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## Malaysian English Language Novice Teachers' Challenges and Support during Initial Years of Teaching

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### Abstract

*This study investigates the challenges encountered by Malaysian English language novice teachers throughout the initial years of their teaching. This study also explores the support received by these novice teachers at the beginning of their careers. The mixed-method research design was adopted for this study. A number of 80 novice teachers participated in the study. Data were collected through a questionnaire survey and an interview with five novice teachers. The findings indicated that the most frequent challenges faced by the novice English language teachers were (1) workload challenges, (2) instructional challenges, and (3) social status and identity challenges. The results also showed that the most frequent support received by the novice teachers was collegial support. Based on the findings, one of the most crucial issues to be addressed during the teacher training was equipping the novice teachers with the knowledge and skill in managing their multiple work and responsibilities in schools. Training novice teachers in using various instructional methods,*

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*particularly on the use of computer technology is also important. The novice teachers also need to be provided with more professional development courses that can develop their confidence in teaching, help them build a relationship with students and colleagues, and educate them on how to manage their problematic learners. A structured support system with good mentoring practices during the initial years of teaching is also crucial in assisting the novice teachers to adapt to the teaching environment and carry out assigned responsibilities.*

**Keywords:** Challenges, English language, mentoring, novice teachers, support.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, the educational system has been witnessing some drastic changes and reforms. Moving into the new millennium, the Ministry of Education has been working on some serious and promising educational reforms mainly by constructing a quality education blueprint and policy complementary to the current requirements, needs, and urgency. Since teachers are considered to play a fundamental role in enhancing the status of a nation, the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2015 report states that the ministry will only select the finest candidates into the system to guarantee that the teaching profession becomes a highly regarded and respected career. The Ministry of Education also emphasized that the teacher preparation program for pre-service teachers has to be at high standards. Teacher training institutions need to select quality candidates and equipped them with the knowledge, skills, and values of effective teachers (Alaa et al., 2019; Gopal & Mokhtar, 2020; Ismail et al., 2019). Teacher preparation programs must address the changing ecosystem in education and prepare teachers who are ready for the current needs and trends in teaching and learning (Ismail et al., 2019; Tahir et al., 2021; Zulkepli, 2020).

In the context of English Language teachers in Malaysia, several studies reported that the language teachers are demanded to be critical in choosing the teaching methods to be used and they are required to practice the ideal teaching strategies in the classroom (Albakri et al., 2017, 2021; Ismail & Albakri, 2012; Katitia, 2015). Katitia (2015) reinforced that despite the effectiveness of the curriculum, facilities, and teaching, the teachers are the ones who make a difference in preparing the learners.

Teaching has often been described as one of the most stressful and exhausting professions. Novice teachers, in particular, are likely to face unique difficulties linked to the concerns and adaptation problems that emerge during the initial years of teaching (Ahmed et al, 2020; Alhamad, 2018; Karatas & Karaman, 2013). Novice teachers encounter stress and the lack of support to overcome it eventually led them to feel burnout and drop out of the teaching profession in their initial years (Ahmed et al, 2020; Alhamad, 2018; Karatas & Karaman, 2013). In terms of the Malaysian context, the research findings by Mukundan and Khandehroo (2010) proved that a high level of burnout is evident among English teachers in public schools. The results indicated that the youngest group (below the age of 25) suffers from emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Other studies on novice English Language teachers have documented that the teachers encountered difficulties in adapting to the school context,

delivering the knowledge and skills to their students, and conducting effective lessons (Albakri et al., 2021; Senom et al., 2013). The studies also indicated that language teachers face conflicts in presenting their image as a teacher, managing the classroom, handling the work stress, and demanding a commitment as a teacher.

Although studies related to novice teachers have been well-explored in the general education context in Malaysia, in-depth studies elucidating experiences, challenges, and support among novice English language teachers have not been well-documented. Considering the complexity of the teaching profession, it is doubtlessly crucial to explore the conflicts faced by these language teachers as they will influence both the early and later days of the teaching career. Exploring the experience of novice English language teachers is critical. Revealing their experiences can help policymakers understand how training of new teachers can be reshaped and specifically determine the types of support received and required by novice teachers.

Therefore, this research intends to explore the challenges faced by novice teachers during the beginning of their teaching careers. This study also explored the support received by novice teachers in overcoming the challenges in the initial three years of their teaching experience. This study is unique because it gathers data from the novice teachers who graduated from a teacher training institute in three different cohorts of 2015, 2016, and 2017.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching is more than just knowledge of the subject matter. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century of teaching and learning, teachers are required to do multitasks by not only delivering the knowledge of the subject matter but also incorporating the necessary values and principles for the development of the pupils' minds and potential (Albakri et al., 2017, 2021).

During the initial years of teaching, novice teachers need to adapt themselves to a collective working environment that consists of patterns of interaction that depend on the culture and politics of the school, individual characteristics, and the needs of the students (Ahmed et al., 2020; Alhamad, 2018; Karatas & Karaman, 2013). A considerable number of studies reported that novice teachers faced unique difficulties linked to the concerns and adaptation problems that emerge during the initial years of teaching (Ahmed et al., 2020; Alhamad, 2018; Karatas & Karaman, 2013).

### 2.1 English Language Novice Teacher

According to Ahmed et al. (2020), a novice teacher could be anyone who is teaching for the first time or who has entered a new cultural context for the first time. Karatas and Karaman (2013) defined a novice teacher as a teacher who has less than two years of teaching. Mahmoudi and Ozkan (2015) stated that novice teachers are defined as those with little or no mastery experience. A novice teacher is defined as a trained new teacher who had worked for between one to three years (Ariff et al., 2016). The novice teachers have been trained at specific teacher training institutions prior to being attached to schools.

In the context of English language novice teachers, these teachers were trained at teacher training institutions and most of them received a Bachelor in Education

Degree specializing in teaching English as a second language. The structure for English language teacher training is almost similar to most teacher training institutions in Malaysia. The program is structured for four years and the practicum is scheduled during the final year of study.

In terms of English language novice teacher preparation, the training of novice teachers during teacher education involves teaching them the subject matter; language skills, grammar, and linguistics. They are also introduced to various pedagogical skills, approaches, theories, assessment methods, and also the school system (Senom, 2013). By doing so, the novice teachers will not only be able to teach effectively in class but also complete the non-instructional tasks given by the school administration. The Ministry of Education in Malaysia highlights that a suitable curriculum, teaching approaches, and also assessment methods are equally significant to forming quality English language novice teachers.

Apart from transferring knowledge and skills about teaching and learning of English language, the teacher preparation program also ensures that the future English language novice teachers have equally strong practical skills via teaching practicum. Strong practical skills will help the teachers to be more sensitive about the realities of the teaching profession. They would learn to survive thousands of interactions that occur either within or outside the classroom since they will always be receiving duties and instructions from the school management. Also, the teachers are taught to work effectively with their colleagues and parents to gather information and motivation to promote students' progress.

Teacher education institutions prepare English language teachers with the skills knowledge and values for their teaching careers. However, teaching is a dynamic process, it is essential to comprehend the experiences in terms of the initial years of the English language novice teachers in the teaching profession. Although novice teachers are lacking in terms of experience, these novice teachers are required to fulfill the same tasks and responsibilities as experienced teachers. The general idea is that a novice teacher should be able to transfer the inputs and drill the pupils at the same level as the teachers with 20 years of teaching experience (Ahmed et al, 2020; Alhamad, 2018).

Greater pressure on English language novice teachers will make them vulnerable to various obstacles found in the real teaching environment. Studies have indicated that novice teachers commonly described the teaching profession with the adjectives such as 'challenging', 'difficult', and 'tiring' (Ahmed et al, 2020). At this point, it is pivotal that the challenges faced by the novice teachers are identified so that they could receive suitable support to overcome the challenges. Failure in identifying and overcoming the challenges could lead novice teachers to leave the teaching profession sooner.

## **2.2 Challenges Faced by English Language Novice Teachers**

Past literature has shown that there are many challenges faced by English language novice teachers in their early years of teaching. The challenges encountered in their initial years should be identified and analyzed to help novice teachers remain enthusiastic about the teaching profession (Senom et al., 2013). Senom et al (2013) argued that the ideals novice teachers formed during training may not be the reality of what they faced in their initial years of teaching. They emphasized that since the

challenges encountered by the teachers might be varied in each educational system, thus all the aspects of the problems should be examined respectively.

Many previous studies have indicated the types of challenges encountered by novice teachers. According to [Kozigoklu \(2017\)](#), the challenges faced by novice teachers can be classified as planning and execution of teaching, relationships with college administrators, parents and community, school physical structure and equipment, professional development-legal rights, and duties. It can be seen here that the first year of teaching for novice teachers comprises confronting classroom realities and the adaptation process. The research findings from [Dickson et al. \(2014\)](#) indicated that there are six major areas of challenges faced by novice teachers: classroom management, implementing the curriculum to mixed ability classes, administrative demands, perception of a lack of support, relationships with colleagues, dealing with parents of students, and balancing home and family life. These findings show generally their challenges in terms of instructional, classroom management, workload, and relationship with students and colleagues.

Despite job-related and social challenges discussed above, difficulties in applying the theory learned in teacher education such as 21<sup>st</sup>-century teaching skills and materials development skills posed challenges to novice teachers ([Dayan et al., 2018](#)). The lack of resources, large classes, and school culture prevent novice teachers from using audio-visual aids or engaging students in activities. Here, it can be seen that there is a gap between the theory and practices. They also highlighted classroom management particularly managing large classes, heavy workload, and adjusting to the school environment as issues faced by the novice teachers.

A study by [Dias-Lacy and Guirguis \(2017\)](#) on novice language teachers highlighted that the teachers felt stressed out due to several factors. Among them are the overwhelming workload, lack of support from teachers and administrators, unable to manage students and the class time, curriculum challenges, and wanting to meet self-expectation. A later study by [Alhamad \(2018\)](#) and [Sali and Kecik \(2018\)](#) echoed the findings reported by [Dias-Lacy and Guirguis \(2017\)](#). [Sali and Kecik \(2018\)](#) conducted a study on novice English language teachers in Turkey. They reported that the teachers faced difficulties related to language teaching due to lack of resources, learners' low proficiency, and classroom discipline. The teachers also encountered challenges in planning their lessons, managing class time, finishing the syllabus, and managing learners' needs and interests. The findings also indicated that there was insufficient support and guidance received by the novice teachers from the school administrators and mentors. Similar findings were reported by [Alhamad \(2018\)](#) who conducted a study on the challenges faced by novice English language teachers. He reported that the major challenges were the students' low English language proficiency and their negative attitude towards learning the language.

### **2.3 Support for Novice Teachers**

Novice teachers are often exposed to challenges due to their lack of experience in the teaching profession. Despite receiving teacher education, the real classroom situations might demand novice teachers to receive support from their mentors and also colleagues to master certain skills. For novice teachers, being away from the 'safe' and familiar environment of their teacher training college can be very isolating and

may add to the pressure they experience during their early years (Dickson et al. 2014). Hence, novice teachers should seek support to overcome the challenges.

New teachers can be helped and supported to adapt to their new classroom cultures and roles. Based on Karatas and Karaman (2013), there are four types of support which are mentors, co-workers, family, and perceived efficacy. The research indicated that apart from the support obtained from the working environment, family support is also important for novice teachers to manage their emotional aspect of teaching.

Hudson and Hudson (2018) emphasized that in the early phases of their teaching career, novice teachers need enough assistance. It is necessary to implement a good mentoring scheme in schools to help all novice teachers enhance their quality as teachers. Hudson and Hudson (2018) reinforced that assigned mentors can assist beginning teachers by modeling practices and providing feedback on the beginning teachers' planning, preparation, behavior management, and assessment.

Albakri et. al. (2021) also highlighted the significance of the mentoring, reflective practice, and evaluation of practice among pre-service teachers to shape and inform the nature of the pre-service teachers' experience, expectations, and actions. These strategies also offer them a window into the type of working environment a beginning teacher will be experiencing. The keywords 'reflection' and 'evaluation' indicate the significance of teacher education as a coping mechanism in preparing the pre-service teachers for the transition to novice teachers.

### **3. METHODS**

This study used the mixed-method research design to collect the data on the challenges faced by novice teachers and the support received during their initial teaching experience. It employed the questionnaire and interviews to collect the data.

#### **3.1 Participants**

The population for this research consisted of novice English language teachers from a university in Malaysia while they were still within their first three years of teaching experience. The participants graduated from the same teacher training institution in Malaysia. The participants selected specialized in the field of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) and they were in their first three years of teaching in government secondary schools. The selected participants were teaching at different schools across Malaysia since they were posted according to the needs of the teachers in a particular area or region.

For the quantitative component of the study, 80 participants were selected from a population of 296 using convenient sampling. Reaching the participants who were currently working in different areas was impossible for the researchers considering the resources of the research such as time, transportation, and financial support. Therefore, the questionnaire was distributed and retrieved from the participants online.

For the qualitative component of the study, five participants were chosen for the semi-structured interview session. These participants were selected from each different year of teaching experience: the first year, the second year, and the third year of teaching experience.

## 3.2 Instruments

### 3.2.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire constructed comprised of three parts: Section 1 (personal information), Section 2 (challenges faced by novice teachers), and Section 3 (the support received by the novice teachers). In Section 1, the participants were required to fill in their names, the area of the school they have been posted, and the current year of teaching. Section 2 consisted of 34 questions and they are divided based on the five challenges faced by novice teachers in their first three years of teaching, they are instructional challenges (10 questions), classroom management challenges (6 questions), challenges related to the relationship with students (6 questions), workload challenges (6 questions), and social status and identity challenges (6 questions).

The items related to the challenges in the questionnaire were adapted from [Ozturk and Yildirim \(2013\)](#). In Section 3, there were 14 items constructed related to the support for the novice teachers: mentoring practice (5 questions), collegial support (5 questions), and teacher education (4 questions). In terms of the items related to the support for the novice teachers, the researchers adapted and adopted the items based on the instrument on the novice teacher support structure by [Warsame \(2011\)](#). Therefore, there is a total of 48 close-ended questions in the questionnaire.

### 3.2.2 Interview

The interview questions constructed were linked to the questionnaire to allow the researchers to further explore the challenges faced by the English language novice teachers and the support they received. Before conducting the interview sessions, the participants were given the sample questionnaire and the notes of reference to give them proper guidance to assist them while answering questions during the interview session. This list of references consisted of the structure of TESL courses that the participants have learned throughout their teacher training program.

## 3.3 Data Collection

In this mixed-method research, the data collection process was done in two phases. Phase one involved the quantitative process, using the online questionnaire while phase two involved a qualitative process, using the structured interview.

### 3.3.1 Quantitative

The list of English language novice teachers who graduated in three different years was collected from the representative of each graduating year to identify the relevant participants. As the questionnaire was in the form of Google Form, the data were automatically saved once the participants completed the online questionnaire. Besides that, the participants were required to fill in their names and schools and they were only allowed to answer the questionnaire once.

### 3.3.2 Qualitative

The semi-structured interview was conducted in the second phase of the data collection. The researchers selected five participants to be interviewed based on their different years of teaching experience to inquire more in-depth information and triangulate with the data from the questionnaire. Once the selected participants have given their consent, the interview sessions were scheduled. The interview sessions were conducted in a place according to the participants' preferences. The interviews were recorded to avoid misinterpretation. Each interview session took about 30-40 minutes to achieve a clear representation of each participant's views and experiences. The audio recordings from the interviews were transcribed and the data was analyzed using content analysis.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis was done in two ways: quantitatively and qualitatively. The descriptive statistic was used to analyze the close-ended questions in the questionnaire. The responses related to the challenges faced by English language novice teachers gathered from the questionnaire were tabulated based on the five different challenges and support received. The frequency of the responses and percentages were used to interpret the trend of the study. Similarly, the frequency of responses and percentages related to the support were tabulated according to the categories listed. The support received will be explored to see how they assisted novice teachers to overcome challenges in their initial years of teaching. As for the data from the interview, thematic analysis was used to analyze the data transcribed. This allowed the researchers to generate codes and themes. The common themes were defined based on the codes given to produce a report of the analysis.

## 4. RESULTS

Two types of data were collected in this study which are the quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data was collected from a questionnaire and the qualitative data was gathered through interviews conducted with the selected novice English language teachers.

### 4.1 Quantitative Findings

Data from the findings presented five types of challenges faced by novice language teachers. The challenges were related to workload, instructional, social status and identity, classroom management, and relationship with students.

**Table 1.** Results for the most frequent challenges.

No.	Challenges	Percentage (%)
1.	Workload	45.6
2.	Instructional	28.8
3.	Social status and identity	24.3
4.	Classroom Management	19.5
5.	Relationship with students	9.5



The results for the most frequent challenges experienced by novice teachers are presented in Table 1. Based on the quantitative findings, the three most frequent challenges encountered by the participants were workload challenges (45.6%) followed by instructional challenges (28.8%), and social status and identity challenges (24.3%). Classroom management (19.5%) showed lower frequency and the lowest average score is the relationship with students (9.5%). This result indicated that most of the participants experienced workload challenges, instructional challenges, and social identity and status more often than other challenges.

**Table 2.** Results for workload challenges.

No.	Challenges	Percentage (%)
1.	The productivity of my instructional work is affected due to workload.	72.5
2.	I have difficulty balancing between instructional (teaching) and non-instructional duties (non-teaching).	70.0
3.	I have challenges in preparing administrative paperwork and reports.	70.0
4.	I spend my time at home assessing students' homework.	62.5
5.	I fail to conduct my classroom lessons due to time constraints.	52.5
6.	I experienced sleepless nights due to the workload burden.	31.3

For workload challenges, the data presented in Table 2 clearly showed that most of the participants perceived workload as the most challenging part of the profession. 72.5% of the participants felt that the productivity of their instructional work was affected due to their workload. Approximately 70% of the participants mentioned they faced difficulty to balance between the instructional and non-instructional work. Similarly, 70% of the participants stated that they struggled to prepare for their administrative work. The failure of managing their unlimited workload has also caused 62.5% of the participants to assess their students' homework at home. Moreover, more than half of the participants (52.5%) failed to conduct their lessons sometimes due to time constraints. Finally, 31.3% of the participants sometimes had sleepless nights due to the workload burden. The findings indicated excessive workload mainly from instructional and non-instructional duties had detrimental effects on the novice teachers' ability to perform as effective teachers. They also faced difficulty in managing their time, hence, they need to continue their work at home to complete the unfinished tasks.

**Table 3.** Results for instructional challenges.

No.	Challenges	Percentage (%)
1.	I find it challenging to teach speaking skills in the classroom.	62.6
2.	I face difficulties in implementing technology in the classroom.	58.7
3.	I use the Malay Language often in the English language classroom.	57.6
4.	I find it challenging to teach writing skills in the classroom.	55.1
5.	I find it challenging to teach listening skills in the classroom.	47.6
6.	I cannot decide on ways to strengthen the students' understanding.	21.3
7.	I find it challenging to teach reading skills.	20.1
8.	I find it difficult to prepare appropriate teaching materials	18.1

Table 3 presents the instructional challenges encountered by the participants. More than half of the participants (62.6%) reported that they had trouble teaching speaking skills in the classroom. The data showed the highest percentage in terms of difficulty to teach was speaking skills compared to other language skills, writing skills

(55.1%), listening skills (47.6%), and reading skills (20.1%). In addition, 58.7% of the participants reported that they faced difficulty in implementing technology in their lessons hence indicating that they need assistance in terms of training to equip them with the knowledge and skills in using technology in their lessons. Apart from that, 57.6% of the participants also responded that they use the Malay language while teaching English which can be considered a significant challenge in terms of teaching the English language. The use of the mother tongue is still a significant alternative in the Malaysian English language teaching contexts at the secondary level. However, the data showed a lower percentage of challenges in terms of participants who struggled to strengthen their students' understanding and prepare appropriate teaching materials with 21.3% and 18.1% respectively.

**Table 4.** Results for social status and identity challenges.

No.	Challenges	Percentage (%)
1.	I feel great pressure in the teaching profession.	77.5
2.	I need support to survive in the teaching profession.	76.4
3.	I am unable to link my undergraduate training with the current atmosphere of the school.	66.5
4.	I have worries about whether I am a good teacher or not.	55.1
5.	I am unable to adapt myself to the school system.	40.0
6.	I struggle to develop a positive relationship with my colleagues.	11.2

For social status and identity challenges, Table 4 shows that a majority of the participants (77.5%) felt great pressure about the teaching profession. Most of the participants (76.4%) felt that they need more support to survive in the teaching profession. The data indicated that having a mentor is crucial in providing support and guidance to inexperienced teachers at the initial stage of teaching in the real context. Apart from that, 66.5% of the participants felt that they were unable to link their undergraduate training to the classroom realities. Teacher training institutions need to provide more exposure to the real school environment and guide the teacher trainees on the practices to make the experience meaningful and relatable to the knowledge imparted during training. Other challenges indicated by the participants were their concerns about whether they were good teachers (55.1%), the challenges in adapting to the school system (40%), and the struggle to build a positive relationship with their colleagues (11.2%). The data showed that the novice teachers were doubtful about themselves as good teachers and struggled to develop relationships with students and colleagues. The need for support in terms of a mentor who advises and guides them at this stage could build their confidence and positive perception of themselves as good teachers.

**Table 5.** Results for classroom management challenges.

No.	Challenges	Percentage (%)
1.	I have problems managing students of mixed abilities.	67.6
2.	I don't know the best way to approach students' problematic behavior.	41.3
3.	I struggle to utilize classroom management strategies.	31.3
4.	I find it hard to manage students with discipline problems.	33.8
5.	I have problems enforcing class rules.	43.8

Table 5 is regarding classroom management challenges. The data showed that 67.6% of the participants faced problems in managing students with mixed abilities.

Almost 43.8% of the participants have issues with managing students with discipline problems, and 41.3% admitted that they were not equipped with the knowledge on the ways to approach students with problematic behavior. About 31.3% struggled to implement classroom management strategies and 33.8% have issues enforcing class rules. Based on the data presented, the novice teachers encountered issues in classroom management as they have limited knowledge, exposure, and experience in managing students in the real classroom context, particularly problematic students.

**Table 6.** Results for challenges in developing a relationship with the students.

No.	Challenges	Percentage (%)
1.	I feel insufficient in dealing with students' social development.	60.0
2.	It is difficult for me to spot individual differences between students.	48.9
3.	I feel insecure about the judgment of students about me as their teacher.	42.5
4.	I feel challenged to grasp the interest and attention of students via communication.	27.6
5.	I experienced hardship in establishing a positive relationship with students.	21.3

As shown in Table 6, novice teachers experienced some difficulties in developing their relationships with students. The highest challenge is in dealing with students' social development (60%). Almost half of the participants (48.9%) reported that they struggled to spot students' individual differences. Interestingly, 42.5% admitted that they felt insecure about the judgment of students about them as a teacher. Apart from that, 27.6% of the novice teachers also felt that it was challenging to gauge their students' attention and 21.3% struggled to establish a positive relationship with their students. The findings exemplified that novice teachers lack confidence in their ability to attract their students and develop a bond with their students. It was partly because they were insecure and they have limited knowledge of dealing with students' emotions and responses.

**Table 7.** Results for the support received.

No.	Support	Percentage (%)
1.	Collegial	58.4
2.	Mentoring Program	48.4
3.	Teacher Education	35.0

The findings thus far indicated that novice teachers struggled with multiple issues at the beginning of their teaching experience. Hence, support is crucial for the teachers to address and manage the challenges. Table 7 presents the types of support received by the participants. The data showed collegial support (58.4%) followed by the mentoring program (48.4%) and lastly teacher education (35%). This general result indicated that the majority of the participants selected collegial support as the highest support received to overcome their teaching profession difficulties.

**Table 8.** Results for collegial support.

No.	Challenges	Percentage (%)
1.	I listened to the wise counsel provided by my colleagues to boost my morale.	86.3
2.	I share my disappointments with my colleagues to get effective ways of dealing with them.	78.8

Table 8 continued...

3.	I use the feedback given by my colleagues via peer observations to improve myself as a teacher.	76.2
4.	I use the resources shared by my colleagues to complete my school tasks.	66.3
5.	I collaborate with my colleagues in group work to reduce the burden of school tasks.	57.6

The data presented in Table 8 with regards to collegial support showed that 86.3% of the participants listened to their colleague's council, 78.8% of participants shared their disappointments, 76.2% of participants used the feedback for improvement, 66.3% of participants shared the resources, and more than half of the participants, 57.6%, collaborated with their colleagues to reduce their workload.

**Table 9.** Results for mentoring support.

No.	Challenges	Percentage (%)
1.	I seek more information about school cultures from my mentor to enhance my adaptation process.	78.5
2.	I used the feedback given by my mentor through classroom visits to improve my teaching skills.	73.8
3.	I seek the help of my mentor for guidance in the teaching profession.	63.8
4.	I use the emotional support received from my mentor to overcome challenges in school more confidently.	48.8

Table 9 presents the results of the support from the mentoring program. The results indicated that the majority of participants (78.5%) did refer to their mentors to get information about the school culture. It is clear that more than half of the participants (73.8%) also used the constructive feedback given by their mentors to improve their teaching skills. Additionally, 63.8% of participants also stated that they seek professional guidance from their mentors. However, only nearly half of the participants (48.8%) used the emotional support given by their mentor to overcome challenges. Although mentor teachers did provide guidance and advice to novice teachers, they were not the main source of support for novice teachers.

**Table 10.** Results for teacher education support.

No.	Challenges	Percentage (%)
1.	I reflect on my practicum experiences guiding me for the first three years of teaching.	68.8
2.	I apply the knowledge gained from teacher education to be a more effective teacher.	60.1
3.	I used the knowledge and feedback given by my supervisor to improve in the teaching profession.	41.3
4.	I often get in touch with my practicum supervisor to discuss any problems.	5.1

Lastly, as presented in Table 10, the participants indicated that teacher education was not the main support during their initial teaching experience. More than half of the participants (68.8%) stated that they reflected on their practicum experiences and use the knowledge gained from teacher education (60.1%) to overcome their challenges. On the contrary, only 41.3 % of participants used the knowledge gained from the supervisor followed by a minority of participants (5.1%) who contacted the practicum supervisor to overcome the challenges.

## 4.2 Qualitative Findings

Based on the interview findings presented in Table 11, four common themes have been identified. The themes were divided into two categories: challenges encountered and support received in school. For the qualitative findings, the excessive workload, difficulties in teaching speaking skills and insecurity about teaching abilities have been identified as the common themes in terms of challenges since the majority of the novice teachers expressed their concerns on the themes mentioned above.

**Table 11.** Common themes were identified during semi-structured interviews.

	<b>Research participant Current teaching year</b>	<b>NV1 1<sup>st</sup> year</b>	<b>NV2 1<sup>st</sup> year</b>	<b>NV3 2<sup>nd</sup> year</b>	<b>NV4 2<sup>nd</sup> year</b>	<b>NV5 3<sup>rd</sup> year</b>
<b>Theme</b>	Excessive workload	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
	Difficulty to teach speaking skills	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Insecurity about teaching ability	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
	Collegial support	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The followings are extracts from the interviews in which the novice teachers reported on the respective challenges encountered during their initial years of teaching. The first three excerpts explain the participants' excessive workload.

- (1) Most of the time, we have the offline work, because the workload is a lot. That's why. (P1- Excessive workload)
- (2) Most of the time, I am unable to complete my work. Given the amount of non-instructional tasks, I had to bring back my work home to be completed. (P2- Excessive workload)
- (3) ... the Form Three task which was uhm at a certain time the senior forgot to tell me what needs to be done so that's the first workload and the second uhm thing I find, uhm burdening would be the co-curriculum activities. (P4- Excessive workload)

The next four excerpts present the participants' concerns about their difficulty to teach speaking skills:

- (4) ...because why uhm they do not have the vocabulary to speak, they are very poor in vocabulary, okay certain things they are not outspoken, yet, they feel very shy, okay to speak in English and then they always the very low self-esteem to come out and speak or speak in front of their friends. (P1- Difficulty to teach speaking skills)
- (5) This is because the students in my school are reluctant to speak in English. They are not interested to put in the effort to speak English. They prefer to speak in Malay language or their mother tongue. (P2- Difficulty to teach speaking skills)
- (6) But when it comes to speaking, even with prompt they actually still can't speak. (P4- Difficulty to teach speaking skills)
- (7) They have difficulty pronouncing even a simple word. (P5- Difficulty to teach speaking skills)

The following excerpts express the participants' insecurities about their teaching ability:

- (8) I felt that I'm not a good teacher, unable to become an English teacher. I'm not qualified to be an English teacher. (P1-Insecure about teaching ability)
- (9) Because of the, uh, because of the response given by the students, most of the time I don't actually achieve my objectives all the time I feel that okay I...I may...I'm a failed English teacher. (P1-Insecure about teaching ability)

- (10) Sometimes, when the students are not cooperating in my classroom lesson, I feel that it is because they don't like me. (P2-Insecure about teaching ability)
- (11) I think it's a challenge because my students are not proficient in the language. At the end of the day, even though the students say they understand the lesson, I will still ask myself whether they really understand the lesson or just saying it, just to satisfy myself. (P3-Insecure about teaching ability)

From the aspect of support, the common theme identified is collegial support. The novice teachers felt that their colleagues have played an integral part in helping them to cope with the challenges. The participants highlighted that the support they received from their colleagues was in terms of encouragement, advice to improve practice, and solutions to the problems in teaching and learning.

- (12) I felt that my colleagues are the most helpful for me to overcome my challenges. (P1)
- (13) In my first year, I remember seeking my colleagues' advice right after the class. They use to provide ideas not only in terms of teaching but also about the working environment. They helped me to adapt well to the school system. (P2)
- (14) It was helpful because almost all the classes are at the same level. Even the other novice teachers, experience similar problems. When we talk to each other, we share and exchange our ideas and experience to teach better. (P3)

The participants also reported that their colleagues share resources and assisted with their workload, as expressed by P5 in (15).

- (15) Yes, all of them guide me. They taught me how to mark the book, how to correct the students' mistakes, and how to ask them to do correction. (P5)

## **5. DISCUSSION**

Based on the findings, all the novice teachers encountered challenges in the initial years of their teaching careers. Some of the challenges were common across all of the participants which were workload, instructional, social status and identity, classroom management, and relationship with students. From the questionnaire, the majority of the participants reported one of the challenges that they encountered most frequently was workload challenges. Workload challenges received the highest scores compared to the other listed challenges in the survey. Heavy workload has also been highlighted in past studies on novice teachers' challenges at the beginning of their teaching career as one of the most highly reported challenges (Dayan et al., 2018; Dickson et al., 2014; Kozigoklu, 2017; Ozturk & Yildirim, 2013; Senom et al., 2013). According to the result gained, the primary reason most of the participants in this research chose the workload challenges as the most frequent challenge was that they felt that their performance in teaching was seriously affected by the difficulties in balancing a large amount of non-instructional workloads such as preparing paperwork and reports.

The data from the interview echoed the data from the survey which stated workload challenges as the most frequently encountered challenges. The participants felt that their non-instructional duties assigned by the administrators increased their workload and burdened them. Keying in marks offline, attending meetings, and preparing paperwork for events and co-curricular activities were examples of burdening workload highlighted by the interviewed participants. Evidence from the

data clearly showed that novice teachers needed support in handling the workload and some assistance to manage the non-instructional work.

The second most frequent challenge was instructional challenges. Since this research was conducted among English language teachers, therefore the main instructional challenge centered around the teaching of language skills. The majority of the participants encountered challenges mainly in teaching speaking skills. According to the novice teachers, what was particularly troubling for some of them was their students' low language proficiency. They were also challenged by the need to use the Malay language during English language lessons to get students to understand the lesson taught.

Based on the results from the interviews, all of the participants reported that they encountered challenges to teach speaking skills often in terms of instructional challenges. The main factors were known to be the low proficiency of students, low self-esteem, their reluctance to speak in English, lack of exposure to speaking skills, and also the preference to use their mother tongue or Malay language to communicate. The result obtained strengthens the findings gained from the survey which stated instructional challenge as the second most frequent challenge encountered and teaching speaking skills was also the most difficult for the teachers. The findings are in line with [Sali and Kecik \(2018\)](#) who reported that the novice teachers in their study experienced difficulties in language pedagogy due to the learners' low level of proficiency. For language teachers, getting students to use the language is crucial to see their development and ability to use the language in context. Hence, addressing reticence among learners is important and evidence from the study has shown that the challenge is immense in getting students to communicate in the language.

Apart from that, the participants had concerns about their social status and identity. The data indicated it as the third most frequent challenge encountered. The main reason for the participants to feel that social status and identity as a challenge was because the results showed that there was a constant need for moral support among the participants. This is supported by the findings from [Dias-Lacy and Guirguis \(2017\)](#) which indicated that as a first-year teacher, the need for support is very high. A more structured mentoring and support system is crucial for novice teachers to build their self-confidence. Moreover, the participants felt that there were difficulties to link the knowledge gained from teacher training. As stated by [Sali and Kecik \(2018\)](#), another disturbing problem for all novice teachers seemed to be putting theory into practice. They expressed that they could not relate the classroom routines in the school with the training received which indicated the lack of real context exposure to build their experience, knowledge, and skills in the real school context. More exposure to the real context should be allocated in the teacher training program to give the trainees the opportunities to handle and manage problems and issues that enable them to reflect on theories and practice. Training novice teachers during their teacher education years should also expose them to problem-solving case studies and inquiry-based approaches that may equip them with the skill in handling issues and challenges at the beginning of their teaching career.

The qualitative data displayed the perspectives of the majority of the participants regarding the insecurity they experienced mainly due to their students. The participants felt that they were not good teachers due to the responses given by the students and their participation in the classroom lessons. In addition, the low proficiency level of the students as well caused the participants to doubt their ability in enhancing the

students' understanding level. Studies by [Senom et al. \(2013\)](#) and [Sali and Kecik \(2018\)](#) also reported similar findings.

Data related to classroom management was recorded as the fourth most common challenge. This challenge focused on the behavioral management of problematic students and mixed abilities students. The findings indicated that novice teachers found it difficult, to a certain extent, in terms of handling mixed abilities and problematic students. These findings are supported by other past studies which indicated that there were highly demotivated learners who posed several disciplinary problems to the novice teachers ([Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017](#); [Sali & Kecik, 2018](#)). The least frequent challenge was about the relationship between novice teachers with their students. A majority of the participants reported that it was difficult to handle the students' social development and at times they felt worried about the students' opinion of them as a teacher. The novice teachers have issues with self-confidence and were at times doubtful of their ability to teach and gauge their learners.

As for data related to support received by the novice teachers to overcome the challenges, most of them responded that they received collegial support to overcome the challenges. Collegial support received the highest score compared to mentoring practice. From the findings for the collegial support, it can be seen that the participants were heavily dependent on the wise counsel and feedback gained from their colleagues to tackle challenges. For instance, the participants claimed in the interview that they received support on ways to manage the class, mark the students' books, and also adapt to the school environment from their colleagues. Apart from that, the participants also responded that they shared their disappointment with their colleagues often to overcome their challenges. As stated in [Karatas and Karaman \(2013\)](#), having an opportunity to share experiences and interact with other staff depends on the teaching environment. If the novice teachers do not have such opportunities, this may affect their perceptions of their efficacy and may lead to a sense of incompetence.

According to the data, mentoring practice is the second most frequent support to help novice teachers overcome the challenges at the beginning of their careers. In terms of mentoring, the participants responded that they referred to their mentor often to seek information about the school culture to ease their adaptation process. Besides, they also responded that the constructive feedback and guidance gained from the mentor were useful for them to improve their teaching skills. [Dias-Lacy and Guirguis \(2017\)](#) stated that mentoring program is a solution to reduce attrition rates and it provided support for first-year teachers with their ability to cope with work overload, stress, and lack of support from superiors. Although the participants claimed that teacher training is not dominant support in managing the challenges they experienced in the real context of teaching, they did respond that the most useful part of teacher education is the experience that they have gained from the practicum which allowed them to reflect and overcome the challenges.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This research focuses on the challenges faced and the support for novice teachers in their first three years of teaching experiences. The findings indicated that commonly shared challenges were reported and the challenges corroborate those past studies about novice English language teachers' tensions and conflicts at the beginning of their



teaching experience (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Karatas & Karaman, 2013; Sali & Kecik, 2018; Senom, 2013). The novice teachers started their teaching careers with challenges that they were not well-prepared to handle. As language teachers, the language pedagogy presents an array of difficulties in terms of teaching using the English language and getting learners to use the language. Besides that, knowledge and skills in using technology have also been reported as a challenge.

The challenges faced by the novice teachers also seemed to influence each other and create a chain reaction. For instance, the excessive workload affects the quality of teaching. When the quality of teaching or instructions such as lacking time to plan a lesson and prepare materials happened, the novice teachers struggled to engage learners and thus led to doubts about their ability which then affected their confidence. Similarly, the challenge in developing a relationship with the students appeared to provoke other challenges such as their self-confidence and classroom management.

The challenges clearly showed that novice teachers critically need more professional support and guidance. Although the novice teachers reported receiving significant support from colleagues, the findings indicated inadequate professional development opportunities, lack of support from the school administration, and lack of quality mentoring received. Therefore, there is a need to train novice teachers with the knowledge and skills to manage their workload. The school administration also needs to review the workload given to novice teachers and provide some support for the non-instructional work assigned to the novice teachers. Besides that, teacher induction programs need to include contents that address the challenges faced by novice teachers such as managing differentiated and problematic learners, handling non-instructional responsibilities, and developing confidence in teaching. A good mentoring structure with trained and experienced mentor teachers would provide a significant contribution to shaping the quality of the novice teachers and provide emotional support to them.

Finally, perhaps, more importantly, not only does this research alerts the pre-service teachers about the teaching realities, but the findings also can help educational stakeholders who are keen on improving the quality of ESL teachers to include more real-world classroom experiences and sharing sessions with experienced teachers. However, similar to other studies, this research has its limitations. The first limitation is all of the participants involved in this research graduated from one particular teaching university. Hence, the findings may not be generalized to larger populations. Apart from that, the instrument which is the questionnaire was distributed online since the participants were teaching in different areas and due to the spread of the covid-19 pandemic. The participants needed to be constantly reminded to answer the online questionnaire which extended the period of data collection.

For future research, it is suggested that comparative studies among different teaching universities should be conducted with bigger sample size. Apart from that, the researchers could also add journal writing as an instrument besides having a questionnaire and interview. The research should give a specific duration such as two weeks or one month for the selected novice teachers to write down their daily challenges in a journal. The journal writing could further strengthen the findings obtained from the questionnaire and interview since the frequency of the challenges could be determined through it. This would also enable the researchers to analyze the findings better in terms of the types of challenges faced by the novice teachers according to the areas of schools they teach.

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## Pre-Service Teachers' Investments in English and Construction of Professional Identity in the Indonesian Context

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### Abstract

*This study explored the pre-service teachers (PSTs) professional identity construction during their teacher education training at a private university in Central Java, Indonesia. It particularly investigated their understanding of the teaching profession and their professional identity, guided by two research questions: 1) what have been the influential aspects of the Indonesian pre-service teachers' investment in the teaching profession? and 2) what professional identities do the PSTs (re)construct during their teacher education training? A qualitative case study was adopted as the design of this study. Data of this study were collected using an open-ended questionnaire and in-depth semi-structured interviews. Participants of this study are eleven PSTs of a private university in Central Java. The obtained data were analyzed by using the theoretical grounding of situated learning, professional identity, and investments. An interpretive approach and thematic analysis were adopted in coding and analyzing the PSTs' open-ended questionnaire responses and narrative accounts obtained from the interviews. It is found that most aspects of PSTs' construction of professional identity are their continuous learning participation and contemplation during their training in the English teacher education (ETE) program and their dynamic inner dialogue with their two selves (i.e. the student-self and the teacher-self) during the teaching practicum at school. These influential aspects lead to the emerging professional identity of the PSTs as caring, motivational, pleasant, and empathetic teachers.*

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*This result implies the need to emphasize the acquisition of teacher identity and reflective teaching at the heart of teacher education.*

**Keywords:** Investment in learning, pre-service English teachers, professional identity, situated learning, practicum, teaching profession.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Professional learning is a complex process, especially for pre-service teachers or PSTs. Teacher learning involves acquiring both theories and practices, and the praxis of the two (Genç, 2016). However, central to their learning is the acquisition of professional identity (Beijaard, 2019). Understanding and acquiring professional identity assist PSTs to know their professional and personal roles as well as characters in their teaching work (Zare-ee & Ghasedi, 2014).

Therefore, PSTs' participation in the teaching community of practice significantly contributes to professional identity development (Chong et al., 2011). It is through this participation in the teaching community of practice (COP), that the PSTs learn and acquire the scope of teachers' work, roles, teaching cultures, practices, and identity from the more experienced teachers (Hsiao, 2018; Rodrigues et al., 2018; Wenger, 1998, 2000). Wenger (1998, 2000) emphasized identity as central to new members' learning and professional growth. How they enact a particular identity occurred in three ways, which are through being engaged with other school members (Wenger, 1998, 2000), teaching knowledge enhancement, and imagining a desirable teacher identity they would like to project in their teaching context (Nghia & Tai, 2017). This engagement with other school members allows the new member to access all resources of the COP by also acquiring its language use or discourse practice.

In the English Language Teaching (ELT) setting, several studies have investigated PSTs' professional identity development process during teaching practicum (Aktekin & Celebi, 2020; Hsiao, 2018; Riyanti & Sarroub, 2016; Velasco, 2019). Kuswando (2017) reported that PSTs were demotivated when taking teaching practicum since they experienced difficulties in relating and seeing themselves as teachers. Hsiao's (2018) study showed how the PSTs' participation in the teaching practicum can support and weaken their professional identity formation by some contextual factors. In the same vein, Nghia and Tai's (2017) study explained how school situations can shape PSTs' minds about the appropriate teacher identity to apply. PSTs' professional identity cannot be separated from their specific teaching practicum setting and the roles and responsibilities expected of them in the teaching context. Identity is, therefore, historically and socially constructed (Norton, 2013). The early years of learning experience in the teaching community is a very significant period for PSTs and beginning teachers. It influences the way they perceive the teaching profession, their teacher identity formation, and their decision whether to stay or leave the profession (Hsiao, 2018). Yet, understanding what the PSTs bring with them into the teaching COP (i.e. through their training in the teacher education program and at schools where they conduct their teaching practicum) as new members, and how they construct professional identity is still underexplored, especially in the Indonesian context.

Studies on pre-service language teachers' learning have been conducted to examine PSTs' identity development in various teaching practices, such as teaching practicum (Hsiao, 2018; Velasco, 2019), micro-teaching (Riyanti & Sarroub, 2016), and pre-designed teaching practice (Aktekin & Celebi, 2020). Nevertheless, the impact of the entire learning process in their PST education program, teaching practicum, and other practices on their decisions to enact a particular teacher identity in the future remains under-researched, especially in Indonesian contexts. Thus, this study aims to inquire about Indonesian PSTs' professional identity (re)construction in relation to Norton's (2001) notion of learning investment.

Therefore, this study, in general, aims to explore pre-service English teachers' professional identity (re)construction in an Indonesian context. The study specifically looks at the notion of identity and investment in exploring how the pre-service English teachers understand their future teaching profession during their teacher education program (i.e., their formal learning and school-based practicum). The following two research questions guided this study:

- What have been the influential aspects of Indonesian PSTs' investments in the teaching profession?
- What professional identities do the Indonesian PSTs (re)construct during their teacher education training?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the notion of teacher professional identity and its relation to the concept of investments in language learning. This review was situated under Lave and Wenger's (1991) seminal work situated on learning and community of practice (Wenger, 1998) in understanding teachers' learning process. This review starts with the notion of situated learning and identity, which is then followed by an explanation of its relation to the concept of investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015).

### 2.1 Situated Learning, Community of Practice, and Identity

Lave and Wenger (1991) discussed that learning is a situated activity, and it happens as learners participated in a community of practice (COP) through membership and participation in the community. Lave and Wenger (1991) called this process 'legitimate peripheral participation'. A community of practice is a group of people who share similar visions, interests, and objectives within their own specific practices and discourses. Learning, as Lave and Wenger (1991) put it, is viewed as the interaction of the learners (as the newcomers) with the old members of the COP, and as the process to gain access to activities, identities, artifacts, discourses, knowledge, and practices. In this way, "a person's intentions to learn are engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full PST in a sociocultural practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29). In the process of becoming a full PST in a COP, Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasized the 'mutually constitutive' relation between identity and practice in the community.

In the context of this study, the PSTs, as the newcomers, enter the teaching community and interact with the old members, namely teacher educators during their training in the English teacher education (ETE) program, teacher mentors, and other

teachers at the school. The PSTs' learning includes their past learning experiences as school students and their present learning experience in the ETE program and their current teaching practicum experience at school. During their teaching practicum at school, the PSTs are immersed in the specific discourse, practice, identity, and other resources of the COP. It is through the interaction with all of these COP resources that the PSTs learn to become legitimate members of the teaching COP as well as construct and reconstruct their professional identity.

Darvin and Norton (2015) defined identity, in general, as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world; how that relationship is structured across time and space; and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 36). To contextualize the notion in our study, Norton's (2013) notion of identity was adapted, particularly to how the PSTs understand their relationship to the teaching profession, how this relationship is (re)constructed during their learning at the PST education and teaching practicum at school, and how they understand their possibilities for the near future teaching career. According to Zare-ee and Ghasedi (2014), by understanding their professional identity, PSTs could define their professional roles, view themselves as teachers, integrate personal roles into teaching (such as social or family roles), and personality character they perform in their teaching. Insights on professional identities deliver knowledge about the real teaching situations that they are participating in. Constructions of teacher identities emerge through their experiences of this immersed participation (Chong et al., 2011; Norton, 2001). School experiences offer opportunities for PSTs to test their theoretical and social ability related to the teaching profession (Lee, 2014; Nghia & Tai, 2017).

Ivanova and Skara-Mincăne's (2016) study revealed that in the teaching practices, PSTs could define themselves as various roles of teachers, such as a friend, a manager, and others. Yet, it is not a stand-alone process by the PSTs. In this case, Ivanova and Skara-Mincăne (2016) also highlighted the teacher educators' roles and supportive teaching situations as the essential factors in the development of PSTs' professional identity. Although PSTs' participation in a particular teaching community might generate tension in the relationship with the school members, they still hold the sense of being part of that community (Castaneda, 2014). In particular, Rodrigues et al. (2018) found that the presence of more experienced teachers might affect the development of a teacher's identity. PSTs frequently adopt their characters as: "1) fluid and in constant search for dialogic, negotiation, and interaction, 2) knowledgeable of the particularities and possibilities of the context, 3) agentive in the collaborative construction of the context, and 4) driven by the moral and ethical dilemmas of daily school life" (Rodrigues et al., 2018, p. 14).

Xu (2016) summarized that there are three characteristics of teacher identity development. Firstly, language teacher identity is shaped by individuals' beliefs about themselves and others' perspectives. Secondly, language teacher identity is the result of gradual attempts of constructing personalities. Thus, identity is dynamic, negotiated, and contextualized in interaction. Thirdly, language teacher identity is shaped through the pursuit of membership in a desirable community. Individual teachers must participate in a community that they desire to belong to, or what Anderson (1983) termed as 'imagined community, and must obtain knowledge to equip them in becoming a member of the desired community'. To get closer to that community, teachers need to invest time and energy to learn and practice in the community of

practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2000). The next section, therefore, reviews the notion of identity and investment as part of identity's (re)construction.

## 2.2 Investment in Learning

Norton (2001) introduced the notion of investment in learning to break the traditional view of motivation as isolated from the learning conditions. The learning outcome is influenced by power and other social issues in the learning context. This condition of power and social issues can position learners in different ways that lead to particular learning outcomes. From this perspective, a learner is seen as "a social being with a complex identity that changes across time and space and is reproduced in social interaction" in a particular learning context (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 37). The notion of investment acknowledges the complexities and dynamicity of the individuals' interaction in a specific learning context with its power and social influences. Identity is viewed as an ever-changing negotiation process for the individual in gaining membership in a COP. This process of negotiation is mediated through language as the most important tool for both communication and identity construction (Barnawi, 2009). It is through language that a newcomer can gain participation, legitimacy, and membership in the COP (Lee, 2014). In the context of this study, the PSTs' learning process and attempt to reach a professional teacher identity are understood as an investment process. The investment itself refers to the learners' learning desire and commitment to achieve a particular purpose and to claim more powerful identities (Norton, 2001). Darvin and Norton (2015) outlined three elements that influence individuals' learning. These elements are summarized as follows:

- Ideology: a set of ideas that enable individuals to reflect on how to be included in a particular community and that lead them to conduct learning practices.
- Capital: a means used to maintain, produce, or change individuals' social utterances. There are five types of capitals proposed by Bourdieu (1984).
  - Cultural capital: an individual's social assets to support social mobility, such as education, intellect, style of speech, dress, and physical appearance.
  - Linguistic capital: a form of cultural capital that is inherited and acquired over time. For example, English linguistic skills equip individuals in communicating (Darvin & Norton, 2015)
  - Social capital: an accumulation of actual and potential resources produced through relationships with others.
  - Economic capital: wealth, property, and income (Darvin & Norton, 2015).
  - Symbolic capital: an accumulation of various capitals (economic, cultural, and social capital) owned by individuals that make them "perceived and recognized as legitimate" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 4, as cited in Darvin & Norton, 2015).
- Identity: multiple sites of struggle, and change over time and spaces. Identity is seen as unstable because it is gradually haunted by the contradictions among the natural positions and expectations, the prevalent ideologies and other optional futures, one's feeling of being confined, and unlimited opportunities to have imagined identities to retransform their new situations as what they imagine to be.



### **3. METHODS**

This study adopted a qualitative case study as its research method. This approach enables researchers to gain descriptive data and examine individuals' beliefs in a natural context (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Therefore, the qualitative research approach is relevant to serve the purpose of this study in exploring PSTs' understanding of the English teaching profession as well as their identity construction.

Eleven pre-service English teachers majoring in an English Teacher Education (ETE) Program of a private university in Central Java, Indonesia, voluntarily participated in this study. They were promised anonymity through the use of codes in the data presentation of this research report (i.e., T1 for teacher 1, T2 for teacher 2, and so on). Recruitment of the PSTs followed the purposeful sampling method. This type of sampling technique allows the researchers to prioritize experiences and knowledge on the research interest (Creswell, 2014). They were selected on the basis that 1) they were finishing their education in ETE program in the near future, and 2) they were taking or had undertaken a microteaching class and teaching practicum in the assigned schools. The PSTs were approximately 21 to 25 years old and have been studying English for an average of 13 years, mostly as a subject lesson at schools.

Data was collected by using an open-ended questionnaire and in-depth semi-structured interviews. For ease of communication and clarity in meaning, the open-ended questionnaire was presented in Bahasa Indonesia. The interview sessions were conducted in the language(s) that the PSTs feel comfortable using (either in Indonesian or a combination of English and Indonesian). Each interview lasted for 40-50 minutes, and it was audio-recorded, transcribed, and later translated into English for data presentation (as shown in the excerpts). This study applied a thematic analysis approach to analyze both qualitative data from the open-ended questionnaire and in-depth interviews and follow three main stages of Grounded Theories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In the first stage (open coding), all data from the interview transcripts were coded, and the researchers looked for the pattern of topic or theme among the coded data. In the second stage (axial coding), the researchers compared all coded data in step one and looked for recurring ideas, then grouped them into new-sub-themes. In the last stage (selective coding), the researchers classified the coded data from step two into the conceptual framework. This study used Darwin and Norton's (2015) investment model to answer the first research question. Meanwhile, to address the second research question Norton's (2001) framework of situated learning, COP, and identity was used.

### **4. FINDINGS**

In this section, the findings are delivered into two main sections based on the research questions. The first section reveals the PSTs' influential aspects of their investment in the teaching profession. Meanwhile, in the second section, it is continued with PSTs' understanding of teachers' roles and their professional identity construction.

#### 4.1 The PSTs' Investment in the Teaching Profession

The PSTs' investments in teaching are mostly led by their sense of ideologies that English is an international language, and the acquisition of this language is necessary to later gain more capital in the near future. Table 1 provides the descriptions of the coding system in the process of analyzing the findings, and the sections that follow provide the details of the findings and discussion.

**Table 1.** PSTs' investment in teaching (based on [Darvin & Norton, 2015](#)).

Influential aspects	Notes
Sense of ideologies	English as an International Language, English as the language of wider communication
Capital acquisition	Cultural capital (e.g. knowledge of teaching techniques, students' backgrounds and characteristics, material development, and classroom management)
	Social capital (e.g. peer-relations (collegiality), teacher mentee and mentor relations, and teaching networks)
	Linguistic capital (e.g. English linguistics knowledge)
	Economic capital (e.g. financial support and future financial gain)
	Symbolic capital (e.g. classroom and institutional recognition)
Constructing various identities	Subjective experiences and understanding of teachers' roles and professional identity

##### 4.1.1 PSTs' sense of ideology

When asked about their reasons for entering the English Teacher Education (ETE) Program, the PSTs' open-ended questionnaire responses were generally related to the way they viewed English and its role in today's reality. They underlined the role of English in this globalization era. T1 and T2, for example, shared their sense of ideology that led them to the interest in acquiring English. They viewed English as an international language, and they believed that English was important for the betterment of their future career.

- (1) I'm interested in English because it is an international language that has been used in daily lives today. It started from my hobby of watching Hollywood movies and listening to Western songs which I became interested in learning English even more. And, English is really needed today in all occupations, and acquiring English competencies is a skill that everyone needs to poses in this modern time. (T1)
- (2) I joined the English education program because I was interested in English and I wanted to be able to teach...the one who inspired me [to learn English] is my sister. She said that if we could speak English fluently, it will be easy to communicate with others. And English is an international language, so it is important if we work abroad or speak to foreigners. (T2)

In (1) and (2), T1 and T2 highlighted the conception that puts English as the language of international communication. They believed that English could enhance individuals' social values and promote communication across the world in many professional fields. The possession of such ideas and beliefs emerge from their daily observation, common discourse they heard, and aspiration from their immediate surroundings. This desire to acquire English has also motivated some of the PSTs to teach the language that led them to enter the ETE Program and learn how to teach English.

Although most PSTs hold similar beliefs to T1 and T2, a few numbers of PSTs (namely T3 and T4) were more interested in only upgrading their English language competencies in the ETE Program. The program has been famous for its consistent use of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) that attracted PSTs like T3 and T4, particularly to gain first-hand experience of using English.

- (3) Since I was young, I have liked English. I have loved English, even though I could only speak little English. To me, being able to use English is an advantage that not all people could do it. Actually, I did not really like the English Teacher Education program, but I assumed that it would be easier for teacher education graduates to find a job after graduating, so I chose it. Actually, I do not know [what my future professional career would be] yet, but it would probably be in teaching. (T3)

As shown in (3), T3's participation in the ETE program was the continuity of her interest in English, although she actually was not interested to join the program for the idea of being a language teacher. She admitted that she had no immediate clue of what future career she might enter and, therefore, did not exclude herself from the opportunity of a teaching career. T3's belief in the value of English as the language of international communication could later lead her to invest her time and efforts in acquiring English for a better future career. In other words, she treated this process as a necessary step to gaining capital acquisition.

#### *4.1.2. Capital acquisition*

The PSTs' responses indicated that their investment in English resulted in capital acquisition to equip them to enter the teaching community of practice (COP). These capitals include cultural, social, linguistic, economic, and symbolic capital.

##### *a) Cultural capital*

Cultural capital in this study was manifested in a form of pedagogical and teaching practice knowledge. The PSTs described in the open-ended questionnaire that their education's experience in the ETE program equipped them with the knowledge of teaching techniques, students' background and characteristics, material development, and classroom management. The following excerpts from T5 and T6 represented how obtaining knowledge on classroom practice has equipped them in their teaching practice during the practicum program.

- (4) I think the most noticeable characteristic of children is they have limited attention span. If you [as a teacher] lose their excitement even for one second, you will lose the entire lesson and that is where teachers do not perform well in their entire performances during the teaching practicum. (T5)
- (5) In the TEYL course, for example, [I learned] from the materials discussed in the course, like teaching techniques and approaches are many. Then [the materials] about students' characteristics from certain ages are helpful. At least, those could be a guideline to what I should do and should not do [in the teaching practices] (T6)

In (4), T5 explained in the interview session how he gained an insight into the main characteristics of young learners during his teaching practicum. He realized that young learners owned a limited attention span, thus, maintaining their excitement

might lead to a successful teaching and learning process. It was through this in-practice experience that he became more observant and analytical in teaching young learners. Similarly, in (5), T6 described how the teaching preparation course in ETE provided her with knowledge of the teaching practice itself and helped her to be able to function as a teacher. The pedagogical and practical knowledge such as teaching techniques and approaches as well as young learners' characteristics were treated as guidance to T6 in performing her role as a teacher. She admitted that the courses in ETE have assisted her to conduct a better teaching and learning process. This is in line with [Zein \(2014\)](#) who highlights teacher education programs as essential to promote PSTs' capabilities, which is by providing practical teaching knowledge, especially to teach primary students as what T5 and T6 experienced.

In the interview session, the PSTs also mentioned other forms of cultural capital namely classroom management skills, a pedagogical decision-making process in doing their role as teachers, and the scope of teachers' work. T7 and T8, for example, discussed their teaching practicum experience that helped them to establish knowledge on teaching work and live as follows:

- (6) I could build my confidence. I also learned how to teach accordingly, manage time, and manage students in class and the materials I delivered. Then from this experience, I become more confident and enjoyed teaching, because I could give a positive impact on my students. I could share the knowledge and educate them. (T7)
- (7) So, although at that time I wouldn't see myself as a real teacher, yet, I learned things like grading, correcting, and joining the teachers' meeting to decide on the lesson – so we sometimes were invited to join the meeting. They [the mentor teachers] asked us, “so what kind of learning activities would work for your students?” And, we were also taught how to discipline students. So, we became more attentive to it. . .to me, it's not just about teaching. . . it's also about how to manage classrooms and practicing to be a teacher. (T8)

In (6), T7 depicted how learning and acquiring the skills of classroom management were manifested into confidence, particularly in projecting his teaching identity. In (7), T8, who at the time still viewed himself as an intern and not yet a full-time teacher, learned to understand lesson design and teachers' decision-making behind his teaching practices in the classroom. He became more aware of the inter-related aspects (i.e., selecting appropriate teaching methods and materials according to the students' characteristics) of the teacher's knowledge and practice in managing a classroom and delivering a lesson. Accordingly, [Velasco \(2019\)](#) stated that learning through teaching practicum enhances the PSTs' emotional and cognitive skills.

#### *b) Social capital*

The social capital of these PSTs was gained through social interactions. These included interactions with their mentor teachers and peers during teaching practicum as well as with their lecturers during their study at the ETE program. Excerpts (8) and (9) represent the role of teacher mentors and the contribution of peers in the real teaching environment (i.e., at school).

- (8) There was this mentor teacher who informed us about the criteria [for evaluation], the materials that should be taught, and the activities. My peers also contributed [to my teaching], such as if I wanted to deliver the materials, they suggested the appropriate activities. Then if the students were

not interested, they help me with how to overcome that situation. It was like sharing with peers. (T9)

In (8), T9 commented that the assistance of more experienced teachers in the teaching community was vital, especially on how to deal with students and material selections. Furthermore, she added that the relationship with peer teachers also generated social resources such as teaching materials and problem-solving skills. Specifically, she could share and exchange information related to teaching performance. This peer relationship created a sense of collegiality among the PSTs during their teaching practicum.

In addition, another PST obtained social benefits provided by their lecturers, as expert members of the teaching community, prior to their teaching practicum. In (9), T8 outlined that his lecturers were supportive and motivational in his learning process that accommodate his participation in the learning activities in class.

- (9) My lecturer trained me to learn more, I gain more knowledge, practice more, and be diligent in learning. The same principle applies to teaching, I need to be more confident. From the activities provided in courses in the faculty, I think those were interesting and less monotonous, so I could enjoy and participate in the activities designed in each course. (T8)

T8 felt that his lecturer provided more learning resources and created a friendly and safe learning environment that motivated him to participate. He also elaborated that the fun and interesting activities conducted in the class created social engagement (of teacher-student and student-student) during in-class learning activities. From this learning experience, T8 was able to gain an understanding of the importance of establishing positive vibrancy and rapport (i.e. social relation resources) with the students, specifically to increase the students' interest in learning. This is in line with [Liou et al. \(2017\)](#) who claimed that social capital in the form of relational resources that are used and distributed among individuals can be effectively optimized for purposive action, in this context, teaching performance.

### c) *Linguistic capital*

All PSTs agreed that linguistic capital was the most prioritized investment in their ETE learning. English skills and knowledge were considered to be the foundation of their education; hence, the desire to master it as the content knowledge was very high, as reflected in T10's and T11's accounts.

- (10) From the learning process, so far, I get many advantages. For example, my English skills are improving. I understand grammar and other learning materials better, how to write better, how to teach [English] properly, how to speak and pronounce better, teaching theories, or other related matters of English. For teaching, if there is a student who does not understand [English], it's unavoidable to use Indonesian. But, it would be better if we can use English because we are teaching English. If it is to improve the students' [skills], I need to use English. (T10)

- (11) I can access more information in English than in Indonesian. There are articles or writings that I rarely found in Indonesian, such as global news that are not published in Indonesian but are published in English. To me, if it is only learning English reading skills and answering comprehension questions, it does no good for me. I mean I used to focus on [understanding] what is written but I couldn't speak, I couldn't communicate. I only knew communication of the written text. But, then, whenever I meet people, it takes me a long time to figure out what I have to say. So, the focus [in my teaching] should be on speaking and perhaps also writing. (T11)

In (10), T10 represented how English linguistic enhancement was necessary for her aspiration to be an English teacher. She emphasized the advantages of improving English skills as a language teacher candidate. For her, these basic language skills and knowledge can later support her teaching performance. Her opinion also depicted her belief in language acquisition through high exposure to English that she was planning to provide for her students to make them more accustomed to the English language.

In (11), T11 also believed that English skills and knowledge were beneficial capitals to invest in. He realized that by acquiring English, he could gain access to new knowledge, which further expanded his perspective and knowledge of the world. In the next set of ideas, T11 also extended his intention of mastering the skill of speaking and communication, which was to be able to participate in communicative events instead of just being a passive user of English. Driven by the belief of focusing on productive skills (i.e. speaking and writing), T11 applied his belief to practice during his teaching practicum at school. T10's and T11's accounts displayed how investment in linguistic capitals contributes to their early projection of teacher identity. Their language learning experiences and knowledge determined their attitudes and confidence in teaching. Thus, the linguistic capital they acquire served as an affordance to their professional identity (Wessells et al., 2017).

#### d) *Economic capital*

All PSTs' accounts led to the view that economic capital, which is a form of financial support, was an essential expense to equip their learning and to gain more investments. Considering their status as students in an ETE program, they viewed that this financial expense provided them access to education that would enhance their cultural, social, linguistic, symbolic, and economic capitals. This view was openly expressed by T11 and T4 below.

- (12) In my opinion, gaining knowledge from experts provides opportunities for me to effectively improve. If I want to learn, I need to spend money on their services. (T11)
- (13) It is one of my investments. I might spend money to learn, but I would get knowledge. And, in the future, I could put this into practice to get more knowledge and a good job that could generate more money than I have spent...actually, entering English Teacher Education Program was only a stepping-stone since I failed to register for the military. Why did I choose ETE? Because I wanted to improve my English and I realized that the skill would be important in the future. Since I failed to register for the military, I continued my study here and have decided to become a teacher. (T4)

In (12), T11 revealed that his learning was supported by experts' contributions, such as lecturers, mentors, and teachers. He believed that their assistance provided an effective improvement for his cultural capital (in this case, knowledge), and their services required financial rewards in return. T11 also pointed out the reciprocity nature of service and reward principle in this type of investment (i.e. economic capital).

Similarly, T4, in (13), stated that the money she spent to get English expertise was not wasted. She believed that her current investment could generate financial benefits in the future. Although becoming a teacher was not T4's first choice, she was ascertained that joining the ETE program opened more possible career opportunities for her. While studying in the ETE program, she realized that the teaching profession could also produce economic capital after graduating from the program. Just as Darwin and Norton (2015) conveyed that economic capital privileges wealth, property, and

income; the PSTs acknowledge the necessity of allocating financial expenses in education to gain more capital for their future career.

*e) Symbolic capital*

In this study, the symbolic capital was seen in the form of recognition and prestige received by the PSTs in the teacher education program and teaching community in general. This case is best represented in excerpt (14), in which T4 depicted how she obtained recognition during her study in the ETE program and teaching practicum at the assigned school. When asked about the challenges in the teaching practicum, T4 explained the good treatments she received from her mentor teacher and students as follows.

- (14) I did not have significant problems during the teaching practicum because I met a mentor teacher and students who are kind and pleasant. The mentor teacher gave me clear guidance, and she is patient, supportive, and motivating. Thus, I learn a lot from her. The students were also friendly and cooperative. During the learning process, they were willing to follow my instructions. What made me happy was that they liked my teaching materials and understood what I had taught. (T4)

From her narrative account, T4 acknowledged that her mentor teacher assisted her in entering the teaching environment as a new member (a mentee teacher) of the teaching community. In addition, when she taught English in the classroom, she received a very good response from her students. As a result, she felt respected and acknowledged by the students as the 'teacher' of the class. The students' cooperative response to her instruction was seen as a form of recognition of T4's teaching skills and pedagogical knowledge that she performed well in her teaching. In excerpt (15), T4 shared how her current status as a student at the ETE program was a fortunate recognition.

- (15) Once, I accompanied my brother to Beta [a pseudonym]– it was a TOEFL or IELTS preparation course institution, and his boss asked me what I studied and I told him I studied in the ETE program. Apparently, it needed some English tutors and that was when I started to realize that, yeah, I could build a relationship with such kind of institution...so, I joined the language course institution and worked there for several months but when I had to write up my thesis, it was harder for me so I resigned. And up till now, my brother's boss kept on contacting me and asking when I would graduate. He keeps on wanting to recruit me to work there. (T4)

Since the ETE program that T4 joined has a high and respected reputation that was recognized by schools and language course institutions in the area, T4 received a symbolic professional attribute as a teacher candidate who was considered to be qualified to teach at 'Beta' (a pseudonym) language course institution. Therefore, studying at the ETE program to acquire pedagogical and content knowledge as well as other teaching skills has granted T4 a form of prestige and recognition as a member of the ETE program. Indeed, this form of recognition, as [Darvin and Norton \(2015\)](#) said, emerges from the possession of other capitals, namely cultural (i.e., teaching skills and pedagogical knowledge) and linguistic (i.e., English content knowledge) capitals.

## 4.2 The PSTs' Professional Identity (Re)Constructions

The interview accounts of the PSTs displayed a dynamic view of professional identity. Their past, present, and future understanding of being a teacher showed a variety of subjective engagement, emotionality, practice, and transformation. In the past, most of the PSTs held the belief that being a teacher was committing to educating students for a better future and that teaching was a noble profession. This may somehow sound like a cliché kind of response, but it is a very common discourse that they came across daily in their immediate surroundings (i.e., in the family, neighborhood, and/or at schools). This view is best expressed by T3.

- (16) Being a teacher is like what most people said 'a noble profession', educating students to succeed, and...the work is rather convenient too, we only teach from the morning until the afternoon, not like from morning till the evening...and one best thing [about teaching job] is when you have a family, you'll have more quality time with them because you can take a break during the semester break too. Well, that's what a lot of people said to me (T3).

In (16), T3 echoed the past discourse of viewing a teacher's profession as a noble and heroic profession that can be traced back to the teaching profession during the nationalism movement in the 1920s in Indonesia. When the first national education institution, Taman Siswa, was established with the first national curriculum, teachers were underpaid and most often provided education for free. From this era to the early 1950s, most teachers were educating Indonesian young generations to be critical of their colonized situation at the time as well as to spread a sense of nationalism to thrive for independence and better development of Indonesia (Manara, 2014). It was not surprising that T3 as well as other PSTs still held this belief considering that this discourse is still maintained throughout their primary and secondary education through the teaching of nationalism in some subject lessons.

Interestingly, the second opinion that T3 brought up is related to the way teaching job was perceived as having working time flexibility. T3 came from a long line of teachers in the family. Her father, mother, and sibling were all school teachers. They had very significant influences on the way T3 constructed the profession of a teacher. In her family, the teaching profession was considered to be more desirable for those (usually women) who already had a family since it offered a balance of quality time between work and family. T3, who previously wanted to pursue a career as a civil servant, was requested to choose a teaching profession by her family members and began to see the possibility of her being a teacher. Hence, her perspective of a teacher was heavily influenced by her family's construction of teacher identity.

Another common belief that the PSTs hold was a teacher is the authoritative figure that needs to be obeyed by the students. Yet, this conception of a teacher was being contested by most of the PSTs which led them to adopt a contrasting figure of a teacher as their professional identity aspiration, as projected by T11 in the following three excerpts.

- (17) From elementary to high school levels, I barely understand English lessons...the teacher only gave us exercises to do. So, I thought, "Is that all that teachers do?" It was like only giving exercises, never really taught us anything seriously. He did not create a fun classroom situation to facilitate the students learning. That was then. (T11)



- (18) But as I entered the ETE program, it's a very good program. I learned what a teacher is, and what an English teacher needs to do. I learned a lot...that a teacher is not just giving out exercises to the students. It's also about creating a learning atmosphere. Finally, I have a clear purpose when teaching...so, the focus should be on the students, and how a teacher can make the students understand and learn something. (T11)
- (19) ...I want to be able to create a comfortable learning atmosphere. I don't want to be authoritative in the class, like my past teachers – just because he was the only one who knew English so the class had to be centered on him. I want to create a class in which students can learn and have fun. I want to be a friend to them. So, not only giving them exercises but also explanations. I want to have an interactive class. (T11)

In excerpt (17), T11 questioned his past teacher's traditional teaching practice in which the lesson was focused on accomplishing language exercises. This type of teaching style usually followed the syllabus of a required textbook. T11 contemplated from a student's perspective that learning could never happen if the teaching and learning atmosphere was not enjoyable for the students. His contemplation led him to realize the emotional aspect of teaching and learning in the classroom. In (18), T11's pondering on teacher's classroom practice beyond completing language exercises was answered when entering and observing other forms of classroom practices in the ETE program. During his study at the ETE program, he acquired the pedagogical knowledge that equipped him for his teaching practicum experience, guided him to what kind of a teacher he aspires to be, and informed him about the ways to achieve this teacher identity aspiration as shown in (19). It can be seen from T11's narrative accounts that his investment in acquiring English at the ETE program was also influential in his reconstruction of professional identity – from an authoritative figure to a motivational figure for the students.

When asked about how they viewed themselves as a teacher, all PSTs expressed how the teaching practicum has provided a depth understanding of the way they viewed the teaching profession. During the teaching practicum, the PSTs were constantly having dialogues with their 'student' self and 'teacher' self. The PSTs used their past learning experiences as a mirror to remind them of what being a student likes (the student-self) and to inform them on what to do to attract students' attention (the teacher-self). This dialoguing process is seen from T9's narrative accounts.

- (20) When I was in senior high school, it seemed that learning English was so difficult like there were a lot of English words that were unfamiliar to me and my friends. For example, when I was in the first grade, we were asked to listen to and complete an English song lyric and most of my friends felt difficult to finish it. So, in my mind, teaching difficulties are related to helping the students to understand better, speak English better, to write in English better. So, my biggest fear is the students couldn't understand what I'm teaching. (T9)
- (21) First from the lesson plan. I prepared the lesson plan from the beginning to the end of the lesson. And the strategies to cope with such situations as when students got bored and were not paying attention...I prepared many activities using teaching aids when teaching so that the students would be more interested in learning instead of talking with their friends in class. (T9)

In (20), T9 illustrated how her experience as a high school student learning a foreign language had a profound impact on her anxiety in learning English. This unpleasant learning experience later developed to be her teaching anxiety during the teaching practicum. T9 became very empathetic to her students and viewed that improving her students' linguistic knowledge was her obligation as a teacher. In (21),

T9 was fully aware of the importance of preventing students from a demotivating learning atmosphere and creating a variety of learning tasks. She showed this commitment by being a well-prepared and well-planned teacher to keep the students' interest to learn in class. T9, in this case, used her resources as a student to inform her present teacher identity in performing her teaching practice during the teaching practicum.

The PSTs' narrative accounts depicted that their acquisition of capital from the ETE program and teaching practicum influenced the construction of the teacher identity they aspire to be. Most of the PSTs imagined they aspired to be a teacher who was highly aware of the pedagogical and psychological aspects as well as power issues in learning as represented in excerpts (22), (23), and (24).

(22) ...Maybe becoming a pleasant teacher so that students can understand what I teach. So, there would be no strict instructions all the time. Yeah, being a pleasant teacher, so the students would be relaxed too when studying, feeling comfortable asking something to the teacher. (T1)

(23) A teacher that could make the students understand the lesson, no matter how difficult the lesson is. At least, I should be patient in finding a way to help them comprehend the materials. It's because when I was in school...from kindergarten to junior high school I was in private schools. Then my senior high school was a public school. I really felt the differences. In public school, the teacher would go finishing the materials without making sure whether the students understood the lesson. Yea, it was different with [teachers] in private schools. The teachers are really caring for the students. (T6)

(24) I cannot really define what a teacher is, but I want to get people accustomed to reading and also listening to many things. I want to increase our ability to input as well because I think when it comes to English teachers, we are almost always focusing on making people able to speak, but sometimes we forget that input is important, like being able to read more and listen more to other ideas and so on. So, when it comes to being an English teacher, maybe like the one that encourages input...every individual has their own potential and in some ways that they are quite limited by how many texts and also the knowledge that they can access...if we only understand L1 then what we can read and what we can obtain are those that are only written and also delivered in our L1 ...English, it would eventually enable us to see from many other perspectives since most of the texts and videos are in English...it might be a good aspiration for me to teach to enable other people, especially in countries with low literacy, that might include Indonesia...to read more and also be excited to know beyond their personal beliefs or what is addressed towards them in their family and also local communities. (T5)

T1, in (22), was being cognizant of the unequal power between the teacher and students in the classroom, and how debilitating it can be when the teacher positioned him/herself as the authoritative figure in practice. He emphasized the necessity of minimizing the social power between teachers and students so that students would not feel under pressure when learning in class. T1, therefore, would like to project a 'pleasant' teacher figure to attend to the students' psychological needs and create a safe learning zone for his students in class.

In (23), T6 depicted her belief that a teacher needed to be resourceful (pedagogically and psychologically) in order to conduct a successful learning process in class. She echoed a similar concern on attending to the students' psychological needs in learning. Drawing from her past schooling experiences, she aspired to become a 'caring' teacher to her students.

Unlike T1 and T6, in (24), T5 has not come up with a fixed idea of teacher identity. Yet, he was driven by his vision of the importance of acquiring English as a

language of wider communication to enable Indonesians to have access to more sources of information. He envisioned being a teacher that enabled students to be literate in English so that they could obtain more knowledge and perspectives about the world. T5 projected an aspiration of being a teacher as an agent of change.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

The findings for the first research question indicate that influential factors affecting PST's investment in teaching include language ideology that influences their view on the status of English, their past learning experiences as school students, their current learning in the ETE program as PSTs, and the continuous inner dialogue with their two-selves (i.e., the student-self and the teacher-self) during the teaching practicum at school. The language ideology that influenced their view of English as having significant status in the world led PSTs to invest in English. These statuses of English, in the PSTs' opinion, are English as an international language (McKay, 2002, 2018), a global language (Crystal, 2003), the language of wider communication (Graddol, 1997), the language of access to education, and the language of opportunities. These views have been the strongest influential aspects that drove PSTs to acquire English linguistics and pedagogical knowledge in the ETE program. English linguistics and pedagogical knowledge were seen as valuable resources that equipped the PSTs to participate in the periphery circle of teaching COP during their practicum at schools.

Another aspect that influenced the way they viewed the teaching profession was their past learning experiences in primary and secondary schools as well as their current learning experience in the ETE program. The PSTs entered the ETE program with a beginning mindset that teaching was simply lecturing and assessing students' work as they witnessed during their primary and secondary schooling years. Yet, with the exposure to various teaching models they experienced during their study in the ETE program, they were able to expand their teaching skills, pedagogical knowledge, and roles and responsibilities as teachers that prepared them for their teaching practicum at schools. Hence, the PSTs are socialized to varieties of resources and practices to understand professional roles and responsibilities (Kearney, 2015). From the perspective of situated learning, PSTs learn to acquire these various resources through formal PST education, learning observations, and contemplation of their past and present learning experiences in the ETE program. As English teacher candidates, PSTs learning in the ETE program mostly focused on two areas: English acquisition and teaching knowledge as linguistic and cultural capitals. However, economic capital was considered a necessary expense to gain the two capitals. As they obtained these capitals, the PSTs developed an understanding of teaching work and life and the imagined professional identity in entering a real teaching context (i.e., assigned school) during their teaching practicum.

During their teaching practicum, the PSTs' learning process extended to a more complex and expansive process through participation in a real school-based teaching context and its practices. The PSTs acquired richer and more meaningful resources as their learning capitals (namely social and symbolic capitals). The expansion of resources they obtained at school enables them to understand the scope of teaching work and live and carry out their tasks and duties, or what Wenger (2000) termed

‘cultural practice’. In this context, PTSs also learn what is expected of them as teachers at school while interacting with their teacher mentors. Yet, it is their interaction with students while teaching in class that brings an immense understanding of being a teacher to the PTSs and the construction of emerging professional identity. This leads to the result of the second research question.

The findings for the second research question reveal that PSTs’ construction of professional identity results from their continuous dialogic interaction and contemplation on their practice in class as well as their inner dialogue with their current two selves (i.e., the student-self and the teacher-self) during the teaching practicum at school. While teaching in class, PTSs are constantly in dialogue with their two selves (i.e., the student-self and teacher-self) due to the dual positions (a student in the ETE program and a teacher mentee at school) they are situated in during the teaching practicum. These dual positions give them the awareness of their students’ psychological aspects while learning in class and, at the same time, this awareness informs the PTSs of what they need to do as teachers who are teaching their students. The constant dialogue leads them to project a certain professional identity. This situated learning at school through the socialization and participation process informs and transforms the PSTs’ understanding of their past, present, and future construction of professional identity (Wenger, 1998, 2000). Most PSTs projected a teacher identity that prioritized their students’ emotional state to increase their interests in learning – ‘caring’, ‘motivational’, ‘pleasant’, and ‘empathetic’ teachers. They refused to register to the restrictive traditional authoritative teacher identity (informed by their past learning experience as school students) that only gave commands for the students to obey. The ability to reflect on their past and current learning experiences lead the PSTs to professional learning by contesting, negotiating, positioning, and navigating (Yazan, 2017) themselves among the existing professional identities in their landscape of teaching contexts. Hence, this suggests a strong proposition for putting forward professional identity learning and acquisition as the heart of teacher learning in the teacher education program and teaching practicum curriculum. As Yazan (2017) suggested, teacher education that is oriented to the acquisition of professional identity has an immense contribution to the teachers’ growth and classroom practice.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In summary, this study found that PSTs’ investment in the teaching profession is influenced by language ideology shaping their perspective about English, their past and current learning experiences both as students and PSTs, and the inner dialogue between their two selves during the teaching practicum at school. These influential aspects, then, lead to the construction of the emerging professional identity of the PSTs as caring, motivational, pleasant, and empathetic teachers. It can be inferred that acquiring teaching resources during the ETE program and the teaching practicum at school has enriched PSTs’ understanding of the scope of teaching work and life enabling them to participate in the teaching COP as legitimate members.

The findings of this study are beneficial for the PST education program threefold. Firstly, the findings on the PSTs’ conception of capital and investment help to reinforce the importance of courses that upgrade the PSTs’ linguistic and communicative competence that is by providing high exposure to English. Linguistic

knowledge and skills are the most important capital and content knowledge that they use to participate as legitimate periphery members of the teaching community during their teaching practicum at the assigned schools. Secondly, information on how the PSTs learn from their lecturers' teaching practice can benefit teacher educators and curriculum designers in designing courses that also nurture PSTs' understanding of what the profession should involve and how they can develop their professional identity. This study argues that the teaching-learning process ought to put attention beyond the cognitive domains. As a model for the PSTs, teacher educators are expected to transform this knowledge and skills into something that has a social value, such as strengthening teacher identity. Thirdly, this study implied the need for new ways of evaluating PSTs' practice during their teaching practicum, specifically in evaluating the complexities of learning multiple micro-tasks of classroom teaching and of acquiring professional roles as a new member of the teaching community at the assigned school. Teaching practicum assessments need to adhere to the reflexivity and dynamicity of these PSTs' practice and how they perceived their roles in class. The classroom presents an unpredictable world that often sends the teachers to have a particular belief about their works, events, and persons. Hence, a variety of teaching practicum assessments can be helpful for the PSTs to understand their teaching tasks and to reflect on their own professional learning and development during the teaching practicum. The teaching and assessment of critically reflective teaching will offer a richer understanding of how PSTs participate in their learning in the immediate teaching context.

This current study, however, is still subject to several limitations. Firstly, since the data collection was conducted during the COVID-pandemic time, direct classroom observation was not possible. Hence, the data in this study relied heavily on the PSTs' narrative accounts. The actual learning process of their training in the ETE program and during their teaching practicum was not able to be documented. Therefore, future studies can include classroom observations on how PSTs learn in the ETE program and during the teaching practicum at school. Future studies could also investigate the mismatch between knowledge provided by teacher education programs and knowledge that they obtained in the field during the teaching practicum, and the strategies PSTs adopt to tackle the unexpected challenges during their teaching practice. Secondly, this study was unable to capture the reflective parts of the PSTs that can help to understand the journey of their professional identity development. Therefore, future research can also look into this process of development. Remembering that identity is changing over time and spaces (Norton, 2001), this approach's implementation enables the researchers to have multiple data collection instruments, such as reflective journals, interviews, observation, or critical reflection interviews. In this way, more information on the learning of professional identity can be intensely studied and understood to enrich the literature on PSTs' identity construction. Furthermore, research that focuses on integrating teaching methods and approaches that accommodate the learning of professional identity is certainly needed in developing and fostering PSTs' professional knowledge, investment, and identity in the teaching COP.

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## Investigating Indonesian EFL Pre-service Teachers' Conceptions of Culture and Intercultural Competence

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### Abstract

*Globalization inevitably increases communication among people from different languages and cultural backgrounds. This phenomenon dramatically demands changes in the traditional aims of language teaching which rely on the norms and values of native-speaking countries. A large body of literature encourages language teaching to be concerned more with intercultural competence (hereinafter IC), which is allegedly effective to help students achieve successful intercultural communication. Nonetheless, in the Indonesian context, there is still an iota of evidence regarding pre-service teachers' understandings of the terms culture and IC. Thus, this study attempts to gain insights into Indonesian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pre-service teachers' understandings of culture and IC. It is considered as a single case study employing questionnaires and interviews. In total, 26 EFL pre-service teachers participated in this study by answering a questionnaire, with mainly close-ended and some open-ended questions. From these participants, seven pre-service teachers were interviewed. The results suggested the discrepancy in the participants' understandings of culture and IC. This condition may hinder the meaningful goals of cultural teaching and the effective pedagogical practices in their future EFL classrooms. Drawing on the results, the present study provides some recommendations for the pre-service teachers*

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and teacher education in an attempt to develop cultural teaching in English Language Teaching (ELT).

**Keywords:** Culture, English language teaching, intercultural communication, intercultural competence, EFL pre-service teachers.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The 21<sup>st</sup> century brings human interactions into unprecedented realms. This era is marked by advanced technologies which create far swifter communication among people around the globe. As a consequence, English is no longer considered the language of English-speaking countries, but the language of worldwide society. English earns its status as a *lingua franca* (Ishikawa, 2016; Jenkins, 2012) to connect people from various cultural backgrounds. Such a phenomenon dramatically affects the missions of English language teaching (ELT), as Baker (2012a) claims that ELT is supposed to “go beyond the predominant focus on grammar, vocabulary, and phonology based on a single native speaker variety of English” (p. 33). A large body of literature recommends English language teaching to acknowledge the importance of helping learners acquire intercultural competence (IC) which is generally defined as an ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in different cultural contexts (Baker, 2012a, 2012b; Byram, 1997; Byram et al., 2002; Deardorff, 2006; Kramsch, 2013; Rajprasit, 2020).

Byram (1997) introduces the framework of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in an attempt to refine Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Piatkowska, 2015). In his framework, Byram (1997) proposes the extended version of CLT in which he puts communicative competence and intercultural competence together. Byram's ICC model pertains to knowledge, skills, attitude, and critical cultural awareness which are considered valuable in attaining successful intercultural communication. Knowledge is associated with one's knowledge of what culture and whose culture. It concerns how an individual perceives other cultural beliefs, practices, and artifacts at both individual and social levels as well as what influences the process of interaction. Attitudes, in this context, can be understood as senses of curiosity and openness toward other cultures as well as readiness to suspend judgment or disbelief to those cultures. Meanwhile, skills are divided into two streams, namely skills of interpreting and relating, as well as skills of discovering and interacting. The former represents the ability to compare the target culture with one's home culture. It allows learners to recognize and interpret the cultural perspectives of the target culture and to establish relationships between the target and their own culture. The latter allows individuals to skillfully operate those previous knowledge, attitudes, and skills in real-time intercultural interaction. Critical cultural awareness itself is defined as the competence to critically evaluate cultural perspectives, practices, and artifacts in one's own and other cultures.

We believe that English teachers should first mind the term ‘culture’ since it lies at the heart of the concept of intercultural competence. Culture is a multifaceted concept with many layers of meanings (i.e., culture as structure, function, process, product, refinement, and group membership) (see Faulkner et al., 2006, for detailed discussion). The way teachers treat ‘culture’ heavily affects their approaches to

understanding and teaching intercultural competence. To grasp the comprehensive meaning of intercultural competence, teachers should consider culture not only based on the essentialist view (i.e., culture as a static and solid creation) but also the anti-essentialist view (i.e., culture as a dynamic and fluid process) (Baker, 2012b; Elsen & St. John, 2007). Although the essentialist view assists to comprehend and appreciate the diversity of cultural realities (e.g., products, practices, and perspectives), it is allegedly still insufficient to accommodate a circumstance that English as a *lingua franca* exists. The anti-essentialist view is required since it helps to anticipate such a dynamic form of communication and establish strategies to cope with it.

As intercultural communication gathers plenty of interest and raises awareness of the importance of intercultural competence in language learning, the number of studies investigating how English teachers perceive intercultural competence shows enlargement in many contexts in the world, such as Thailand (Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak, 2017), China (Gu, 2016; Zhou, 2011), Iran (Alaei & Nosrati, 2018), New Zealand (Oranje & Smith, 2018), Turkey (Saricoban & Oz, 2014), Colombia (Olaya & Gómez Rodríguez, 2013), U. S. A. (Young & Sachdev, 2011), and some European countries (Czura, 2016; Larzén-Östermark, 2008; Sercu et al., 2005; Young & Sachdev, 2011), just to name a few. Drawing on the previous studies, English teachers are not only supposed to have sufficient intercultural competence but also able to promote such competence in their classrooms. It is quite obvious that language learning and intercultural communicative competence are intertwined. The lack of intercultural communicative competence may lead to frustration and failure in language learning as well as conflict and misunderstanding (Alaei & Nosrati, 2018; Saricoban & Oz, 2014). Although teachers mostly have positive attitudes toward IC and willingness to operationalize it in their classrooms, there is still a disconnection between IC theories and their actual pedagogical practices (Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak, 2017; Czura, 2016; Gu, 2016; Oranje & Smith, 2018; Young & Sachdev, 2011). As a result, scholars recommend more support from educational institutions (e.g., education faculty and teacher professional development) to equip pre-service and in-service teachers with both theories of IC and appropriate models of how to put IC into a practical plan, implementation, and assessment.

In the Indonesian context, there is a large body of studies focusing on the notion of an intercultural approach to English language teaching (Abduh & Rosmaladewi, 2018; Gandana & Parr, 2013; Hermawan & Lia, 2012; Idris, 2020; Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018; Munandar & Ulwiyah, 2012; Putra et al., 2020). Abduh and Rosmaladewi (2018) scrutinize intercultural values and intercultural teaching strategies from the perspectives of bilingual teachers (Mathematics, Economics, and Political Sciences). Kusumaningputri and Widodo (2018) examine the use of intercultural tasks based on digital photographs to promote English literature students' critical intercultural awareness. Idris (2020) attempts to provide evidence of secondary school English teachers' level of intercultural competence and its correlations with teaching locations. Gandana and Parr (2013) concern the notion of a teacher educator's identity at the higher education level for Cross-Cultural Understanding subject. Other researchers focus on the manifestation of the intercultural approach in English textbooks (Hermawan & Lia, 2012; Munandar & Ulwiyah, 2012; Putra et al., 2020). However, the aforementioned studies did not put forward pre-service teachers' understanding of intercultural competence. It makes the notion of pre-service English teachers' understanding of intercultural competence in the Indonesian context remains

limited or almost non-existent. Nonetheless, it is believed that any innovation in teacher education should not proceed without taking pre-service teachers' perspectives into account (Zhou, 2011).

Although studies focusing on English teachers' perspectives of intercultural competence in abroad countries are redundant, we still know little about similar studies focusing on how pre-service teachers view intercultural competence in the Indonesian context. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill the gap by addressing intercultural competence from the English pre-service teachers' perspectives. This study basically functions as a contextual study (Ritchie, 2013) which attempts to investigate phenomena as experienced by the study population in terms of their understandings and perspectives. In light of this, Ritchie's work is helpful to formulate research questions that the present study would like to answer.

- How do the pre-service teachers conceptualize the term culture?
- How do the pre-service teachers express their understandings of intercultural competence?

The results of this study may contribute to the development of English teacher education and future relatively similar studies.

## 2. METHODS

This present study employed a single case study design (Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell & Poth, 2016). The methodological approach offered by a case study is in line with the spirit of the present study. The investigation of pre-service teachers' views towards IC requires an in-depth understanding. It can give a clear and deep understanding of how the participants perceive the intercultural approach in English language teaching.

### 2.1 Participants

The participants were pre-service teachers whose major was English Education Program at one Indonesian state university. The program offers an undergraduate degree in English Language Teaching. It provides instructions and preparations for those who are interested in teaching the English language in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. Like most programs in Indonesia, the program is designed to be accomplished in eight semesters. The completion of the program is gained by semester credits (or *Satuan Kredit Semester*, abbreviated as SKS) in which students normally need to take at least 144 SKS in total. In the credit system, each course is completed in one semester that lasts for 14 weeks, excluding the mid-term test and final test. The participants of this study were pre-service teachers who have been taking and had taken the Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) course. The CCU course was set to be in the fourth semester. The CCU course or sometimes called Intercultural Communication in ELT is a compulsory course for English pre-service teachers in Indonesia. Thus, they had enough awareness of the importance of culture in language learning. The training does not only prepare them to elevate English proficiency but also be well-educated on teaching theories and methods related to the integration of culture and IC in ELT.

Twenty-six pre-service teachers were available and willing to respond to and return the questionnaire. The questionnaire participants were 17 females and 9 males, aged 18-23 years old. Out of these participants, seven pre-service teachers were then engaged in the interview sessions voluntarily. They expressed their willingness to be involved in the interview sessions. The interview included four female and three male pre-service teachers. This study used pseudonyms (i.e., P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, and P7) to identify the interviewed participants for ethical concerns.

## 2.2 Procedures

The participants' definition of culture and intercultural competence was first elicited by questionnaires, with mainly close-ended and some open-ended questions. We distributed the questionnaire invitations to the participants through WhatsApp. The questionnaire invitations gave them a brief explanation regarding the purpose of the study. It also showed the link to access the questionnaire in Google Forms. The questionnaire regarding the participants' definition of culture consisted of eight items which followed [Faulkner et al.'s \(2006\)](#) layers meaning of culture. When it comes to IC, the questionnaire was derived from current relevant studies ([Almawoda, 2011](#); [Byram, 1997](#); [Czura, 2016](#); [Sercu et al., 2005](#); [Zhou, 2011](#)) that contained nine items, including the dimensions of attitude, knowledge, skills, and critical cultural awareness. We utilized the Likert scale in which the participants were asked to respond to a series of statements by indicating whether they strongly agree (SA), agree (A), not sure (NS), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD). The questionnaire consisted of 18 closed-ended questions that attempted to unearth participants' views of culture and views of intercultural competence. The statements were formulated in Bahasa Indonesia so that it would be easier for the participants to grasp the meaning. At the end of the questionnaires, we attached an interview invitation in which the participants had total freedom to accept or reject it.

Interviews have commonly proceeded in the field of teachers' belief and cognition studies (e.g., [Macalister, 2010](#); [Oranje & Smith, 2018](#); [Young & Sachdev, 2011](#)) as they may yield more in-depth data about individuals' experiences, knowledge, opinions, beliefs, and feelings ([Sercu et al., 2005](#)). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was almost impossible to conduct face-to-face interviews. Therefore, we decided to utilize one of the WhatsApp features called voice notes to investigate pre-service teachers' understandings of intercultural competence. We sent them questions in the form of voice notes and they were asked to respond to our questions through the same feature. In one-on-one interviews, we asked questions and recorded the answers from one participant only at a time. Interviews allow participants not to be hesitant to speak, to speak articulately, and to share ideas comfortably ([Creswell, 2012](#)). The number of interview questions varied from one participant to another participant (5-8 questions) based on their sufficient information.

The questions in the interviews were developed from the research questions of the present study. The interviews were aimed at confirming and enriching data that had been earned through the questionnaires. They were done in Bahasa Indonesia and recorded. Each interview lasted from 20 to 40 minutes, varying among participants. The interviews were transcribed and returned to the participants for confirmation. As the interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, they were translated into English for the report of data analysis.

## 2.3 Data Analysis

The information on the participants' understanding of intercultural competence obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed by descriptive statistics. We reported the means, standard deviations, and percentages to make readers easily grasp the quantitative results of the participants' thoughts regarding culture and intercultural competence. When it came to the interview data, we categorized the information provided by the participants into themes through an interactive model (Miles et al., 2014). The themes were generated from the coding process of the entire interview transcripts and then compared with the results of the quantitative data analysis. To increase the accuracy of our interpretation, the analysis was double-checked and cross-checked by the two authors.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 Participants' Understanding of Culture

This section attempts to report the participants' voices in understanding 'culture' as suggested in the literature and how teachers' approach to the term 'culture' heavily affects the way they understand and teach intercultural competence. The results from the questionnaire are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** EFL pre-service teachers' definitions of culture.

Definitions of Culture	Response (%)					Means	Std. Dev.
	SD	D	NS	A	SA		
1. People's behavior (customs and traditions).	0.0	0.0	0.0	26.9	73.1	4.73	0.44
2. Systems of social interaction/ communication patterns among a group's members.	0.0	0.0	0.0	34.6	65.4	4.65	0.48
3. Concrete items, including clothing, art, architecture, food, etc.	0.0	0.0	15.4	30.8	53.8	4.38	0.74
4. Cognitive structure, including, thoughts, beliefs, and perspectives.	0.0	0.0	23.1	46.2	30.7	4.08	0.73
5. Process of differentiating one group from another.	0.0	0.0	34.6	38.5	26.9	3.92	0.78
6. Process of transmitting a way of life.	0.0	11.5	26.9	30.8	30.8	3.81	1
7. Process of the development of moral value.	0.0	11.5	38.5	30.8	19.2	3.58	0.98
8. Process of the development of intellectual value.	0.0	15.4	46.2	26.9	11.5	3.35	0.87
9. Results of political dominance.	11.5	23.1	30.8	19.2	15.4	3.04	1.2

The analysis shows that the participants had various ways to approach the definition of culture. However, the analysis also allows us to conclude that they primarily held the essentialist view of culture which tended to see culture in its solid, static, and isolated form. It is apparent from the questionnaire result (see Table 2) that some of the participants' main definitions of culture fell under the terms 'people's behaviors' (e.g., customs and traditions) ( $M=4.73$ ,  $SD=0.44$ ), 'systems of social

interaction/communication patterns among a group's members' (M=4.65, SD=0.48), and 'concrete items' (e.g., clothing, art, architecture, and food) (M=4.38, SD=0.74). At the same time, the participants seemed to struggle to see culture from its anti-essentialist point of view. Table 2 demonstrates that the participants had the least attention to definitions of culture within the anti-essentialism or critical paradigm indicated by their preferences for 'process of the development of moral' (M=3.58, SD=0.98) and 'intellectual values' (M=3.35, SD=0.87) and 'results of political dominance' (M=3.04, SD=1.2).

Participants' voices in the interviews also reflect what they had conveyed in the questionnaire. They frequently categorized culture into three major themes. First, they perceived culture as 'a structural element of life'. Second, they acknowledged that culture is 'a process of transmitting and sharing ways of life'. Third, culture was often understood as 'a distinctive feature of a country or a region'.

### 3.1.1 *Culture as a structural element of life*

From the analysis of the participants' voices during the interviews, it is clear that most of them associated culture with a structural element of life. At this point, the participants looked at culture in terms of cultural systems held by a certain group of people. First, they frequently referred to culture as a structure of behaviors of people consisting of customs and traditions. Examples of the evidence can be seen in the voices of P1 and P2.

- (1) To me, culture is a tradition. It is a kind of habit which is carried out by a group of people in social settings. (P1)
- (2) Culture is something inherent in people, depending on where they live. It is like customs or values held by those people. That is what I know about culture in a nutshell. (P2)

P1 and P2 understood culture as an observable thing that is utilized by a particular group of people. They believed that people's customs and traditions are at the heart of the concept of culture. For a more practical example, let's have a look at P3's response. He said, "...an example of traditions is a ritual that is meant to express gratitude before harvesting periods. It is called *Wiwitan*". To give the context, *Wiwitan* is a traditional ceremony that is usually performed by Javanese farmers before they harvest their crops, especially rice. In the ceremony, they commonly provide a variety of offerings, such as grilled chickens, traditional snacks, and rice cones. The offerings are meant to express their gratitude to the deities. Another participant, P3, acknowledged culture as the structure of behaviors in terms of social interaction patterns among a group's members. He said, "...tradition is not the only example of culture. Another example is politeness". P3 viewed culture as a social phenomenon. He emphasized politeness as one of the key elements of culture. He implicitly said that culture highly deals with how people should behave in a certain context to maintain an interpersonal relationship with others. It is evident that rather than seeing culture as physical products (e.g., painting, architecture, and literature), the participants saw culture as social behaviors including norms, values, traditions, and customs.

### 3.1.2 *Culture as products of meaningful activities*

Another sub-theme of culture that can be drawn from the participants' voices is 'culture as products of meaningful activities'. In light of this, participants perceived culture as concrete items produced by societies, such as clothing and traditional dances. The evidence can be seen from the responses delivered by P4 and P3.

- (3) Culture is something that is created in the past such as a piece of clothing and the way people wear it. (P4)
- (4) Traditional dances can also be other examples of culture. (P3)

P4 viewed that culture has something to do with clothes. Meanwhile, P3 argued that traditional dances can be included as one of the elements of culture. The information provided by both participants shows that culture meant to them as concrete items or materials which are produced by a certain group of people. These responses can be said as traditional responses to the meaning of culture. Unlike the previous voices which view culture as behavioral processes within societies, these views perceived culture as extrinsic products or artifacts created by people.

The other two participants, P5 and P6, frequently considered culture in terms of 'people's perspectives'. These perspectives or cognitive structures are an unconscious process in certain cultural groups, including systems of values, attitudes, and beliefs. Here are the voices echoed by P5 and P6 in the interview sessions.

- (5) In my opinion, culture is values or norms which are formed in a community or region. It can be decisive for them to think and behave. (P6)
- (6) In my opinion, culture is a value which develops in a society or a group of people. (P5)

These excerpts of the data suggest that both P5 and P6 perceived culture as a system of values or beliefs that take place inside people's minds. P6 treated culture as philosophical perspectives which underlie the way those people act and behave. These responses are interesting because instead of describing culture as visible aspects (e.g., behaviors and traditions) like the previous responses, P6 and P5 illustrated culture as the inner or mental processes of people in a shared-culture condition.

### 3.1.3 *Culture as a process of transmitting and sharing ways of life*

The previous paragraphs have shown that the participants regularly associated culture with structural elements of humans' life, such as products, values, norms, behaviors, and perspectives. This paragraph gives an elaboration showing that there are three participants (P5, P4, and P3) who believed that culture fell under the notion of a process of transmitting and sharing ways of life from one generation to the next generation.

- (7) Culture is something which is created by forefathers and passes down from one generation to the next. (P3)



- (8) Culture is something which is created in the past such as a piece of clothing and the way people wear it. Then, it is passed down to and followed by many people. In the end, it is called culture or something normal because many people commonly do it. (P4)

Based on the participants' voices, the process of transmission from one generation to the next generation is one of the key themes of culture. They believed in culture as a process that never stops. It is an ongoing process that has been inherited by the past generation and will be passed on to the next generation. P5's response can be another piece of evidence. She mentioned, "...it (culture) is passed down from one generation to the next generation and is always preserved, (and the culture) still exists until now". Through her eyes, culture can be further described as a process that can be preserved by people in their community. It implies that culture is not merely transmitted to the next generation but also can be learned and developed by the people within the process of transmission.

#### *3.1.4 Culture as a distinctive feature of a country or a region*

Most of the participants (P4, P6, P2, P3, P7) evoked that every cultural group has its unique cultural characteristic. It is impossible if there is only one culture in the world. A culture possessed by a particular group is different from the cultures owned by the other groups.

- (9) Geographical areas where people live determine their culture. (P5)
- (10) In my opinion, culture is something inherent in a person, depending on a region or where he lives. (P6)
- (11) To me, culture is an identity. It can be an identity of an individual or maybe a group. It can be even greater as the identity of a country. Each culture cannot be the same as another culture. (P7)

The responses from the participants express that culture includes unique aspects which differentiate one cultural group from another. They seem to sound culture as a feature that classifies the distinctiveness between their cultures and other cultures. The participants had tendencies to see culture as the concept of differentiation rather than the concept of culture as a space to share commonalities or mutual interactions.

### **3.2 Participants' Understanding of Intercultural Competence**

The results suggest that the participants simply and superficially referred IC to as one's knowledge of cultural information which helps to communicate in intercultural conditions. Many of them seemed to avoid elaborating intercultural competence into bigger details. Other findings indicate that most of them identified IC as the factual knowledge of particular cultures and the acquisition of a respectful manner to other cultures. However, the participants had a fragmented understanding of the term. Instead of conceiving intercultural competence as a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, they understood those dimensions as isolated parts. Besides, further analysis conspicuously suggests that they failed to raise the issue of critical cultural awareness (CCA) within their understanding of the definition of IC.

As shown in Table 2, the participants agreed that one of the most instrumental aspects of intercultural competence falls under the term cultural knowledge concerning

'the knowledge of cultural practices from different cultural backgrounds (e.g., festival, tradition, habit, fashion, etc.)' (M=4.50, SD=0.58). Another knowledge dimension, namely 'the knowledge of the way of life of other people from different cultural backgrounds (e.g., values and beliefs)', was also considered the most suitable description of intercultural competence (M=4.42, SD=0.70). The affective dimensions related to 'the attitude dealing with openness towards other cultures' (M=4.38, SD=0.64) and 'the attitude dealing with curiosity to learn from other cultures and interact with other people' (M=4.19, SD=0.80) were also considered as the next instrumental keys. From this point, it is obvious that the participants predominantly saw intercultural competence from the point of view of knowledge and affective dimensions.

The dimension of skills (i.e., 'the abilities to ...') is reported as the third important aspect. Unlike the knowledge of cultural practices and perspectives of other cultures which has the highest position, the knowledge of cultural products was dramatically considered by the participants as the least important aspect of intercultural competence. The results also show that the participants relatively saw the dimension of critical cultural awareness which is illustrated as the ability to see the positive and negative side of one's own cultures and target cultures as the least crucial element of intercultural competence.

**Table 2.** EFL pre-service teachers' definitions of intercultural competence.

Definitions of IC	Response (%)					Means	Std. Dev.
	SD	D	NS	A	SA		
1. The knowledge of cultural practices from different cultural backgrounds (e.g., festival, tradition, habit, fashion, etc.).	0.0	0.0	3.9	42.3	53.9	4.50	0.58
2. The knowledge of the way of life of other people from different cultural backgrounds (e.g., values and beliefs).	0.0	0.0	11.5	34.6	53.9	4.42	0.70
3. It is an attitude dealing with openness towards other cultures.	0.0	0.0	7.7	46.2	46.1	4.38	0.64
4. It is an attitude dealing with curiosity to learn from other cultures and interact with other people.	0.0	0.0	23.1	34.6	42.3	4.19	0.80
5. The ability to understand and express the similarities and differences between students' own cultures and English-speaking countries' cultures.	0.0	0.0	11.5	57.7	30.8	4.19	0.63
6. The ability to interact and establish a good relationship with people whose cultures are different from them.	0.0	7.7	11.5	53.9	26.9	4.00	0.85
7. The ability to see the positive and negative sides of students' own cultures.	0.0	0.0	26.9	46.2	26.9	4.00	0.75
8. The ability to see the positive and negative sides of other cultures.	0.0	3.9	23.1	50.0	23.0	3.92	0.80
9. The knowledge of cultural products (e.g., music, arts, literature, historical places, etc.) from both students' cultures and the target cultures.	0.0	0.0	34.6	50.0	15.4	3.81	0.69

### 3.2.1 *Intercultural competence as the factual knowledge of cultures*

During the interview sessions, we asked the participants to share what intercultural competence means to them. The results of the interviews were relatively consistent with those of the questionnaires. Out of seven interview participants, five predominantly echoed intercultural competence as factual cultural knowledge. They argued that knowledge of practices and perspectives of other cultures is essential to building intercultural competence. In the interviews, the participants shared their thoughts.

- (12) It is about the cultural information of the people we are talking to. (P1)
- (13) Intercultural competence is a kind of knowledge of what to do or what not to do when we are positioned in particular cultural conditions. (P4)
- (14) IC is an ability to understand the culture of the target language—the culture of English or the culture of the people we are talking to. (P6)
- (15) Intercultural competence embraces the way we get or dig up information about the culture of the people we are communicating with such as how they behave and their values. (P2)

P6 and P2 further realized that knowing only the cultures of other people whose cultures are different from their cultures is still inadequate. They suggested that one should possess the knowledge of his own culture. They realized that the knowledge of other cultures and one's own culture was believed to be an important starting point to knowing the differences and similarities among cultures.

- (16) However, it is not only understanding others' cultures but also understanding ours. If we have knowledge of other cultures as well as our culture, we may see the similarities and the differences". (P6)
- (17) How we understand our culture is also essential because it helps us to know the differences among cultures. (P2)

It is worth noting that the participants unanimously agreed that knowing the practices and perspectives of other people is positioned as the most crucial element within the framework of intercultural competence. It is an unsurprising result since we have already discovered that such kinds of knowledge earn the highest score on the questionnaires.

### 3.2.2 *Intercultural competence deals with positive attitudes towards other cultures*

As explained earlier, the participants' perceived cultural knowledge as one of the key elements of intercultural competence. Besides such a cognitive element, fewer of the participants mentioned the affective element as an instrumental factor of intercultural competence. They believed that an interculturally competent individual has a positive attitude (e.g., tolerance and respect) towards other cultures. This view is evidenced by the voices of P1 and P2 in the interview sessions.

- (18) Also, it is an ability to tolerate others' cultures, not just ours. So, intercultural competence allows us to communicate with people from different countries without offending their cultures. (P1)

(19) Intercultural competence creates respect for our culture and other people's cultures. (P2)

From the excerpts in (18) and (19), it can be understood that both participants acknowledged that an individual who has sufficient intercultural competence can tolerate and value cultural diversity among people around the world. As a result, it allows him to act respectfully and cooperatively in certain multicultural conditions. Doing so may minimize any misunderstanding and avoid unsuccessful interactions. Although the literature suggests that having positive attitudes is indispensable, there are P1 and P2 who gave sufficient attention to it.

### *3.2.3 Intercultural competence as an ability to skillfully operate knowledge and attitude in an intercultural condition*

Further results indicate that only P2 realized that the aforementioned aspects – knowledge, and attitude– should be carefully integrated. She believed that intercultural knowledge and positive attitudes towards other cultures constitute successful real-time intercultural communication. Without having sufficient knowledge and attitudes, effective or appropriate intercultural communication will not be possible to achieve. P2 elaborated her view on intercultural competence as follows:

(20) From cultural knowledge, we can draw a relationship between foreign cultures and our culture. So, in an interaction, we can know that 'oh, although it is common to talk like that in my country, it will be rude if we do so to people from other countries'. For example, Indonesians usually ask people about their ages or families. However, such questions will be sensitive for native speakers. It may be impossible to ask such questions for the first time to them. (P2)

P2 knew that it is not only about having existing knowledge of different cultures but also having the ability to identify the relationship between those cultures. Besides, she further implied that an interculturally competent person is someone who can be a mediator between people of different cultures or identities. This means that the person can notice the misunderstanding which may occur during intercultural interactions. Later on, she tried to explain them in the Indonesian context as she stated that private matters such as age, family, or marital status are commonly discussed by Indonesian people. Many Indonesians consider them as a form of hospitality; thus, they believe that it is normal to ask and answer such personal questions. P2 implicitly said that successful interactions make use of the existing cultural knowledge (how foreigners and our people perceive the private questions) and attitude (the willingness to avoid such sensitive questions) together.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

Throughout this section, we would like to discuss the results from the views of previous relevant studies and, in turn, formulate alternatives that may be useful to overcome some limitations of intercultural teaching in teacher training and education. We first discuss the pre-service teachers' understanding of the notions of culture. Next, it continues with the discussion of the pre-service teachers' understanding of intercultural competence.

The EFL pre-service teachers in this study provided rich and diverse definitions of culture. Most of the participants associated cultures with the structure of behaviors of people (e.g., custom and tradition) and products of meaningful activities (e.g., clothing and traditional dance). Only one participant was concerned that cultures have something to do with mental processes or perspectives held by people. Furthermore, they often referred to culture as the distinctive feature of a region that is transmitted from one generation to the next generation and shared within a society. The results of the present study are more or less in line with those of the previous studies (Larzén-Östermark, 2008; Olaya & Gómez Rodríguez, 2013; Önalán, 2005). Definitions of culture provided by our participants, to a certain degree, differ from what Önalán (2005) and Olaya and Gómez Rodríguez (2013) depict in their studies. They report that the participants' understanding of culture is limited and superficial. They argue that the participants only defined culture based on traditional and aesthetic points of view. The present study reports the opposite since our participants delivered a wide range of definitions of culture ranging from cultural products to cultural perspectives. Besides, they often tried to link language and culture by emphasizing the notion of politeness. This result occurs because our participants had different learning experiences from those of the previous studies. The courses that our participants were experiencing in their training might provide more cultural learning inclusion and offer richer cultural perspectives. Therefore, they were already well-informed about and more aware of the wide-ranging definitions of culture. Since this study, however, focuses only on the participants' cognitive aspect, more investigations about how intercultural language learning is carried out in the classroom should be conducted to clarify our claim.

The commonality between this study and the previous studies occurs when the EFL pre-service teachers predominantly saw culture in the essentialist view in which they often explained culture in its static and stable forms. No participant argued that culture is changeable and flexible. The responses like 'culture is transmitted from one generation to the next generation' and 'culture is a distinctive feature' imply that they assumed culture to be unquestionably transferred without changing or reshaping any possible alteration or transformation. Nonetheless, an effective intercultural education also requires constructivist thinking or an anti-essentialist view which sees culture as something fluid and flexible that is always built and reshaped during social activity and interactive communication (Baker, 2012b; Elsen & St. John, 2007). If language learners conceive culture as a dynamic process of meaning-making, they will possibly be able to communicate in fluid, open-ended, and unpredictable processes which are the potentials to build understanding to a bigger perception of reality and, in turn, can feed the development of their language skills.

The results of the questionnaire and interview shed light upon the participants' understanding of intercultural competence. In a broad sense, intercultural competence is defined as an ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in different cultural conditions (Baker, 2012a, 2012b; Byram, 1997; Byram et al., 2002; Deardorff, 2006; Kramsch, 2013; Rajprasit, 2020), which requires one's intercultural knowledge, attitude, skill, and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006). The results of the interview and questionnaire are relatively consistent. It is apparent that the EFL pre-service teachers perceived intercultural competence as factual knowledge of foreign cultures and one's own culture which allows someone to find similarities and differences between those cultures. In addition, the participants had a robust belief

that intercultural competence requires a positive attitude towards other cultures which can be reflected in having respect for cultural diversity. Since the participants predominantly viewed culture as solid and static forms instead of dynamic and unpredictable, it is unsurprising that they did not grasp the essential spirit of intercultural competence. To understand intercultural competence, Baker (2012b) asserts that someone needs to approach “culture as an emergent, negotiated resource in communication which moves between and across local, national, and global contexts” (p. 64). Besides, the results also acknowledge that the participants delivered the aspects of intercultural competence in a fragmented way. They still considered the aspects of intercultural competence as isolated aspects that are disconnected from each other. Meanwhile, the aspects should be considered as integrated aspects to build successful intercultural communication (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Sercu et al., 2005).

Further results suggest that the EFL pre-service teachers missed the aspect of critical cultural awareness (CCA). CCA, based on Byram (1997), is “an ability to evaluate critically based on explicit criteria perspectives, practices, and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries” (p. 53). Their responses imply that gaining knowledge, having a positive attitude, and operating such knowledge and attitude in communication are already sufficient. Those, to a certain degree, reflect typical traits of Indonesian people called ‘*rasa*’. We, Indonesians, know that ‘*rasa*’ leads Indonesians to have acceptance, a relaxed manner, or a comfortable feeling when encountering equivocal or unfamiliar situations. These results are partly aligned with several previous studies that took place in different contexts (Castro et al., 2004; Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak, 2017; Olaya & Gómez Rodríguez, 2013). Moreover, Cheewasukthaworn and Suwanarak (2017) point out that some major conditions of Southeast Asian cultures which are harmony orientation, blind obedience, and conflict avoidance contribute to the lack of students’ critical awareness. These conditions are believed to be not very conducive for an individual to do a critical evaluation of other cultures or his own culture.

To address the results, the EFL pre-service teachers are encouraged to reflect on the comprehensive concept of culture. They need to approach culture from both the essentialist side and the anti-essentialist side. By doing so, it may assist to shape the meaningful goals of their future cultural teaching and the actual pedagogical practice in EFL classrooms. The reflection on intercultural competence as a whole concept which covers dimensions of knowledge, attitude, skill, and critical cultural awareness is also suggested. Besides, we believe that EFL pre-service teachers need sufficient information to gain a firmer understanding of the notion of culture and intercultural competence. Education stakeholders are encouraged to give more attention to providing EFL pre-service teachers with activities that can lead them to reflect and critically evaluate products, behaviors, and perspectives of the target culture as well as their own culture. Teaching strategies suggested by literature such as addressing and conflicting debatable topics about discrimination, xenophobia, homophobia, race, gender roles, hatred, human rights, etc. (Byram et al., 2002; Olaya & Gómez Rodríguez, 2013) can be fruitful learning activities to provoke students to be culturally reflective and critical. Literature also reported inviting students to engage in asynchronous online discussions (Rajprasit, 2020) and critically evaluating images and descriptions in textbooks (Baker, 2012b; Byram et al., 2002) and digital forms (Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018) may be beneficial to consider.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The present study attempts to shed light upon EFL pre-service teachers' understandings of culture and intercultural competence. The results show that the participants gave relatively accurate definitions which are, to a certain degree, in line with the definitions proposed by experts. Nonetheless, they still acknowledged that the intercultural dimensions (i.e., attitude, knowledge, and skills) are isolated and disconnected from each other. It is problematic since, to acquire worthwhile intercultural competence in language teaching and learning, one needs to consider all dimensions to be integrated and connected. Further results suggest that most of the pre-service teachers missed the dimension of critical cultural awareness—the ability to critically evaluate one's own culture and foreign cultures.

Although every effort has been made toward firm research design and analysis, the limitations of this study are still acknowledged. This study investigated a relatively small number of EFL pre-service teachers and the participants are only from one university. As a result, it limits the generalizability of the study. In other words, it can be said that the results may not apply to many other contexts. Therefore, it recommends future relevant studies to design multiple case studies or wide-area examinations to grasp more comprehensive results related to the study of intercultural competence in English language teaching. Besides, it has limitations to observe the real phenomena which occur in face-to-face classrooms or online classrooms due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of this study are merely based on the data which were gained from the voices of EFL pre-service teachers. Future researchers are suggested to scrutinize EFL pre-service teachers and their education for a longer time intensively and observe the classrooms directly so that they can get a deeper understanding of the phenomena. The results of future studies hopefully can pave further discussions or debates on cultural teaching, especially in the English language classrooms.

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## Investigating Speaking Tasks in Relation to Communicative Goals: Possibilities and Obstacles

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### Abstract

*Enhancing students' communicative competence is crucial in teaching speaking in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) classrooms. While relating elements focusing on curriculum, materials, and teachers pay attention to developing the students' communicative competence, obstacles hinder students' communicative skill development. This mixed-methods study aimed to analyze the communicative level of the speaking tasks presented in the teaching materials and how teachers used these tasks to enhance communicative competence. It also investigated teachers' perceived difficulties in teaching speaking in the classroom. The participants were three 11<sup>th</sup> grade teachers and 54 students from three schools in the southern border area of Thailand. Data collected from speaking task analysis and classroom observation were analyzed based on Littlewood's communicative continuum, and a semi-structured interview was analyzed with an inductive approach. This in-depth information illustrates the communicative level presented in the teaching materials and observed in the classroom, along with obstacles encountered. The findings showed that teacher-made teaching materials mainly focused on forms, while commercial textbooks explored forms and meaning-focused in Littlewood's communicative continuum. However, how teachers used the tasks did not always correspond to the original design presented through teaching materials. Many perceived difficulties in teaching English speaking were found, these include time limitations, students' English proficiency level, teachers' attitude toward the tasks, a lack of school*

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*facilities, and exam-oriented teaching and learning. The results of this study are expected to be a consideration for material developers in designing speaking tasks and for English teachers in engaging their students with communicative speaking activities.*

**Keywords:** Classroom observation, communicative competence, mixed-methods, speaking tasks.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

To be able to communicate globally, learners need to learn speaking, which is believed as a crucial language-communication skill (Goh & Burns, 2012). That is why acquiring speaking skills in English is considered an essential part of learning a foreign or second language (Richards, 2008). However, speaking is complex (Dincer & Yesilyurt, 2013) and arguably the most difficult skill to master (Dincer & Yesilyurt, 2017). Therefore, while we focus on improving our English-speaking skills, our goals have not been achieved, mainly due to some factors.

Two main factors, teachers and teaching materials tend to affect the improvement of speaking skills. First, a teacher plays different roles in teaching. For example, the teacher may play the role of a facilitator helping students learn skills and language that they cannot reach on their own (Goh & Burns, 2012). The teacher can also be a resource person presenting material, managing activities, and resources (Cunningsworth, 1995; Willis & Willis, 2007), as well as motivating students to be more responsible for their learning and comprehension (Snow & Campbell, 2017; Willis & Willis, 2007). The teacher can also encourage students to improve their speaking ability (Goh & Burns, 2012). While trying to accomplish the communicative speaking goal, teachers face problems commonly occurring in foreign language teaching for preparing their students to apply the target language (Bygate, 1987). As a result, one of the ways to facilitate teaching is that teachers need tangible materials, including textbooks, to teach (Dubin & Olshtain, 1986). Textbooks are also used by many English teachers (Cunningsworth, 1984). Many English textbooks are provided for schools because textbooks have become a commodity and are beneficial for education (Gray, 2013). However, selecting the right English Language Teaching (ELT) material is challenging (Razmjoo, 2007).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has expanded students' communicative skills and is a foundation for teaching materials and teachers' classroom roles. The Thai Ministry of Education has also recommended the CLT methodology in its English language policy in 2014 (Inprasit, 2016; Prasongporn, 2016). For EFL countries, attaining communicative ability is the primary goal of language education (Lim, 2019). However, Thai students apparently cannot speak English at a high level of proficiency, even though they began learning English from elementary school until the higher education level (Sasum & Weeks, 2018). Therefore, it is urgent to ascertain further details of English materials used and the ways teachers use them, along with the difficulties they experience during a speaking class.

## 1.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was introduced to emphasize developing learners' communicative competence (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Communicative competence is knowing a language and communicating with people in various situations and settings (Hedge, 2000), spontaneously and unrehearsed (Savignon, 1976). CLT has dominated foreign language teaching discourse for the last 40 years (Littlewood, 2013), focusing on the functional and structural aspects (Harmer, 2007; Littlewood, 1981). Task-based teaching (TBT) is an extension of CLT that focuses on tasks (Willis & Willis, 2007) in which the sequence of tasks organizes classwork and tasks generates language used in classrooms (Estaire & Zanon, 1994). The TBT method facilitates learning languages by engaging learners using real-world language (Harmer, 2007; Richards, 2008). TBT has been a part of teaching English because many English teachers rely on tasks in delivering lessons. Many scholars claim that TBT focuses on meaning-focused activities or tasks as a central role rather than grammatical rules (Ellis, 2009; Littlewood, 1981, 2004; Nunan, 1989). However, grammatical rules are still essential in TBT (Willis & Willis, 2007).

TBT materials, including textbooks used in classrooms, provide speaking tasks to improve communicative competence. In TBT, teachers may explore published materials and self-made materials (Hughes, 2011) with speaking tasks that engage students to use language to pursue a related objective of speaking (Luoma, 2004) and to achieve a higher level of fluency (Goh & Burns, 2012). A task gives activities to engage learners to achieve an objective (Prabhu, 1987; van den Branden, 2006). Ellis (2013) opined that tasks pursue a communicative goal rather than focus on linguistic terms. It makes a difference between a task and an exercise; a task focuses on communicative goals and an exercise focuses on linguistic terms. Estaire and Zanon (1994) defined them as communicative and enabling tasks, and Littlewood (2004, 2007) distinguished them as meaning-focused and forms-focused tasks.

**Table 1.** Littlewood's (2004) communicative continuum.

Focus on forms	← ————— →			Focus on meaning
Non-communicative learning	Pre-communicative language practice	Communicative language practice	Structured communication	Authentic communication
Focusing on the structures of language, how they are formed, and what they mean, e.g., substitution exercises, 'discovery' and awareness-raising activities	Practicing language with some attention to meaning but not communicating new messages to others, e.g., 'question-and-answer' practice.	Practicing pre-taught language in a context where it communicates new information, e.g., information-gap activities or 'personalized' questions	Using language to communicate in situations that elicit pre-learned language, but with some unpredictability, e.g., structured role-play and simple problem-solving	Using language to communicate in situations where the meanings are unpredictable, e.g., creative role-play, more complex problem-solving, and discussion.
'Exercises'	(Ellis) ←		→	'Tasks'
'Enabling tasks'	(Estaire and Zanon) ←		→	'Communicative tasks'

Littlewood (2004, 2013) also introduced a communicative continuum with five communicative levels that can be used to investigate what communicative level is applied in delivering English-speaking tasks. It starts from focusing on forms without attention to meaning and develops to focusing on the communication of meaning. Littlewood's (2007) communicative continuum has been used to investigate the extent to which communicative competence tasks are present in English textbooks and teaching-learning classrooms. For example, Lim (2019) applied Littlewood's communicative continuum and pedagogical perspective to analyze speaking activities presented in English textbooks. Similarly, Ogura (2008) analyzed oral communication textbooks with Littlewood's communicative continuum. Both Lim and Ogura used the continuum to analyze textbooks without further inspection of classroom practices. On the other hand, Deng and Carless (2009) emphasized Littlewood's communicative continuum to observe teaching-learning English classrooms without analyzing teachers' textbooks. In addition, other studies (Chang & Goswami, 2011; Kalanzadeh et al., 2013; Li, 1998) investigated CLT obstacles faced by teachers without observing both what teaching materials were used and how teaching materials were delivered in classrooms. Therefore, the present study obtained richer data by observing teaching materials used, how teachers applied them to classrooms, and investigated barriers during the teaching of speaking.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

While past CLT studies mainly collected data with only one or two methods, this study combines three methods: speaking task analyses, classroom observations, and interviews, to triangulate data. Furthermore, this research investigated the communicative competence level of the English-speaking tasks presented through teaching materials and in the classroom. Since commercial textbooks were produced based on public requests instead of students' needs (Khan et al., 2020), they are not suitable for all students. Therefore, teachers must ensure that the textbooks are suitable for their students' English proficiency levels (Mede & Yalçin, 2019). Teaching materials analysis helps teachers choose suitable textbooks for students (Suryani, 2018). In addition, the analysis benefits teachers to avoid a mismatch between authors' assumptions about learners' proficiency levels and actual learners' proficiency levels (Johnson, 1989; McDonough & Shaw, 1993). Finally, teachers' perceived difficulties during the teaching of speaking were also explored.

Drawing on the rationales above, this mixed-methods study aimed to answer two key research questions:

- To what extent do the English-speaking tasks presented through teaching materials and in the classroom focus on communicative competence?
- What barriers do teachers have in engaging students in speaking task activities?

## **2. METHODS**

### **2.1 Participants**

This current research was designed as a case study that used many sources to analyze a natural context thoroughly (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006) and investigated a

particular set of problems in an educational context (Grauer, 2012). The case study was conducted in a border area, Sadao District, Songkhla province, located in Southern Thailand, close to Malaysia. According to Timothy (2001), border tourism gives people more opportunities to contact foreigners, indirectly increasing global language demand. In selecting the participants of this study, a purposive sample was employed. Since there were three public schools in Sadao District registered under the Thailand Ministry of Education (EMIS) in 2019, all of them were approached for data collection. The teachers all graduated with bachelor's degrees. Teacher 1 is male, and Teacher 2 and Teacher 3 are females. The English teaching experience of Teacher 1, Teacher 2, and Teacher 3 were 27, 28, and 6 years respectively. Students' numbers differ between classes (School 1=29, school 2=25, and school 3=19), but not all students were always present. Therefore, 54 students (n=54) participated in this study. Furthermore, this study explored teaching materials used in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade from the three schools: teacher-made material, commercial Textbook A, and commercial Textbook B, respectively.

## 2.2 Research Instruments

Three instruments were used to triangulate the data: a speaking tasks analysis, a classroom observation, and an interview.

### 2.2.1 Speaking tasks analysis

A checklist to analyze the teaching materials was designed to investigate the communicative level of the speaking tasks presented in Grade 11 teaching materials. The checklist comprised items representing each level based on Littlewood's communicative continuum: non-communicative learning, pre-communicative language practice, communicative language practice, structured communication, and authentic communication. The measurement scale ranged from 1 to 3 nominal scales (scale 1 = goal not achieved, 2 = partially achieved a goal, and 3 = fully achieved).

### 2.2.2 Classroom observations

Similar to the textbook analysis checklist, the classroom observation checklist was constructed based on Littlewood's (2004, 2013) communicative continuum. The checklist was designed to rate the communicative level of the speaking tasks delivered in the classroom by asking if the tasks have met the goals, ranging from 1 to 3 nominal scales (1 = goal not achieved, 2 = partially achieved the goal, and 3 = goal fully achieved on the continuum). Observing teaching speaking in a classroom was crucial because it gave rich data from the classroom as an artificial environment to learn and use L2 (Littlewood, 1981). Besides, teachers play a significant role in how tasks' objectives can be achieved because the effectiveness of teaching materials also depends on how teachers emphasize them in classrooms (Ahmed, 2017).

### 2.2.3 Interviews

The interviews were employed in collecting qualitative data. For example, teachers might have reasons why they selected particular, extended, or modified tasks

(Goh & Burns, 2012). Moreover, researchers can investigate in-depth data about participants' motivations, thoughts, and feelings toward a topic through interviews (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). This post-observation interview aimed to investigate the rationale behind English speaking task-based teaching practiced in the classrooms and the challenges encountered by the teachers. Three teachers who participated in the semi-structured interviews responded to open-ended and closed-ended questions. These questions were designed based on the results from the speaking tasks analysis, and classroom observations, and adapted from Willis and Willis (2007), focusing on the issues related to task-based teaching.

### **2.3 Data Collection Procedure**

Quantitative data was first collected. Here, the researchers and the three teachers collected two speaking tasks from the lesson and analyzed them based on the speaking task analysis checklist. The speaking tasks used in these lessons were different because the teachers from the three schools used different teaching materials. Next, the researchers observed the classroom to assess the communicative level of the speaking tasks presented in the classroom. Then, immediately after the lessons finished, the students used the classroom observation checklist to assess how the speaking activities were delivered in the classrooms. The number of observations ranged from two to seven teaching periods. Qualitative data was then collected through interviews with the three teachers, each lasting between 30 and 90 minutes. The interviews were conducted in English. All interviews were audio-recorded and then fully transcribed.

### **2.4 Data Analysis**

Data from different sources were collected and analyzed as follows. First, data collected from the speaking task checklist by the teachers and researchers were grouped and analyzed for mean scores ( $\bar{x}$ ). The mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) showed the communicative level of the speaking task presented in the teaching materials. Second, data were collected from the classroom observation checklist. The mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) classroom observation checklist results showed the communicative level of speaking activities delivered based on the students' and researchers' assessments. Third, data from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed with an inductive approach, in which the coding scheme was directly from the text (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The transcriptions were codified based on the similarity of obstacles to teaching English speaking tasks experienced by the teachers.

## **3. RESULTS**

This section presents how the speaking tasks presented in the teaching materials and delivered in the classroom meet the communicative level based on Littlewood's communicative continuum. In addition, the analysis of challenges encountered by the teachers in delivering speaking tasks in the classroom is also presented. School 1 used teacher-made material, while the participants from School 2 and School 3 used commercial textbooks (Textbook A and Textbook B, respectively).



### 3.1 School 1

#### 3.1.1 *The communicative level presented in teacher-made material*

Teacher 1 created teaching materials by combining and selecting tasks from several sources such as textbooks, websites, and YouTube videos. He used a PowerPoint presentation to deliver task 1 and task 2. These tasks were designed with a list of questions and pictures of public figures. Each picture has a description as information to answer provided questions.

Table 2 shows that task 1 and task 2 in teacher-made material focused on forms over meaning. These two speaking tasks partially achieved pre-communicative and non-communicative goals ( $\bar{x} = 2.33$  and  $2.17$ , respectively). Given these points, the two speaking tasks of the teacher-made material were forms-focused with a similar trend. This teaching material had low support for reaching communicative goals and was more concerned with linguistic terms.

**Table 2.** Mean value ( $\bar{x}$ ) of speaking task analysis of teacher-made material.

Littlewood's Communicative Continuum	School 1	
	Task 1	Task 2
Non-communicative learning	2.17	2.17
Pre-communicative language practice	2.33	2.33
Communicative language practice	1.50	1.50
Structured communication	1.00	1.00
Authentic communication	1.00	1.00

#### 3.1.2 *The communicative level presented in classroom teaching*

The result of Table 3 supports the idea that speaking activities delivered in School 1 focused on forms over meaning.

**Table 3.** Mean value ( $\bar{x}$ ) of classroom observation checklist.

Littlewood's Communicative Continuum	School 1	
	Task 1	Task 2
Non-communicative learning	2.15	2.14
Pre-communicative language practice	2.67	2.62
Communicative language practice	1.94	1.87
Structured communication	1.94	1.71
Authentic communication	1.74	1.67

From Table 3, Teacher 1 followed speaking tasks on the PowerPoint by asking questions between students in task 1 and asking questions between teacher and students in task 2. The teacher delivered speaking task 1 and task 2, which partially achieved the pre-communicative goal ( $\bar{x} = 2.67$  and  $2.62$ , respectively) as the most prominent objective. However, speaking task 1 and task 2 also achieved non-communicative objectives ( $\bar{x} = 2.15$  and  $2.14$ , respectively). As a result, Teacher 1 delivered speaking tasks by engaging students mainly with non-communicative and pre-communicative activities, which had less support in communicative speaking development.

There were some reasons the teacher engaged students with low communicative speaking activities. One of them was the poor English proficiency level of students. This is as expressed by the teacher in the following excerpt.

- (1) As I told you, they are weak. Some of them are just slow, hesitant. At the beginning of every semester, I will speak English all the time in every class. But I have to [speak] less-less-less. (Teacher 1)

Moreover, the tasks created by the teacher might not be suitable for their current students since they relied on previous students' English proficiency levels, which differed from the current students.

- (2) I think some vocabulary is too difficult for this class. Maybe, it is easy for the last one [previous year class] but not for this [current class]. (Teacher 1)

The condition of schools' facilities improved or worsened the way teachers teach in a classroom. For example, a lack of school facilities triggered time limitations in delivering speaking tasks in a classroom.

- (3) Usually, we have a projector in our lab, but that is broken, so I have to combine this in one period to use that room. After the projector broke, I had to use some documents or something. And then, just some classes have time to practice speaking. (Teacher 1)

Two tasks in the teacher-made material served forms-focused objectives, which have less support in communicative competence development. As a result, the teacher delivered less communicative speaking activities using tasks from the teacher-made material following simple instructions. In addition, the students' poor English proficiency levels and lack of school facilities made teaching more challenging for the teacher.

## 3.2 School 2

### 3.2.1 The communicative level presented in Textbook A

Textbook A was a commercial textbook used by Teacher 2. As shown in Table 4, speaking task 1 in Textbook A focused more on meaning, while speaking task 2 focused more on forms.

**Table 4.** Mean value ( $\bar{x}$ ) of speaking task analysis of Textbook A.

Littlewood's Communicative Continuum	School 2	
	Task 1	Task 2
Non-communicative learning	1.34	2.50
Pre-communicative language practice	1.50	2.17
Communicative language practice	1.34	1.67
Structured communication	2.17	2.00
Authentic communication	2.00	1.34

Task 1 had been designed with a sequence of reading and speaking. After reading a passage about Dick Summers, students acted out an interview between a journalist and Dick Summers based on the reading passage. Task 2 had two parts; an individual

speaking by answering a simple question and a pair-work conversation based on clues and samples provided in the textbook.

Speaking task 1 reached a partial structured and authentic communication ( $\bar{x} = 2.17$  and  $2.00$ , respectively). The second task's objectives were ranked from the high level of non-communicative objectives ( $\bar{x} = 2.50$ ), pre-communicative objectives ( $\bar{x} = 2.17$ ), and a structured communication objective ( $\bar{x} = 2.00$ ). Since these tasks had different objectives, Textbook A tended to combine both forms and be meaning-focused. It can be concluded that the textbook can be categorized as a communicative teaching material that can develop students' communicative competence.

### 3.2.2 *The communicative level presented in classroom teaching*

Both speaking tasks delivered in School 2 focused more on forms-focused activities. The teacher used another reading task instead of an interview stated in the textbook as speaking task 1. They asked students simple questions related to the reading task. The second speaking task in the textbook was modified with a speaking practice based on grammar rules and samples. Speaking task 1 achieved the pre-communicative objective ( $\bar{x} = 2.20$ ) while speaking task 2 was delivered by achieving the non-communicative objective ( $\bar{x} = 2.75$ ) (see Table 5). Therefore, the teacher emphasized non-communicative or pre-communicative objectives in delivering speaking activities. As a result, it can be seen that students were engaged with less communicative speaking activities in the classroom.

**Table 5.** Mean value ( $\bar{x}$ ) of classroom observation checklist.

Littlewood's Communicative Continuum	School 2	
	Task 1	Task 2
Non-communicative learning	1.98	2.75
Pre-communicative language practice	2.20	1.85
Communicative language practice	1.43	1.58
Structured communication	1.49	1.83
Authentic communication	1.25	1.41

The teacher selected and modified tasks to be delivered in the classroom. She had several reasons to support this action as follows. There were many holidays and extra activities throughout the study that required the teacher to restructure her teaching schedule.

- (4) In my school, there are many activities. Moreover, there are many camps. So, I skip [the task]...I do not want to use much time. Because I know when the students must have a midterm examination, so, this is one reason why I combined [modified] it." (Teacher 2)

The teacher also mentioned to what level their students' English proficiency was. However, unfortunately, it was also a barrier to delivering speaking tasks.

- (5) I think it [task] is not hard, it is not difficult, but only a few students in our school can achieve good marks because most Thai students in the local area are rather weak in English. They do not understand the instruction that the teacher asked them. (Teacher 2)

Challenges might also come from the teacher herself. For example, task selection and modification might occur because the tasks were too complex and not interesting from the teacher’s perspective.

- (6) If I begin with a strenuous activity like exercise number 7 [skipped speaking task], I think I must spend much more time and must be very tired ... Sometimes, for me as the teacher, I do not like this exercise [task]. It is not attractive. When I do not like it, I will change it. The reason for changing the item or the exercise [task] is because I am bored of reading and checking the same thing, the same items...the students do not know this exercise [task] before, but I have known it for many, many years.” (Teacher 2)

Furthermore, Thailand has an O-NET (i.e., Ordinary National Educational Test, to test the knowledge and thinking ability of Grade 6, 9, and 12 students) and final examinations that indirectly influenced students’ and teachers’ attitudes toward teaching-learning English speaking. The main concern of both teachers and students was preparing students for the examination, which pays more attention to test-taking strategies. Therefore, learning speaking tasks were not deemed as necessary as learning for the examination, which determines students’ graduation or going up a grade.

- (7) Thai students are taught to study for the exam. So, many teachers, including me, try to teach students how to do the test. The students must learn and memorize, and finally, they must answer questions in the test. (Teacher 2)

Less communicative speaking activities were given to the students by using the communicative textbook. In addition, the teacher selected and modified speaking tasks to be delivered in the classroom, causing changes in the communicative goals. The teacher found that task selection and modification were needed because of time limitations, students’ poor English proficiency levels, teachers’ attitudes toward the tasks, and exam-oriented teaching and learning.

### 3.3 School 3

#### 3.3.1 The communicative level presented in Textbook B

Textbook B used by teacher 3 was a commercial textbook. Speaking task 1 was a pair-work speaking practice, i.e., playing a role. Likewise, in speaking task 2, students were assigned a pair-work speaking practice with correct grammar by using provided phrases.

**Table 6.** Mean value ( $\bar{x}$ ) of speaking task analysis of Textbook B.

Littlewood’s Communicative Continuum	School 3	
	Task 1	Task 2
Non-communicative learning	2.17	2.33
Pre-communicative language practice	2.33	2.50
Communicative language practice	2.00	2.17
Structured communication	2.34	2.17
Authentic communication	1.50	1.67

Similar to textbook A, textbook B also served a combination of forms-focused and meaning-focused speaking tasks. Two speaking tasks in textbook B used in the

third school served all communicative objectives except authentic communication. The objective of the first speaking task spread across Littlewood's communicative continuum levels ( $\bar{x} = 2 - 2.34$ ) (see Table 6). The second task's objective was slightly different from the previous task's goal because of the higher scale achieved in the pre-communicative objective ( $\bar{x} = 2.50$ ). As a result, this textbook focused on forms and on meaning that can be used to improve students' communicative competence.

### 3.3.2 *The communicative level presented in classroom teaching of school 3*

As can be seen from Table 7, the third school seems distinct compared to the first two schools since the tasks combined numerous communicative levels.

**Table 7.** Mean value ( $\bar{x}$ ) of classroom observation checklist of school 3.

Littlewood's Communicative Continuum	School 3	
	Task 1	Task 2
Non-communicative learning	2.00	2.43
Pre-communicative language practice	2.42	1.99
Communicative language practice	2.03	2.36
Structured communication	2.25	1.96
Authentic communication	1.60	1.59

Teacher 3 followed speaking tasks presented in Textbook B to be delivered to the classroom. Speaking task 1 partially achieved all communicative levels ( $\bar{x} = 2.00$  and 2.42), except authentic communication. Then, the teacher applied non-communicative and communicative language practice objectives ( $\bar{x} = 2.43$  and 2.36, respectively) to deliver speaking task 2. The second speaking task had an uneven distribution of objectives; even so, both speaking tasks were delivered using a combination of forms-focused and meaning-focused activities. In addition, students were engaged in communicative activities that can efficiently develop students' communicative competence.

Teacher 3 engaged students with communicative activities using similar tasks provided in the textbook. This method appears to be in contrast with the previous two. However, the teacher also faced several challenges in teaching speaking in the classroom. Similar to the students in the two preceding schools, the students of School 3 had low proficiency levels in English.

- (8) I think beginners...they do not understand the words, the vocabulary. They do not know the meaning of most vocabulary. (Teacher 3)

Since it took many periods to wait for students to be ready for speaking performance in class, the teacher revealed that teaching communicative speaking tasks might cause a problem. The teacher's perspective was that the tasks took longer than expected:

- (9) Especially about time, it is the big problem. (Teacher 3)

The teacher created a pair-work practice by engaging students in speaking performances. One student was supposed to ask questions, and another answered. Two students performed multiple speaking to help other pairs by asking them questions,

which was a more challenging role. The response of the teacher about the way the students did speaking performance was:

- (10) It is not 100%, okay, but if not like that, I need so much more time. It was a waste of time for me. So, I let them do that. Better than they sit down. (Teacher 3)

In conclusion, the teacher adopted the speaking tasks from Textbook B and delivered those speaking tasks to the classroom. Even though the teacher also faced several obstacles in the classroom, such as time limitations and students' poor English proficiency levels, the teacher decided to deliver communicative speaking activities. As a result, more time was consumed than expected.

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

Teacher-made material focused on forms aiming at understanding structures rather than applying language communicative practice. This material was designed with flexible and straightforward instruction, leading to different teaching goals depending on how teachers delivered the tasks. Using the material, there is an opportunity to engage students to speak communicatively, e.g., by asking-answering questions in a random pair presentation with their own public figure choices by giving unpredictable questions. Eventually, students can produce questions-answers to communicate new information from pictures. On the other hand, the teacher could not fully deliver communicative speaking activities due to broad and straightforward design materials. Moreover, there were other factors like students' low English proficiency and a broken projector. These became barriers to achieving the learning expectations in the Thai curriculum. Moreover, less communicative teaching material created fewer opportunities for doing communicative activities in the classroom.

A classroom teacher and teaching material are combined to pursue communicative goals to improve students' communicative competence. Indeed, teaching material that can support communicative speaking is not the only key to developing students' communicative competence; it needs support from the teacher in the classroom. Textbook A served forms-focused and meaning-focused tasks as a part of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) material because the CLT tasks consist of language functional and structural aspects (Harmer, 2007; Littlewood, 1981). Instead of delivering speaking tasks from the CLT textbook, the teacher engaged students with forms-focused activities, which have less support for communicative competence development. A teacher can select and modify a task so that teaching speaking may be different from a guideline in the task of a textbook (Goh & Burns, 2012). In the current study, the teacher redesigned speaking tasks to be presented in the classroom. The task modifications and selections caused different speaking tasks' goals from those stated in the teaching material. The teacher's decision was based on students' English proficiency levels, time limitations, exam-oriented teaching objectives and learning, and teachers' attitudes.

The objectives of communicative activities in School 3 were achieved by using the CLT textbook. Instead of task modification and selection, Teacher 3 adopted the speaking tasks provided in the textbook in the teaching lesson. It also achieved similar expected goals to those stated in the textbook. The teacher's decision supported the idea of Cunningsworth (1995) that textbooks influence the way a course is delivered.

Aside from time limitations and students' poor English proficiency levels, the students also had low motivation to speak English. It was observed that they avoided playing a more challenging role in speaking practice. That is why two speaking activities took longer than expected. Thai students are EFL learners who lack the urgency to learn English, which differs from ESL learners who need to learn English since they use it beyond classrooms (Huang & Yang, 2018). Indeed, communicative tasks take longer time than expected (Chou, 2017), so the teacher decided to communicate with students individually outside the class rather than interacting (Chou, 2017).

Additionally, the current study shows that the result of the communicative level presented in the textbooks differs from the previous studies. Ogura (2008) and Lim (2019) found that the analyzed textbooks were forms-focused. Michaud (2015) did a comparison study between two groups of textbooks, revealing that one group focused on forms, but another was meaning-focused. Most speaking tasks in the textbooks in this study focused on both meaning and forms. Thus, the commercial textbooks serve communicative competence development without leaving forms-focused learning.

Classroom activities conducted in the study tended to vary. This study revealed that all speaking tasks in School 1 and School 2 were delivered by applying forms-focused activities. This result parallels Deng and Carless's (2009) study of classroom observations in an elementary school in Guangdong, China. Their study showed that classroom activities focused more on forms than meaning. Littlewood (2018) mentioned that many teachers attempt more forms-focused activities to teach the English language. In contrast, Teacher 3 emphasized both forms and meaning activities in delivering speaking tasks. The teacher applied the CLT method because the chosen activities focused on structural and functional aspects of a language (Harmer, 2007; Littlewood, 1981).

Based on interview data, the problems experienced by the teachers were students' poor English proficiency level, time limitations, exam-oriented teaching and learning, teachers' attitude toward speaking tasks, and lack of school facilities. However, the essential problem experienced by these three teachers was the students' low English proficiency, which was an echo of previous research; Li (1998) in South Korea, Chang and Goswami (2011) in Taiwan, and Kalanzadeh et al. (2013) in Iran. In this research, Teacher 1 adapted teaching due to the students' low English proficiency with more minor communicative speaking tasks and delivered less communicative activities in the classroom. Teacher 2 tended to adjust tasks delivered in the classroom to suit their students' poor English proficiency levels. It can be seen that even though speaking tasks in Textbook A met communicative goals, the tasks delivered in the classroom achieved less communicative goals.

On the other hand, Teacher 3 assisted students in doing communicative speaking activities based on the textbook regardless of their low English proficiency levels. As a consequence, the class time took longer than expected. Their low English proficiency level was the most prominent issue that influenced task selections and modifications and triggered a boundary in efficiently improving communicative competence.

Thailand's government has established an English curriculum for Grade 11 with the expectation that students can use the foreign language to communicate in informal and formal conversations in various situations (Ministry of Education Thailand, 2008). The student participants are expected to use English to communicate with anyone, in any situation, and at any location. However, it seems not in line with the final examination program held in schools. The O-NET in Thailand has been designed with

multiple-choice questions (Todd, 2019). It causes an unequal portion to teach and learn speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills in school because of students' and teachers' attitudes toward the test. Indeed, a test influences how teachers teach and students learn (Todd, 2019). Accordingly, instead of expanding language abilities and skills, teachers led students to accomplish tests (Imsa-ard, 2021). Brown (1996) suggests that a well-designed task may be targeted toward unpredictable data like real-life interactions that are unpredictable between speakers. Since there is no speaking part included in English tests (especially O-NET), it has less power to support students' communicative competence development.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The findings showed that teacher-made teaching materials mainly focused on forms, while commercial textbooks explored forms and meaning-focused as proposed in Littlewood's communicative continuum. However, how the teachers used the tasks did not always correspond to the original design presented through their teaching materials. Many perceived difficulties in teaching English speaking were found, these include time limitations, students' English proficiency level, teachers' attitude toward the tasks, lack of school facilities, and exam-oriented teaching and learning. It is suggested that these findings can positively contribute to material developers and English teachers, especially in Thailand. The actual condition of students' English proficiency level and the obstacles experienced by teachers might be helpful information for material developers before designing speaking tasks. For example, a material developer might evaluate speaking task sections if their target students were Thai, particularly in rural areas. Students in rural areas likely have poor English proficiency levels. Decreasing tasks' difficulty level to be more accessible and adjustable to rural students might reduce a gap of mismatch between students' English proficiency levels expected by a teacher in reality.

The communicative level presented in the teaching materials can enrich the teaching material selection for English teachers who implement the CLT methods. CLT material can support English teachers to engage their students to improve their speaking skills communicatively. However, communicative teaching material and a teacher's effort in creating communicative activities go hand-in-hand. They are necessary to go together to achieve communicative competence development successfully. However, time management is also urgently needed to avoid spending more extended periods than expected.

The number of speaking tasks in this study is limited, and it is recommended to analyze more speaking tasks in future related research. In addition, the participants involved in this study were from government schools, so it is recommended to gain more insight into the area by expanding the background of the study participants to different levels of teaching. Finally, another limitation is the small number of participants (i.e., three teachers) which hinders the generalizability of the findings, although the findings may be transferable to similar teachers and settings.



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## APPENDIX A

### Speaking Tasks Analysis Checklist

Please read speaking tasks 1 and 2 below.

Do speaking tasks 1 and 2 presented through the teaching material meet the following goals or not?

Please tick  : 1 = goal not achieved, 2 = partially achieved a goal, and 3 = goal fully achieved.

No.	Goals of the speaking tasks	Speaking Task 1			Comments
		1	2	3	
1.	Learners can produce sentences with correct linked conjunctions, comparison, conditional sentences, or tenses.				
2.	Learners can substitute words/expressions right after being given an example.				
3.	Learners can learn speaking via pronunciation drills of words with emphasis on sounds, stress, and intonation.				
4.	Learners can answer common questions to which all learners know the answers.				
5.	Learners can answer common questions from a task that requires a particular form.				
6.	Learning speaking by describing visuals (pictures, maps, and graphs) or explaining word(s).				
7.	Learning speaking through doing a simple survey (includes survey amongst classmates) to complete a table or picture.				
8.	Learning through completing information gap (includes asking a partner) based on recently taught language.				
9.	Learners can answer 'personalized' questions like information about family and daily activities.				
10.	Learning speaking through a scripted role-play activity in which the situation has been structured and which uses existing resources.				
11.	Learners can give information to their pair or group member and get some new information from them.				
12.	Learning speaking by dealing with a daily or common problem and giving their opinion/solution.				
13.	Learning speaking in a group discussion.				
14.	Learners can practice speaking by dealing with a complex issue/problem (environment, politics, economy, etc.) and giving their solution.				
15.	Learning speaking via unscripted a role-play activity with unpredictable sentence forms created by students.				

**APPENDIX B****Classroom Observation Checklist**

Please read speaking tasks 1 and 2 below.

Does the speaking task 1 and 2 presented in the classroom meet the following goals or not?

Please tick  : 1 = goal not achieved, 2 = partially achieved a goal, and 3 = goal fully achieved.

No.	Goals of the speaking tasks	Speaking Task 1			Comments
		1	2	3	
1.	The teacher instructs learners to produce a sentence based on a grammar rule such as clauses linked by conjunctions, comparison, conditional sentences, or tenses.				
2.	The teacher gives an example of a sentence and substitutes one or more words or changes prompts to lead students to produce a new structure.				
3.	The teacher guides learners to do speaking by practicing a pronunciation drill by saying some words with correct intonation and sound.				
4.	The teacher stimulates speaking practice by giving learners common questions that all learners know the answers to.				
5.	The teacher stimulates speaking practice by giving common questions that require a particular form.				
6.	The teacher guides learners to do a speaking activity by describing a visual task (picture, maps, and graph) or explaining word(s).				
7.	The teacher facilitates learners to do a speaking activity by doing a simple survey (including a survey amongst classmates) to complete a table or picture.				
8.	The teacher facilitates learners to do a speaking activity by completing information gaps (including asking a partner) based on recently taught language.				
9.	The teacher gives 'personalized' questions like information about family and daily activities.				
10.	The teacher manages the situation of role-playing for learners to do speaking activity within using existing resources.				
11.	The teacher assigns learners into a group or pair to exchange information from group members/partners by speaking.				
12.	The teacher facilitates learners to deal with a daily or typical case and express their opinion/solution.				
13.	The teacher assigns the learner to do a speaking practice in a group discussion.				
14.	The teacher facilitates learners to deal with a complex case (environment, politics, economy, etc.) and express their solutions.				
15.	The teacher asks students to do a speaking activity in a role-play without using form sentences.				

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Interview Guides**

The questions asked to the teachers could be classified into five:

1. First, what teaching material do you use in teaching English? Second, is that based on your selection or school decision?
2. Why did you ask students to do this activity? What is your expectation?
3. Why do students respond the way in the classroom?
4. Suppose you have a chance to teach again. Will you do the same or different? Why so?
5. What is your problem when teaching speaking in the classroom? Time allocation? English students' level? Pressure to prepare for exams that are not tasks based?



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## The Magic of Storytelling: Does Storytelling through Videos Improve EFL Students' Oral Performance?

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### Abstract

*This study aimed to examine the EFL (English as a foreign language) students' oral presentation of storytelling. The students performed retelling of narratives such as fables, legends, myths, and fairy tales using their smartphones and video recorder. The participants of the study were 19 students enrolled in the Drama in ELT (English Language Teaching) course at Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, Indonesia. It employed participant observation and interviews to collect data. The results of the study revealed that for non-language aspects, the lowest score was for 'dress code' (M=2.1), meaning that the students did not make any efforts to dress and use props that were related to the stories they were telling. While for the language aspects, the lowest score was for 'communicative abilities with the audience' (M= 1.2). This shows that even though the participants recorded their performance, and there was no audience watching them directly, they still faced barriers and a lack of confidence when presenting the storytelling. The interviews further supported the findings from the observation such as not being able to use appropriate props for their performance, lack of eye contact, switching*

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*voices, use of gestures, difficulty in remembering the script, and needing somebody else to do the recording for them. Therefore, the students need more practice in front of audiences to overcome the problems in the future to ensure that the use of storytelling can improve their oral performance.*

**Keywords:** Drama, EFL students, narrative, storytelling, oral performance.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Storytelling is one element of drama in English Language Teaching (ELT) subjects. Storytelling is the act to tell a story and build a connection with the audience (Saiful, 2020). Sometimes storytelling can be considered difficult to be performed. Since the function of storytelling is to deliver knowledge, information, and culture (Razmi et al., 2014), it is believed to provide meaningful output as students engage in the negotiation of the meaning process because storytelling consists of dialogues (Bakhtin, 1986, as cited in Rahimi & Yadollahi, 2017).

In Indonesia, storytelling is taught in English language lessons (Mu'tashim & Syafi'i, 2018) from junior high school to the university level. Storytelling is integrated into speaking lessons (Ananthia, 2011), and storytelling competitions are held every year. Mastering storytelling skills enhance students' speaking performance (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2018; Yan & Zhao, 2019). At the university level, storytelling is one of the components studied by the students majoring in English language teaching at any Faculty of Teacher Training and Education throughout the country. The students are teacher trainees who would be certified as teachers when they graduate. At Universitas Syiah Kuala, specifically, during their study, these students are enrolled in the Drama in ELT course, which is one of the compulsory subjects of the Teacher Training Program. By the end of the course, the students are expected to have the knowledge and skills that are necessary for effective storytelling and oral presentation.

A study by El Enein (2011) on the EFL Palestinian university students' difficulties when giving an oral presentation focused on the analysis of eye contact, organization plan, coherence, cohesion, and use of equipment. The participants gave oral presentations directly in front of the audience. The results showed that the students did not make eye contact with the audience; this is one of the major difficulties faced by Palestinian students. In addition, the students did not act cheerfully to entertain the audience, and they were unable to use the technological tool and failed to use transitional or signaling words in their oral presentation. They faced challenges that limited them from successfully performing well. The students did not involve the audience or attract their attention, and the reluctance to maintain eye contact is a signal that they were not confident.

Another study by Rachmawaty and Hermagustiana (2015) also found that retelling stories are an effective technique that can improve university students' speaking fluency since they can employ multiple strategies during the retelling process. These strategies included rearranging texts, removing unfamiliar words, memorizing, and slowing down in speech. Rachmawaty and Hermagustiana (2015)



suggested these strategies as an example of strategic competence, which the students' employed to negotiate the story's substance. The findings also revealed that storytelling had a positive impact on the development of oral ability in college students, such as vocabulary and comprehensibility.

In the English Education Department at Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, Indonesia, the performance of storytelling was delivered in a 'traditional way' or without any digital media as today's modern technology service provides. Before the pandemic of COVID-19, the students performed storytelling activities on stage, in front of an audience. The audience was sitting and watching their performances directly. The students, who presented stories, had to be confident and use effective oral presentation skills. The success of the performance depended on the students' ability to retell stories with proper voice modulation, body language, and engagement with the audience. However, oral presentation during the pandemic has been switched to online mode. This is due to the government's lockdown or quarantine rules as an effort to restrict the number of persons who may be exposed to the COVID-19 virus, including the activities in educational institutions (Abidah et al., 2020). Our pre assumption was that as the students did not perform in front of an audience, they would not be shy or nervous. However, no evidence performing the online mode would make students feel confident and have no barriers. This study, therefore, tried to investigate the students' performance of storytelling using a video recorder. We developed two research questions as follows:

1. Does storytelling conducted through video recording enhance the students' oral performance?
2. What are the difficulties that the students face in performing recorded storytelling?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review consists of some overviews of storytelling in English language teaching, the benefits, oral presentation, and previous studies.

### 2.1 Storytelling in English Language Teaching

There are several definitions of storytelling depending on its type, way, and function. Traditionally, storytelling is the act of passing out a story to a listener (Anderson, 2010). In English language learning, storytelling is related to students' effort to perform a story to other students in good English (Akhyak & Indramawan, 2013; Samantaray, 2014).

There are several benefits of storytelling. For instance, storytelling enhances students' competencies in reading practice (Anggraini et al., 2021). Stories are also a means of delivering language to students. According to Saunders (1997), there are at least ten benefits of a story, some of which are that it increases language awareness, helps students build empathy as well as community, teaches us that our gesture, act, and choice bring consequences in the future, and teaches us to be human. Furthermore, Paul (2012) stipulates that when a teacher reads a story, students who listen to it can improve their vocabulary including syntax and sentence structure.

Gill (2013) states that when performing a kind of drama, students can experience paralanguage and use expressive voices. The story will give positive emotions that can enhance students' long-term memory in language learning (Zlesakova, 2005). Furthermore, the use of creative props (Stadler & Ward, 2010), can additionally gain the audience's interest in listening to the story (Mujahidah et al., 2021). Storytelling in EFL classes has been found to improve students' four language skill competencies (Atta-Alla, 2012), especially in speaking performance (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2018; Yan & Zhao, 2019), build vocabulary, comprehension, story sequencing, and improve listening and communication skills (Samantaray, 2014).

## 2.2 Telling Narrative Genre Story

The term narrative may mean differently in various contexts. In the online Merriam-Webster dictionary, the narrative is categorized into nouns and adjectives based on its meaning. For nouns, the narrative is defined as 'something that is narrated'. For adjectives, the narrative is defined as 'having the form of a story or representing a story' (Merriam-Webster, 2022). However, in the Indonesian curriculum, the narrative genre is one type of text genre that aims to amuse or entertain the readers and this genre is one of the texts studied at schools (Jaya, 2017). The text begins with orientation (introduction), followed by several events, and ended with a resolution/coda (Hastuti et al., 2020). Meanwhile, Eggins and Slade (1997) mention five elements of telling a story, especially narrative and anecdote, i.e., (1) abstract, (2) orientation, (3) remarkable events, (4) reactions, and (5) coda. An abstract is a part of the introduction or beginning of the story, orientation emphasizes 'who, what, when, and where' followed by some events introducing an end with a coda or how the story ends. The events in the narrative story are listed by sequences (Norrick, 2000).

In the national curriculum for junior and senior high school year 2013 (*Kurikulum 2013* or *K13*, literally translated as Curriculum 2013) in Indonesia, the narrative genre is introduced at the junior high school level (Tachia & Loeneto, 2018). There are some types of narrative text: myth, fairytale, fiction, and bedtime stories (Anrasiyana, 2021). In learning a narrative text, students are required to have the ability to understand the purpose of the text, its organization, and its language features.

## 2.3 Oral Presentation Aspects

The oral presentation is one way to develop students' competence in speaking. Hammad (2020) claims that oral presentation should improve students' speaking performance and reduce their anxiety. Accordingly, Liu et al. (2018) further believed that cooperative group work would bring out better results in lessening students' anxiety in language learning. In relation to speaking, for Karimy and Pishkar (2017), the correct pronunciation is the key to success for listeners to understand the words that speakers are saying. They add that the other aspects of speaking such as stress, rhythm, and intonation are much more important so that the message delivered by speakers is understandable. Wright (1995, p. 16) claims that "the potential varieties of human voices include: pitch, volume, rhythm, softness/ harshness, pace, and

pauses. Making use of these varieties depends on a story, the personality of the teller, and the listeners". However, he further states that not many people make sufficient effort in telling a story, and thus produce monotone activities only (Wright, 1995).

The intonations of words produced differentiate written and spoken activities (Norrick, 2000) and thus make the oral presentation interesting. The presenter should prepare what they will use such as personal preparation and visual aids (Malderez, 2010). However, students who are not practicing spoken English may find it difficult to give an oral presentation (Harun et al., 2016), and students should have this communication skills such as speaking clearly and using proper expressions when telling a story (Samantaray, 2014) so that the oral presentation run smoothly.

#### 2.4 Storytelling through Video Recorder

For decades, the oral presentation has always been done in classrooms. Harun et al. (2016) agree that presenting a topic in a classroom may give benefits to students, one of which is that it gives a chance for students to communicate with others naturally. On the other hand, Putri (2018) argues that using storytelling is not a new idea and she agrees that storytelling presentation can be done through digital storytelling (DST). The term DST emphasizes more on the use of digital technology to create a story such as using PowerPoint, images, and sound embedded. These terms may be slightly different from a video recorder, in which the students themselves present the story without using any of those tools.

Li and Peng (2018) agree that presentation by video also gives some benefits for students: (1) video is a reflective tool that enables students to reflect on their performance, (2) students' authenticity of the performance is shown, (3) video recorded can be played many times and enable students to watch and learn from it, (4) video can be shared via internet or WA or any suitable platforms, and this enables group discussion, and (5) students can learn new approaches in learning.

Asma (2021) further revealed that speaking activities using a video camera through smartphones can reduce students' anxiety, especially EFL students. As evidenced in the study, the Indonesian students' anxiety decreased because they were given more time before performing by recording with their video cameras, thus better prepared, and their self-confidence was boosted. They were also challenged by using the smartphone video camera method as an innovation in the speaking class.

In terms of storytelling activities, they must follow certain guidelines. Brewster et al. (2002, p. 22) mention several guidelines for EFL students:

- starting the story from a short or an easier one,
- attracting audiences' attention by making sure that everyone is watching and listening to the storyteller,
- reading or telling the story slowly so that everyone can understand,
- asking questions or giving some comments,
- participating, repeating, and paraphrasing the sentences,
- using gestures, mime, facial expressions, and
- using different tones and volumes of speaking.

Adapting several of these steps should gradually enhance students' ability to perform better.

## **2.5 Previous Studies**

A study on storytelling to enhance students' speaking performance was conducted by [Li and Peng \(2018\)](#) involving 30 university students in China. The students were asked to make oral presentations using videos. The results showed that doing presentations with videos was interesting and fun for the students. They were also confident to do the task. However, the study also revealed that the students had difficulties recording videos, and they were worried about their self-image; therefore, the activity was very time-consuming. This study claims that even though no audience was watching the presentation directly, the students were still concerned about their self-image which affected their self-confidence.

Another study was by [Zuhriyah \(2017\)](#), who conducted collaborative action research investigating the use of storytelling to improve students' speaking skills. The samples were 23 students studying in the second semester at the Intensive English Program at Hasyim Asy'Ari University, Indonesia. The result revealed that after the second cycle, students' speaking performance improved in comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation aspects. A similar study was also conducted by [Akhyak and Indramawan \(2013\)](#) to implement storytelling for speaking practice for college students at Pangeran Diponegoro Islamic College (STAI), Indonesia. The results of their study revealed that storytelling improved the students' vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and content. The study also highlights that storytelling enhances the students' motivation and enthusiasm.

[Zuhriyah \(2017\)](#), however, only studied the language aspects, while the study by [Li and Peng \(2018\)](#) focused on the non-linguistic aspects, such as self-image and time-consumption in doing the storytelling task. In the meantime, [Akhyak and Indramawan \(2013\)](#) concentrated more on motivation. The current study, however, looks into both aspects: language and non-language aspects as both should be integrated into students' oral performances.

## **3. METHOD**

The study used a qualitative approach to collect data. The following is a description of the research participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

### **3.1 Participants**

A total of 19 students studying at the Department of English Education, Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, Indonesia, were the participants of this study. We selected the samples purposively, in which all students enrolled in the Drama in ELT course during the pandemic of COVID-19 in the year 2021, a compulsory course for the English major students at the university. At the time of data collection, the participants were in their fourth to the sixth semester of study. The rationale for choosing the students as the sample for the study was that they were students majoring in English, and were being trained to be teachers once they graduate from the university. Therefore, they should have the knowledge and skills necessary to perform storytelling activities. Storytelling is an integral part of oral language skills

and teacher trainees need to develop the skills necessary to be competent teachers (Vitali, 2016).

### 3.2 Instruments

Data were collected from the videos that the participants uploaded on the Edmodo platform. Each student sent a video as a part of their final exam. The students themselves became the subject of the data. The data were collected from the students' oral performances which included their language performance and non-language performance.

The second instrument used for data collection was interviews. Four interviews were conducted with two male and two female students through WhatsApp. The students were asked four questions related to the barriers that the students faced while performing storytelling activities such as whether or not they had problems preparing props (El Enein, 2011), gestures (Brewster et al., 2002), and using the right pitch, volume, rhythm, softness/ harshness, pace, and pauses (Wright, 1995) on their performances. The students were coded as S1, S2, S3, and S4.

### 3.3 Data Collection Procedure

The students were assigned to retell a story in a narrative genre in 4-10 minutes. They could select any type of narrative story: a fable, legend, myth, or fairy tale. They were instructed to retell the story which included the element of the narrative genre: abstract, orientation, events, reactions a coda (Eggins and Slade, 1997). Each student recorded his or her performance by using a video recorder, or from his or her mobile phone. They were asked to perform their storytelling in interesting and interactive ways. They had the flexibility to choose their own setting and place to suit the story being told.

The teacher set some instructions for students when they recorded their oral performance. Those were:

- (1) the recording should not 'play and pause'. So the video would show students' real time spent including when they uttered fillers, such as 'ums', 'uhs' and 'ers', or kept silent because they tried to memorize the script.
- (2) the video should not be edited, and
- (3) must use props relevant to the story.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The students were informed about the criteria used to assess their storytelling activity. The components in the criteria are the language and non-language aspects.

#### 3.4.1 Non-language aspects

Since storytelling is part of the drama, the teacher assessed not only the students' English ability but also aspects of storytelling assessment such as dress code, voice modulation, eye contact, gesture, confidence level, and overall performance. These assessment criteria were adapted from Harun et al. (2016). Table

1 shows the rubric used to assess the storytelling activity performed by the participants of the study.

**Table 1.** Rubric for non-language aspect assessment (Harun et al., 2016).

Criteria	1	2	3	4
Dress code	Do not wear appropriate dresses for the characters.	Use and wear one or two costumes.	Use and wear one or two costumes or some properties to support the characters in the story.	Use and wear costumes based on all characters in the story. The properties are also used to support the characters in the story.
Voice modulation	Flat, the voices of the characters are not different.	There is a slight rising and falling of voice intonation but the teller can only switch to two voices of the characters.	Using more than two voice tones between characters and the intonation is almost perfect.	Excellent pronunciation, excellent use of rising and falling tone, able to switch voices of all characters.
Eye contact, movement	No eye contact and no gesture.	Very limited eye contact and gesture.	Maintain eye contact and use many gestures based on the story.	Maintain eye contact at all times, use movements and gestures and sometimes greet the audience.

(a) *Dress code*

In telling narrative stories, the storytellers should prepare the properties based on the story (El Enein, 2011). For example, Pinocchio's style is different from other narrative stories. When someone is presenting Pinocchio, they should also wear a costume that reminds the audience of Pinocchio such as a long nose and hat. The more complete the props were used, the better the score that a student would achieve.

(b) *Voice modulation*

The human's capability in speaking includes pitch, volume, rhythm, softness/harshness, pace, and pauses (Wright, 1995). Non-verbal language such as gesture, posture, expression, and others are important for students to engage with the story and audience (Healtfield, 2015). As these aspects would make the story more interesting, they were included in the assessment. For example, a storyteller should switch voices and sounds according to the characters in a story. Cinderella, for example, is a famous story that consists of more than one famous character, there is also a fairy godmother, a prince, the stepmother, and the stepsisters. Students with talent should be able to switch voices when they speak on behalf of Cinderella, the prince, or other characters in the story. The more characters are represented, the more different voices a student should use. It is also important to use high and low tones when telling a story. The ability to convey emotions such as anger, excitement,

happiness, and sorrow (i.e., emotive narratives) is also essential to make the story more interesting and engage with the audience (Namaziandost et al., 2020).

(c) *Eye contact, gesture, and movement*

Storytelling requires the storyteller to use eye contact (El Enein, 2011), gestures, and body movement (Brewster et al., 2002; Samantaray, 2014). Facial expression and gestures are effective ways to deliver meaning to audiences (Lipman, 1999). The study teller can move, turn around, sit, stand, jump and use other actions to attract the audience. Silviyanti et al. (2020) add that students can use their gestures, mimes, and facial expressions when they have difficulty saying sentences.

### 3.4.2 Language aspects

For the language aspects, the assessment criteria were adapted from Saeed et al. (2019) who establish a speaking rubric for advanced levels ranging from 1 to 4 scales: (1) bad, (2) fairly bad, (3) good, and (4) excellent. Table 2 presents the criteria of language assessment used in the present study.

**Table 2.** Language assessment (Saeed et al., 2019).

Aspects	1	2	3	4
Communicative Ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>not able to communicate effectively with the audience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has difficulty communicating effectively with the audience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can communicate satisfactorily with the audience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can communicate effectively with the audience very well.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>hardly able to demonstrate good interactive ability in carrying out the discussion and maintaining eye contact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has difficulty demonstrating good interactive ability in carrying out the discussion and maintaining eye contact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can demonstrate interactive ability in carrying out the discussion and maintain eye contact satisfactorily.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can demonstrate interactive ability in carrying out the discussion and maintain eye contact very well.</li> </ul>
Fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>He/she hardly pronounces the individual words correctly.</li> <li>He/she is hardly able to express stress and intonation correctly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>He/she has difficulty speaking fluently and smoothly.</li> <li>He/she has difficulty speaking without pausing for too long.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>He/she speaks fluently and smoothly satisfactorily.</li> <li>He/she speaks without any pausing for too long satisfactorily.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>He/she speaks fluently and smoothly very well.</li> <li>He/she speaks without any pausing for too long very well.</li> </ul>
Pronunciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>He/she hardly pronounces the individual words correctly.</li> <li>He/she is hardly able to express stress and intonation correctly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>He/she has difficulty pronouncing the individual words correctly.</li> <li>He/she has difficulty expressing stress and intonation correctly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>He/she pronounces the individual words satisfactorily.</li> <li>He/she is satisfactorily able to express stress and intonation correctly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>He/she pronounces the individual words very well.</li> <li>He/she can express stress and intonation very well.</li> </ul>

Table 2 continued...

Grammar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He/she hardly uses a range of accurate and correct grammar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He/she has difficulty using a range of accurate and correct grammar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He/she uses a range of accurate and correct grammar satisfactorily</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He/she uses a range of accurate and correct grammar very well</li> </ul>
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He/she hardly uses a wide range of vocabulary effectively.</li> <li>• He/she hardly uses appropriate vocabulary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He/she has difficulty using a wide range of vocabulary effectively.</li> <li>• He/she has difficulty using appropriate vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He/she uses a wide range of vocabulary satisfactorily.</li> <li>• He/she uses appropriate vocabulary satisfactorily.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He/she uses a wide range of vocabulary effectively and very well.</li> <li>• He/she uses appropriate vocabulary very well</li> </ul>

#### 4. RESULTS

The results of the students' oral performance and interviews were separated into two sections. The results from the students' oral presentations are presented based on the calculation of the mean score of each criterion. Meanwhile, the results from the interviews are presented in excerpts.

##### 4.1 The Students' Storytelling Oral Performance through Video

The results reveal that the students have difficulties in performing storytelling through the video. Table 3 shows the mean of each category.

**Table 3.** Mean score of the students' oral performance.

Aspects	Assessment category	Mean	Meaning
Non-language	Dress code	2.1	Fairly bad
	Voice modulation	2.3	Fairly bad
	Eye contact, movement, and gesture	2.6	Fairly bad
Language	Communicative performance	1.2	Bad
	Fluency	3	Good
	Pronunciation	3.2	Good
	Grammar	3.2	Good
	Vocabulary use	3	Good

Surprisingly, from eight aspects of the assessment, four categories were either bad or fairly bad (i.e., dress code, voice modulation, eye contact, movement, gesture, and communicative performance). For non-language assessment, the dress code had the lowest point ( $M = 2.1$ ), which means that almost all students did not use appropriate dress related to the story they performed. For example, some students performed 'Little Red Riding Hood', but they wore their daily dress, not the costumes that portrayed the characters in this story. Some students brought a hat and a veil to show the differences between the two characters they performed (i.e., the grandma and the little girl). Unfortunately, this is not enough for a drama performance.



For voice modulation,  $M = 2.3$  (fairly bad). Although voice variation is one of the essential components of effective storytelling, the majority of the students could not use voice variation. The students did not change their voices as they presented different characters in a story. Next, the mean score for eye contact while telling the stories was not any better ( $M = 2.6$ ). For non-language assessment, the scores of all criteria were still low.

For linguistics assessment, the communicative criteria received the lowest score ( $M = 1.2$ ). The participants did not have any form of communicative interaction with the audience. For example, they did not either greet the audience when they first opened their speech or greeted the audience in the middle or at the end of their performance. They acted as if they performed alone, and nobody watched them. One reason for this is that they did not perform it on stage in front of their audience, so they ignored the audiences who watched the recorded version.

For fluency ( $M = 2.8$ ), the average score shows that it is relatively almost good. However, from the video, we found that the students had memorized the content of the story. Sometimes, the students forgot what they had memorized, but they still attempted to continue the story. The mean for grammar also reveals the same level of performance ( $M = 2.9$ ). Finally, the students showed that they had an adequate vocabulary and, even though some of the participants had to pause the story for several seconds, they tried hard to use their own vocabulary to tell the story.

## 4.2 Difficulties in Performing Recorded Storytelling of a Narrative

### 4.2.1 Not able to use appropriate props

From the interviews, it was revealed that the participants did not have the appropriate dress and other materials that were related to the story they were telling.

- (1) I tried my best, but I think I didn't wear the perfect clothes that matched the characters of the story. The reason is I'm a little bit overwhelmed when I have to change the clothes in a short time because the character changed very often and quickly. So, I made it simple by using a specific thing for every character so that the audience can differentiate them. (S1)
- (2) No, I don't. Because the story that I choose (the wolf and the crane) is a bit hard to be represented with dress and accessories because the story is related to animals' behavior. (S2)
- (3) I don't think I have worn the proper dress and accessories in that storytelling video. Because it is so hard to find dresses and accessories I could use when I'm not in my house. I mean, as someone who lives far from my parents, I can only use stuff I have in my room (dormitory). But I do believe, I already did my best. (S3)
- (4) Yes and no. For costumes, I don't have any costumes that are relevant to represent the story, but I think I have used related stuff such as plates and swords that support the story I told. (S4)

The students' claims were in line with the fact that the dress code and properties used was the lowest score for the non-language assessment. However, the videos showed that the students have tried to use some properties to support their performances. There were some props used such as hats, stones, and others, that they could use within reach in their own homes or dormitory.

#### *4.2.2 Lack of eye contact, switching voices, and use of gestures*

The second result found was about their difficulties to fulfil the assessment criteria (see Table 2).

- (5) For me, the most difficult thing was maintaining eye contact, using gestures, and movement. Because when I told the story I had to remember the plot of the story so I did not focus on maintaining eye contact with the audience and neither doing gestures or moving. But I think voice switching between characters is not a big problem for me. (S4)
- (6) Based on my own experience, the most difficult aspect is voice switching between characters, because I have to explore and try to find some new sounds from my own voice. I have a deep voice that makes it harder to explore, especially when there are so many characters in one story. When I'm trying to focus on the storyline inside my head, at the same time I have to think to which character I should use this kind of voice. But for me, eye contact, gesture, and movement are not really difficult. When I understand the storyline, I try to get into every character, next, eye contact, gesture, and movement will automatically follow each character. (S1)
- (7) Voice switching between characters is the easiest because it's so simple to do and effective. And dress code is more difficult because it needed extra effort to make it look real. After all, it's a story about an animal. (S2)
- (8) The easiest aspect is voice switching. I sometimes do dub in my room, for fun, and I'm used to reading storybooks to my little brother which needs me to switch my voice from one character to another. The most difficult one is eye contact, gesture, and movements. Actually, I was a theatre performer in my previous high school and used to do well in maintaining eye contact, gestures, and movements on stage. But in this situation, which was recorded by phone only, it was so hard because I had a small space. (S3)

Almost all of the students admitted that maintaining eye contact, doing movements, and using gestures were difficult. From the video, we observed that most students just stood still when they told the story. They faced the camera, but their eyes looked somewhere else, and they did not move. It seems that the participants were reluctant to perform as they realized their video would be watched by their lecturers. However, three interviewees admitted that switching voices among characters was not very difficult. But from the performance via recorded videos, we observed that the students could only do two kinds of different voices for two characters. It was difficult for them to change to the third or fourth voice. Therefore, it was noted that the voice of the third character was the same as the first character. We believe that this is a skill that not everybody has because a talented storyteller can have different voices after receiving specific training.

#### *4.2.3 Difficulty in remembering the script*

The third result that we found was about students' difficulty when telling narrative stories.

- (9) I had difficulty remembering the script. I'm not good at memorizing things. I needed to do a few practices before the final video, but when I was recording the final one, I knew I missed some stuff. (S3)

- (10) I do, keeping eye contact, making the gesture, moving, switching voices, and remembering the dialogue in the story altogether at the same time are a bit difficult because they needed extra effort and focus to make the storytelling look good. (S2)
- (11) I don't think that I have any difficulties in telling a story that I already know. But, if I tell a new story, it will be a little bit hard for me to remember and stay focused on the storyline without making too many improvements and I sometimes forget what to say. (S1)
- (12) I find it difficult to recall the story because I was nervous. (S4)

Some students reported that the challenge they faced was recalling the story they have memorized. We observed from the video that some students tried to recall when they forgot the story. Some kept silent for a while then continued telling the story after they remembered.

#### 4.2.4 *Need somebody else to do the recording*

Unlike the barriers that the students faced above, they did not have any problems with their mobile phones because all of the students had good smartphones. However, another problem found was that they needed somebody else to record their performance and set the place to suit the setting of the story. This is as elaborated by S1 in (13).

- (13) Honestly, it was difficult for me to find someone who would record the video, because the work was time-consuming, and I had to retake the video if I did mistakes since I could not record it by myself. And it was also difficult to set and describe the unreal places. I mean my story is about the forest, but I recorded it in my backyard. I described that the atmosphere was frightening and dark, yet, I recorded the story when the weather was very sunny. But I have learned that storytelling was a great experience for me because I learned many new things. (S1)

## 5. DISCUSSION

The results of the study reveal that the students of the English Education Department did not obtain good scores for their performances. Overall, students were reluctant to do the actions even though they just recorded the acts and did not perform directly in front of an audience. This result contradicts [Hammad's](#) that oral presentation should reduce students' anxiety. However, in this class, students still had barriers even though they acted alone, and recording their performance did not help them in doing better performance. This finding also contradicts [Rachmawaty and Hermagustiana \(2015\)](#). Most of the participants in this study just stood in front of the camera and started telling stories. Some participants avoided looking at the camera and some did not make any movements when performing. This is similar to the Palestinian EFL students when performing storytelling ([El Enein, 2011](#)). Others did not use any gestures or movements such as nodding their heads, turning around, walking around, and others.

Participants failed in almost all categories of assessments. The lowest part of the non-language criterion was for the dress code. The props used were also not enough to support the performance, meanwhile, the literature notes that props give a positive effect on the use of descriptive language in storytelling ([Stadler & Ward, 2010](#)) and gain the interest of the audience ([Mujahidah et al., 2021](#)). Therefore, this

led to the students' failure to successfully perform narrative stories in terms of non-language aspects. This finding is supported by the students' interviews. They admitted that they did not have good props for the narrative stories they told. Actually, to overcome this problem, students can work in groups to prepare handmade props. Members of groups can help other members and this will not be very costly. Furthermore, to improve the students' performance, they are expected to perform with the real audience for engagement and improve their speaking practice (Brewster et al., 2002). Students working cooperatively would gain greater knowledge, increase their performance and reduce their anxiety (Liu et al., 2018). However, since the course was conducted during the pandemic of COVID-19, the students were not able to work in groups due to the social restrictions ordered from the government (Abidah et al., 2020).

Another weakness noted among the participants was on maintaining eye contact, using gestures, and making movements. Tatsuki (2015) agrees that eye contact and gesture, as well as voice tone, are important. Maintaining eye contact with the audience means that students are confident to perform (El Enein, 2011). This means that teacher educators should create opportunities for their students to develop storytelling skills and encourage them to involve the audience during storytelling performances (Yan & Zhao, 2019). This includes encouraging students to greet the audience by asking a question such as, 'Do you know who Cinderella is?', 'Are you happy with Pinocchio's action?' and so on. By asking some questions, students will not neglect the audience even though the audience is not present directly in front of them (Karanian, 2016).

For language aspects, students obtained relatively good scores for fluency, vocabulary, and grammar. This means that the mistakes that occurred during the storytelling did not affect the message being delivered, and overall, the presentation went smoothly. However, since the participants are the students of the English Education Department, they still need a lot of practice to improve their speaking ability. Teachers can use storytelling practice by following steps suggested by Brewster et al. (2002) such as selecting a story from a short one or an easier one. When they improve their speaking performance, the student can choose to tell longer stories. So, time spent should be applied from 1-3 minutes talk to 3-5 minutes talk and continue to 5-10 minutes talk.

We suggest English teachers use storytelling practice following the procedure suggested by Brewster et al. (2002). We also suggest following several steps: 1. working in group/pair, (2) selecting a story, (3) creating props, (4) practicing in groups, (5) practicing in front of audiences, (6) recording performances, and (7) watching students' performances together and giving peer and teacher feedback. We believe that there is a need to conduct action research following the steps proposed by Brewster et al. (2002) because it will reveal more valuable insight into English language learning development. Furthermore, the Department of English Education at Universitas Syiah Kuala and elsewhere could improve students' oral presentation skills and performance skills by incorporating a storytelling competition into compulsory courses.

## 6. CONCLUSION

To conclude, the students who took part in the storytelling activity did not do very well in their non-language aspects but relatively well in their language aspects. In terms of non-language aspects, their eye contact, gesture and movement, dress code, voice modulation, and communicative performance needed improvement. Despite there were improvements in their fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary used during the Drama in ELT course, the self-alone performance was found to not assist the students in reducing their anxiety or improving their confidence.

The obstacles faced by the students in conducting storytelling through videos were not able to use appropriate props for their performance, lack of eye contact, switching voices, use of gestures, difficulty in remembering the script, and needing somebody else to do the recording for them. These barriers could have been resolved if the task was done in groups. However, due to the COVID-19 social restriction throughout the country, group work was not possible at the time of the research.

The findings of this study have to be seen in light of some limitations. It is limited to only one class consisting of 19 students, and therefore, the results cannot be generalized to all EFL students. Therefore, future studies with a larger sample size are encouraged, and perhaps even from different EFL contexts to complement the findings from this study.

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## Assessing Episodes in Verbalization Process of EFL Students' Collaborative Writing

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### Abstract

*One of the ways to engage EFL students in writing is to assign them to work collaboratively. Collaborative writing requires a verbalization process resulting in episodes related to language, texts, and scaffolds. This study examined the use of episodes in collaborative writing of EFL students set in pairs by the teacher. It identified the most productive type of episodes which include language-related episodes (LREs), text-related episodes (TREs), and scaffolding episodes (SEs). It also scrutinized the categories of episodes within each type of episode. The study involved 20 pairs of Indonesian students from the English Department of a reputable university in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The students were given an integrated reading-writing task and asked to work in pairs. The results of the study showed that SEs were the most productive type of episode, followed by LREs in the moderate occurrence, and TREs, which were the least productive type of episode. The results also revealed that among the categories in each type of episode, lexis-focused (LREs), organization-focused (TREs), and repetition (SEs) were more productive than the other categories of episodes. These results imply that the most productive categories of*

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*episodes could be catalysts in the teaching of writing, which employs collaborative writing tasks either in pairs or in small groups. This study offers insights into creating activities to encourage writing activities that especially involve types of pairings.*

**Keywords:** Collaborative writing, English as a foreign language (EFL), episodes, pairings, verbalization process.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Various types of tasks can be assigned to students when teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) writing. The students can be asked to work either individually or collaboratively in the process of completing their writing activities. Unlike individual writing, which requires the students to be more active in their thinking process, collaborative writing expects students to be cognitively active and socially engaged (Deveci, 2018). Social engagement in collaboration is apparent in the verbalization process that occurs during interaction and meaning negotiation (Zhang, 2018). The verbalization process in collaborative writing is an operationalization of language learning (Li & Kim, 2016).

In collaborative writing, the verbalization process comprises several types of episodes. One of the types is language-related episodes (LREs). LREs are defined as occurrences in collaborative dialogue in which students negotiate explicitly about the language they are producing, question their language, or correct themselves or others (Leeser, 2004; Swain & Lapkin, 1998). Studies about LREs have introduced several categories of LREs that could be grouped into three major categories based on the linguistic focus that the students negotiate. They are forms of grammar, lexicon or lexis, and mechanics, and three categories are based on the quality of the problem-solving outcome, i.e., correctly solved, incorrectly solved, and unsolved (Kim & McDonough, 2008; Leeser, 2004; Niu et al., 2018). Mozaffari (2017) found that the teacher-assigned pairs produced significantly more LREs than the students' self-selected pairs, and these pairs tend to produce more off-task episodes. Several research studies have explored the categories, quantity, and quality of LREs (Kim & McDonough, 2008; Leeser, 2004; Niu et al., 2018; Storch & Aldosari, 2013; Watanabe & Swain, 2007).

Other types of episodes in the verbalization process during collaborative writing include text-related episodes (TREs) and scaffolding episodes (SEs). TREs are defined as any episodes in which learners talk about text development, including the discussion about the content and organization of the text (Neumann & McDonough, 2015; Watanabe, 2014). On the other hand, SEs are defined as the language-mediated process provided by a peer to achieve a higher-level performance that was previously beyond the learner's existing level of ability (Hanjani & Li, 2014; Hassaskhah & Mozaffari, 2015; Mozaffari, 2017; Watanabe, 2014). The present study addresses the three types of episodes in the verbalization process during collaborative writing.

This study has been inspired by the quest for unfolding the best ways in managing pairings of learners within the variety of types of episodes in the verbalization process of collaborative writing for the optimal learning outcome. Previous studies (e.g., Adodo & Agbayewa, 2011; Fauziah & Latief, 2016; Maftoon

& Ghafoori, 2009; Zamani, 2016) on pair collaborative writing have concentrated on two separated areas, experimental studies on the effect of proficiency pairings on the EFL students' writing ability and descriptive studies on the collaborative process that occurs as observed through the verbalization process. In relation to the first area, the findings of existing studies (e.g., Adodo & Agbayewa, 2011; Fauziah & Latief, 2016; Maftoon & Ghafoori, 2009; Zamani, 2016) have provided mixed conclusions and, therefore, created space for further investigation, notably using different research designs that could integrate both writing outcome (after intervention) and the pair writing process. The second area also needs more exploration since the previous studies (e.g., Kim & McDonough, 2008; Leeser, 2004; Niu et al., 2018; Storch & Aldosari, 2013; Watanabe & Swain, 2007) mostly compared the collaborative writing process between pair and individual writing in strictly controlled and free writing tasks. Other comparisons that could describe how proficiency pairings (heterogeneous pairs and homogenous pairs) are negotiated in integrated writing tasks (such as in reading-writing tasks) are not yet available. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill in these identified gaps.

Studies on TREs and SEs are not as comprehensive as those on LREs. Most studies compared the TREs and SEs between individual writing and pair collaborative writing (Hanjani & Li, 2014; Neumann & McDonough, 2015; Watanabe, 2014). Therefore, the present study focused on the area which has not been adequately studied, that is, the variety of types of episodes in the verbalization process of collaborative writing. Accordingly, this study is intended to answer the following research questions:

1. Which type of episode is the most productive in the verbalization process of collaborative writing?
2. Which episode category is the most productive from each type of episode in the verbalization process of collaborative writing?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 EFL Writing and Pedagogical Approaches**

It has been widely accepted that writing is a complex language skill, and therefore it is expected that EFL students find it difficult, also partly because the language is not their mother tongue. Writing is complex because, first, it needs to undergo some stages (Karim et al., 2017). There are at least three stages in writing, namely, planning, execution, and evaluation (Rosário et al., 2019) and the extended version covers eight stages, consisting of prewriting, planning, drafting, pausing, reading, revising, editing, and publishing (Williams, 2003). Second, the written product should be presented in a particular structure, which includes an introduction, body, and conclusion (Oshima & Hogue, 2007), or it has to follow the generic structure of certain genres (Dirgeyasa, 2016). Finally, to produce a good piece of writing, a writer has to be aware of the components that affect readers' judgment of the writer's ability in writing, namely content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanical aspects (Weigle, 2002). Due to the complexity of writing, attempts have been made to help language learners in general or EFL learners, in particular, to learn how to write.

The ability of EFL students to produce a piece of writing has always been a challenge. There are three main pedagogical approaches suggested in the teaching of writing, i.e., text-oriented approach, writer-oriented approach, and reader-based approach (Hyland, 2016). A text-oriented approach, parallel to a product-oriented approach (Nunan, 1999, p. 272) views “texts-as-autonomous objects” and highlights the writing product; therefore, this approach concerns more the error-free sentences and language forms, i.e., grammar, syntax, and mechanics (Hyland, 2016). Matched to this view is a quantitative measure utilizing T-unit, error-free, and word count analysis for each writing aspect, i.e., complexity, accuracy, and fluency (Issacson, 1988). In addition, a text-oriented approach also considers text-as-discourse, which corresponds to “a discourse-based approach” (Nunan, 1999, p. 287), as well as a genre-based approach (Hyland, 2003) that views writing ability as the ability to create coherent and cohesive discourses following suggested structures.

In contrast to the text-oriented approach, which concentrates on the product, the writer-oriented approach views writing as a personal expression, cognitive process, and a situated act. Therefore, writing ability in a writer-oriented approach is linear to a process-based approach (Nunan, 1999) and is defined as the ability to plan and develop ideas and then use specific revision and editing practices to finalize the draft in a provided context (Hyland, 2016; Yi, 2009). The reader-oriented approach views writing as social interaction, social construction, power, and ideology. A reader-oriented approach emphasizes the reader’s awareness; therefore, a reader-oriented approach considers a successful writer as one who can assume the readers’ perception and expectations and balance those assumptions into the relevant structure and content of the discourse, so that the writing activity can serve its communicative purpose (Hyland, 2003, 2016).

In the field of second language writing, the integration of language comprehension and production, particularly reading-writing, is receiving growing attention because numerous real-life writings are composed in response to a text (or texts) demanding a high degree of reading skills to integrate the input materials into the written response (Plakans & Gebril, 2012; Weigle, 2004). Some studies have compared the composition process and the writing quality between writing-only tasks (independent writing) and reading-to-write tasks (integrated writing) (Plakans & Gebril, 2012). According to this integrated approach, writing ability is defined as the ability to gather information, develop thoughts, and then write to produce an organized response that incorporates selected information from the available sources.

## 2.2 Collaborative Writing and Verbalization Process

Collaborative writing is understood as a joint production or co-authoring of a text by two or more writers (Storch, 2018). It emphasizes joint ownership because the writers are engaged in the whole writing process or partial writing activities such as group planning or peer editing (Storch, 2018). The effectiveness of collaborative writing, compared to individual writing to promote writing ability, has been confirmed by several researchers (Khatib & Meihami, 2015; Shehadeh, 2011). Factors contributing to the quality of collaboration and the outcome of collaborative writing have been reported, more particularly regarding language proficiency and patterns of interactions (Watanabe & Swain, 2007), the task variation (Kim & McDonough, 2011;

McDonough & Fuentes, 2015), and member personality, collaboration experience and cultural values (Rezeki, 2016).

In pair collaborative writing, in particular, the quality depends on the equality and mutuality (Storch, 2005) of the interaction process between peers, which is known as the verbalization process (Watanabe, 2014), or previously known as ‘*linguaging*’, as well as collaborative dialogue (Swain & Lapkin, 1998). The verbalization process is defined as the dialogue in which speakers are engaged in problem-solving and knowledge building (Swain & Lapkin, 2002). In the case of L2 learners’ interactions, the verbalization process is the dialogue in which learners work together to solve linguistic problems and/or co-construct language or knowledge about language (Swain et al., 2002). The verbalization process mediates L2 learning since peers provide L2 learners with opportunities to engage in collaborative dialogue as they seek out and assist with language-related problems (Swain et al., 2002). In a controlled writing task, pairs tend to focus on grammatical issues, while in a free writing task, pairs tend to focus on lexis and discourse matters (Kim & McDonough, 2011; Leeser, 2004; Niu et al., 2018; Storch & Aldosari, 2013; Watanabe & Swain, 2007).

### 2.3 Episodes in the Verbalization Process

Several studies have used language-related episodes (LREs) instances of the verbalization process as a unit of analysis to examine the peer-peer dialogue as learners jointly engage in problem-solving tasks (e.g., Swain & Lapkin, 1998; Swain & Watanabe, 2012; Watanabe & Swain, 2007). An LRE is defined as any part of a dialogue where students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, correct themselves or others or reflect on their language use (Swain & Lapkin, 1998). LREs have been recognized as a valuable construct for understanding the process and product of L2 learning and have been used in peer-interaction research studies to identify the degree to which L2 learners address language-related problems, allowing for the systematic analysis of these episodes.

Extending peer interaction episode studies, several researchers have initiated the exploration of non-LREs by analyzing the frequency and/or categories of other types of episodes appearing in the verbalization process in the collaborative writing task, namely TREs (Watanabe, 2014) or content and organization episodes (Neumann & McDonough, 2015), scaffolding/non-scaffolding episodes (Hanjani & Li, 2014; Watanabe, 2014), and on/off-task episodes (Hanjani & Li, 2014; Mozaffari, 2017).

The investigation of the verbalization process, especially in reading-for-writing tasks, needs to be conducted to provide evidence that would help predict the LREs production of pairs when they work in reading-for-writing tasks. This task is more flexible than a controlled task (e.g., dictogloss) but less free than a free task (e.g., composition task). In the EFL field, there has been a growing interest in this kind of task. It represents real-world writing in that people usually read several reading texts first and then integrate the input materials into the writings (Chan et al., 2015). These led to the present study on the occurrences of a variety of types of episodes in the verbalization process of collaborative writing.

### 3. METHOD

The present study explored EFL students' verbalization process reflected in three types of episodes: language-related episodes (LREs), text-related episodes (TREs), and scaffolding episodes (SEs). It also examined the categories of episodes within each of the types of episodes. Twenty teacher-paired Indonesian EFL students of the English Department of a reputable private university in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, participated in this study. When the study was conducted, the students attended the Reading-Writing course offered in the department. The students were assigned to work collaboratively and required to write a short essay on the topic of 'How to Be a Good Parent'. Before starting to write, the students had a brainstorming activity about being parents. They also read a text about 'Strict and Relaxed Parents'. After brainstorming and reading the text, they worked in pairs to write the instructed essay. During the collaborative writing process, their verbal discussion was audio-recorded. The audio recordings were transcribed and examined.

The transcripts of the verbalization process during collaborative writing were categorized according to the types of episodes (LREs, TREs, and SEs). The LREs were related to any discussion about grammar and mechanics, and TREs dealt with any discussion about the content, the writing purpose, and the organization of the writing pieces. Finally, SEs covered any discussions within the collaborative writing, including those about language and text and other aspects to support each pair member to complete the given task.

Since language is multifaceted, it is possible that an episode does not exclusively belong to one category. One piece of data (episode) can also belong to more than one category. As the data of verbalization process source were collected from the spoken discourse, the indicator of each episode utilizes para-tones such as the boundary of topic markers, which include shallow pitch, even on lexical items, loss of amplitude, and a lengthy pause (Brown & Yule, 1983; McCarthy, 1991).

In this study, the investigation of the LREs, TREs, and SEs was firstly focused on the frequency of occurrences. The result of frequency analysis was in the form of numbers indicating the number of LREs, TREs, and SEs appearing in the interactions (Leeser, 2004; Swain & Lapkin, 1998). A descriptive quantitative approach was undertaken to offer results in the form of frequency evaluation. Then, the types and outcomes of the LREs were studied. The types were categorized into three (forms, lexis, and mechanics), and the outcomes were also categorized into three (correctly solved, incorrectly solved, and unsolved). Furthermore, the types of TREs were analyzed by categorizing them into two (content and organization). Finally, the SEs were investigated into several categories (repetition, elicitation, and justification) (Kim & McDonough, 2008; Leeser, 2004; Niu et al., 2018).

### 4. RESULTS

The results of the study were based on the analysis of the audio recording transcripts of the types of episodes and evaluation of students' collaborative writing products.

#### 4.1 The Most Productive Type of Episode

To answer the first research question about the most productive type of episode, all elicited episodes were counted and classified into their types. The results of the analysis of the three types of episodes (LREs, TREs, and SEs) in terms of occurrences and percentages are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Occurrences and percentages of episodes.

Types of episodes	Occurrences	Percentages
LREs	141	32.3
TREs	69	15.8
SEs	227	51.9
Total	437	100%

Table 1 shows that SEs achieved more than half of the number of occurrences (51.9%), making this episode the most productive type of episode. LREs are in the middle position with almost one-third of occurrences (32.3%), which is followed by TREs with only about one-sixth of occurrences (15.8%), indicating that this is the least productive type of episode.

#### 4.2 The Most Productive Category from Each Type of Episode

To answer the second research question, each episode was analyzed in greater detail. The results of evaluating the students' collaborative writing products revealed the categories within each of the three types of episodes.

##### 4.2.1 Categories of language-related episodes (LREs)

There are three categories of LREs identified in this study, i.e., form-focused LREs, lexis-focused LREs, and mechanics-focused LREs. In form-focused LREs, students discussed verb agreement. For example, they discussed that the options either 'said', 'says', or 'say' should agree to 'some people.' Then, the anonymous decision was to use 'say'. Then they realized that 'some people' was a plural noun. Another piece of discussion was on expressing ideas in a superlative sentence using comparative 'more' or superlative 'most' as in the sentence "parent was the most important in life" or "parent is the more important in our life". They opted for the word 'more' because they found that it suits the context better. Examples of lexis-focused LREs indicated that the students discussed the use of intensifiers 'very' or 'extremely'.

Next, the adverbs of time 'nowadays' or 'recently' were also discussed. In mechanics-focused LREs, a student did not know how to spell the word 'meritorious.' The use of punctuation in a sentence, either a comma (,) or a full stop (.), was also discussed. Table 2 displays the frequency of each LRE category produced during the recorded collaborative writing task. The students consistently paid very close attention to lexical matters rather than grammar or mechanics.

Table 2 indicates that the lexis-focused category is the most productive category of LREs, with a total number of nearly half of the occurrences (46.8%). Then, it was followed by the lexis-focused category with occurrences of more than one-third (34.8%). The mechanics-focused category was the least productive, with almost one-fifth of occurrences (18.4%).

**Table 2.** Occurrences and percentages of categories of LREs.

Categories of LREs	Occurrences	Percentages
Form-focused	49	34.8
Lexis-focused	66	46.8
Mechanics-focused	26	18.4
Total LREs	141	100%

The teacher-paired students produced three categories of outcomes: correctly solved, incorrectly solved, and unsolved. Examples of correctly solved outcomes of LREs were apparent when the students discussed the use of verb agreement 'has' or 'have' and the verb form after 'to'. Word choices were also deliberated. Incorrectly solved outcomes of LREs were seen when students discussed the use of 'both of...', whether they would use 'both of the kind', 'both of the kinds', or 'both of each' and incorrectly used predicates. Another mistake is word selection between 'everybody' or 'every child,' and the incorrect choice was made (i.e., everybody). The unsolved outcome of LREs was evident when students argued on how to translate an idea '*dengan batasan-batasan yang sudah disepakati*' [based on the agreed boundaries] into English. Translating words like '*bertengkar*' [argue] is also left unsolved. In the end, they neither made any conclusion nor did they write a relevant sentence to those issues in their final drafts. Table 3 illustrates the frequency of the outcomes of LREs.

**Table 3.** Occurrences and percentages of outcomes of LREs.

Categories of LRE outcomes	Categories of LREs	Occurrences	Percentages
Correctly Solved	Form-focused	40	83
	Lexis-focused	53	
	Mechanics-focused	24	
Incorrectly Solved	Form-focused	6	12
	Lexis-focused	9	
	Mechanics-focused	2	
Unsolved	Form-focused	3	5
	Lexis-focused	4	
	Mechanics-focused	0	
Total LREs		141	100%

Table 3 shows that the majority (83%) of LREs occurrences were categorized as correctly-solved outcomes, with the lexis-focused category being the most frequent LREs, followed by form-focused and mechanics-focused. Only a few LREs were in the incorrectly-solved category (12%) and the unsolved category (5%). These findings imply the students were more concerned with lexis-related issues and less with mechanics.

#### 4.2.2 Categories of text-related episodes (TREs)

Two categories of TREs were revealed from the study, namely organization-focused and content-focused categories. Table 4 presents the occurrences of categories found when the students talked about the organization or content of the essay they wrote.

Table 4 shows that the number of occurrences of the two categories of TREs was slightly different. However, the trends were almost similar, suggesting that there is a close relationship between the organization (50.74%) and content (49.26%).



**Table 4.** Occurrences and percentages of categories of TREs.

Categories of TREs	Occurrences	Percentages
Organization-focused	35	50.74
Content-focused	34	49.26
Total TREs	69	100%

Examples of categories of TREs include organization-focused and content-focused categories. Examples of organization-focused categories were apparent in the discussion of how to write the introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs. The examples of content-focused TREs were noted when students discussed the given topic, how to outline before writing the essay, and how to conclude.

#### 4.2.3 Categories of scaffolding episodes (SEs)

There were three categories of SEs exhibited by the students in the collaborative work, namely repetition, elicitation, and justification, as presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Occurrences and percentages of categories of SEs.

Categories of SEs	Occurrences	Percentages
Repetition	203	89.5
Elicitation	11	4.8
Justification	13	5.7
Total SEs	227	100%

Table 5 shows that the category of SEs that occurred most frequently was repetition (89.5%), followed by justification (5.7%), and elicitation (4.8%). Some examples of SEs shown by students during the audio-recorded collaborative writing task include three types of SEs: repetition, justification, and elicitation. The repetition category happened when students kept repeating the same words. They mentioned 'which', 'whether', 'and', 'between', 'we need to...', '...to educate...', 'reading', and '...parenting' several times throughout the conversations. Elicitation episodes occurred during the development of paragraphs. Sentences were constructed by eliciting a response by questioning each other. An argument on the usage of the phrase 'less of attention' and 'lack of attention' in a sentence is an example of justification episodes. In the writing process, a student proposed an outline consisting of five paragraphs (introduction, contents, closing paragraph), the other students agreed, and confirmation was made.

## 5. DISCUSSION

### 5.1 The Frequency of Occurrences of LREs

The present study has revealed that 141 categories of LREs were produced (see Table 2). Although the links between the number of LREs and language learning achievement are still being explored, previous studies have confirmed that LREs were sources of language learning (Swain & Lapkin, 1998; Swain & Watanabe, 2012; Watanabe & Swain, 2007). The trend found in this study should be perceived with caution because the data in this study are limited only to verbalized language. Non-

verbal language such as signs, mimes, and expressions that might happen during pair interactions was not captured. Furthermore, Table 2 has shown the categories of LREs as a trend that students paid especially close attention to lexis-focused LREs. These findings align with the previous studies, which found that intermediate learners would pay more attention to vocabulary issues (Kim, 2009; Niu et al., 2018). Additionally, paying more attention to the lexicon seems to be consistent with the result of a study conducted by Rahayu (2020), which shows that in the collaborative writing, the interactions among Indonesian-Indonesian pairs focused on 'the language-related aspects' mostly on lexical choice and the meaning, more than the mixed pairs of Indonesian-Chinese students.

The outcomes of the LREs indicate that the students' pairs could successfully resolve the LREs. This evidence strengthens the previous studies that pairs could scaffold each other during collaborative dialogues and eventually met the correct solution to their language problems (McDonough, 2004; Mozaffari, 2017; Storch, 2008; Watanabe & Swain, 2007). The other trend observed in Table 3 is that when there were unresolved LREs and incorrectly resolved episodes, pairs would prefer to avoid difficulties or matters that none of the members could decide. They resolved these problems by not continuing their discussion about the problems.

## **5.2 The Frequency of Occurrences of TREs**

The TREs were the least episodes produced after SEs and LREs. Previous studies have reported that the students' TREs depend on the writing topic and the nature of the writing task (Neumann & McDonough, 2015; Niu et al., 2018). In the current study, all pairs were given the same topic when they did the collaborative writing. The number of TREs was less than the other types of episodes since, in this study, the task was reading-for-writing. The pre-writing assigned reading texts much facilitated the students' content of the writing.

Students paid relatively equal attention to the organization-focused and content-focused categories of TREs (see Table 4). This finding contradicts the previous findings that collaborative pairs produced more content-focused TREs than organization-focused TREs (Neumann & McDonough, 2015). The contradiction might be a result of the difference in the pairing techniques and the writing task. In the previous study by Neumann and McDonough (2015), the pairing technique was not explicitly explained, and the students were assigned to produce free writing, while in the current study, the students were paired based on their proficiency and were assigned to complete integrated reading and writing tasks.

## **5.3 The Frequency of Occurrences of LREs**

There were 227 occurrences of categories of SEs produced by the students (see Table 5). In L2 learning, especially in collaborative tasks, scaffolding could be initiated by teachers and peers. In the current study, the teacher gave general feedback to students at the end of the lesson. During a pair of collaborative dialogues, however, the students talked to each other by producing scaffolding episodes. In addition to the effectiveness of teacher scaffolding (Vonna et al., 2015), peer scaffolding facilitates L2 learning (Donato, 2004; Watanabe & Swain, 2007). Scaffolding could increase the

students' motivation as they get immediate and relevant feedback from their peers (Dabao & Blum, 2013; Rezeki, 2016).

The most frequent category of SEs was repetition, followed by justification and elicitation. This is in line with the previous studies, which showed that repetition was the most frequent category of episodes during pair collaborative writing (Watanabe, 2014; Yoshida, 2008). The students in this study frequently repeated their peer's words or phrases. Repetition could be used as a cognitive strategy to acquire new words and memorize unfamiliar terms (DiCamilla & Anton, 1997). Justification and elicitation were less productive categories of SEs. Yet, the appearance of justification and elicitation categories of episodes showed that the pairs were engaged, and they complemented each other (Storch, 2008; Zhang, 2018). Such engagement could support the intensiveness of peer feedback. Previous studies have reported that peer feedback is effective for the learning of EFL writing (e.g., Cahyono & Amrina, 2016; Kusumaningrum et al., 2019).

## 6. CONCLUSION

To summarize, the results of this study indicated that students who were set in pairs mostly produced SEs, followed by LREs, and the least productive counterpart was TREs. In addition, the form-focused category of LREs, the organization-focused category of TREs, and the repetition category of SEs were the categories of episodes that were mostly produced during collaborative writings. Collaborative writing tasks have enabled the students to scaffold each other, emphasizing language forms and text developments and sharpening their collaboration strategies. The most frequent category of scaffolding episodes was repetition, followed by justification and elicitation. This may suggest that students need repetition in lesson delivery, too.

Students seem to have paid close attention to lexis-focused LREs. Therefore, teachers may consider teaching students more vocabulary acquiring strategies. As students could successfully resolve the LREs, teachers may focus on areas containing incorrectly resolved LREs and further encourage them to attempt the unsolved LREs. If left unchecked, students might continuously make the same mistakes or feel demotivated to seek answers to unsolved matters. Finally, students paid attention to the organization-focused and content-focused TREs in the context of a reading-for-writing task.

Overall, the study has unfolded the type of episodes which was the most productive in the verbalization process of collaborative writing and which categories of episodes were the most productive in the verbalization process of collaborative writing. The results could be a catalyst to a much-guided EFL teaching approach. In addition, the results could be valuable, especially for EFL teachers who are preparing sets of instructional materials and techniques to develop EFL students' writing skills.

This study results in some issues that need to be examined in the future. The small number of research subjects challenges the generalization of the research findings. Accordingly, future researchers could find accessible research sites that have more students in their writing classes. While the students in this study were all of a relatively similar age and had the same courses in the previous semesters, this study did not collect the students' perceptions and attitudes toward collaborative writing or make notes of their collaborative writing and their previous writing courses to weigh

the detailed equality of student background. Thus, further research studies could explore these research areas.

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## The Effectiveness of an Instructional Guide on Chinese Pre-Service EFL Teachers' Knowledge in Teaching Phonics

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### Abstract

*In China, phonics instruction has been given substantial emphasis ever since the implementation of the 2011 National English Curriculum for Compulsory Education. However, many Chinese students' learning outcome remains unsatisfactory due to EFL teachers' insufficient knowledge to teach phonics and the absence of a phonics instructional guide. To address this gap, this study aims to investigate the effects of a newly developed phonics instructional guide on Chinese pre-service EFL teachers' knowledge base to teach phonics. Adopting an experimental research design, the study was conducted at a teachers' college in Sichuan Province, China. There were 172 pre-service EFL teachers assigned into two equivalent groups, namely the experimental group (N=86) and control group (N=86), who took a test respectively before and after the intervention. The measures of the test included seven dimensions aiming to elicit knowledge of general phonics, phonetic system, phonemic awareness, phonics decoding rules, phonics instructions, reinforcement methods, and sight word instructions. The experimental group participants*

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*undertook a 15-hour phonics training course using the newly developed Phonics Instructional Guide (PHOInG). The control group participants were taught using a conventional method involving the use of an English textbook prescribed by the college. Results revealed that the Chinese pre-service EFL teachers in the experimental group improved significantly in their overall knowledge base of English phonics and phonics instruction, except for phonemic awareness and knowledge of the phonetic system. These findings point to the importance of using a needs-based and theoretically informed instructional guide when providing phonics and phonics instruction training to Chinese EFL pre-service teachers.*

**Keywords:** Phonics instruction, pre-service EFL teachers, instructional guide, knowledge base.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Chinese educational reform which took place in 2011 witnessed a call for a change in English language teaching when phonics instruction was given a greater emphasis in the newly launched National English Curriculum for Compulsory Education (NECCE). This is especially applicable for primary school students who are in their grade 1 to grade 6 of elementary education. Fundamentally, following this new curriculum, EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students are highly expected to master 26 letters in the English alphabet with basic concepts of phonemic awareness and the ability to grasp the basic letter-sound relationship to attain automaticity in word recognition. This grapho-phonics cueing system is essential in the early reading process (Gopal & Mahmud, 2018; Gopal & Singh, 2020). With the mastery of this knowledge, the EFL students are predicted to be able to achieve basic reading automaticity at the word level (Nasir et al., 2019).

Although all EFL instructors are made aware that teaching phonics will benefit EFL students in several aspects of skills enhancement, such as word recognition and spelling (He, 2018; Liu, 2019; Zhang, 2019), the expected student learning outcome remains unsatisfactory. This could be attributed to the poor implementation of phonics instruction due to EFL teachers' weak knowledge base to teach phonics (Long, 2019; Yan, 2018; Zhao, 2019; Zhong, 2020; Zhong & Kang, 2021). As reported in several previous studies conducted in the Chinese EFL learning context, most of the EFL teachers or novice teachers expressed that they lacked knowledge in general phonics and were often confused with the International Phonetic Alphabetic system which then caused them to be unable to identify phonics contents in the textbooks prescribed to them. In some instances, although the teachers could identify the phonics-related contents, they still preferred to teach them in the form of IPA which they were taught before (Zhao, 2019). Furthermore, some of them underestimated the function of phonics and chose to ignore phonics contents because they either did not know the value of phonics instruction or they had no idea how to teach them (Long, 2019; Yan, 2018).

In a similar vein, some novice EFL teachers expressed that they encountered problems in teaching phonics. Aside from the above-mentioned problems, they had little knowledge of phonics decoding rules and lacked the confidence to teach phonics

in class because they did not know how to explain irregulars in phonics. Also, many of them expressed that they did receive professional training in the teachers' preparation program but they were not taught using any phonics instructional guide (Long, 2019; Yan, 2018; Zhao, 2019; Zhong, 2020). Thus, it can be deduced from here that Chinese EFL teachers need an instructional guide to assist them in teaching English phonics in class. This also aligns with the 2021 National English Curriculum which calls for EFL teachers to update their subject matter content knowledge, including phonics instruction (Ministry of Education, 2011).

To address the aforementioned knowledge gap among Chinese EFL teachers, this study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of a newly developed, needs-based, and theoretically informed phonics instructional guide on Chinese pre-service EFL teachers' knowledge base in teaching phonics. This instructional guide was developed based on needs assessment outcomes and aimed at improving Chinese pre-service EFL teachers' knowledge of implementing explicit and systematic phonics instruction. Furthermore, the aim of this study was guided by the research question:

- Is the instructional guide effective in assisting pre-service EFL teachers to acquire subject matter content knowledge for phonics instruction?

To answer this question, the null hypothesis was set: H0: There is no causality between the input received in the phonics instructional guide and the Chinese pre-service EFL teachers' change of knowledge in implementing phonics instruction. The alternative hypothesis (H1) is: There is a positive causality between the input received in the phonics instructional guide and the Chinese pre-service EFL teachers' change of knowledge in implementing phonics instruction.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study was underpinned by the Behavioural Learning theory (Schunk, 2020), Bottom-up Theory of the Reading Process (Amadi, 2019) as well as Andragogy Theory of Adult Learning (Knowles et al., 2015). They are explained in the next subsections.

#### 2.1.1 Behavioural Learning Theory

Behaviourists posit that (language) learning occurs through the sourced stimuli to cause the behavioural response or output, knowledge, or skills to be transmitted from more knowledgeable sources to less informed ones (Robinson, 2018). In light of this principle, Skinner's concept of 'instrumental conditioning' in the Stimulus-Response (S-R) theory suggests that when the right stimulus is given, and learners' positive learning outcomes are reinforced, they would continue to learn and improve (Nazir, 2018; Schunk, 2020). Also, as Budiman (2017) and Morrison et al. (2019) asserted, instructional design is rooted in learning theories, and instructors are the ones who manipulate the input in the learning environment to alter learners' behaviours. Hence, the instructors' knowledge base, especially subject matter content knowledge, is critical for delivering the stimulus (Syamdianita & Cahyono, 2021). Based on that, this study holds that the proposed phonics instructional guide, which serves as the

stimulus, could assist Chinese pre-service EFL teachers in acquiring subject matter content knowledge to implement phonics instruction. When they experience the positive outcome following the training using the instructional guide and regard the learning as a rewarding experience, their teaching practice will certainly be reinforced which in turn promotes their EFL students to read at the word level.

### *2.1.2 Bottom-up Theory of the Reading Process*

The present study is also premised on the Bottom-up Theory of the Reading Process's assumption that the early reading process should start with the basic and smallest unit of a language, which includes recognizing the alphabet, simple letter-sound relationships to more complex components, and word chunks (Gopal & Singh, 2020). In line with this, the direct and explicit phonics instruction approach is deemed a more relevant phonics instruction approach because it stems from basic phonics decoding rules to a more advanced layer (Tahir et al., 2021). This approach is also recommended for all English language beginners to learn how to read (Blevins, 2017; International Literacy Association, 2019). Following this claim, the central focus of the proposed phonics instructional guide should adopt an explicit and systematic synthetic phonics approach so that pre-service EFL teachers can be equipped with the knowledge and skills to teach phonics. In turn, they could help their students to learn phonics to attain reading automaticity on word level.

### *2.1.3 Andragogy Theory of Adult Learning*

Andragogy Theory of Adult Learning (Knowles et al., 2015) also sheds light on this study. This theory emphasizes the learning needs of adult learners such as pre-service EFL teachers who possess a desire to learn practical and useful knowledge for their own future careers (El-Amin, 2020). This implies that instructional design should be guided by the basis of needs assessment to ensure the quality of an instructional product and to meet adult learners' learning needs (Iswati & Triastuti, 2021; Morrison et al., 2019). This theory also prognosticates that when training caters to adult learners' needs or gears towards solving their real-life problems, the adult learners are prompted to learn and learning could happen as expected (El-Amin, 2020; Knowles et al., 2015). Hence, to ensure the effectiveness of the phonics instructional guide, the guide was designed and developed following a needs assessment of the pre-service EFL teachers.

## **2.2 Development of Phonics Instructional Guide**

The design, development, implementation, and evaluation of the proposed Phonics Instructional Guide (PHOInG) follows the ADDIE (Analyse, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate) instructional design sequential framework (Branch, 2018; Knowles et al., 2015). Following the ADDIE guideline, the contents of PHOInG were first determined via a needs assessment. The assessment outcomes were then consolidated and rationalised based on the required knowledge base generalized from previous literature, as advised by Nation and Macalister (2010).

The ADDIE instructional design sequential framework, as its name suggests, consists of five phases: (i) analysis, (ii) design, (iii) development, (iv) implementation, and (v) evaluation (Surdyanto & Kurniawan, 2020). For the present study and as part

of multi-phase research, the ‘needs assessment’ was undertaken by examining the pre-service EFL teachers’ present knowledge about phonics and phonics instruction and their desired changes in light of the Andragogy Theory of Adult Learning. This theory emphasises that adult learners, such as pre-service EFL teachers in this study, have the right to make decisions on what they lack, what they want to learn as well as what problems they intend to solve through training (Branch, 2018; El-Amin, 2020). This clearly justified the need to conduct the needs assessment before designing the guide. The needs assessment phase was followed by the ‘design’ of the instructional guide. This involved determining the instructional goals, objectives, contents, and materials. This is a decision-making stage in which the designers have to evaluate various factors that may affect the effectiveness and feasibility of the proposed instructional guide for phonics instruction training. In the next phase, all the finalised plans, materials, and evaluation tools were ‘developed’, aligning with the pre-determined goals and objectives (Nafiah, 2020). This stage was then followed by the implementation or experiment in this study. Here, the instructional materials or guide were tried out with proper instructional strategies decided earlier in the design phase. For the present study, Gagné et al.’s (2005) ‘Nine Strategies of Instruction’ was adopted for implementation. The purpose of implementation was to obtain summative information on the effectiveness of the instructional guide (Johnson & Bendloph, 2018).

Lastly, the summative information pertaining to the effectiveness of PHOInG was evaluated by the researchers and the research participants. This was pertinent because finding out its effectiveness may help to evaluate the extent to which the prepared guide and materials have helped the pre-service teachers to achieve the targeted learning outcomes. In other words, it could reflect on what and how much has been learned to locate the strengths and weaknesses of the instructional guide and provided evidence for further improvement (Branch, 2018). Also, the research question of this study was answered through the evaluation.

The finalised contents of PHOInG consist of seven sets of the knowledge base (dimensions) on phonics and phonics instruction that Chinese pre-service EFL teachers need to learn, including (1) phonics-related general knowledge, (2) basic knowledge of the English sound system, (3) knowledge about phonemic awareness, (4) phonics decoding rules, (5) phonics instruction approach with systematic synthetic phonics instruction as the focus, (6) decoding rules reinforcing approach, and (7) sight words instruction approach. In conclusion, the proposed PHOInG, primarily based on systematic synthetic phonics, was developed to improve Chinese pre-service EFL teachers’ knowledge base to implement explicit and systematic phonics instruction.

### **3. METHODS**

#### **3.1 Context, Sampling, and Participants**

This experimental study was carried out in one teachers’ college in Mianyang City, Sichuan Province, P. R. China. The participants were 172 pre-service EFL teachers enrolled in a 4-year full-time bachelor’s degree programme in teacher education. To enrol into this programme, they had to fulfil a general entry requirement, namely to pass the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE) or the generally called ‘Gaokao’ (高考) in China. Additionally, in order to be enrolled in the college’s

English Department, a good score in the English Subject of NCEE was required. On the whole, the average score of the 1243 pre-service EFL teachers enrolling in the department was 126.8 out of the maximum score of 150 in English.

To select a representative sample from the 1243 pre-service teachers in the department, a stratified random sampling (Johnson & Christensen, 2019) method was utilized, in which the samples were chosen from four existing strata (academic year) in the form of four intact classes. As a result, 172 samples were chosen to participate in the present study, and the distribution were freshmen (N=39), sophomore (N=41), junior (N=48), and senior (N=44). To be specific, one intact class was selected randomly from each academic year. The sample size was 13.83%, which fulfilled the optimal ratio above the minimal 10% of the population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). After administration of the pre-test on the 172 representative samples, they were assigned to the control group (N=86) and experimental group (N=86) via group matching technique after the pre-test scores were sorted from high to low (Johnson & Christensen, 2019).

### **3.2 Data Collection and Instruments**

Employing a multi-phase study design based on the ADDIE instructional design sequential framework, the data collection procedure was divided into four phases. In Phase I, after identifying the 172 representative samples (Johnson & Christensen, 2019), a needs assessment was conducted. In Phase II, the instructional guide was prepared. In Phase III, first, a pre-test was administrated on the 172 representative samples. Then, they were assigned to the experimental group (N=86) and control group (N=86) by group matching technique (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). The experiment was conducted where trainees in the experimental group were taught phonics and phonics instruction using the developed PHOInG, whereas participants in the control group were taught using the prescribed English textbook. Due to the tight schedule and the permission granted, both groups undertook five training sessions for three hours for each training session. Before conducting the actual experiment, a pilot study was conducted to examine the feasibility of the training. The feasibility study results showed that the duration of the training was sufficient to produce a 'measurable effect' (Gay et al., 2009). In addition, according to Maruyama and Deno (1992), the time duration of any intervention is not a central issue because the study or research itself is much more complex than merely looking at the time duration. Therefore, the duration of any intervention may vary from study to study greatly, and it depends on the potential impact of the research on educational practice. Furthermore, to maximize the internal validity, the same trainer conducted the training for the two groups following an alternative schedule. Lastly, a post-test was administered to all the 172 representative samples.

Essentially, both the pre- and post-tests were identical but different in wording or layout as advised by Creswell and Creswell (2018). The tests comprised 30 MCQ items covering seven dimensions, namely phonics-related general knowledge (5 items), English sound system (3 items), phonics decoding rules (12 items), phonics instruction knowledge (3 items), knowledge and skills of phonemic awareness (5 items), sight words knowledge (1 item), and decoding rules reinforcement approach (1 item). Each of the MCQ items contained five answer options, including the option of 'no idea'. The reliability and validity of the tests were tested and verified. Both the

pre- and post-tests obtained an acceptable level of internal consistency reliability (McNamara, 2014) with the alpha value of 0.743 and 0.773, respectively, using Cronbach's alpha reliability method. In addition, for test item analysis, the index of item facilities and discrimination were measured and recorded at an acceptable level of 0.3 (FI) and 0.2 (DI) (Fraenkel et al., 2011; Wajihah et al., 2017). Besides, the difficulty level of the test items was also checked by four EFL educators who had more than 20 years of experience in teaching linguistics and pedagogy-related courses.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Homogeneity of Variance and Normality Test for the Pre-Test

The homogeneity of variance and the normality of the pre-test scores were first determined before the experiment on the research participants was conducted. This was premised on the need to decide if a parametric or a non-parametric test was more relevant for data analysis (Johnson & Christensen, 2019).

**Table 1.** Homogeneity of variance for the pre-test.

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	sig
0.583	3	168	0.627

**Table 2.** Homogeneity of variance in the pre-test for both groups.

Groups	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	sig
Experimental	0.788	3	82	0.504
Control	0.324	3	82	0.808

Analysis of the pre-test for the experimental and control groups showed that the assumption for homogeneity of variance was met. In addition, based on the overall test scores of both groups in the pre-test, the homogeneity of variance was assumed, too. So, the means between and within groups could be compared.

**Table 3.** Normality test of the pre-test for the control and experimental groups.

Groups	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro--Wilk		
	statistic	df	sig	statistic	df	sig
Control	0.97	86	0.044	0.983	86	0.196
Experimental	0.90	86	0.084	0.983	86	0.304

Table 3 shows that the scores of both the experimental group and control group in the pre-test were well distributed. Under the premise that their homogeneity of variance was assumed and the scores were well distributed, an independent t-test was applied to measure the mean difference between the two groups in order to examine if the two groups were equivalent.

### 4.2 The Pre-Test Results

The descriptive analysis of the pre-test in Table 4 indicated that the means and SDs of the control group and experimental group were close to each other. Based on

the assumed homogeneity of variance and normal distribution, an independent t-test was applied to do the hypothesis testing. The results are shown in Table 5.

**Table 4.** Descriptive analysis of the pre-test.

	Control group (N=86)	Experimental group (N=86)
mean	12.279	12.105
SD	4.6619	4.5865

**Table 5.** Independent t-test results between the two groups in the pre-test.

Mean of the experimental group	Mean of the control group	Mean difference	t	df	sig (2-tailed)
12.279 (40.9%)	12.105 (40.04%)	0.174	2.47	170	0.805

The results in Table 5 were based on the null hypothesis:  $H_0: \bar{X}_x1 = \bar{X}_c1$  (x= experimental group, c=control group, 1=pre-test). The t-test results showed that  $p=0.805 > 0.05$  which implied that the null hypothesis failed to be rejected. Hence, statistically, the experimental group and control group yielded no difference in the pre-test scores. This further indicated that the two groups were equivalent.

Furthermore, the equivalence of the two groups in the seven dimensions of the test was examined (Table 6). This analysis was crucial to lay a foundation for further analysis to determine the effectiveness of the intervention on each of the dimensions.

**Table 6.** Independent t-test results of the seven dimensions in the pre-test between two groups.

Dimensions	Mean of the experimental group	Mean of the control group	Mean difference	t	df	sig. (2-tailed)
General knowledge	1.593 (32%)	2.105 (42%)	-0.5117	-2.668	170	0.008*
Sound system	1.791 (59%)	1.884 (62%)	-0.093	-0.873	170	0.384
Decoding rules	4.198 (35%)	3.965 (33%)	0.2326	0.606	170	0.545
Phonics instruction	1.035 (34%)	0.930 (31%)	0.1047	0.623	170	0.534
Phonemic awareness	2.977 (60%)	2.616 (52%)	0.3604	1.585	170	0.115
Sight words	0.419 (42%)	0.349 (35%)	0.0698	0.938	170	0.35
Rules reinforcement	0.267 (27%)	0.256 (26%)	0.0116	1.72	170	0.863

(\*Note: p-value is less than 0.05)

The findings presented in Table 6 were based on the null hypothesis:  $H_0: \bar{X}_nx = \bar{X}_nc$  (n = any dimension, x= experimental group, c= control group). The findings revealed that between the experimental group and control group, there was no statistically significant difference in the participants' performance in each dimension ( $p > 0.05$ ), except for phonics general knowledge (dimension 1,  $p=0.008, < 0.05$ ). However, it is important to point out here that the mean difference in this dimension did not affect the overall mean of the full test between the two groups. In other words, though the mean of the experimental group was higher than the control group in the pre-test, if the situation was reversed after the treatment, that would explain the effects of the instructional guide.

### 4.3 Comparing Mean Scores of the Pre- and Post-Tests within the Experimental Group

The mean scores obtained by the experimental group participants in the pre- and post-tests were compared (see Table 7) to measure the effectiveness of PHOInG on their knowledge base to teach phonics after the intervention.

**Table 7.** Paired samples t-test results of the experimental group between the pre- and post-tests.

Mean of post-test	Mean of pre-test	Mean difference	SD	t	df	sig (2-tailed)
19.012 (63%)	12.395 (41%)	6.617	5.2360	11.718	85	0.000

The results in Table 7 were based on the null hypothesis:  $H_0: \bar{X}_{x1} = \bar{X}_{x2}$ . ( $x$ = experimental group, 1= pre-test, 2= post-test). The results showed that, for the experimental group, the mean difference between the post- and pre-test was 6.617 ( $p < 0.05$ ), which indicated that the null hypothesis was rejected and there was a statistically significant difference in the participants' post- and pre-test scores after the intervention. This showed that the experimental group participants had made some progress after undergoing the training using PHOInG, and their improvement rate was approximately 22%.

For a more detailed analysis of the effectiveness of PHOInG on the pre-service EFL teachers' knowledge base in teaching phonics, the intervention effects on the seven dimensions of the test were examined by comparing the mean difference of the pre- and post-tests using paired samples t-test.

**Table 8.** Paired samples t-test results of seven dimensions between the pre- and post-test within the experimental group.

Dimensions	Mean of post-test	Mean of pre-test	Mean difference	SD	t	df	sig. (2-tailed)
General knowledge	2.984 (60%)	1.631 (37%)	1.37209	0.19151	7.165	85	0.000
Sound system	1.8953 (63%)	1.8023 (60%)	0.09302	1.02473	0.842	85	0.402*
Decoding rules	8.1163 (67%)	4.2326 (33%)	3.88372	0.32568	11.88	85	0.000
Phonics instruction	1.7674 (58%)	1.0698 (31%)	0.69767	1.46384	4.420	85	0.000
Phonemic awareness	2.8721 (56%)	2.9767 (57.4%)	0.10465	1.52647	0.636	85	0.527*
Sight words	0.6977 (70%)	0.4186 (42%)	0.27907	0.64445	4.016	85	0.000
Rules reinforcement	0.6774 (68%)	0.2791 (28%)	0.39535	0.57964	6.325	85	0.000

(\*Note: The p-value is more than 0.05)

The results reported in Table 8 were based on the null hypothesis:  $H_0: \bar{X}_{nx1} = \bar{X}_{nx2}$  ( $n$  = any dimension,  $x$ = experimental group, 1=pre-test, 2=post-test). As shown in Table 8, after the experiment, for five dimensions of the test, namely general knowledge, decoding rules, phonics instructions, sight words, and rules reinforcement, the significant value of the mean difference between the post- and pre-test was  $p \leq 0.001$ , indicating that the null hypothesis was rejected and significant differences



were recorded in the pre- and post-tests mean scores. The trainees made progress by 23%, 34%, 27%, 28% and 40%, respectively.

Nonetheless, for the dimensions of the sound system and phonemic awareness, the  $p > 0.05$  implied that the null hypothesis failed to be rejected and there were no significant differences found between the means obtained from the pre- and post-tests. This implied that the trainees' learning progress in these two dimensions was not significant after the intervention.

#### 4.4 Comparing Mean Scores of the Pre- and Post-Tests in the Control Group

In this section, the means of both pre- and post-tests within the control group were probed to examine whether the participants in the control group had made any progress in learning phonics and phonics instruction by using the conventional textbooks prescribed to them. Before the comparative analysis was conducted, homogeneity of variance and score distribution was checked to decide the method of carrying out hypothesis testing (Tables 9 and 10). As the score difference of the control group in both tests was not well distributed, therefore, Wilcoxon Test was deemed appropriate for hypothesis testing (Table 11).

**Table 9.** Homogeneity of variance for the post-test of the control group.

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	sig
0.69	3	82	0.976

**Table 10.** Normality of score difference of the control group in both tests.

	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro--Wilk		
	statistic	df	Sig	statistic	df	sig
Control group - difference	0.313	86	0.000	0.825	86	0.000

**Table 11.** Wilcoxon test results within the control group between the pre- and post-tests.

Mean of post-test	Mean of pre-test	Mean difference	Z	sig (2-tailed)
11.837(39%)	12.105 (40%)	-0.268	-2.006	0.045*

(\*note: The p-value is less than 0.05)

The results presented in Table 11 were based on the null hypothesis:  $H_0: \bar{X}_{c1} = \bar{X}_{c2}$  ( $c$ =control group,  $1$ =pre-test,  $2$ =post-test). As shown in Table 11, the overall mean score of the post-test was lower by 0.268 as compared to the pre-test score with  $Z = -2.006$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . This indicated that although the null hypothesis was rejected and there was a statistical difference between the two tests within the control group, the textbook approach did not help the participants in learning phonics and phonics instruction as they did not make much progress in learning.

The results in Table 12 were based on the null hypothesis:  $H_0: \bar{X}_{nc1} = \bar{X}_{nc2}$  ( $n$  = any dimension,  $c$ = control group,  $1$ =pre-test,  $2$ =post-test). From Table 12, there was a statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-tests mean scores for the dimensions of the sound system and phonemic awareness ( $Z = -2.121, -3.176$ , and  $p < 0.05$ ). However, despite the null hypothesis being rejected, showing the significant difference, the post-test scores were lower than the pre-test scores, which indicated that the textbook approach did not help the participants in learning the sound system and increasing their phonemic awareness. For the remaining five dimensions, there

was no statistical difference between the means of pre- and post-tests within the control group.

**Table 12.** Wilcoxon test results in each dimension between the pre-and post-tests within the control group.

Dimensions	Mean of post-test	Mean of pre-test	Mean difference	Z	sig. (2-tailed)
General knowledge	2.058 (41%)	2.105 (42%)	0.0466	-1.155	0.248
Sound system	1.814 (60.4%)	1.884 (62%)	0.0697	-2.121	0.034*
Decoding rules	3.942 (32.8%)	3.965 (31%)	0.0232	-0.040	0.968
Phonics instruction	0.965 (32%)	0.930 (31%)	-0.03488	-1.732	0.083
Phonemic awareness	2.430 (48.6%)	2.616 (52.2%)	0.18605	-3.176	0.001*
Sight words	0.337 (34%)	0.349 (35%)	0.01163	-1.000	0.317
Rules reinforcement	0.291 (30%)	0.256 (26%)	-0.03488	-1.732	0.083

#### 4.5 Comparing Post-Test Scores between the Experimental and Control Groups

To compare the post-test mean scores of the two groups, the homogeneity and score distributions in the post-tests were first determined to decide whether to apply an independent t-test or Mann-Whitney U test. Analyses showed that for individual groups and both groups, the homogeneity of variance was met. However, for skewed score distribution, Mann-Whitney U Test could be applied for hypothesis testing.

**Table 13.** Homogeneity of variance for the post-test.

Group	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	sig
Control	0.69	3	82	0.976
Experimental	1.360	3	82	0.261

**Table 14.** Homogeneity of variance for the post-test of both groups.

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	sig
0.402	3	168	0.752

**Table 15.** Test of normality for the control and experimental groups in the post-test.

Groups	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro--Wilk		
	statistic	df	sig	statistic	df	sig
Control	0.95	86	0.052	0.979	86	0.175
Experimental	0.132	86	0.001	0.954	86	0.004

**Table 16.** Test of normality for both groups in the post-test.

	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro--Wilk		
	statistic	df	sig	statistic	df	sig
Control group in post-test	0.107	172	0.000	0.977	172	0.007

**Table 17.** Mann-Whitney U Test results between the two groups in the post-test.

Mean of the experimental group	Mean of the control group	Mean difference	Z	sig. (2-tailed)
19.012 (63%)	11.837 (39%)	7.1744	-7.366	0.000

The results in Table 17 were based on the null hypothesis:  $H_0: \bar{X}_x2 = \bar{X}_c2$  (x=experimental group, c=control group, 2=post-test). The Mann-Whitney U Test showed that  $Z = -7.366$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , indicating that the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that, overall, the trainees in the experimental group obtained a correct rate of 63% after undergoing the intervention using PHOInG. On the other hand, the control group participants' correct rate was only 39%. This also marked a significant difference in the post-test scores between these two groups.

**Table 18.** Mann-Whitney U Test results of each item in the seven dimensions between two groups in the post-test.

Dimensions	Items	Mean of the experimental group	Mean of the control group	Mean difference	Z	sig. (2-tailed)
General knowledge	total	2.9884 (60%)	2.0581 (41%)	0.9303	-3.937	0.000
	S1-1:phonics definition	0.616	0.349	0.267	-3.499	0.000
	S1-2: consonant blend	0.663	0.314	0.349	-4.536	0.000
	S1-3:consonant digraph	0.512	0.407	0.105	-1.373	0.170*
	S1-4:diphthong	0.512	0.407	0.105	-1.373	0.170*
	S1-5:phoneme definition	0.686	0.581	0.105	-1.420	0.156*
Sound system	total	1.8953 (63%)	1.8140 (60%)	0.0813	-1.130	0.258*
	S2-1: open syllable	0.640	0.581	0.059	-0.780	0.436*
	S2-2: final stable syllable	0.640	0.628	0.012	-0.158	0.875*
	S2-3: closed syllable	0.616	0.605	0.011	-0.156	0.876*
Decoding rules	total	8.1163 (68%)	3.9419 (32%)	4.1744	-8.417	0.000
	S3-1:silent consonant	0.709	0.291	0.418	-5.747	0.000
	S3-2:r-controlled vowel	0.709	0.326	0.383	-5.021	0.000
	S3-3:hard C	0.628	0.337	0.291	-3.804	0.000
	S3-4:soft C	0.674	0.314	0.360	-4.714	0.000
	S3-5:hard G	0.698	0.349	0.349	-4.567	0.000

Table 18 continued...

Decoding rules	S3-6:CVCe pattern	0.709	0.302	0.407	-5.322	0.000
	S3-7: silent E	0.500	0.326	0.174	-2.316	0.021
	S3-8: soft G	0.721	0.209	0.512	-0.6707	0.000
	S3-9: short vowel sound	0.721	0.326	0.395	-5.175	0.000
	S3-10: long vowel sound	0.674	0.535	0.139	-1.866	0.062*
	S3-11: silent letter	0.686	0.291	0.395	-5.171	0.000
	S3-12:variant hard C	0.686	0.337	0.349	-4.563	0.000
Phonics instruction	total	1.7674 (59%)	0.9651 (32%)	0.8023	-5.184	0.000
	S4-1:analytic phonics instruction	0.628	0.302		-4.268	0.000
	S4-2:synthetic phonics instruction	0.640	0.302	0.326	-4.417	0.000
	S4-3 Analogy phonics instruction	0.500	0.360	0.14	-1.843	0.0605
Phonemic awareness	total	2.8721 (57%)	2.4302 (48%)	0.4419	-1.448	0.148*
	S5-1:deletion	0.698	0.605	0.093	-1.1276	0.202*
	S5-2:blending	0.709	0.605	0.104	-1.441	0.149*
	S5-3:speech sound counting	0.384	0.302	0.082	-1.121	0.262*
	S5-4: alliteration	0.721	0.580	0.141	-1.914	0.056
	S5-5 phonemic awareness definition	0.360	0.337	0.023	-0.319	0.750*
Sight words	S6-1 sight words instruction	0.6977 (70%)	0.3372 (33%)	0.3605	-4.717	0.000
Rules reinforcement	S7-1 rules maintenance methods	0.6774 (68%)	0.2907 (29%)	0.3867	-5.021	0.000

(\*Note: The p-value is more than 0.05)

The results in Table 18 were based on the null hypothesis:  $H_0: \bar{X}_{nx2} = \bar{X}_{nc2}$  ( $n$  = any dimension,  $c$  = control group,  $x$  = experimental group,  $2$  = post-test). The findings presented in Table 18 showed that the correct rate for the sound system (dimension 2) and phonemic awareness (dimension 5) were similar for both the experimental and

control groups. For the former, the correct rate was 63% and 60% respectively; and for the latter, the correct rate was 57% and 44% respectively, with no significant difference ( $p>0.05$ ). So, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected.

For the remaining five dimensions, the mean scores recorded in the experimental group were greater than the control group with  $p<0.001$ , which clearly indicated that the null hypothesis was rejected. The results further showed a statistically significant difference between the two groups in the five dimensions of the post-test. In short, the trainees in the experimental group outperformed their counterparts in the control groups in the five dimensions of the test, namely general knowledge, decoding rules, phonics instruction, sight words, and rules reinforcement.

Furthermore, for the general knowledge dimension, the trainees in the experimental group did not outperform their counterparts in the control group in the knowledge of consonant digraph, diphthong, and phoneme definition. Also, the trainees in the experimental group did not outperform the participants in the control group for the knowledge of the 'long vowel' sound.

To conclude, as [Kumar \(2019\)](#) noted, the objective of employing such an experimental design allowed for the examination of the causality between the independent variable (the guide) and the dependent variable (learning outcome) because the use of the control group was to quantify the extraneous variable's impact to ascertain the effect of the guide. In this regard, using the instructional guide in training had helped the pre-service EFL teachers to improve their overall knowledge base to teach phonics by 23%. More specifically, 24% of improvement was recorded for their general knowledge section, 35.6% for knowledge of decoding rules, 26% for knowledge of phonics instruction, 31.6% for sight words instruction, and as high as 36% for improvement for knowledge of decoding rules reinforcement. Therefore, it can be concluded that the main null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted in which there was a positive causality between the instructional guide and the trainees' learning outcomes.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

Fundamentally, the purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the newly developed instructional guide (PHOInG) in improving the Chinese pre-service EFL teachers' knowledge base, or more precisely the subject matter content knowledge to implement systematic synthetic phonics instruction.

The findings revealed that for the experimental group, the participants' overall knowledge base had improved by 23% after the intervention. This could be attributed to the incorporation of the S-R theory with reinforcement in developing the PHOInG. Here, the newly developed instructional guide served as a form of reinforcement, covering the input, stimuli, or a more knowledgeable source, which had the function of changing learners' learning behaviour in order to achieve and attain the desired output or changes ([Reynolds, 2018](#)). In line with this, through the implementation of the instructional guide, the participants' subject matter knowledge in phonics and phonics instruction had improved. This also indicated that, as theorised in the Behaviouristic theories, the newly constructed information flowed from a knowledgeable source to less informed ones, and the results could be objectively measured by the participants' performance in the tests ([Robinson, 2018](#)).

From a micro perspective, the main findings of this study were, to a certain extent, similar to what McCoy (2017) reported in his research on instructional training. Comparatively, in his study, the twenty-one trainees' 'knowledge base' for phonics instruction had improved by 10.3%; while in the present study, the pre-service EFL teachers in the experimental group had recorded a 23% of improvement. The findings from these two studies reflected the educational implication of S-R Theory with reinforcement in which 'reinforcement' was a key determinant used to drive learning behaviour change (Reynolds, 2018). It is important to point out at this juncture that although different researchers hold different conceptualizations of the knowledge base for phonics instructions, their focus of analysis is somewhat similar. For instance, the 'phonics block' in McCoy's (2017) study included phoneme definition, syllables, diphthongs, digraphs, and decoding rules, which were classified as phonics knowledge to phonics education. This classification of the phonics knowledge base is similar to the proposed knowledge base or subject matter knowledge in the present study, which comprises the main contents of phonics general knowledge such as introduction to phonemes, syllables, and diphthongs and digraph, phonics decoding rules, and instructional approaches.

Despite the difference in conceptualizing knowledge base for phonics instruction, 'phonics decoding rules' remain one of the core knowledge areas in this area. In Spear-Swerling et al. (2005), Brady et al. (2009), Ghoneim and Elghotmy (2015), as well as Westerveld and Barton's (2017) studies, they unanimously indicated that through professional training in phonics instruction, their trainees' knowledge on phonics decoding rules had improved, with a range of 11.6% to 67%. In the present study, the participants had improved by 35.6% in this dimension. The available evidence seems to suggest that although the contents of the instructional guide can be tailored, adapted, or shortened for the training needs of different target groups, this dimension is deemed the most essential one and cannot be removed or shortened. This is because phonics instruction could not be realized without the knowledge of phonics decoding rules. This is also confirmed in Yan (2018), Long (2019), Zhao (2019), and Zhong's (2020) studies in which their respondents, including both in-service and novice teachers, expressed a strong desire to learn explicit and systematic phonics decoding rules. In that sense, the findings of this study reflected that the pre-service EFL teachers' needs to learn phonics decoding rules were met by the implementation of PHOInG.

Learning the phonics instruction approach is another core dimension of knowledge covered in PHOInG. After the intervention, the trainees' knowledge in this regard had improved by 26%. As for McCoy's (2017) study, phonics instruction approaches were combined with decoding rules, and overall his trainees improved by 10.3%. It is important to note that McCoy's (2017) study was carried out in an L1 context, thus, the inclusion of phonics instruction in the instructional guide proposed in the present study could fill the gap between teaching and learning English phonics and phonics instruction in the L2 context, specifically in the Chinese setting. To date, research in this domain is still scarce, and many EFL teachers in China are eager to learn how to teach phonics (Yan, 2018; Zhao, 2019; Zhong, 2020; Zhong & Kang, 2021). Therefore, both the phonics instruction approach and the aforementioned phonics decoding rules are the critical knowledge base that needs to be considered in any intervention of this kind.

In terms of phonics general knowledge, which is operationalised as the basic terms related to phonics such as diphthongs, blends, clusters, and so on, is another equally important core knowledge that needs to be included in any intervention for learning phonics and phonics instruction. The basic knowledge of terms is very important for pre-service teachers to become competent in their future classroom teaching because those key terms can help them better understand phonics and phonics instructions (McCoy, 2017). This claim is also true for the current scenario of teaching phonics among Chinese EFL teachers.

Besides that, learning 'sight words' was another key element in PHOInG which witnessed a learning progress of 31.6% by the participants. As Blevins (2017), and Ghoneim and Elghotmy (2015) pointed out, sight word instruction mainly focuses on dealing with irregular words in English which takes up about 16% of English vocabulary. From a narrower perspective, 'sight words' include those high-frequency words as well as tricky words which do not follow common spelling patterns (Blevins, 2017). Phipps (2011) suggested that these tricky words should be taught along with synthetic phonics to help learners to achieve reading automaticity. In the same vein, Zhao (2019) found that many EFL teachers were actually eager to learn how to tackle tricky words in daily teaching. Due to this reason, the learning of sight words in any intervention for phonics instruction is necessary.

In light of the educational or pedagogical implication of the 'Law of Exercise' under the S-R Theory with reinforcement, practice is considered the key to the completeness of learning. This implies that the connection between stimuli and response is strengthened by practice or use (Islam, 2015). To enhance the learning of phonics among Chinese EFL students based on this principle, the present study recommends the use of decodable text in phonics instruction as part of the intervention. Via this tool, the pre-service EFL teachers would be able to learn how to use decodable text to help their future students to reinforce the already learned decoding rules. In a training program designed for pre-service teachers by Manchester Metropolitan University (2015), this knowledge was also incorporated into their training framework. Also, Blevins (2017) found that when teachers used decodable text in teaching English phonics, their students would be more confident in reading books at a comparatively more difficult level. Thus, incorporating decodable text along with phonics instruction is essential for training.

On the other hand, in this study, the participants did not make any significant progress in the dimension of phonemic awareness. This finding was contrary to those reported in Spear-Swerling et al. (2005), Brady et al. (2009), Ghoneim and Elghotmy (2015), McCoy (2017), and Westerveld and Barton's (2017) studies. The plausible reasons for this scenario are multi-dimensional. Firstly, since both explicit and systematic synthetic phonics instruction and 'phonics instruction' were assumed to foster phonemic awareness at the same time (Blevins, 2017; International Literacy Association, 2018), phonemic awareness 'contents' were not the training focus of the proposed instructional guide. In PHOInG, only definitions, significance, as well as phonemic awareness skills were introduced because it was not identified as the prioritised needs for learning phonics and phonics instruction by the pre-service EFL teachers in the preliminary study. Secondly, knowledge in this section was not part of their prioritized needs. Thus, it could be postulated that the trainees were not ready to learn the knowledge. Lastly, the trainees might have probably learned how to blend and segment words from their past learning based on their scores in the pre-test, thus,

there was no significant progress found in their phonemic awareness after the intervention. As Brady et al. (2009) pointed out when the higher the scores are the less space for improvement.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the main objective of this study was to evaluate to what extent a phonics instructional guide that had been developed following the ADDIE framework could equip Chinese pre-service EFL teachers with the necessary knowledge base to implement systematic and explicit phonics instruction in EFL classrooms. The results of the study indicated that the proposed Phonics Instructional Guide (PHOInG) was more effective in equipping Chinese pre-service EFL teachers with the knowledge to implement phonics instructions than the prescribed textbook used with the control group. As most of the studies on phonics instruction training were conducted in non-Chinese monolingual or bilingual ESL/EFL learning contexts, the present study contributes to enriching the literature in this domain in EFL settings in China.

Nonetheless, this study suggests further investigations into the dimensions of ‘sound system’ and ‘phonemic awareness’ as the trainees in the study did not show any significant improvement in the said dimensions after the intervention. This could be done by conducting a more comprehensive assessment of the Chinese pre-service EFL teachers’ needs to learn the knowledge related to these two dimensions. Based on the outcomes of the needs assessment, it is hoped that a more feasible and effective instructional guide could be devised for the use of phonics instruction training. In brief, this study provides ample support for the need for innovating phonology courses in EFL teachers’ preparation programmes in China.

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## Problems Faced and Strategies Applied by Test-Takers in Completing the TOEFL iBT Test

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### Abstract

*The present study aimed at exploring strategies applied and the problems test-takers faced before, during, and after working on an integrated reading-listening-writing (IRLW) task. This narrative inquiry research employed 23 students taking a TOEFL iBT test in the Indonesian context using the purposive sampling technique. The respondents answered a questionnaire and written questions related to the problems they faced during the test and their strategies to solve the problems. The test-takers' responses from the interview were used to confirm the data from the responses to written questions. The researchers used an in-depth interview protocol to explore the test-takers' strategies to solve the problems they faced when doing the test. The interview process was conducted right after they finished the test. The data from the questionnaire, written questions, and interviews were further analyzed descriptively. The findings showed that the test-takers encountered internal and external problems in completing the IRLW of the TOEFL iBT test. They used different integrated writing strategies, depending on their learning styles, cognitive levels, experiences, abilities, levels of anxiety of each test-taker, and the environment of the test. The affective, cognitive, metacognitive, and test-wiseness strategies were all used in their own way to solve their problems. It implies that future test-takers need to learn and apply all positive strategies based on their learning styles. English teachers, therefore,*

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*should teach positive strategies of IRLW because students might not know the importance of the strategies and how to use them in the test.*

**Keywords:** iBT, integrated reading-listening-writing task strategies, test-takers, TOEFL.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Academic writing is an interaction between the readers and the writer via written texts for educational or scholarly purposes. The style of English academic writing is formal, and it is usually circulated within the academic world. Alharthi (2012) argues that when people already know what they want to write, they are competent writers. Competent writers are those who already have the writing ability to cover global issues (content and organization) and local issues (vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics) (Sulistyo et al., 2020). Without taking a writing class, they only need to write down their knowledge and ideas with excellent language proficiency. Unfortunately, writing for educational or scholarly purposes is difficult for ESL or EFL learners or test-takers. They have to pursue it intensely to accomplish a minimum standard in English performance tests, such as TOEFL, TOEP, IELTS, etc.

One of the English performance tests is TOEFL iBT, the latest TOEFL test that uses the Internet as its test medium to measure foreign language task performers' (learners') competence. One of its functions is to assess task performers' English proficiency for academic purposes. This type of test is becoming more popular in non-English speaking countries, partly because task performers need it to apply for scholarships or continue studying abroad (Mukminatien, 2015). More than that, TOEFL can be used as a requirement for university admission (e.g., applying for a doctoral degree program in English Language Teaching) and for career promotion and teacher or lecturer's certification, like in Indonesia. Thus, Indonesian foreign language task performers need strategies in completing this kind of test.

Different strategies used by ESL and EFL learners in writing processes become a challenge in academic writing contexts because writing is recursive steps allowing students to move forward and back in producing a good composition. In this case, effective writers apply more suitable strategies than ineffective ones (Sulistyo & Heriyawati, 2017). Therefore, investigating writing as a process primarily in studies conducted in ESL/EFL integrated writing process contexts becomes urgent. However, many studies related to writing performances mainly focused on non-integrated writing tasks (Alharthi, 2012; Sadi & Othman, 2012). For example, Alharthi (2012) found that the students were aware of writing strategies but still had problems with sentential (grammatical errors, use of wrong vocabulary, and misuse of punctuation) and intersentential levels (a clear meaning in general). Therefore, they have to plan, translate, and edit their writing. In other non-English speaking countries in Asia, particularly in Indonesia, several writing researchers conducted their studies on aspects related to the teaching of writing (Widiati & Cahyono, 2001) such as error analysis (Mukminatien, 2015), feedback provision (Budianto et al., 2020), and writing experiences (Sulistyo et al., 2020). However, their studies focused on non-integrated writing tasks.

The findings of the previous studies indicate many substantial questions related to the integrated reading-listening-writing topics still remain unanswered and need to be investigated further (Gebriel & Plakans, 2014; Plakans & Gebriel, 2017; Yang & Plakans, 2012). One of the questions is related to the task performers (their activities and performance). Interestingly, discussions on this topic still become a trend among researchers. Some are interested in integrated writing (Gebriel & Plakans, 2014; Plakans, 2009a, 2009b; Plakans & Gebriel, 2013), yet, research on integrated writing needs exploring further as it is still relatively scant (Yang & Plakans, 2012), particularly among EFL test-takers in the Indonesian contexts. If test-takers perform well on a TOEFL-iBT writing test task, they probably maximize their writing abilities for a discipline-specific task (Riazi, 2016). It makes sense, maybe because TOEFL iBT is relatively new for most Indonesian students and researchers. Accordingly, no previous studies focus on TOEFL iBT test test-takers completing an integrated writing test in Indonesia.

Based on the gaps above, the researchers formulated the following research questions:

- 1) What are the problems faced by Indonesian test-takers in accomplishing the Integrated Reading-Listening-Writing task of the TOEFL iBT Test?
- 2) What strategies do the test takers apply to solve the problems they faced in completing the Integrated Reading-Listening-Writing task of the TOEFL iBT Test?

Correspondingly, research in the area of integrated writing is essential because to study at the university level in an English-speaking country, non-native speakers of English need to have adequate English academic writing skills. They have to write based on the reading text and the lecture they have listened to from their professors.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Integrated-Reading-Listening Writing Strategies

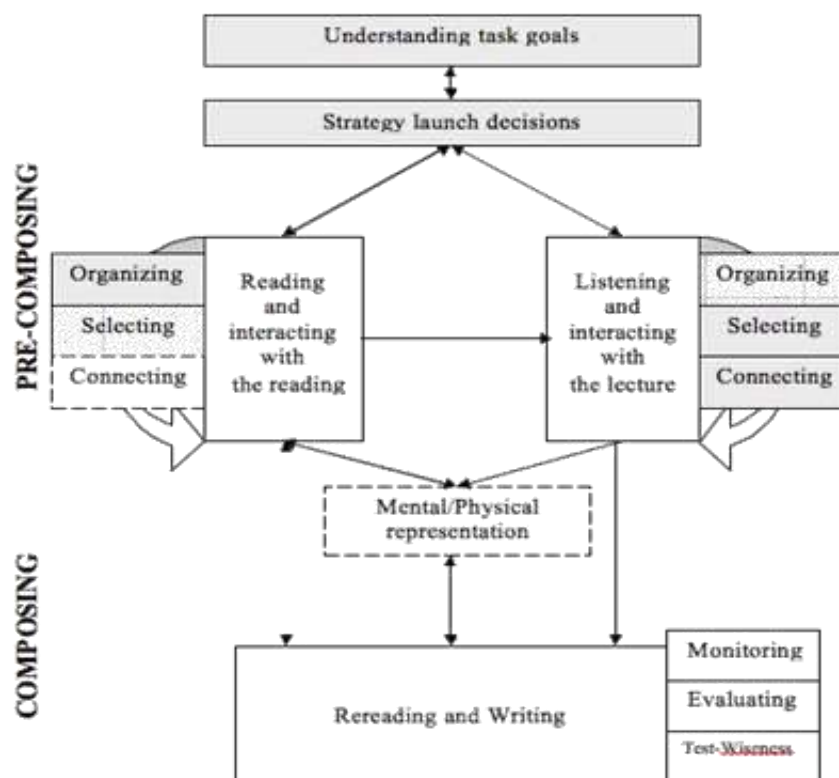
The term strategy in writing means actions and behaviors administered by a writer to accomplish the process of writing (Shapira & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2005), which strongly deals with the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) or learning strategies (Oxford, 1990). These actions and behaviors reflect four clusters: meta-cognitive, cognitive, social, and affective processes. Thus, writing strategy is the actions writers adopt to plan, generate, process, and present information, indicating the students' strategies to minimize their difficulties and anxiety when writing a text (Alharthi, 2012).

Metacognitive strategies, according to Oxford (1990), are thinking about what students have done, covering planning, implementing, and evaluating in accomplishing a certain task. Marhaban et al. (2021) confirm that metacognitive strategies are self-inventory activities. Thus, students have to assess what they have done by themselves independently. In contrast, cognitive strategies refer to specific techniques to accomplish a particular task (Oxford, 1990), such as reading and listening to instructional videos. Social strategies refer to a form of social communication that involves other people, which play important roles in the process of learning (Marhaban et al., 2021). For instance, students ask for information about

the topic being discussed with their friends, teachers, or other people. They involve other people in the learning process (Oxford, 1990). Lastly, affective strategies are non-academic in nature but very important factors in the learning process (Marhaban et al., 2021) covering motivation, self-esteem, attitudes, and emotions (Oxford, 1990). Accordingly, the students need to be aware of the importance of affective strategies that may affect their learning success.

The implementation of the strategies covering actions and behaviors applied by the writer to complete a writing task is different, depending on how writers (and future test-takers) use them. They need to apply appropriate writing strategies in accomplishing their writing tasks (Marhaban et al., 2021), and Sulisty & Heriyawati (2017) claim that outstanding writers apply more suitable strategies than average ones.

Yang and Plakans (2012) propose a theoretical framework of integrated-reading-listening writing because it has integrated several previous theoretical frameworks related to integrated operations (Spivey & King, 1989), integrated writing tasks (Plakans, 2009a), L1 (first language) and L2 (second language) writing, integrated writing, learning, and test-taking strategies (Cohen & Upton, 2007). The theoretical framework of IRLW adopted from Yang and Plakans (2012) is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** The theoretical framework of integrated-reading-listening writing (source: Yang and Plakans, 2012).

The writing strategies the writers do to complete the IRLW task cover three types (Yang & Plakans, 2012): self-regulatory strategy (SELS), discourse synthesis strategy (DSS), and test-wisness strategy (TWS). SELS concerns two factors: monitoring and evaluating, which play a pivotal role over the other strategies. DSS deals with three factors: organizing, connecting, and selecting.

Monitoring and evaluating are associated with processes in integrated writing, appearing when writers construct goals, make informed decisions, and create strategic plans to complete the task (Yang & Plakans, 2012). Evaluating happens when writers reexamine task effectiveness and fulfillment by reconsidering task requirements, ideas, written texts, and revisions to improve the texts (Esmaeili, 2000).

The last strategy is TWS (test-wiseness strategy), where the test-takers have to find suitable responses to the questions rather than the cognitive answers test designers expect (Plakans & Gebril, 2013). For instance, some test takers wrote down their previous writing models, filled in some keywords, or copied the verbatim from source materials (Braine, 2010; Cumming et al., 2005). Also, less effective writers frequently apply copying and revising strategies (Gebril & Plakans, 2009) to complete integrated writing tasks.

In order to avoid getting wedged in the process of writing, writers should not concentrate too much on the writing mechanism (Priambodo, 2008). Writers should focus on the aesthetic sense of their writings and not-for-profit writing purposes because it will automatically come with the quality writing they produce. It shows that writers need to consider the aesthetic of the text, such as a combination of artistic, cultural references, literary devices, and finding their own voice; they should not think of the profits they get from the writing activities.

There are three significant discourses to compose reading materials in synthesis processes: organizing, selecting, and connecting (Spivey & King, 1989). Organizing is writers' efforts to make meaning of the texts based on their background knowledge. Selecting is writers' main thoughts from less critical details related to task goals, demands, purposes, or specifications. And, connecting is writers' ideas to gather different sources and develop the ideas from an integral point of view.

## 2.2 Strategy Inventory for Integrated Reading- Listening-Writing

Yang and Plakans (2012) developed Strategy Inventory for Integrated-Reading-Listening-Writing (SIIW) to apply strategies for accomplishing an integrated writing task in TOEFL iBT. According to Yang and Plakans (2012), SIIW, as seen in Figure 1, is reflected in the writers' strategies in accomplishing the task to compose a text covering three sections: pre-writing, whilst-writing, and post-writing. Pre-writing consists of organizing, selecting, and connecting reading and listening activities to plan what the students will write. Whilst-writing is the main activity in composing the text by drafting, rereading the draft, revising, and editing the text. Last but not least, post-writing is checking again the text in terms of content, organization, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary of the text. If needed, the writers make some revisions before submitting the text.

The items in SIIW are in the form of a Likert scale questionnaire. The writing strategies, from pre-writing, whilst-writing to post-writing from Yang and Plakans (2012) are shown in the following tables.

**Table 1.** Yang and Plakans' (2012) pre-writing strategies.

No.	Strategies
1.	I reread the task requirements carefully.
2.	I thought about the type of essay I wanted to write.
3.	I tried to summarize the overall ideas from the whole reading passage in my mind.
4.	I wrote down keywords from what I heard in the lecture.



Table 1 continued...

5.	I tried to understand the relationship between the ideas of the reading and the lecture.
6.	I tried to memorize some ideas from the lecture.
7.	I made a writing plan (e.g., outlines, notes, keywords).
8.	I wrote down the main ideas and important points from the reading passage.
9.	I searched for connections among sentences.
10.	I tried to understand the content according to how information is organized in each paragraph.
11.	I tried to understand the organization of the reading passage or the lecture.
12.	I summarized ideas from the lecture in my mind.
13.	I searched for connections among paragraphs.
14.	I planned to copy good sentences from the reading or lecture in my writing.
15.	I predicted the content of the lecture after reading the passage.

**Table 2. Yang and Plakans' (2012) whilst-writing strategies.**

No.	Strategies
16.	I double-checked to see if my writing met the task requirements.
17.	I reread the reading passage to look for the main ideas.
18.	I wrote some phrases based on a writing template I had memorized before the test.
19.	I thought about mentioning the authors in my essay.
20.	I copied the sentences from the reading passage and revised them.
21.	I tried to write about my knowledge or my own experience in the essay.
22.	I used different words or phrases to describe ideas from the reading passage or lecture.
23.	I reread what I had written to see if I was using correct English (e.g., grammar, spelling).
24.	I checked if I used the same phrases or sentences as the authors.
25.	I revised the sentences to make my writing clear.
26.	I thought about a word, phrase, or sentence before I wrote it down.
27.	I first wrote out a writing template I had memorized before and filled in some ideas from the lecture or the reading passage.

**Table 3. Yang and Plakans' (2012) post-writing strategies.**

No.	Strategies
28.	I checked if I used examples to support my main ideas.
29.	I reread my essay and changed the content that didn't express what I meant.
30.	I added new points based on the reading or the lecture.
31.	I reread my essay and made sure my English was correct.
32.	I checked if I had connected the ideas from the lecture to the ideas from the reading passage.
33.	I made changes to the phrase to ensure I didn't copy the exact phrase.

As seen in Tables 1-3, the Yang and Plakans' SIIW consists of 34 items to capture test-takers' mental behavior and behavioral activities related to specific stages (pre-writing, whilst-writing, and post-writing strategies) in the process of completing an integrated reading-listening-writing task (Yang & Plakans, 2012, p. 85).

### 2.3 TOEFL iBT Test

The National Council on Testing English as a Foreign Language in the United States developed the TOEFL test in 1963 (Barkaoui, 2015). It has evolved from paper-based tests to computer-based tests and, in 2005 to Internet-based tests (Alderson, 2009), the TOEFL iBT. It is the latest TOEFL that uses the Internet as its test medium to measure foreign language task performers' (learners') competence. Today, it is one of the worldwide tests administered to examine one's English proficiency for different

purposes, such as academic purposes before one goes abroad to continue studying (Mukminatien, 2015).

According to Sulisty (2009), the TOEFL test has three successive major formats: pBT, cBT, and iBT. Initiated by an American council on the testing of English as a foreign language in early 1962, TOEFL and its historical development can be viewed from two angles: the development and the technology use. Barkaoui (2015) explains that TOEFL has evolved from a paper-based test to a computer-based test and, in 2005, to an Internet-based. The last version has been applied globally.

The new internet-based TOEFL, TOEFL-iBT, in 2005 consisted of two writing test tasks: 1) an integrated task that covers reading, listening, and writing and 2) an independent task involving writing prompts. This test requires test-takers to complete the IRLW task (Barkaoui, 2015; Riazi, 2016). Therefore, future students planning to study overseas need to ensure that they have IRLW skills for the TOEFL iBT test. When doing the TOEFL iBT test, test-takers respond to the independent and integrated writing tasks in the TOEFL iBT activities, and the results depend on the test taker's English language proficiency (Barkaoui, 2015).

### **3. METHOD**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The present study explored the strategies used and the problems faced by Indonesian test-takers before, during, and after working on an IRLW task, primarily based on Yang and Plakans' (2012) theoretical framework of IRLW. This study employed a narrative inquiry research design because the type of data collected in this study was descriptive (qualitative) information. This design fits with the purposes of this study which aimed at exploring the strategies used by Indonesian test-takers and the problems they faced in completing an IRLW task. The researchers could not directly examine test-takers' strategies and problems because the researchers did not have access to their actual integrated writing process. Thus, the researchers relied on the test-takers' recall of memory/reflection/introspection during the completion process of IRLW.

#### **3.2 Source of Data**

The data of this study were statements of the respondents related to the strategies used by task-takers and the problems they faced in accomplishing an IRLW task. The data were from the Indonesian task-takers' responses to (1) the questionnaire, (2) written questions, and (3) interviews. Because of the difficulty of finding the actual practice of integrated reading- listening-writing tasks in the EFL classroom, this study involved 23 respondents (15 males and 8 females) of TOEFL iBT test-takers from different study disciplines using purposive sampling. The TOEFL iBT test-takers were selected as the source of data because they had the experience of being confronted with the IRLW task. The respondents were asked to fill out the questionnaire related to the IRLW strategies listed in Yang and Plakans' (2012) SIIW. They were also asked to answer the written questions and responded to the interview to further inquire about the strategies applied while taking the test.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

The researchers received official permission from Yang and Plakans (2012) to collect the data using their Strategy Inventory for Integrated Reading- Listening-Writing (SIIW) for the IRLW task. Yang and Plakans' (2012) theoretical framework of integrated reading-listening-writing (IRLW) strategies were used because it is developed based on the empirical finding of integrated writing relevant to the context of the current study. SIIW is in the form of a Likert scale questionnaire ranging from very rarely (1), rarely (2), occasionally (3), often (4), and very often (5). The researchers added an extra (0) to indicate 'never' because real task performers might not use the strategies listed in Yang and Plakans' (2012) SIIW, despite that this SIIW is known easy to use and covers major strategies used by IRLW writers. Hence, the questionnaire was open-ended to allow the respondents to add more strategies not yet listed in the SIIW. Before using SIIW as a research instrument, the researcher had searched for its validity and reliability evidence. It involved a literature review and experts' validation process. The instrument was then tried out to see its suitability and applicability to this research context, i.e. Indonesian test-takers.

Other instruments used in this study were written questions and an in-depth interview protocol derived from SIIW. The written questions and the interview asked the same questions. The written questions provided the task performers to answer the questions in the writing format, while the interview process provided the task performers to answer the questions verbally. The researcher used these two different types of answers (written versus verbal) to address task performers' learning style differences and for data triangulation purposes. The interview was also used to dig for more information from the task performers that might not be expressed through written answers, such as the problems they faced, the way they used note-taking strategies, and the way they solved the problems were asked to the respondents.

The interview process was conducted right after the test with the help of eight enumerators having English backgrounds. The session was recorded, and the recordings were transcribed. Before data collection, the researchers trained these enumerators and attended a tried-out session of the interview. The data from the written questions and interviews then was further analyzed through descriptive analysis (Nassaji, 2015).

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Problems Faced by the Test-Takers**

Based on the result of the open-ended questionnaire, the researchers identified some problems faced by Indonesian test-takers while completing the IRLW task, as presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Problems faced by the test-takers while completing the IRLW task.

<b>No.</b>	<b>Types of problem</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Total respondents</b>
1.	Grammar and structure	R2, R4, R5, R6, R9, R12, R13, R14, R20, R21, R23	11
2.	Listening comprehension	R2, R4, R9, R11, R12, R15, R16, R17, R19, R22	10

Table 4 continued...

3.	Lack of vocabulary	R2, R4, R5, R6, R9, R16, R17, R20, R22, R23	10
4.	Synthesizing information	R6, R7, R9, R11, R12, R17, R19, R21	8
5.	Paraphrasing	R1, R4, R9, R15, R17, R18, R23	7
6.	Developing main ideas	R1, R4, R5, R6, R13, R21, R23	7
7.	Reading comprehension	R2, R9, R12, R16, R17, R19	6
8.	Lack of time	R8, R14, R15, R16, R20	5
9.	Topic familiarity	R1, R2, R3	3
10.	Internal distractor	R10, R22, R23	3
11.	External distractor	R5, R21	2
12.	Multi-tasking (taking notes while listening)	R7, R10	2
13.	Rhetorical writing pattern	R2, R20	2
14.	Paragraph and essay organization	R12, R20	2
15.	Memorizing	R9	1
16.	Connecting main ideas	R8	1
17.	Too many words	R8	1

Those 17 problems are grammar and structure, listening comprehension, lack of vocabulary, synthesizing information, paraphrasing, developing main ideas, reading comprehension, lack of time, topic familiarity, internal distractor, external distractor, multi-tasking problems, rhetorical writing pattern, paragraph and essay organization, memorizing, and connecting main ideas. Among the problems, the test-takers faced the main problems regarding grammar and structure, listening comprehension, lack of vocabulary, synthesizing information, paraphrasing, and developing main ideas. The rest of the other problems, even though minor, seemed to influence the test-takers' strategies in completing the task. The aspects of internal and external distractors influenced the strategies applied by the test-takers while completing the integrated reading-listening-writing task.

These findings are strengthened by the responses of the respondents from the written questions and interview data. A respondent (R4) expressed that:

- (1) When listening to the audio, there was a sound from outside that distracted my efforts in comprehending the audio in the listening session. I got frustrated. (R4)

Essentially, R4 complained that noises from outside of the audio distracted him from taking the test quietly, thus, ruining his concentration. The noises came from his peers' who were also taking the test. This external distractor also influenced the outcome of his test.

Another respondent (R7) claimed:

- (2) I got stuck before starting the writing session. I did nothing for some minutes. I was shocked that listening and speaking parts made me nervous. I was not sure about the results. Too hard for me. Yet, I tried hard to do the writing session.

Meanwhile, R7 posed internal distractors that weakened his ability to do the test, which were competence and anxiety. This finding corresponds to the writing process model developed by [Flower and Hayes \(1981\)](#), which put the task environment (internal and external factors) as the factors contributing to the process of writing. It

indicates that one's writing ability is not the single factor affecting the quality of a text he/she produces.

## **4.2 Strategies Applied by the Test-Takers**

After analyzing the data from the written questions and interviews, the researchers found out that the whole picture of the IRLW process could be derived from test-takers' strategies used before and whilst writing the essay. It is not surprising that almost all Indonesian task performers respondents used the same strategies as found by [Yang and Plakans \(2012\)](#). However, it is interesting that some strategies were not listed in Yang and Plakans' SIIW, but the respondents jot them down in the questionnaire and written questions and claimed to have used them. Perhaps this is because the Yang and Plakans' subjects of the study were non-real task performers and their cultural backgrounds were different from the subjects of this present study. [Yang and Plakans \(2012\)](#) employed 161 non-native-English-speaking students enrolled in a large southwestern university in the United States. They came from different countries, including Brazil, China, Egypt, France, Iran, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Taiwan, Turkey, and Vietnam. Thus, they had experiences in using the English language in their daily activities. In contrast, this present study involved 23 respondents (15 males and 8 females) of TOEFL iBT test-takers from different disciplines. All came from Indonesia and had to take the TOEFL iBT test as one of the requirements before they continued their study in the United States, so it was a high-stakes test. In fact, they rarely used English in their daily lives; their use of this language was limited to formal settings such as in classes, meetings, conferences, or academic gatherings/events.

### *4.2.1 Before writing strategies*

Before writing the essay, the test-takers applied strategies related to processing information input from the reading passage and the lecture. Thus, strategies before writing the essay are classified into reading strategies, listening strategies, and outlining strategies which happen right after the completion of the listening stage.

In the reading stage, the test-takers applied four strategies. First, predicting the content of the reading passage was a strategy that was a part of the knowledge acquisition process ([McCrinkle & Christensen, 1995](#)), which linked the new knowledge about the topic and prior personal knowledge of the task performers. Thus, when the test-takers started reading the title of the reading, the information they got could be connected to their prior personal knowledge ([Widiati & Cahyono, 2001](#)), so that they could predict or guess the content of the reading passage. The importance of predicting or guessing the forthcoming information input could be found in Yang and Plakans' SIIW as they put 'predicting the content of the lecture after reading the passage'. However, they did not put 'predicting the content of the reading after reading the title of the passage', which is substantially the same aspect of the information process through connecting their prior (previously acquired) knowledge with their new knowledge.

Second, the test-takers focused on the reading passage to overcome the anxiety that affected their concentration in processing the information input from the reading passage as suggested by [Al Faruq \(2019\)](#) reading anxiety does not need an instant response but students need to focus on the concrete text. A respondent (R4) said:

- (3) The texts were so difficult since I was not familiar with the topics. It was very hard to comprehend them. But I tried to get the main ideas and some important clues from the texts.

This strategy was categorized as an affective strategy (Oxford, 1990). The absence of this strategy in Yang and Plakans' SIIW was because Yang and Plakans' (2012) research setting was not a high-stake test. Thus, the writers might not experience the anxiety feeling like what has been experienced by a respondent in this study. Staying focused on the task was essential to do to process the information input from the reading text. Failure to use this strategy would affect the comprehension of the reading passage.

Finding main ideas and essential information from the reading passage was another strategy found in this study. This finding was in line with what has been found by Spivey and King (1989) that there are three significant discourses to compose reading materials in synthesis processes: organizing, selecting, and connecting. Organizing is the writers' approach to making meaning of the texts based on their prior knowledge; selecting is writers' key ideas from less important details based on task goals, demands, purposes, or specifications; and connecting is writers' ideas to link information from different sources and elaborate the ideas from an integral perspective (Spivey & King, 1989). Finding main ideas here could be categorized as sorting key ideas from less critical details based on task goals or purposes. Finding main ideas and writing down main ideas were two different activities. The study conducted by Yang and Plakans (2012) did not include main ideas as a distinct strategy because task performers may have different learning styles.

Finally, the current study found that categorizing the main points in the reading passage as a distinct cognitive strategy is incomplete; it was a personal strategy enabling the writer to process and transform the information. There is a need to include this strategy in SIIW. In line with Weinstein and Mayer (1986) on cognitive strategies, they identified three types of cognitive strategy, one of which was organization strategies, in which the task performers reorganized information to be learned to make it more meaningful. To be more meaningful here could refer to the writers' strategy to categorize the main points in the reading passage into either positive or negative and either agreement or disagreement points to be more meaningful. Meaningful information from the reading, then, could be elaborated through the synthesizing process, which linked the new knowledge (from the reading) and the test-takers' prior knowledge (experience) (McCrinkle & Christensen, 1995).

Then, in the listening stages, the majority of the test-takers used the listening and outlining strategies as listed in Yang and Plakans' (2012) SIIW. Two respondents, however, reported not using strategy items number 14 and 15. Strategy item number 14 is 'planning to copy a good sentence from the reading or lecture in the essay', while strategy item number 15 is 'predicting the content of the lecture after reading the passage'. This finding could be explained by Yang and Plakans (2012), who found that verbatim strategy negatively correlated with the writing score (Gebril & Plakans, 2009). Thus, R6, who did not use strategy item number 14, might be a high-achieving writer.

R14 did not use strategy item number 15 because he did not know that he could predict the lecture's content after reading the passage, which could help him understand the lecture's content. Thus, the test-takers needed to learn strategies to use in the integrated reading-listening-writing task of TOEFL iBT (Yang & Plakans, 2012). English teachers, therefore, need to teach positive strategies of IRLW because

students might not know the importance of the strategies and how to use them in the test.

This study also found some strategies not listed, yet, in the SIIW. Those strategies were focusing on the lecture, trying to identify the main ideas and important points from the lecture, using a symbol for note-taking, guessing the main points from the lecture, categorizing main points or essential information from the lecture, and creating a comparison table/matrix of the lecture and the reading passage. Previous studies did not identify these strategies because of the research subjects' different characteristics (learning styles) and cultural backgrounds (Yang & Plakans, 2012).

The test-takers' efforts to have total concentration were needed while processing the information from the reading passage and during the processing of information input from the lecture. It was urgently needed when there was a potential of having external or internal distractors like what has been found in this study that a respondent experienced an external distractor while processing the information input from the lecture. The distractor was the noise made by the other task performers who were completing the speaking test in the same room as those listening to the lecture. In this case, the task performer could use a metacognitive strategy to focus his concentration on the listening task (Shapira & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2005). This external distractor could not be tolerated because it could affect the test-takers' listening comprehension and their scores.

It was also found that the test-takers used symbols such as keywords for note-taking while processing the information input from the lecture. This finding was in line with previous research findings by Flower and Hayes (1981), who found that during writing, the writers were involved in the planning process to build an internal representation in the writers' minds.

Flower and Hayes (1981, p. 373) preferred to use the term "translate" over "transcribe" or "write" because they believed that the information generated during the planning stage "may be represented in a variety of symbols systems other than language, such as imager". They further stated that when writers move from planning to translating, they try to develop a representation encoded in one form, and sometimes it cannot be expressed in words. Thus, it can lead to huge confusion and often obliges the writer to form good English sentences (Flower & Hayes, 1981).

Another test-wiseness strategy that was not listed yet in Yang and Plakans' (2012) SIIW was guessing the main points from the lecture. Guessing was also categorized as part of processing information input. However, in this context, there were two types of guessing or predicting. The first one was positive guessing, which made the task performers easily comprehend the information input to their prior knowledge and helped them process it. The test-takers could confirm the prediction when they finished reading the whole text or listening to the whole lecture, increasing the meaningfulness of the information processed (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986).

This study also found that categorizing main points was used in information input from the reading passage and the lecture. Like in the reading, this type of strategy could also be categorized as a cognitive strategy found by Weinstein and Mayer (1986). Categorizing main points from the lecture into positive or negative information or agreement or disagreement was part of reorganizing the information to be learned to make it more meaningful which fell into analyzing the level of cognitive (thinking) skills. If it is viewed from the perspective of the cognitive level of Bloom's taxonomy, it is clear that there is a distinction between knowing, comprehending, analyzing,

synthesizing, and evaluating. In an integrated reading-listening-writing task, task performers' cognitive strategies used could be identified by their activities such as knowing the information (e.g., by note-taking), understanding the content (by comprehending), analyzing (by categorizing the content), and synthesizing (by connecting the reading passage and lecture).

#### 4.2.2 *Whilst writing strategies*

It is not surprising that almost all respondents used most of the whilst writing strategies listed in the questionnaire proposed by [Yang and Plakans \(2012\)](#). However, it is essential to know that two respondents (R11 and R12) reported that they did not use strategy item number 22, which was 'trying to write about their knowledge or their own experience in their essays'. In contrast to independent writing, the integrated writing task required the test-takers to write based on the content from the reading and the passage, not based on the task performers' experience ([Guo, 2011](#)). Thus, that R11 and R12 did not use strategy item number 22 might be because they knew that in integrated writing, task performers did not need to use their personal experience in their essay, or it might be because they did not have any previous experience or knowledge related to the topic of the essay. However, other respondents reported using strategy number 22. It means that it was substantial for EFL teachers to teach their students to avoid strategy item number 22 in the integrated reading-listening-writing task of TOEFL iBT.

This study also found some strategies not listed, yet, in Yang and Plakans' SIIW are comparing and contrasting points of view in the paragraph and combining the content in the lecture and the reading passage. Comparing and contrasting essential points of view in the essay was also considered a strategy that involved test-takers' cognitive skills. Using this strategy was an indication that the writers were at the level of analysis (indicated by the ability to compare and contrast the information). This strategy was necessary because one of the functions of academic writing was to reinforce or challenge concepts or arguments ([Yakhontova, 2003](#)).

Another interesting finding from this study was that cognitive strategies happened during the processing of information input (before writing) and during the writing (while writing). Combining the content of the reading passage and the lecture in the essay was also considered a cognitive strategy called linking previous knowledge from the reading and newly learned knowledge through listening to the lecture as stated by a respondent, R14 in (4).

- (4) I tried hard to focus on the writing session more seriously. I recalled my background knowledge while writing. I added some details which I had not thought about at the beginning of writing. Sometimes, ideas appeared suddenly. I was not a good writer.

Based on [Weinstein and Mayer \(1986\)](#), this could be categorized as a cognitive strategy. The content in the lecture and the reading passage could be combined by connecting sentences using the appropriate conjunctions.

#### 4.2.3 *After writing strategies*

This study also found other strategies not listed yet in the 'after writing' strategies of Yang and Plakans' SIIW. They were checking the completeness of the



content of the essay, checking the connection of ideas among paragraphs, and reorganizing the writing.

The test-takers checked the completeness of the content of the essay during the revising stage. It was in line with the finding of [Murray \(1980\)](#) who recognized the last stage of writing as revising or evaluating the writing product ([Sadi & Othman, 2012](#)). The evaluation here could include checking spelling, punctuation, and the completeness of the content of the essay. Checking the completeness of the content of the essay was a distinct strategy that was different from the strategies listed by Yang and Plakans in their 'after writing' strategy classification (see Table 3). Thus, it was essential to be added to Yang and Plakans' SIIW.

The test-takers also checked the connection of ideas among paragraphs that were significant to uphold the writing quality ([Hessamy & Hamed, 2013](#)). This strategy could be done after writing to make sure that the essay was coherent. Thus, checking the organization or connection of ideas among paragraphs needed to be added into Yang and Plakans' SIIW post-writing stage (evaluation) category.

This study also found that a task performer used re-organizing strategy after writing the draft. It happened to a respondent, R4, who claimed:

- (5) I re-read my draft many times to make sure that I had written all ideas I planned in the beginning part of the writing. Then, I added or revised some parts before finishing my text. Even I edited some misspellings or punctuations as well as capitalization.

This finding was in line with [Murray's \(1980\)](#) finding that the writer edited, developed, cut, and reordered the information in the written task during the evaluation process. It was because for some people it was difficult to make meaning with written language 'by looking backward from a finished page...It is possible, however, for us to follow the process forward from blank page to final draft and learn something of what happens' ([Murray, 1980](#)). Thus, future test-takers could use the strategy of reordering information in the written task.

The strategies of each test-taker could be different based on some reasons, such as their cognitive levels, experiences, abilities, and levels of anxiety of each test-taker besides external factors and even learning styles. However, [Sulistyo and Heriyawati \(2017\)](#) claim that outstanding writers commonly apply more appropriate strategies in accomplishing a writing task.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The test-takers encountered internal and external problems in completing the integrated reading-listening-writing (IRLW) of the TOEFL iBT test. The test-takers use affective, cognitive, metacognitive, and test-wisness strategies to solve their problems. The use of these strategies depends on their learning styles and cognitive skill levels. The test-takers need to learn and apply all positive strategies based on their learning styles to solve their problems in completing the IRLW task of the TOEFL iBT test.

The test-takers are different from one another in using integrated writing strategies. Some task performers reported using strategies listed in the Yang and Plakans' Strategy Inventory for Integrated Writing (SIIW), while some others reported not using the strategies listed in the SIIW. Other strategies not listed yet in Yang and

Plakans' SIIW supports the need to revise this framework into a more comprehensive assessment instrument to elicit integrated writing strategies. It implies that future test-takers need to learn and apply all positive strategies based on their learning styles. Therefore, teachers have to empower their students with some strategies for accomplishing such as the TOEFL iBT test and the like.

Due to the possible limitations of this recent study, such as the inability to access the test-takers' TOEFL iBT writing scores, further research needs to investigate the relationship between task performers' strategy use and their writing performance on the real test of TOEFL iBT to understand more about integrated reading-listening-writing strategies. Furthermore, the respondents of this research were only 23 test-takers, thus, future research should involve more respondents in data collection from other areas in Indonesia. A comparative study with other EFL test-takers out of Indonesia is also feasible for future related research.

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## Flipping an IELTS Writing Course: Investigating its Impacts on Students' Performance and Attitudes

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### Abstract

*The technology-enhanced instructional approach has been proven to stimulate active learning and advance the teaching-learning process. The flipped classroom (FC) instructional method, an instructional technology part of blended learning, has gained remarkable popularity in recent years due to its promising and positive impacts on different aspects of students' learning process (motivation, engagement, academic performance, independent learning). In the current study, an explanatory mixed-method approach was employed to investigate the implementation of the flipped pedagogical approach in a government-funded IELTS preparation course in Indonesia, particularly in the writing section of the course. It examined the impacts of this instructional technology method on learners' writing performance and explored their learning attitudes and experiences. A number of 25 participants from various professional backgrounds aspiring to pursue master's and doctoral degrees who were recruited based on their previous TOEFL or IELTS scores participated in this study. The findings of this study showed that the learners had a positive attitude toward the flipped instruction method, and their writing test achievement significantly improved as reflected in the official IELTS test scores. Method flexibility, independent learning, and collaborative and active learning were factors*

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*that emerged in the interviews that were considered the important determinants of the participants' IELTS writing improvements.*

**Keywords:** Asynchronous learning, flipped classroom, IELTS writing skills, students' performance, synchronous learning, technology-enhanced instructional approach.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) has been one of the most widely used English language testing systems in the world. Administered in more than 140 countries, it is considered a standardized language proficiency test for those who want to pursue their graduate studies. Like IBT TOEFL, IELTS is also a language testing system “assessing speaking and writing as a compulsory part of a full test system” (O’Sullivan, 2018, p. 1). One distinct feature of the IELTS writing section is that the writing task is designed to test students’ ability to provide arguments and reason (Task 2) and to examine and identify data in the form of graphics, processes, charts, or tables (Task 1). Moreover, of the four English language skills, writing is perhaps the most difficult one to master, particularly in the context of academic writing required by the IELTS. Empirical research has indicated how academic writing is perceived as a much more daunting and difficult task for EFL learners (Xu & Qi, 2017) of the four language skills. In teaching writing, “a common underlying objective is to make sure that students recognize that they write to accomplish certain deliberate functions” (Cheung, 2016, p. 2). Thus, writing requires the higher-level skills of planning and organizing in addition to the lower-level skills of spelling, punctuation, and the word. Understandably, the failure to strategically allocate cognitive resources adversely impacts writing performance (Ferretti & Fan, 2016).

To motivate and improve EFL learners’ writing skills and performance, instructional methods used in teaching writing must aim at triggering learners’ cognitive domain by delivering interactive, challenging, and motivating activities. Traditional teacher-centered instruction in writing has indicated the ineffectiveness in sustaining students’ interests in learning (Buitrago & Diaz, 2018). In the teacher-centered learning process, learners are often spooned-fed about constructing ideas into sentences and paragraphs, where teachers instruct learners to follow examples. In this traditional teacher-centered writing class, students have limited time to exercise or work with their peers as the teacher often presents a lengthy material presentation, resulting in a loss of focus and interest on the part of the students (Buitrago & Diaz, 2018). This is to say that pedagogy is one of the determinants of the instructional process that define the quality of the teaching-learning process. One of the contemporary innovative pedagogical models in language teaching designed to improve students’ learning achievement is flipped learning (Yang et al., 2018). On this note, Wang and Qi (2018) argued that “the flipped classroom model particularly suits competency-based learning, such as language learning” (p. 50). This is because the reverse mode of learning where students are required to review course materials enables students to adjust their pace of study, utilizing the most suitable learning strategies in their own time. Numerous studies have shown the positive impacts of this

instructional approach on students' performance (Araujo et al., 2017; Blau & Shamir-Inbal, 2017; Chang & Hwang, 2018; Landrum, 2020).

In a flipped classroom (FC), class time is allocated to activities triggering learners' higher cognitive skills such as group discussions, presentations, and question and answer sessions. In the context of today's learners who "grow up immersed as digital natives and familiar with a wide range of digital devices" (Zainuddin et al., 2019, p. 678), adopting technology as an instructional strategy is the second nature. Clearly, "this innovative pedagogy has gained prominence in higher education institutions as an alternative pedagogical model reversing what traditionally occurs in and out of the class activities" (Zainuddin et al., 2019, p. 679). However, despite growing studies on the impacts of the FC on learners' academic performance, the paucity of empirical evidence on learners' IELTS writing experience and how FC affects learners' performance (IELTS writing result) remains one of the pressing issues. Owing to this fact, two research questions are put forward:

- (1) What are the learners' attitudes and experiences of a flipped classroom in teaching IELTS writing?
- (2) What impact does the flipped classroom method have on learners' IELTS writing performance?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 IELTS Writing Task

Wu et al. (2020) stated that "in globalization, there is a consensus that great proficiency in English is an essential primary benchmark of competitiveness in modern society" (p. 2). Universities around the world have emphasized the importance of English proficiency as one of the requirements for students to pursue their graduate studies. One of the standardized English proficiency tests used to benchmark students' language competence is the IELTS test. O'Sullivan (2018, p. 1) argued that "IELTS is a high-stakes test, used to measure the English-language proficiency of people who wish to study or work in countries or institutions where English is the language used".

One of the language skills tested in the IELTS test, writing skills, has two types of writing tasks, Task 1 and Task 2, scored based on several criteria. In writing Task 1, test takers are required to address the question given in the form of a particular graph, table, chart, or process, and they have to write at least 150 words within 20 minutes. While in writing Task 2, test takers must respond to a question by writing an essay of at least 250 words within 40 minutes. There are five types of questions commonly asked in writing Task 2 (opinion essays, discussion essay, advantage/disadvantage essays, solution essay, and direct question essays) which is randomly assigned to test takers. Topics of IELTS writing tasks range from a wide area of issues such as education, technology, environment, sustainable energy, etc. In addition, there are several different criteria as shown in Table 1 that learners have to meet in the IELTS writing test in responding to Task 1 and Task 2 questions (O'Sullivan, 2018). Within the context of this research, the researchers focused on the academic stream of IELTS writing.

**Table 1.** Score criteria in Writing Task 1 and Task 2 (adopted from O'Sullivan, 2018).

Score criteria	Task 1	Task 2
Task achievement	Response relevancy to the question.	Response relevancy to the question.
Lexical resource	Development of arguments (e.g. thesis statement development), organization, and clarification of ideas.	Development of arguments (e.g. thesis statement development), organization, and clarification of ideas.
Coherence and cohesion	Logics or consistency (ideas make sense as a whole).	Logics or consistency (ideas make sense as a whole).
Grammatical range and accuracy	The variety of sentence structure and error-free sentences.	The variety of sentence structure and error-free sentences.

Writing is difficult enough as it is. In a test condition, the level of difficulty and the intensity of the situation that test takers have to face intensify tremendously. What this means is that the pressure that test-takers face in executing Writing Task 1 and Task 2 within the required time allocation usually increases during the test as the topic given in Task 1 and Task 2 may not be familiar issues for them, contributing to the increased anxiety intensifying the situation face by test takers.

Besides lower-level writing skills (spelling, tenses, word choice), writing also requires higher-level skills such as planning, organizing, developing ideas, putting ideas into language, reviewing (evaluating and revising text), and monitoring (deciding when to move from process to process) (van der Loo et al., 2018) which often triggers anxiety and concern in the part of language learners (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

## 2.2 Flipped Classroom Instructional Method

Flipped classroom (FC) is one of the student-centered instructional methods consisting of two distinct learning phases (O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015), where students have synchronous active and collaborative learning in the classroom and the pre-class technology-assisted individual learning. This pedagogical method allows students to watch instructional videos using technology as a part of knowledge transfer and optimize the class time for active learning (Hung, 2015). In a similar vein, Abeysekera and Dawson (2015) elucidated that the pre-class activities are intended to transmit information or knowledge to prepare students with needed cognitive knowledge and practical skills so that they are ready to contribute positively in the synchronous classroom activities.

Its unique feature lies in the fact that the teaching-learning process is divided into two learning stages, out-of-class and in-class settings. By integrating technology, during the out of the class setting, students are required to carry out preparatory activities by accessing, watching, and reviewing instructional content shared by the teacher, commonly in the form of videos (Hung, 2017). In the context of traditional pedagogy, these activities take place in a brick-and-mortar classroom. FC allows students more time outside the classroom for additional practice and material preparation that can be accessed at students' ease, allowing more class time for discussion (Arnold-Garza, 2014), which is important in the effort to encourage students to use higher-order reasoning. Class time and activities can be devoted to promoting students' higher thinking and knowledge construction, which under the guidance of the teachers, can be done through group discussions, debates, presentations, and take-and-give conversations (Adnan, 2017; Dooly & Sadler, 2020).



According to Ekmekçi (2016, p. 194), “flipping covers a technology-driven and systematic approach to learning and it is also in line with the objectives of modern educational policies demanding more engaged, autonomous, active, and self-confident learners”. Webb & Doman (2019) suggested that “the flipped method to teaching and learning is one way to ensure that technology is a key component to learning in an inquiry-based classroom and to support civic online reasoning” (p. 3). One positive feature of this instructional technology lies in learners’ flexibility in accessing learning materials provided through online applications, outside the classroom (Howitt & Pegrum, 2015; Zaka et al., 2019). Transmission of knowledge via individual technology-enhanced asynchronous learning frees up class time for active learning activities in advancing students’ language learning experiences, which has been acknowledged as one of its positive characteristics.

This instructional technology has been considered one of the innovative pedagogical approaches to amending outdated instruction, promoting active learning (Lee, 2018; Shih & Tsai, 2017; Sletten, 2017), and increasing learners’ motivation (Chuang, et al., 2018; Long et al., 2017; Yilmaz & Baydas, 2017), enhancing learners’ higher-order thinking (Kim et al., 2017), and fostering classroom engagement (Elmaadaway, 2017), as well as leading to better academic performance (Lo & Hew, 2017; Shyr & Chen, 2018). Within the context of foreign language learning, evidence has shown that FC instruction contributes to the implementation of a student-centered learning environment, leading to positive results. The impacts of the use of FC in teaching have been recorded by many researchers. One of the positive effects of FC is that it promotes self-directed and collaborative learning (Tseng et al., 2018). The study experimented by Lee (2018), for example, shows considerable improvement in classroom engagement and active classroom learning as a result of FC implementation. Positive results are also reported in the study conducted by Chang and Hwang (2018) highlighting the improvement in the students’ test scores in the experimental class compared to that of the control class.

### **3. METHODS**

To answer the research questions, the researcher applied a mixed-method study aimed to examine the effects of the flipped classroom (FC) on the learners’ IELTS writing performance, as well as explore their attitudes and experiences toward FC.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study compared the result of the IELTS writing section of the FC of the 2019/2020 cohort with the non-flipped class of the 2018/2019 cohort. Both cohorts were given the same IELTS writing materials by the same instructor. To benefit from both quantitative and qualitative methods, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were utilized.

Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews to enable the researchers to investigate the participants’ learning experiences comprehensively. Face-to-face interviews with the students who agreed to be interviewed were conducted after the IELTS program finished. The quantitative data were gained through a survey questionnaire and pre-test and post-test results to get

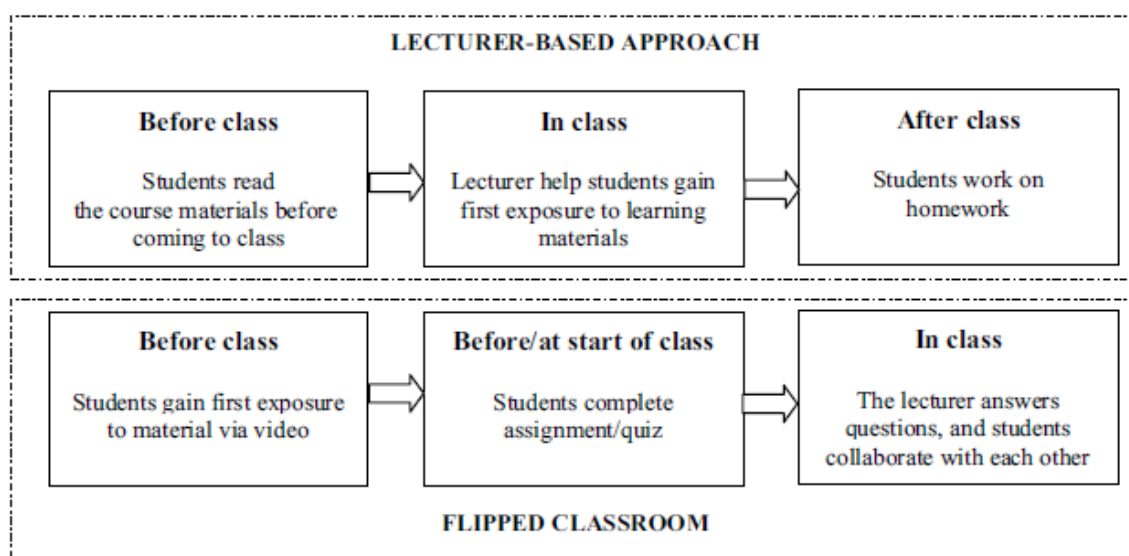
the illustration of the participants' performance in the IELTS writing section, and their attitudes towards FC. The data were collected after a three-month FC intervention which lasted for 16 meetings. To look at how FC affected the students' writing performance, an official IELTS test carried out by the official IELTS test center was conducted. The scores of students' simulation IELTS test were then compared to the scores of their official IELTS test.

### 3.2 Course Design

To look at whether they benefitted from FC instructional method, the students, before attending the class, were encouraged to access and watch the previously-prepared videos on IELTS writing taken from YouTube Education online learning resource. The links to the website of the learning sources given to the learners are included in the Appendix. A total of 13 instructional videos (see Appendix), ranging from 3:03 to 30:13 minutes, related to various components of IELTS writing were shared in the WhatsApp group (WAG) and Google Classroom before synchronous classroom time. The selected YouTube videos posted by the IELTS practitioners online were aimed at addressing the IELTS writing four scoring criteria and developing writing strategies for the writing tasks.

These videos were accessed by the students outside the class prior to the classroom meetings. In total, 80 meetings were scheduled for the IELTS speaking, listening, reading, and writing sections. Sixteen 110-minute sessions out of 80 meetings were allocated for the IELTS writing section, scheduled twice a week. The rest were apportioned to speaking, reading, and listening sections of the IELTS. Outlines of the IELTS writing weekly course structure are provided in the Appendix. The meetings took place twice a week for three months.

Two tests were administered to analyze participants' progress in the IELTS writing section, one of which was a simulation test (week 8), and the other was an official IELTS test administered by an IELTS certified test center (week 16).



**Figure 1.** A comparison of the traditional classroom and the flipped classroom methods (source: Al-Samarraie et al., 2019, p. 1019).

In the asynchronous pre-class learning activities, participants were able to access and discuss the IELTS writing materials shared through WAG and Google Classroom at their own time and pace. They were encouraged to post questions and answer some of the questions posted by their peers. As a part of the summative test, summary tasks and quizzes accompanying the instructional videos were given by the lecturer. Lo and Hew (2017) highlighted the importance of low-stakes formative assessments, commonly in the form of quizzes and note taking which can be posted in WAG and Google Classroom in the effort to accomplish the pre-class work. Classroom time was then allocated for practicing their writing and discussion whether in pairs or a small group.

### 3.3 Participants

In this study, a total of 25 students (8 males and 17 females), with the age span of 24 to 37 served as a control class who took part in a three-month government-funded IELTS preparation program. Meanwhile, the other 25 participants (7 males and 18 females) serving as an experimental class, with the age span of 20 to 45, were admitted to the same program and participated in the study. Unlike the experimental class, the control class was not treated with the FC method. Therefore, they were taught by using the conventional method of teaching where mentors gave the materials in the classroom. This method, commonly referred to as the lecturing method, did not provide learners with materials before the classroom took place.

The selection criterion for the program was based on participants' previous IELTS scores set at a range of 4.5 to 5, or TOEFL score of 450 to 500, either official or non-official test. Thus, the program participants in both control and experimental classes had relatively the same level of English skills. Fourteen participants (56%) in the experimental class intended to pursue their doctoral degree, while the rest planned to undertake master's degree qualifications in universities overseas. The participants' backgrounds varied from lecturers (11), researchers (3), government officials (8), and the self-employed (3), representing different disciplines. The majority of them were full-time government employees accounting for 88% (22 participants) of the total participants, and the rest 12% (3 participants) were self-employed. Approximately 18 out of 25 participants had taken the IELTS preparation course before, while the rest 7 participants had not had any IELTS preparation course prior to this government-funded program. Of them, 17 had sat in the IELTS official test once; six had taken the test twice and 2 did not take an IELTS test before this program that they attended (see Table 3). Meanwhile, of these participants, six of them consented to be interviewed.

### 3.4 Data Collection

In the current study, three types of research methods were employed; quantitative data in the form of the survey questionnaire and participants' IELTS test scores (both simulation and official writing section test scores), and qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with duration ranging from 30-60 minutes. The researchers, with participants' consent, audiotaped all interviews which were later transcribed to discover themes related to the issues under investigation. In doing so, "the general issues that are of interest are determined before the analysis, but the

specific nature of the categories and themes to be explored are not predetermined” (Ezzy, 2002, p. 80).

To investigate learners' attitudes and experiences toward FC and its impacts on their TOEFL performance, the researcher adopted a questionnaire designed by Barua et al. (2014), with changes to suit the context of the current study. Twenty questionnaires, piloted and tested before disseminated to learners, were conducted to facilitate the researcher's research design. The questionnaire was developed by adopting that of Barua et al. (2014) and was tested on 10 students before dissemination. A five-point Likert scale that ranges from 'strongly agree' (5) to 'strongly disagree' (1) was employed to get the learners' attitudes and experiences toward the FC. The learners' IELTS scores were also used to compare their initial IELTS scores with their latest scores taken after flipped learning intervention.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

Since the assumptions of the normal distribution of the data in the IELTS tests were not satisfied, a Mann-Whitney U-test test was operated (instead of a t-test). This analysis aimed to determine if there were any differences between the control and treatment groups in terms of IELTS test scores. For the students' positive attitudes and experiences of the FC, the data were considered normally distributed, and therefore, a parametric test was employed (one-sample t-test).

**Table 2.** The result of Cronbach's Alpha (perceived positive the FC).

Type of Scale	Number of items	$\alpha$
Perceived positive the FC with Google Meet application	20	.796

**Table 3.** Demographic information of the treatment group.

<b>Gender</b>	<b>F (%)</b>
Male	7 (28.00)
Female	18 (72.00)
<b>Age</b>	
20-25	9 (36.00)
26-30	4 (16.00)
31-35	4 (16.00)
36-40	5 (20.00)
41-45	3 (12.00)
<b>Having technological devices used in the learning process</b>	25 (100)
<b>Types of technological devices used in the learning process</b>	
Smartphone	25 (100)
Laptop	25 (100)
Desktop	3 (12.00)
iPad	5 (20.00)
<b>Web 2.0 applications used in the learning process</b>	
WhatsApp	25 (100)
Google Classroom	25 (100)
Facebook	25 (100)
Google meet	24 (96.00)
Zoom	20 (80.00)
<b>Number of IELTS tests taken previously</b>	
None	2 (8.00)

Table 3 continued...

1	17 (68.00)
2	6 (24.00)
<b>IELTS preparation class taken previously</b>	
Yes	13 (52.00)
No	12 (48.00)
<b>Time studying IELTS writing outside the classroom (experimental class)</b>	
2-3 hours	2 (8.00)
3-4 hours	21 (84.00)
More than 5 hours	2 (8.00)
<b>Qualification to pursue</b>	
Master's degree	14 (56.00)
Doctoral degree	11 (44.00)

**Table 4.** Demographic information of the control group.

<b>Gender</b>	<b>F (%)</b>
Male	8 (32.00)
Female	17 (68.00)
<b>Age</b>	
20-25	10 (40.00)
26-30	6 (24.00)
31-35	4 (16.00)
36-40	5 (20.00)
<b>Having technological devices used in the learning process</b>	
<b>Types of technological devices used in the learning process</b>	
Smartphone	25 (100)
Laptop	25 (100)
Desktop	4 (16.00)
<b>Web 2.0 applications used in the learning process</b>	
WhatsApp	25 (100)
Google Classroom	25 (100)
Facebook	25 (100)
Google meet	22 (88.00)
Zoom	18 (72.00)
<b>Number of IELTS tests taken previously</b>	
None	5 (20.00)
1	15 (60.00)
2	5 (20.00)
<b>IELTS preparation class taken previously</b>	
Yes	15 (60.00)
No	10 (40.00)
<b>Time studying IELTS writing outside the classroom (control class)</b>	
0-1 hours	21 (84.00)
1-2 hours	4 (16.00)
<b>Qualification to pursue</b>	
Master's degree	17 (68.00)
Doctoral degree	8 (32.00)

The interview data gained in this research were scrutinized by using a thematic analysis approach by adopting Creswell's (2012) six steps data coding process involving "disassembling and reassembling the data" (p. 94), enabling the researchers to get the themes of the issue. The coded data was used to produce a conceptual

framework, which included the process of classifying the data into specific group categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Within the context of this study, preparing and organizing data were done by transcribing interview data which was crucial to get the data in a similar format ready for analysis. Once this stage was done, the researchers started to read the data and look for common themes based on the research questions which were then coded and categorized accordingly. This allowed the researcher to describe and present the data narratively. The last step was to interpret the findings and discussed the results.

## 4. FINDINGS

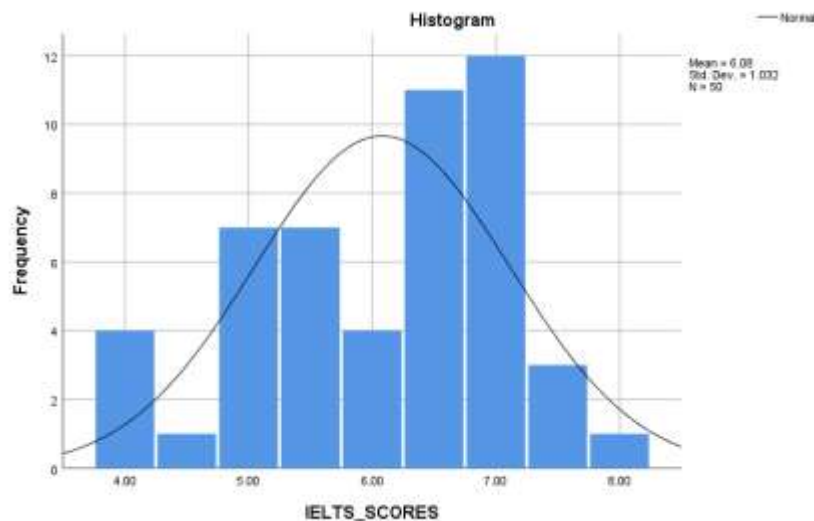
### 4.1 Quantitative Results on Learning Performance

The data of the students' IELTS test scores were reported as being not normally distributed as the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test results were statistically significant at the 0.05 level ( $df = 50$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) (see Table 5). Figure 2 also shows and supports that the histogram is not bell-shaped, indicating that the distribution is not normal. Therefore, a non-parametric test (Mann-Whitney U-test) was applied in analyzing the data or comparing students' performance between flipped (experimental class) and non-flipped instruction (control class).

**Table 5.** Normality test of Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test – indicating the data were not normally distributed.

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
IELTS_SCORES	.198	50	.000	.930	50	.006

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction



**Figure 2.** Histogram of Normality Test – not normally distributed.

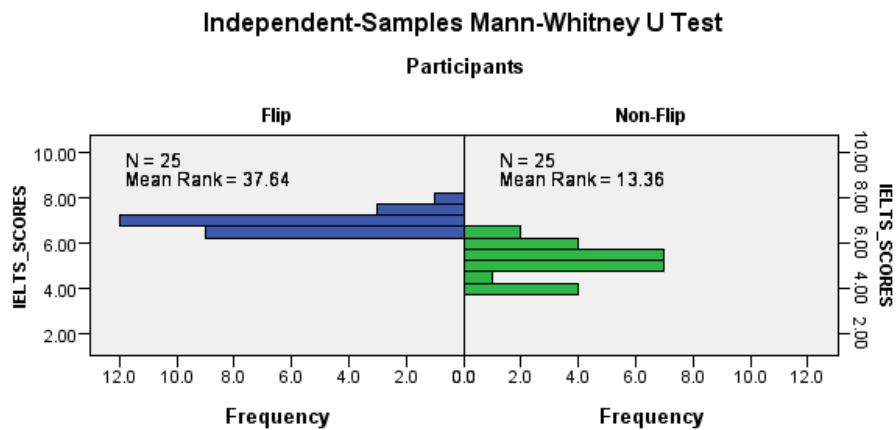
Although descriptive statistics show that the mean scores of both instructions were 6.92, the Mann-Whitney U test revealed that there was a significant difference between the two intervention groups,  $U = 9$ ,  $p < 0.05$  (Table 6). The Independent Sample Mann-Whitney U test in figure 3 also illustrates that the M-Rank of the flipped model was higher than that of the non-flipped instruction.

**Table 6.** Mann-Whitney U Test results to compare students’ IELST test scores between two intervention groups.

IELST Tests	Intervention Groups	n	Descriptive Statistics	Mann-Whitney U test			
			Mean (SD)	M-rank	Z	U	p
Scores	Flip	25	6.92 (0.4)	37.64	-5.982	9	.000*
	Non-Flip	25	6.92 (0.4)	13.36			

\*p < .05

Note: Scores from speaking, listening, writing, and reading skills.



**Figure 3.** Independent sample Mann-Whitney U Test.

This positive result can imply that the participants in the FC had better IELTS writing preparation leading to the final official test compared to the non-FC. The ability to access learning materials before the classroom interactions seemed to have positive effects on participants’ writing skills which were reflected in their final scores at the end of the program.

#### 4.2 Students’ Attitudes

A parametric test (one-sample t-test) was employed since the data were normally distributed. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test results were not statistically significant at the 0.05 level ( $df = 25$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) (See Table 7).

**Table 7.** Normality test of Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk Test.

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Average	.161	25	.096	.938	25	.133

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The one-sample t-test was employed to determine how much variance in the students' perceived learning with the FC reflected toward their attitude. The results in Table 8 show that all items were positively responded to by learners. In all these cases, the learners' responses were significantly higher than 3 (neutral); therefore, we can summarize that the learners on average had a positive attitude about the FC in the IELTS preparation course. Since the p-value is significantly higher than the neutral response (Tables 8 and 9), it can be summed up that all questionnaire items were positively responded to by the learners. Compared to the control class, this finding reinforces the results of the learners' assessments that confirm positive mean scores in which the final official IELTS test scores significantly increased compared to the simulation exam in the eighth week of the program. This was not the case with the control class, in which the results of the final official IELTS test were not improved significantly as required by the program.

**Table 8.** One sample t-test (n=25) determining learners' positive responses to the questionnaire items (test value=3) was administered after the writing course was completed.

No.	Items	M	Std. dev.	t	p
1.	Pre-class materials were available on Google Classroom before the flipped classroom activities.	4.92	0.28	34.671	0.000*
2.	Adequate time was provided to spend on the pre-class materials before the flipped classroom activities.	4.92	0.28	34.671	0.000*
3.	Pre-class materials were relevant for the flipped classroom activities.	4.8	0.41	22.045	0.000*
4.	The classroom arrangements (positioning of the chairs for a group activity, audio-visual facilities, etc.) were conducive for the flipped classroom activities.	4.08	0.28	19.503	0.000*
5.	The activities during the flipped classroom session improved my understanding of the key concepts.	4.2	0.41	14.697	0.000*
6.	The instructor was able to engage me in the flipped classroom activities.	4.2	0.41	14.697	0.000*
7.	The instructor was able to provide clarification and examples on difficult concepts during the flipped classroom activities.	4	0	14.807	0.000*
8.	The instructor was able to expand writing pre-class materials during the flipped classroom activities.	4.04	0.35	13.266	0.000*
9.	More lectures should be conducted in the flipped classroom model.	3.88	0.33	13.966	0.000*
10.	I feel more confident to ask for clarifications and contribute to the discussion after watching the pre-class materials.	4.28	0.46	14.905	0.000*
11.	I feel more confident about my learning due to the flipped instruction.	4.52	0.51	26.000	0.000*
12.	With the Flipped instructional method, I find it easier to understand the process of writing.	4.04	0.2	12.736	0.000*
13.	The flipped classroom instruction helped me improve my writing skills.	4.12	0.44	14.905	0.000*
14.	The flipped instruction allows me to apply my own learning style.	4.52	0.51	19.503	0.000*
15.	I made more effort than usual when it came to flipped classroom learning activities.	4	0	10.007	0.000*



Table 8 continued...

16.	I spent time looking for more materials similar to the pre-class learning materials shared by the instructor.	4.08	0.28	24.000	0.000*
17.	The flipped classroom is more engaging than conventional classroom instruction.	3.88	0.44	26.000	0.000*
18.	I have no problems and I am satisfied with the format and structure of the learning materials presented.	3.96	0.2	13.863	0.000*
19.	The structure and the format of the flipped classroom motivated me to take the program seriously.	4.04	0.2	34.671	0.000*
20.	The use of the flipped classroom reduces a feeling of fear and tension, because of the prior preparation.	4.32	0.48	34.671	0.000*

\*p &lt; 0.01

Table 8 indicates students' attitudes towards the implementation of flipped learning in relation to the IELTS writing section. The questionnaires administered after 16 meetings of the IELTS writing classes showed the learners' positive attitudes toward flipped learning (Table 9).

**Table 9.** Overall scores of 20 questionnaire items – one-sample t-test.

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 3 (Neutral)					
	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Average	39.050	25	.000*	1.24000	1.1745	1.3055

\* p &lt; 0.01

### 4.3 Qualitative Findings

In the current study, the interviews were conducted to get the participants' in-depth insights into their IELTS writing learning experiences by using the FC. Several themes came up during the interview such as method flexibility, independent learning, collaborative and active learning, and better writing result.

#### 4.3.1 Method flexibility

During the interview, when asked what makes FC different from other methods that they experienced, RP1 and RP3 informed about the flexible time for learning since both were still working while taking the program.

- (1) This method of teaching allowed me to fit my learning within my hectic schedule. Better yet, the materials needed have been selected and shared for us to be accessed anytime and anywhere.

RP3 reiterated that:

- (2) As a government employee, most of my time is occupied with official work. I really found this method useful as it fits in my works.

#### *4.3.2 Independent learning*

One of the themes that appeared in the interview related to the opportunity to learn independently. On this note, RP2 said that:

- (3) I think, more than anything else, I became a more independent learner now than I used to be. The videos helped provide examples and direction. But I still have to allocate time to find other relevant materials that helped me in my writings.

In a similar vein, RP4 suggests that:

- (4) Once I accessed the link to the online videos, I could find tons of materials on the same topics. Thus, I spent more time online researching similar materials when I needed them.

#### *4.3.3 Collaborative and active learning*

With regard to the features of FC experienced by the program participants, another theme that appeared is collaborative and active learning. RP1 reiterated that:

- (5) With this method, I was able to work with other participants in the class, by providing feedback on their writings and vice versa. We created a WhatsApp group for the class so that we could keep discussing outside the classroom. We were able to have meaningful discussions that improved our writing.

The same kind of response was articulated by RP6:

- (6) I was able to connect with other participants and ask questions if I had writing issues to resolve.

To investigate the influences of FC on their learning experience, the findings suggested that FC affected students' learning strategy. The fact that they were able to discuss the materials provided before classroom meetings enabled them to work collaboratively in their spare time. RP5 reiterated:

- (11) I was able to work with my classmates inside and outside of the classroom. They can provide feedback on my initial writings before classroom discussion.

In a similar vein, RP2 stated:

- (12) I spent more time researching materials online and discussed with my friends the particular elements of Task 1 and Task 2. I often got valuable advice from my colleagues which helped me in my writing.

#### *4.3.4 Better writing results*

Research participants in the experimental class also mentioned the impacts of FC on the result of their IELTS writing task which improved. RP4 said:

- (7) I had attended an IELTS course before and the writing section has always been my biggest hurdle until now. I was able to exceed a minimum band of 6.0 during this program, which I think is due to the method implemented by the instructor.

In a similar vein, RP5 stated:

- (8) The method used by the instructor has given me a scholarship ticket. My previous TOEFL score was 6.5, but I did not get a scholarship because my writing band was less than 6.

When asked what impacts does FC have on their writings, RP1, for example, expressed that:

- (9) I have enrolled in the preparation program previously, but I did not get the intended result. I did not spend time preparing myself outside of the classroom. This method (FC) was brilliant as I was able to review the materials in my spare time, and the instructors shared relevant resources for us to access.

In a similar vein, RP4 detailed that:

- (10) Before admission to this program, I had taken IELTS preparation classes twice. However, I was not able to get an LOA from the university in Australia because my writing band was less than 6. I managed to get a score of 6.5 this time around. I personally benefited from this innovative method which triggered me to set aside time to review the materials in my spare time.

When asked how they regarded FC in relation to their learning, the students expressed positive attitudes towards the FC method for achieving better writing results, as articulated by RP4:

- (13) I found this method interesting and stimulating. To achieve better writing results, I spent more time watching shared videos and when I needed to clarify writing issues, I could ask my instructor and friends online. This was wonderful as I could ask and answer questions anytime in my spare time.

On the same note, RP6 stated:

- (14) I personally loved having the opportunity to review the materials (videos) before classroom meetings. It allowed me to prepare myself and I had the chance to ask for feedback on my writing.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This mixed-method study examined the impacts of FC on students' IELTS writing and explored learners' attitudes and experiences of its implementation. With regard to the learning performance, quantitative data indicate that the result of learners' IELTS writing scores after the implementation of FC improved considerably compared to that of the conventional method (Table 6). This finding is in line with the previous studies conducted by Farah (2014). In her experimental study, Farah (2014) examined the effects of FC intervention on students' IELTS writing performance at an Emirati high school in Abu Dhabi. The results of her study indicated that this innovative pedagogical approach was able to achieve instructional goals (improving the students' writing achievement) compared to the conventional pedagogical method. In the current study, the findings also confirmed that the participants' IELTS writing performance improved significantly as reflected in their final official writing IELTS scores.

It can be assumed that one of the reasons behind the participants' improved writing performance was the flexibility of the method which allowed them to access

learning resources during their spare time. As the majority of the participants were government employees (88%), time was an important issue for them. To be able to arrange their study without neglecting their work responsibility seemed to be a high priority for the majority of them. Because the nature of the FC instructional method enabled the participants to learn independently outside the classroom, they were able to keep up and contribute actively during classroom interactions. The majority of participants (84%) spent at least three to four hours outside the classroom each week, 8% of 2 to 3 hours and the rest of the participants allocated more than 5 hours to review materials outside the class (Table 3). In comparison, the majority of students in the control class spent far less time outside the classroom (Table 3). This phenomenon has undoubtedly influenced their writing achievement as they had less exposure to IELTS writing materials outside the classroom. This is in line with the study carried out by [Amiryousefi \(2017\)](#) who stated that FC pedagogical approach facilitates flexible instructional time, allowing the students to access the materials at the time and place that suit them. This characteristic is especially important considering the participants' work commitment and time limitations. With this instructional technology, this issue was addressed by the use of Web 2.0 technology that enabled them to learn and immerse in active and collaborative learning. [Lee and Wallace \(2017\)](#) also elucidated the influence of the flipped learning environment in triggering students' engagement and positive learning processes. As a result, the improvement in the participants' IELTS writing achievement in the FC was significantly higher than that of the non-FC cohort of 2018/2019.

In the interview, the participants also reiterated that they were not able to focus on the IELTS preparation program that they attended previously prior to this program. This was due to their office workload and hectic schedules. In the current FC IELTS writing class, however, they managed to make time to go through the materials before attending the class. Moreover, the materials selected by the instructors were tailored to address their writing issues. The inverted delivery method also allowed them to work collaboratively by using Web 2.0 applications such as WhatsApp and Google Classroom. This is another significant finding that helps the participants' writing improvement, that is the opportunities that allowed them to be actively involved in pre-class peer review activities. The participants were able to ask or respond to questions if they needed to ask or clarify issues in their writings. Peer review, as one of the pre-class asynchronous learning activities, was of great importance in their preparation for the synchronous classroom activities. The importance and positive effects of online writing peer review by using Web 2.0 were suggested by [Ebadi and Rahimi \(2017\)](#). Their study showed how the Web 2.0 application in the form of Google Form helped improve students writing skills. According to [Elmaadaway \(2017\)](#), the students' pre-class learning activities (collaborative learning) played an important role in increasing classroom engagement and involvement in problem-solving activities with their peers. Gaining immediate feedback from instructors was also one of the strengths of the FC method as it enabled the students to constantly review and check their writings for mistakes, improving the chances of avoiding the same errors in real exams.

Interview results also revealed participants' positive attitudes towards the FC, particularly because the method allowed them to be independent learners. On this note, [McNally et al. \(2017\)](#) suggested that the FC method prompted students' positive attitudes which are often reflected in students' active classroom involvement and

content engagement. It can be summarized that increased classroom engagement was the result of students' willingness to better prepare themselves prior to in-class activities, which allowed them to collaborate with their peers in the learning process. As such, the participants became more responsible and autonomous in their learning. This finding corroborates previous studies carried out by [Chang and Wei \(2016\)](#) and [Wang \(2017\)](#) that showed the contribution of the FC in encouraging and stimulating peer interaction in the students' learning.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This mixed-method study was aimed at investigating the impacts of FC on learners' IELTS writing performance and exploring their attitudes and experiences towards this instructional technology approach. To address the research questions, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected using semi-structured interviews and survey questionnaires, and two writing tests. The study focused on adult learners.

The result of the current study showed that the learners' IELTS writing performance improved significantly after the intervention of the FC method. Compared to the control class, the areas of IELTS writing components (task assignment, coherence and cohesion, lexical resource, and grammatical accuracy) that were often considered major hurdles in achieving required IELTS scores were successfully addressed in the experimental class by using this method. This was evident in the learners' IELTS writing scores at the end of the program.

Interviews with research participants confirmed that method flexibility, independent learning, as well as collaborative and active learning as a result of the implementation of FC helped them achieve better writing results. Learners' positive responses can also be observed from the result of questionnaires reiterating positive attitudes and experiences towards the implementation of FC in the IELTS writing class. Among positive attitudes and experiences included improved class engagement, independent learning, improved self-confidence, reduced feelings of fear and tension, and satisfaction with the format and structure of learning.

The findings of the current study also reaffirmed previous studies on the benefits of the FC pedagogical approach. However, unlike other research on FC instructional method, this study focused on how the FC method affects the learners' IELTS writing performance. As discovered during the interview sessions, the flexibility of course delivery, being able to be independent learners, and involvement in collaborative and active learning which helped the participants to get and give feedback was cited as factors that influenced participants' positive attitudes. The above-mentioned flipped learning features also contributed to learners' better achievement as reflected in their final official IELTS test results. This innovative pedagogical approach, making the best use of Web 2.0 technology, was able to trigger participants' active learning, and help them address their writing problems. As this study was confined only to the IELTS writing section, and the FC intervention was given to a specific group of students, further study can be conducted to examine whether FC also has positive effects on other areas of English skills in different groups of the level of students.

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## APPENDIX

**Table A1.** IELTS writing course structure (16 meetings).

Week	Topics	Pre-class activities	In-class activities
1 & 2	Band predictors: Task assignment (TA), coherence & cohesion (CC), lexical resource (LR) & grammar accuracy (GA) What is scored in T1 & T2	Watching videos on IELTS writing band predictors Summarizing the content of videos <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43AlGwz1Aq0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43AlGwz1Aq0</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1E2wLW9pn8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1E2wLW9pn8</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2ZbcfF0ixM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2ZbcfF0ixM</a>	In groups of 5, listing strategies to answer T1 and T2 questions In pairs, reviewing band predictors and scoring criteria. Presenting a summary of the discussion Q & A (teacher feedback)
3 & 4	T1 essay structure Types of T1 questions	Watching YouTube videos on T1 essay structure. Preparing summary of videos for each type of T1 question. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzLyARGcTEA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzLyARGcTEA</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDfFRAm1ye0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDfFRAm1ye0</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qywjKFDMhcM&amp;t=118s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qywjKFDMhcM&amp;t=118s</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XU5sMqd2eP0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XU5sMqd2eP0</a>	Presenting videos summary Discussing the topic In pairs, reviewing the T1 essay structure In groups of 5, discuss how to answer T1-type questions. Group practice Individual writing practice Q & A session Peer and teacher feedback

Table A1 continued...

5, 6, 7	T2 essay structure Types of T2 questions	Watching YouTube videos on T2 essay structure & type of Q Summarizing videos Answering quizzes Researching similar materials online <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WsDvaf1KQvk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WsDvaf1KQvk</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FiP4VAyEw28">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FiP4VAyEw28</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjdPaYn-f40&amp;t=150s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjdPaYn-f40&amp;t=150s</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=718Q_t4mUwI&amp;t=569s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=718Q_t4mUwI&amp;t=569s</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YngqHI_BLOU&amp;t=61s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YngqHI_BLOU&amp;t=61s</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nrTXOdiI&amp;t=891s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nrTXOdiI&amp;t=891s</a>	In pairs, reviewing the T2 essay structure In groups of 5, discussing how to answer different types of T2 Q Group practice to create a good intro paragraph, BP, and conclusion. Individual writing practice Peer discussion & feedback Q & A session Teacher feedback
8	Simulation Test	Review all previous materials Asynchronous discussion	Attending a test
9 & 10	Review of simulation test results	Review all previous materials Asynchronous discussion Researching online resources	Group discussion Presenting online resources to the class In pair, identifying writing problems Proposing solutions Q & A session Teacher feedback
11 & 12	Lexical resource Coherence & cohesion	Watching videos Research for online resources <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UbjzVPoWnx0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UbjzVPoWnx0</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43AlGwz1Aq0&amp;t=1s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43AlGwz1Aq0&amp;t=1s</a>	In pair, identifying lexical resource and CC problems in writing. In group, proposing solutions Individual writing practice Q & A session Peer & teacher feedback
13 & 14	Review of T1 & T2 Sample answers	Summarizing previous learning materials Research for IELTS writing sample answers	Presenting online resource Group writing practice Q & A session Peer & teacher feedback
15	Review of T1 & T2 Sample answers	Researching learning materials (videos and reading materials)	Presenting online resources to the class Group discussion Q & A session Peer & teacher feedback
16	Final official IELTS test	Review all previous materials	End of program



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## Gender Perceptions of Benefits and Challenges of Online Learning in Malaysian ESL Classrooms during COVID-19

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### Abstract

*The current study aims to investigate students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of online learning implementation in ESL classrooms and how gender differences influence their perceptions. Participants were 60 undergraduate students from a private university in Perak, Malaysia, who enrolled in English language courses taken during the shift to online learning at the institution. The study utilizes a quantitative approach where data were collected using an adapted questionnaire in the form of Google Form. Data collected were analysed with independent samples t-test using the SPSS software. Overall, the majority of the students agreed that the implementation of online learning posed challenges for them. The students, however, showed unbiased opinions towards the benefits of the online learning implementation in the ESL classrooms. Based on the analysis, the study found that gender differences do not influence the students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of online learning. The findings indicated that students do face difficulties in learning online and that there is a need for the lecturers to improve the teaching practices and strategies for online learning. The institution management is also recommended to*

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*provide better resources and technical support for effective online learning.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19, English as a Second Language, gender, online learning, perceptions.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

There has been a major shift from the traditional to the online classroom since early 2020 due to the outbreak of COVID-19. This solution is currently promoted by most academic institutions due to the crisis (UNESCO, 2020). The traditional classes are now conducted virtually in order to continuously provide knowledge to the students and minimize disruption to the academic calendar. In Malaysia, with the closure of public and private educational institutions since March of 2020, the teaching and learning sessions have been conducted through online platforms, and later in May, the Higher Education Ministry announced that online university lectures are to continue until the end of the year (Landau, 2020).

Online learning is the experience of using different devices in synchronous or asynchronous environments where students can learn remotely and communicate with teachers and other students (Singh & Thurman, 2019). Many studies have been conducted to identify the perceptions pertaining to the benefits and challenges of its implementation in the classroom. However, Imsa-ard (2020) emphasized that studies conducted to understand the learner's perceptions of online learning's sudden implementation due to the crisis are found to be scarce. Hence, this study aims to revisit the learner's views on the benefits and challenges of the online learning implementation with the focus on the English as a Second Language classroom setting in a private university. The study through such an aim also seeks to shed light on the role of the virtual or online instructional environment in the development of interaction, viewed by researchers as the genesis of language learning (Assaiqeli, 2019).

Numerous studies have been conducted to explore the perceptions regarding the implementation of online learning in their institutions during the outbreak of COVID-19. In a study conducted by Nambiar (2020), to investigate the teachers' and students' perceptions of online learning in India during the pandemic of COVID-19, the researcher found that a majority of the respondents from both groups agreed that they prefer the classroom teaching mode over online learning mode.

In a study conducted by Minghat et al. (2020), regarding the Indonesian and Malaysian students' perceptions of online learning throughout COVID-19, the researchers found that respondents were mostly neutral about the implementation of online learning in their institutions. However, their findings also showed that the respondents perceived online learning to be passive, difficult in terms of instructions, and did not increase their motivation. Kumar and Tiwari (2021) also conducted a study to understand the students' perceptions regarding online learning in Punjab during COVID-19. The results of their study showed that most of the students accepted online education during the pandemic but did not prefer the learning mode as an alternative to traditional classroom learning. Their findings also revealed that there was no significant difference in the perceptions between genders.

Meanwhile, a majority of respondents had positive perceptions of online learning in a study conducted by Mad et al. (2020). In understanding the Malaysian UiTM students' perceptions of online learning implementation during the pandemic, their findings showed that the students preferred the hybrid learning mode, embedding the online learning into the traditional classroom setting. In another study by Baharum et al. (2021), to investigate perceptions of Malaysian students from private and public universities on online learning compared to face-to-face classrooms, the researchers found that most of the respondents preferred the traditional classroom learning over online learning. The findings of their study showed that the respondents perceived the traditional classroom to be more effective.

Although numerous studies have been conducted to investigate students' perceptions of the implementation of online learning during the pandemic (Baharum et al., 2021; Kumar & Tiwari, 2021; Mad et al., 2020; Minghat et al., 2020; Nambiar, 2020), limited research focused on ESL classrooms and the difference in perceptions between genders especially in Malaysia. Hence, this study aims to fill the existing gap and provide recommendations based on the findings.

The general purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of students towards the benefits and challenges of implementing online learning in ESL classrooms while the specific purpose of the study is to understand how gender differences are related to the students' perceptions. In order to meet the purposes of this study, the following questions were addressed:

- 1) What are students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of online learning implementation in the ESL classroom?
- 2) Is there a significant difference in male and female students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of online learning implementation in the ESL classroom?

Based on the research question, 'what are students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of online learning implementation in the ESL classroom?', the following hypotheses were constructed:

H<sub>0</sub>: There are no significant different perceptions of the benefits and challenges of online learning implementation in the ESL classroom.

H<sub>1</sub>: There are significant different perceptions of the benefits and challenges of online learning implementation in the ESL classroom.

In addition, based on the research question, 'is there a significant difference between male and female students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of online learning implementation in the ESL classroom?', the following hypotheses were constructed:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant difference between male and female students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of online learning implementation in the ESL classroom.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant difference between male and female students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of online learning implementation in the ESL classroom.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews previous literature in relation to the benefits and challenges of online learning as well as the influence of gender differences on perceptions.

## **2.1 Students' Gender and Perceptions of Online Learning**

Understanding one's perception of a phenomenon may help to provide valuable insights. Perception is the man's core means of cognitive engagement with the environment and it could be elicited based on experience (Efron, 1969; Rojabi, 2020). Understanding students' opinions are very beneficial in educational research. According to Kulal and Nayak (2020), in the education system, students' views are what really matter. Without the students' acceptance of online education, it may not be sustainable in the future educational scene. Hence, it is important to acquire the students' perception of the implementation of online learning. Many factors can influence an individual's perception, including demographic variables such as age, gender, and race. According to Nielsen et al. (2017), gender diversity might help researchers in learning new things by diversifying their perspectives, interests, and study fields.

Murphrey and Arnold (2012) stated that in order to design efficient online course delivery techniques, it is important to first study students' demographics and how they use Internet-based technology. In a study by Lim (2004), it was found that in terms of gender disparities in computer use, female students managed the learning process using computers and the Internet significantly better than male students. In another related study, Murphrey and Arnold (2012) also suggested that technology can have a beneficial influence on participants' perceptions dependent on their gender and categorization. This shows that demographic variables do provide insight into the phenomenon being studied.

Regarding the demographic variables that influence perceptions of online learning, many previous studies have also been conducted to find gender differences in views of online learning. Tsokova et al. (2017) conducted a study to investigate the influence of gender, age, specialty, and previous e-learning experience on the opinions of healthcare students about online learning. From the students' perceptions, they found that students of different genders have different views of online learning and female students were more likely to accept the implementation.

A study by Mahawar and Nandedkar (2019), however, showed no significant effect made by gender on the perceived effectiveness of e-learning. Both male and female students were equally comfortable with online learning and had no gender biases toward online learning. A study by Rafiq et al. (2020), found a contradicting opinion from a study conducted in Pakistan in which male students showed more positive attitudes toward e-learning as compared to female students.

## **2.2 Benefits of Online Learning**

Studies on the implementation of online learning in recent years have shown that the new culture is perceived to be useful for schools as well as higher education institutions. Technology is an important component of online learning and the aid of technology is one of the benefits of online learning, which was also highlighted by Baxter (2020) and Gillett-Swan (2020). Educators and learners use technology mainly to communicate, provide instructions and make two-way feedback since there is a limitation to face-to-face communication. Hence, the use of technology offers the opportunity for students to engage in the language in order to communicate (Baxter,

2020; Gillett-Swan, 2020). For example, students are able to learn how to write proper emails to lecturers with proper and correct language use.

The development of the Internet also turns out to be helpful for students. Tareen and Haand (2020) reported that students perceived online learning as having the ability to promote student participation in class since they are able to actively engage themselves with teachers and other students, for example, through forums. The Internet also allows teachers and students to share content through Learning Management System (LMS) or messaging applications as well as communicate with each other despite the geographical distance between them (Mathew & Ebelelloanya, 2016).

With the Internet as well, online learning is made convenient to conduct research and have access to the latest information. Students are also more encouraged to do research online since they have accessibility during class (Paudel, 2020). Another feature of online learning in higher education is the use of LMS software. In a study conducted by Allo (2020), LMS software was perceived to be helpful for students to learn beyond the traditional model of the face-to-face classroom.

Mustafa and Yaakub (2021) carried out a study to investigate the effectiveness of using WhatsApp in teaching Bahasa Melayu to a group of foreign students in one of the selected public universities in Malaysia. The course was taught during the recent global pandemic COVID-19. Data were collected using an experimental research design. The main purpose of the study was to look into how the students learned effectively through WhatsApp as an online learning platform. The findings revealed that students favoured learning language skills through WhatsApp as it provided them more opportunities to interact with peers and exchange ideas.

Al-Rasul (2020) developed an electronic program to teach the voices of the Arabic language to a group of non-Arabic speakers. The researcher incorporated oral audio as one of the initial steps considered significant in teaching the Arabic language. The electronic program was developed with the hope to assist non-Arabic speakers to identify and distinguish the vocabulary, sounds, and structures of the language to enable the speakers to recognize the same voices and comprehend what they hear. This study highlights the importance of using modern technologies and media in instruction and the application of this to learn listening skills. The findings showed that educators have to pay attention to several factors when it comes to the teaching of the Arabic language, namely the electronic and technical features in teaching language skills.

Singh et al. (2020) carried out a study to investigate the ESL teachers' strategies to teach the English language during the movement control order that was enforced in April 2020. The researchers employed a case study design for data collection purposes. Data were collected from eight ESL teachers voluntarily. The findings revealed that the ESL teachers used Telegram, WhatsApp, Google classroom, and Zoom to ensure the teaching and learning process was carried out as planned. The teachers made use of various learning apps including Quizziz, Padlet, and Kahoot to ensure mastery of learning at the end of the teaching session. The teachers reported that they faced other issues while teaching, including getting students to participate through the apps used, students' attitude and their lack of cooperation to take part actively in discussion, and students' inability to access audio materials shared during the teaching and learning process.

Teachers and educators, today, can employ numerous teaching and learning strategies by integrating technology and also a social network to ensure instruction takes place as planned. The integration of ICT into teaching and learning allows

teachers, educators, and students to communicate and collaborate (Alaa et al., 2019; Goyak et al., 2021; Shukor, 2015; Singh et al., 2020).

Shukor (2015) carried out a study to explore the views of tertiary students on the impact of Facebook as a collaborative writing tool in one selected public university in Malaysia. Their study employed a quasi-experimental research design and 33 participants participated in the study. The findings revealed that a majority of the students showed moderately high mean scores for the use of Facebook for collaborative writing activities.

According to Prensky (2001), teachers and educators should keep abreast with the latest development in ICT and how they can infuse ICT into the teaching and learning process. This is supported by McLoughlin and Lee (2010) on how the advancement in technology today could assist educators to be creative in terms of offering students more space for an interactive and stimulating experience.

Learning online also opens up the opportunity for students to make use of online tools to facilitate learning. Various websites, software, and applications have been developed to help with different skills including writing. With tools such as Google Translate and Grammar Checker, students are able to improve their writing skills rather than solely being dependent on classroom instructions (Bailey & Lee, 2020; Dahmash, 2020). Other benefits highlighted in previous literature include the cost-efficiency of online learning, its convenience in relation to their circumstances, the promotion of student autonomy and self-directed learning, and the ability to have more freedom (Baxter, 2020; Dahmash, 2020; Paudel, 2020).

Mastery learning by Benjamin Bloom (1986) is a theory relevant to online learning. According to Abakpa and Iji (2011), this theory emphasizes that although the students are provided with different learning environments, they could achieve the same level of academic performance. This theory supports the implementation of online learning in which students are able to learn at their own pace (Bergman & Sams, 2012; Eppard & Rochdi, 2017). Hence, mastery learning provides the opportunities needed for students to learn at their own pace and according to their own needs in the online classroom.

### **2.3 Challenges of Online Learning**

Although there are benefits as perceived in previous studies, the conduct of online learning also poses challenges for students, educators, and institutions. According to Dhawan (2020), the challenges of implementing online learning in the classroom range from issues for learners, and educators, to content (Dhawan, 2020). While the use of the Internet and technologies provide convenience for students in learning, it is also viewed to have posed a number of challenges in online learning. Without the availability of reliable Internet connection, students are limited to access to finding information online. A similar issue is also the technical glitches of the communication devices. Not only are the students sometimes unable to participate in online classes, but also they are unable to retrieve any files containing notes and exercises shared by friends and teachers (Allo, 2020; Baxter, 2020; Dahmash, 2020; Mathew & Ebeelloanya, 2016; Paudel, 2020).

Corresponding to the importance of having a reliable Internet connection and decent technologies, students from low-income families may struggle to afford an Internet connection and the required technologies for online learning (Allo, 2020;



Mathew & Ebelelloanya, 2016). They need to be able to afford mobile Internet data to join online classes as they may not have an Internet subscription for their home. Students also need to have decent technologies such as communication devices to communicate and work on their tasks and assessments for effective learning. Another aspect that was perceived as a challenge of online learning is also one of the benefits—the LMS software (Gillett-Swan, 2017). Certain LMSs have limitations which lead to ineffective communication of instructions from teachers to students. One of the limitations was highlighted in the study by Allo (2020) where students perceived that it was difficult to understand written instructions in LMS if not accompanied by the audio version.

The implementation of online learning also posed a few other challenges reported by Allo (2020), including the limitations on the materials used by the lecturers as not all learning resources could be adapted for online learning and are easy to be used by students. The study also found that the clarity of instructions was a problem for the students while another study by Tareen and Haand (2020) found that students perceived that there was a lack of precise feedback and support from the lecturers. In the studies conducted by Bailey and Lee (2020) and Baxter (2020), it was found that students' participation in online learning was fewer as opposed to the findings by Tareen and Haand (2020) and the class time was greatly reduced where lesser syllabus contents could be delivered.

A few other challenges in the implementation of online learning include the difficulties faced by the students due to the lack of necessary skills for online learning, especially in terms of time management and ICT (Paudel, 2020; Sornasekaran et al., 2020). These skills are very important in online learning as students need to balance their time to finish their tasks at home by themselves. The ICT skills are necessary to be able to access the Internet, and the technological devices are needed to communicate and complete the tasks. With the integration of the Internet and communication devices, while at the same time staying at home, students tend to become distracted and have no interest. (Bailey & Lee, 2020; Dahmash, 2020; Tareen & Haand, 2020). As opposed to learning in class, at home the teachers are unable to determine whether the students are focusing on the class or playing with their friends or mobile phones instead.

### **3. METHODS**

This section provides a brief description of the research approach and the participants involved in this study. The details of the instrument and procedures on how the data were collected and analysed are also provided.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This research was conducted using a quantitative approach. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a survey is a research design that describes trends, attitudes, or opinions numerically or quantitatively, which represents a population based on a study of a sample from the population through the use of a questionnaire or structured interviews as instruments to collect the data. The results of the study on a sample will be useful to generalize to

a population (Fowler, 2008). A survey research design produces descriptions of the trends, attitudes, and opinions of a population quantitatively (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Hence, this study adopted the survey research design in order to identify the opinions of private university students through the use of a questionnaire – one of the most commonly-used instruments in this design.

### **3.2 Participants**

The study participants were 60 students who took English courses at a private university in Perak, Malaysia, consisting of 41 females (68.3%) and 19 males (31.7%). The majority of the samples are from the age group of 18 to 20 years old (86.8%) and the rest are from the age group of 21 to 23 years old (10%), and 24 years old and above (3.3%). The students were from different faculties and in different years of study at the university. They were studying through online classes for one whole semester for 14 weeks. The reason for choosing the students who were taking English courses was to conform to the purpose of this study which is to identify their perceptions within the setting of ESL classrooms. Hence, it is relevant for this study to sample the participants from this population of existing students. This sampling method is known as the purposive sampling method which is the intentional choice of a participant because of the qualities that the participants possess, that meet the entry requirements for the study. Researchers are the ones who decide on what needs to be identified and find participants who are able and willing to provide required information based on knowledge or experience for this sampling method (Etikan et al., 2016).

### **3.3 Instrument**

The instrument used to collect the data to answer the research questions was an adapted questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed based on the findings reported by Tareen and Haand (2020). The items were modified according to the objectives of the study. The items in the questionnaire were originally focused on the perceptions of the postgraduates in a public university. Hence, several terms in the items were changed to focus on gathering undergraduates' perceptions. The items in the questionnaire were divided into three sections. The first section is the Demographical Data of the samples which consists of five items. The second section which is the Benefits of Online Learning consists of eight items and the last section, the Challenges of Online Learning, consists of nine items. In addition to the demographic information presented, the survey elements were considered using a five-point Likert scale, with 1 representing 'strongly disagree' to 5 representing 'strongly agree'.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

As the Movement Control Order (MCO) in Malaysia was still enforced when this study was conducted, data collection was only possible using an online platform. Hence, the questionnaire was adapted into a Google Form and arranged following the divided sections stated previously. The distribution of the link to the questionnaire was assisted by English lecturers through the WhatsApp application. The Google Form was open for responses for three weeks before it was closed when it reached 60

respondents. The collected data was extracted using Google Sheet and downloaded into digital storage in the researcher's laptop before analysis was conducted using the SPSS software.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

The data collected were analysed using the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) v.26. The students' general perceptions of the benefits and challenges of online learning were presented through percentages of responses. The items in the questionnaire were ranked based on the percentages of the agreement for both domains. Students' levels of agreement were calculated by adding the percentages of responses for 'agreed' and 'strongly agreed' while the disagreement levels were based on the total percentages of 'disagreed' and 'strongly disagreed' responses.

According to [Sullivan and Artino \(2013\)](#), on an ordinal scale, as produced by survey data, responses can either be rated or ranked but the distance between responses is not measurable. However, based on compiled evidence in a study by [Norman \(2010\)](#) as cited in [Sullivan and Artino \(2013\)](#), parametric tests can also be used to analyse ordinal data from the Likert scale and that parametric tests, in general, are more robust than the nonparametric test. [Rickards et al. \(2012\)](#) suggested grouping the items into one survey scale to assess a particular construct of interest based on the total score or mean score. Hence, for this study, the items under the constructs of benefits and challenges were grouped into survey scales and the responses were totalled to get the score. Then, a parametric test of independent samples t-test was administered using the total scores of the two domains to compare means between the female and male students.

## **4. FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Benefits of Online Learning Implementation**

Students' perceptions of the benefits of online learning implementation in the ESL classroom were described with percentages in Table 1. The benefits were ranked from the most reported to the least reported based on the total percentage of agreement that was calculated by adding the percentages of 'agree' and 'strongly agree' responses.

From Table 1, overall, the majority of the students had neutral positions on the benefits of online learning implementation in the ESL classrooms showing that they neither agreed nor disagreed with all of the statements. The most reported benefit of online learning implementation in the ESL classrooms was that it is very convenient while the least agreed benefit was that online learning promotes better understanding compared to physical classroom learning.

**Table 1.** Students’ perceptions of the benefits of online learning implementation in the ESL classroom.

No.	Item	Percentage (%)				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Online learning is very convenient.	1.7	20	50	20	8.3
2	Online learning enables me to accomplish tasks more easily compared to classroom learning.	3.3	20	53.3	16.7	6.7
3	Online learning promotes greater student participation.	11.7	13.3	56.7	18.3	-
4	Online learning promotes better student interaction.	11.7	30	41.7	13.3	3.3
5	Online learning promotes better understanding compared to classroom learning.	18.3	23.3	50	6.7	1.7
6	Online learning improves my performance academically.	8.3	20	48.3	16.7	6.7
7	Online learning caters to individual learning needs.	1.7	16.7	58.3	18.3	5
8	Online learning improves the learning process.	8.3	15	53.3	20	3.3

In terms of the level of agreement towards the benefits of online learning, Item 1 with the statement that online learning is very convenient showed the highest agreement (28.3%) in comparison to disagreement (21.7%). This was followed by Item 2 with a percentage of students who agreed and strongly agreed at 23.4% on the statement of online learning enables them to accomplish tasks more easily compared to classroom learning. The next item for high agreement level was Item 6 on the statement that online learning improves their performance academically in which the percentage of students who reported agreement (23.4%) towards the statement was lower than those who reported disagreement (28.3%).

From the results, Item 7 reported 23.3% of students’ agreement compared to 18.4% who disagreed that online learning facilitated them with their different learning needs. An equivalent percentage of agreement and disagreement (23.3%) was reported for Item 8 stating that online learning improved their learning process. The survey data also shows that only 18.3% of the students agreed that there was more participation of students in online learning than in classroom learning, and only 16.6% reported that they agreed online learning promotes better interaction and communication. The least agreed benefit of online learning implementation was Item 5 where only 8.4% of the samples reported their agreement in comparison to 41.6% who reported disagreement.

#### **4.2 Challenges of Online Learning Implementation**

Students’ perceptions of the challenges of online learning implementation in the ESL classrooms were described with percentages in Table 2. Similarly, the challenges were ranked from the most reported to the least reported based on the total percentage of agreement that was calculated by adding the percentages of ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’ responses.

**Table 2.** Students' perceptions of the challenges of online learning implementation in the ESL classroom.

No.	Item	Percentage (%)				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Online learning is not too favourable among students as students prefer classroom learning situations.	1.7	3.3	38.3	25	31.7
2	Online learning is difficult for students as lecturers' instructions are unclear.	-	8.3	26.7	40	25
3	Online learning could demotivate students as students do not know what criteria they will be assessed.	-	8.3	36.7	40	15
4	Online learning is difficult for those who need assistance in learning from the lecturer.	-	3.3	33.3	31.7	31.7
5	Online learning decreases students' motivation in learning because of the lack of formality in the teaching process.	-	8.3	33.3	30	28.3
6	Online learning is difficult because sometimes there are off-topic posts in the discussion.	-	10	46.7	21.7	21.7
7	Online learning makes it difficult for students to retain information.	-	11.7	33.3	30	25
8	Online learning is difficult because students tend not to participate in the learning process.	-	6.7	35	36.7	21.7
9	Online learning is difficult as there tends to be a single-student-domination.	1.7	5	43.3	30	20

The students reported the highest percentage of agreement (65%) on Item 2 where they found online learning is difficult for them as lecturers' instructions are unclear. Item 4 with the statement that online learning is difficult for those who need assistance in learning from the lecturer recorded the second-highest percentage of agreement (63.4%).

Most of the students also reported a high agreement level (58.4%) on Item 8 stating that online learning is a challenge due to students' tendency not to participate in the learning process. Concerning the demotivating effect of online learning for Item 5, the survey recorded 58.3% of agreement. About 55% of the students also reported on Item 3 that they were demotivated by online learning as they were uncertain about the criteria of the assessment.

For Item 1, a majority of the students reported with a high agreement level (56.7%) that they preferred classroom learning situations. This was followed by Item 7 where students reported agreement (55%) on the statement that they were unable to retain the information learned online. Item 9 recorded that a majority of the students agreed and strongly agreed (50%) with the statement that online learning is difficult as there tends to be a single-student-domination.

The least reported challenge of online learning implementation was Item 6 where only 43.3% agreed and strongly agreed that online learning is difficult because of the off-topic posts in the discussion compared to that 10% who disagreed. The students, however, mostly (46.7%) reported that they were not positively or negatively affected by the off-topic posts in the online discussion which often took place on the LMS platform.

### **4.3 Gender Differences**

An independent samples t-test was administered to identify whether female and male students showed a statistically significant difference in their responses to the items in the instrument. Table 3 shows the summary of the independent t-test for the benefits and challenges of online learning between genders.

**Table 3.** Gender differences in perceptions towards online learning.

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>
Benefits	Female	41	23.37	5.911	.509	.613
	Male	19	22.58	4.730		
Challenges	Female	41	33.71	6.186	.302	.763
	Male	19	33.16	7.290		

The result of the test showed that there was no significant difference in the responses on the benefits of online learning implementation between female and male students ( $t = .509$ ,  $p = .613$ ). Similarly, the test indicated that the responses to the challenges of online learning implementation were not significantly different between female and male students ( $t = .302$ ,  $p = .763$ ).

## **5. DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Benefits of Online Learning Implementation**

Overall, the majority of the students had neutral positions on the benefits of online learning implementation in the ESL classroom showing that they neither agreed nor disagreed with all of the statements. The most reported benefit of online learning implementation in ESL classrooms was that it is very convenient while the least agreed benefit was that online learning promotes better understanding compared to physical classroom learning.

From the results in Table 1, Item 1 recorded the highest agreement level showing that one greatest features of online learning is that it is very convenient for students. Learning online allows students to easily access all the latest information (Mathew & Ebelelloanya, 2016). The students' perceptions of the convenience of online learning may also be influenced by the current situation of the country due to COVID-19, as it is safer to have physical distances and this is corresponding to the study by Dahmash (2020) where the students reported that the implementation of online learning is relevant to their circumstances during the pandemic outbreak.

Students also believed that they could accomplish more tasks easily in classroom learning. This shows how online learning benefited students with the availability of online learning tools such as Grammarly and Google Translate to assist them in

completing the task better especially in writing (Bailey & Lee, 2020). In previous literature, online learning is perceived to help improve students' academic performance in terms of learning motivation, achievement, and engagement (Mandasari, 2020). This is contradicting the findings of this study, stating that more students believed their academic performance did not improve while learning online.

Another benefit of online learning based on this study is that it caters to individual learning. Similar to the traditional classroom, students are different in terms of their learning needs, in which some might need more time with their learning pace. With online learning, these needs could be fulfilled and this is supported in a study by Bailey and Lee (2020) in which, students can get extra time to prepare for answers in online classes compared to the traditional classroom setting. This helped the students to complete the tasks and participate in activities better throughout online learning.

The students also showed agreement that online learning improved their learning process. Throughout the implementation of online learning at the institution, content sharing of learning materials and assessments were made available using the university LMS software which is really helpful for the students' learning process. This is supported by Allo (2020) in which students believed that online learners could be fully supported with the online learning system tools such as LMS software.

The survey data also reported the students' agreement that there was more participation of students in online learning than in classroom learning but only a few agreed that online learning promotes better interaction. These findings are in contradiction with the study by Mathew and Ebelelloanya (2016) who stated that the major benefits of using technology in online learning included better interaction and students' engagement.

The least agreed benefit of online learning implementation was Item 5. This shows that students did not find online learning beneficial to improve their understanding compared to classroom learning. However, this is in contrast with the previous studies where the researchers found that online learning was perceived as beneficial as students can search for information while learning online whereas they did not have the chance to do so in a traditional classroom setting (Khatoony & Nezhadmehr, 2020; Paudel, 2020). The responses for this item could be explained by the instructions' clarity issue discussed in the challenges perceived by the students.

## 5.2 Challenges of Online Learning Implementation

Overall, the majority of the students showed agreement on the challenges of online learning implementation in the ESL classrooms based on the statements. The most reported challenge of online learning was the issue concerning the clarity of lecturers' instructions while the least reported challenge was the off-topic postings in the online discussion.

Item 2 reported the highest percentage of agreement showing that unclear instructions by the lecturers were the main challenge of learning online in the ESL classroom. This could apply when students were given tasks or assignments to be completed at home. Without clear instructions from the lecturers, students find it difficult to complete the tasks successfully. This is supported in the study conducted by Allo (2020) in which students stated that they were hoping that explanations would be provided before the assignments and materials were given to them. Another challenge of online learning based on this study is that there is a limitation in getting

lecturers to assist students in need. Item 4 recorded the second highest percentage of agreement showing that online learning limits the assistance given by the lecturers to those who needed them. This finding is supported by [Tareen and Haand \(2020\)](#) in which students had difficulties getting assistance from the lecturers as there was a lack of precise feedback and support from the lecturers for their learning process.

Students also face the challenge of the tendency not to participate in the learning process. This tendency may be the result of technical issues on the part of both the students and lecturers as well as the attitudes of the students ([Allo, 2020](#); [Baxter, 2020](#); [Dahmash, 2020](#)). The analysis also shows that students felt demotivated to learn when there was no formality in the teaching process. In the classroom setting, they could see the lecturers teaching in front. However, at home, since there was no lecturer to supervise them, they tended to feel demotivated to learn and easily get distracted ([Bailey & Lee, 2020](#)). The students also reported that they were demotivated by online learning as they were uncertain about the criteria of the assessment and this finding is in line with the study by [Paudel \(2020\)](#) where it was a challenge for the students in finding the learning path themselves.

A majority of the students reported that they preferred classroom learning situations, indicating online learning was not favourable. According to [Baxter \(2020\)](#), class time is greatly reduced in online learning due to circumstances. This could lead to ineffective delivery of lessons and less participation in class. The students also perceived that online learning was challenging for them to retain information. The findings of the study by [Allo \(2020\)](#) showed that it was difficult for the students to learn online when the lecturers implemented materials and instructions that were complicated to use. Materials that do not match the students' learning needs are considered as not suitable to be used ([Rahmadani et al., 2019](#)). This shows that students can retain information better in a physical classroom setting where instructions and materials are much more comprehensible.

Item 9 recorded that the majority of the students reported agreement on the statement showing that their learning was affected as they may not get enough opportunities to participate in online discussion when there was a single student who dominated the online learning. This is in line with the study by [Tareen and Haand \(2020\)](#) where it was found that the lack of interaction among the students made them more reserved since they did not know each other.

The least reported challenge of online learning implementation was Item 6 where the students perceived that they were not positively or negatively affected by the off-topic posts in the online discussion which often took place on the LMS platform. Students are most probably not affected since they are not fond of the use of LMS due to the lack of necessary features ([Gillett-Swan, 2017](#)).

### **5.3 Gender Differences**

Overall, there was no significant difference between female and male students' perceptions of the implementation of online learning. This shows that both male and female students have neutral perceptions of the benefits of online learning but mostly agreed on the challenges of online learning. This finding is in line with the study by [Mahawar and Nandedkar \(2019\)](#) which revealed that there were no gender biases towards online learning among the two genders although in an earlier study by [Tsokova et al. \(2017\)](#) female students were more positive on the implementation of



online learning in the classroom. This corresponds to the findings by [Apriani et al. \(2022\)](#), where female students in Indonesia favourably viewed online or ICT use in language learning as more advantageous to them in terms of competence, knowledge, and motivational enhancement, despite the fact that male students were more skilled in ICT literacy. However, the recent study by [Rafiq et al. \(2020\)](#) found that male students had more positive opinions on online learning indicating that the male students adapted better to changes in the learning environment.

#### **5.4 Pedagogical Implications**

The findings of the study shed light on some pedagogical implications for the lecturers as well as the management of institutions. First of all, it is important for the lecturers to improve the teaching practices, for example, better clarity of instructions and guidance in completing online tasks or assignments. Lecturers should also consider applying teaching strategies that provide an opportunity for all students to engage with the lecturers, other students, and the learning materials to promote participation, interaction, and a better understanding of the lessons.

It is also important for the lecturers to adapt to students' different learning needs when opting for suitable strategies to be used in online learning. On the other hand, the management of the institutions should upgrade the quality of the learning management system platform to provide greater accessibility for learning materials, ease of communication, and better students' engagement. Improved technical support should also be taken into account for both lecturers and students to minimize the differences between virtual and physical classroom learning.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the implementation of online learning could benefit the students in so many ways. The greatest feature according to students' perceptions of online learning was its convenience in accessibility to the latest information. The least perceived benefit of online learning was that it promoted better understanding compared with the face-to-face classroom setting. On the other hand, the greatest challenge of online learning was the issue of clarity in the instructions given by lecturers and the least concern for online learning among the students is the off-topic postings in online discussions. The gender factor also did not influence the students' perceptions of online learning.

However, this study has its own limitations which should be addressed. It is recommended for future studies to integrate qualitative analysis to further understand the reasons behind the students' opinions. Other than that, there is also a need to consider external factors such as the pedagogical factor as well as the students' experience with online learning. Furthermore, the current study only investigates the students' perceptions of online learning in ESL classrooms. However, extensive research needs to be conducted for classrooms in different fields. The data collected for this study was only limited to quantitative data; hence, future researchers should include the qualitative approach in future studies for in-depth analyses and discussions.

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## Fostering Students' Multimodal Communicative Competence through Genre-Based Multimodal Text Analysis

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### **Abstract**

*The multiplicity of semiotic resources employed in communication, the rapid advancement of information, communication, and technology (ICT), and burgeoning interdisciplinary research into multimodality have led to a paradigmatic shift from a mono-modal to the multimodal perspective of communication. Conversely, actualising multimodal concepts in teaching and learning practises remains underexplored, notably in developing the students' multimodal communicative competence (MCC). For this reason, this study endeavoured to probe genre-based multimodal text analysis in fostering the students' MCC. Grounded on Action Research (AR), the present study facilitated students to cultivate their MCC through the activities of Genre-based multimodal text analysis (hereafter, GBMTA). Practically speaking, students performed the analysing practises in the course at an English Education Department of a state university in Tasikmalaya, West Java, Indonesia, namely Grammar in Multimodal Discourse (GiMD). Four Indonesian EFL students were recruited as the participants. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed with thematic analysis. The findings showed that the students could: (1) build their knowledge on multimodality, (2) engage with*

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*theoretical and practical learning activities, (3) assign analytical and reflective task-based learning activities, and (4) provide constructive feedback about their learning performances, and (5) raise awareness of the contributions of multimodality to prospective English teachers' competences. The main implication of this study is the promotion of increased awareness of deploying multimodal aspects to English language teaching, learning, and investigative practises to attain optimum MCC.*

**Keywords:** Genre-based multimodal text analysis, grammar, Indonesian EFL students, Multimodal Communicative Competence.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Multimodality has occupied a pivotal position in current literacy practises because of its impacts on how meanings are conveyed (Wang, 2018), including in activities involved in the teaching and learning of language. Thibault (2000) contended that multimodality refers to the utilisation of communication modes where miscellaneous semiotic resources (e.g., language, visual images, gestures, space, movement, audio, and audio-visual modes) are inter-semiotically co-deployed and co-contextualised to make meaning. Besides, since learning experiences tend to run multimodally, the composition of semiotic resources (multimodal resources) in teaching practises enables the teachers to apply distinctive pedagogical approaches (Victor, 2011). Also, the rapid growth of sophisticated technologies has significantly contributed to a fast-tracking change in multimodal representations of knowledge and contents (Plastina, 2013). Furthermore, Liu and Qu (2014) assumed that the mixture of diverse semiotic modes enables the audiences (e.g., students) to alter their perceptions of information. With this in mind, equipping students with multimodal communicative competencies remains essential in this current pedagogical period.

Multimodal communicative competence (MCC) is the capacity to comprehend the amalgamated possibility of assorted modes to make meaning, notably to communicate and create meanings in the texts (Royce, 2002). More specifically, it stipulates that foreign language students should be able to foster their metalanguage, facilitating them to remark on the co-deployment of semiotic resources within particular texts and associate their knowledge with the contexts of the situation and culture of such texts (Cocchetta, 2018). In addition, the approaches to how a language correlates with other semiotic resources varying amid cultures have become representative teaching resources (Royce, 2006). Students were encouraged to make meaning not only through language but also through other semiotic resources such as images, sounds, spaces, gestures, and others. Hence, multimodality-based teaching practises allow teachers to raise the students' MCC as the ultimate goal of teaching and learning practises (Araneda & Fredes, 2021; Galante, 2015; Morell, 2018; Morell & Cesteros, 2018; Reyes-Torres & Raga, 2020). In response to this issue, a paradigmatic shift of communicative competence (CC) relying heavily on linguistic communication to MCC in language teaching practices is necessary.

A growing number of studies have examined multimodality in heterogeneous lenses. Liu and Qu (2014) explored the multimodality of EFL textbooks for Chinese college students. The findings revealed that: (1) EE (Experiencing English) and NCCE

(New Century College English) indicated visually-verbally coherent multimodal texts and showed predominant facets for intersemiotic semantic relations, and (2) EE presented a higher level of interpersonal intersemiotic complementarity and multimodality enabling the implementation of contemporary educational notions (e.g., constructivism in EE and humanism in NCCE), and (3) each textbook represented disparities in terms of language difficulty and target students' English language competence. Additionally, [Lirola \(2016\)](#) investigated the main political posters created for the campaigns of the Irish political party, Fianna Fáil, represented in the Celtic Tiger (1997-2008) and post-Celtic Tiger years (2009-2012). She reported that politicians were depicted positively through their statuses and formal manifestations to convince people to vote for them and their political party.

Furthermore, [Michelson and Valencia \(2016\)](#) analysed meaning sources of study abroad (SA) experiences represented on an institutional website. The findings demonstrated that discourses of tourism appeared more dominantly than educational discourses. Also, the students' discursive practises were reflected on the institutional website. More recently, [Parlindungan et al. \(2018\)](#) delved into the representation of Indonesian cultural diversity in middle school English textbooks. They inferred that the 2013 English textbooks for Grades 7 and 8 pervaded unequal proportions of cultural values and practises. Furthermore, they recommended the benefits of subsuming the affluent Indonesian local cultures more concretely. These studies problematized how multimodal analytical tools were utilised to analyse cultural values, political movements, educational discourses, and ideologies represented in miscellaneous multimodal texts.

Though a plethora of valuable insights has been yielded by previous studies, relatively little is known about the practical implementation of multimodal approaches to language education, such as the Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA) approach to mathematics, grammar, and literacy ([O'Halloran, 2009](#)), multimodal assessment of and for learning ([Hung et al., 2013](#)) and the teachers' use of gestures in the classroom ([Lim, 2019](#)). A dearth of studies scrutinises multimodal communicative competence (e.g., [Cocchetta, 2018](#); [Royce, 2006](#)); these studies, from an empirical standpoint, highlighted how multimodal concepts were manifested in educational practices (e.g., teaching, learning, and evaluating). In addition, they are relevant to the present investigation that focused on implementing GBMTA as a teaching technique for multimodal teaching and learning practises. More specifically, the research question of this study is:

- How does GBMTA raise the students' multimodal communicative competence?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Multimodal Communicative Competence

Since its emergence 45 years ago, the notion of communicative competence (CC) has obtained extensive attention from several scholars (e.g., [Canale, 1983](#); [Canale & Swain, 1980](#); [Celce-Murcia, 2008](#); [Celce-Murcia et al., 1995](#); [Hymes, 1972](#)). Conversely, the concept accentuated the linguistic components of communication ([Cocchetta, 2018](#)). As a result, emphasising the significance of involving multimodality in the current communication era is demanding. [Kress \(2000, p. 337\)](#) added that it is



“now impossible to make sense of texts, even of their linguistic parts alone, without having a clear idea of what these other features might be contributing to the meaning of a text”. In other words, concentrating on a single-mode and ignoring others may inhibit the delivery of a message comprehensively (Royce, 2006). For this reason, MCC remains crucial.

MCC, also known as multiliteracies (New Group London, 1996), is the ability of mixed communicative modes to make meaning (Royce, 2006). It demonstrates the capacity of meaning negotiation in communication (i.e., English) by deploying various semiotic resources (Cocchetta, 2018). Therefore, the information and knowledge framed in multimodal texts and discourses need multimodal literacy to thoroughly explore meanings within such texts and discourses (Jewitt & Kress, 2003).

From the view of systemic functional linguistics (SFL), MCC designated several suppositions (Royce, 2006). Initially, multimodal communication involves a belief in negotiating, envisaging, and delivering meanings in a social context. In addition, it presupposes that situated cultural contexts generate the choice of social meanings. Likewise, since people select and apply a typical semiotic system to communicate, they communicate in miscellaneous visual and verbal modes. Thus, these suppositions can be valuable and supportive information to be implemented in pedagogical practises, mainly in language teaching and the learning process.

## **2.2 Genre-Based Multimodal Pedagogy**

Historically, the genre is classified into three types discerned from their distinct perspectives, namely the New Rhetoric School approach to the genre, the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach to the genre, and the Systemic Functional Language (SFL) approach to the genre (Banegas, 2021; Banegas, & Consoli, 2021; Hyon, 1996). Viewed from the New Rhetoric School approach, genre accentuates socio-contextual aspects, attains thorough actions, and understands that such socio-contextual aspects change regularly (Paltridge, 1997). Meanwhile, the ESP (English for specific purposes) approach sees genre from its formal features rather than its specialised functions of texts and their enfolding social contexts (Flowerdew, 2022; Hyon, 1996). Swales (1990, p. 58), the most influential scholar on ESP-based genre, noted that “genre as ‘communicative events’ that are characterised both by their communicative purposes’ and by various patterns of ‘structure, style, content and intended audience’”. From the SFL viewpoint, the term ‘genre’ appears as a result of burgeoning social contexts and correlated semiotic activities where students take part (Gebhard, et al., 2013; Martin, 2009). Dealing with this, Martin (2009, p. 10) outlined genre as “a staged goal-oriented social process”. Nonetheless, the present study merely highlights genre from an SFL perspective to inform a functional portrayal of language displaying the language used in heterogeneous social contexts (Martin, 1992; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & Rose, 2008), such as text in context.

Regarding classroom employment, the genre-based approach (hereafter, GBA) was initially fabricated to help teachers design the curriculum and organise the instruction (Martin, 2009). Furthermore, Martin (2009) added that it could facilitate students in comprehending and producing genres from various specific fields and levels. In particular, this approach aims at advocating for students to acquire critical thinking skills on knowledge, and social semiotic practises that shape such knowledge. To meet these aims, GBA is operationalised into several stages, namely Building

Knowledge of the Field (BKoF), Modelling of the Text (MoT), Joint Construction of the Text (JCoT), Independent Construction of the Text (ICoT), and Linking of Related Texts (LoRT) (Feez, 1998; Martin & Rose, 2008; Rothery, 1996). To illustrate, BKoF familiarises the students with an example of authentic texts and particular cultural contexts in which it commonly takes place. Then, in MoT, the students are guided to explore the structural and linguistic features of the model of the text.

Additionally, the students attempt to create an identical text in dissimilar settings with the teachers' support in JCoT. At this stage, the teachers' support is gradually reduced when the students can adapt themselves to the texts. Likewise, in ICoT, the students are assumed to be able to cultivate the texts autonomously and are prepared to be evaluated. Lastly, in LoRT, the students can investigate the learned texts' interrelations with other familiar texts (Feez, 1998; Martin & Rose, 2008; Ningsih, 2016; Rothery, 1996).

Nevertheless, since the current study deals with multimodal pedagogical issues, the nomenclature of GBA stages was modified to meet the required investigative context, such as building knowledge of genre-based multimodal text analysis, modelling of genre-based multimodal text analysis, joint genre-based multimodal text analysis, independent genre-based multimodal text analysis, and linking of related texts. More technically, in building knowledge of genre-based multimodal text analysis, the students are guided to comprehend multimodal texts and genre-based multimodal text analysis. Besides, modelling of genre-based multimodal text analysis introduces and familiarises the students with the features (semiotic resources) in multimodal texts and analytical frameworks of multimodal text analysis. In addition, joint genre-based multimodal text analysis scaffolds the students to analyse a multimodal text collaboratively. Furthermore, in independent genre-based multimodal text analysis, the students are bolstered to identify semiotic resources, select an appropriate analytical tool, prepare supportive literature and individually perform genre-based multimodal text analysis. As a final point, linking of related texts supports the students to scrutinise the correlations between their results of genre-based multimodal text analyses and others. Overall, these modified stages are framed in the GBMTA.

### 3. METHODS

Grounded on Action Research (hereafter, AR), this study centralised on exploring genre-based multimodal texts analysis in raising the students' multimodal communicative competence (MCC). AR refers to an empirical study attempting to invigorate the social contexts in which it stems from mutual collaboration and problem-solving (Bergroth et al., 2021; Burns & Westmacott, 2018; Lyngsnes, 2016). Additionally, Kemmis (2009) contended that the primary purpose of AR is to change practitioners' practises, their understanding of practises, and the conditions where they practice. Hence, these notions are relevant to the focus of the current study, namely how the practises of genre-based multimodal texts analysis fostered the students' MCC.

The cycle of AR in this investigative context encompassed four predominant stages, namely planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Banegas, 2021; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Planning refers to the process of recognizing a problem and

formulating action to resolve such a problem or to improve a situation in a particular investigative setting. Acting deals with the regular process of implementing the practical intervention (action) based on the identified problem(s). Observing portrays the impacts of the applied action to be reflected and improved. Reflecting functions to evaluate the impacts of intervention (action) to determine the foundation of subsequent cycles.

In practice, the AR cycles are depicted in Table 1. This AR was conducted in an English Education Department of a state university in Tasikmalaya, West Java, Indonesia. The main reasons for choosing the data sources are (1) the existence of Grammar in Multimodal Discourse (hereafter, GiMD) as the course was the focus of the investigation, and (2) the accessibility of gaining the data because one of the researchers of the present study is a teacher in such a course, and (3) the aptness of research issues and required data.

Four junior students (two males and two females) majoring in English Education in one of the GiMD classes were purposely selected as the participants, ages 19-21 years old. They gave consent and were given freedom should they wish to withdraw from the research. They speak Sundanese as their first language (L1), Bahasa Indonesia as their second language (L2), and English as their foreign language (FL). There were several considerations in recruiting them. First, they took the GiMD course where the GBMTA was applied. Second, they were willing to participate in this study. Third, they indicated their high learning engagement while learning the GiMD course. Then, they were able to perform the GBMTA practises appropriately. They took part in 10 meetings during teaching and learning practises. Eventually, they had better collaborative personalities than their classmates during practising GBMTA.

To sum up, regarding the application of multimodal concepts to pedagogical practises mainly English language teaching, the present study employed GBMTA to raise the students' MCC anchored in a systemic functional linguistic landscape, especially GBA (Derewianka, 1990; Feez, 1998; Hyon, 1996; Rothery, 1996). More practically, the cycles of instructional activities are encompassed within five adapted stages of activity (Feez, 1998), as shown in Table 2.

This research intended to gain a blatant portrayal of the students' MCC to see how GBMTA raised their multimodal communicative competence. Therefore, data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The interview was guided by several topics for posing questions. Those topics encompassed their prior knowledge of multimodality, experiences of performing genre-based multimodal texts analysis, existing knowledge after learning multimodality, the paradigmatic shift of English language teaching and learning, comprehension of semiotic resources on multimodal texts, multimodal communicative competence, and implementation of genre-based multimodal text analysis. However, such topics did not restrict the dynamics of questions that may occur during interview sessions if unpredictable responses appear. The interview was video-recorded by one of the researchers with a camcorder (Samsung HMX F-90). All participants' names were changed to pseudonyms (Student #1, Student #2, and so forth) to maintain anonymity and uphold ethical issues.

**Table 1.** Steps of a genre-based multimodal texts analysis (Boche & Henning, 2015; Feez, 1998; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

Stages (Cycles)	Details		
Stage 1 (Planning) Introduction	Introducing the students to multimodal texts and genre-based multimodal text analysis.	Facilitating them to comprehend three kinds of multimodal texts viz. educational posters, university websites, and English language teaching textbooks and multimodal analytical frameworks, such as multimodal discourse analysis on compositional meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), Kress' model of multimodal social semiotic (MSS) communication (Kress, 2010) and semiotic approach (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) to analysing textual and non-textual representations of cultures.	Helping the students select multimodal analytical tools and analyse a multimodal text.
Stage 2 (Acting) Scaffolded Analysis of Multimodal texts	Leading the students to analyse multimodal texts.	Scaffolding the students to perform genre-based multimodal texts analysis.	Directing them to explore various relevant information for supporting their interpretation of analysis results.
Stage 3 (Acting) Practising multimodal texts analysis	Asking the students to collaborate with their groups to analyse several multimodal texts, such as educational posters, university websites, and ELT textbooks.	Requesting the students to discuss and interpret their multimodal analysis results.	Demanding the students to write an essay containing their genre-based multimodal analysis results and interpretations.
Stage 4 (Observing) Presenting an essay on multimodal text analysis	Providing the students a chance to present their essays of genre-based multimodal texts analysis.	Observing and supporting the students' classroom presentations about presenting their essays of genre-based multimodal texts analysis.	Providing feedback to the students' classroom presentations about presenting their essays of genre-based multimodal texts analysis.
Stage 5 (Reflecting) Reflection	facilitating the students to reflect on their genre-based multimodal text analysis.	encouraging the students to reflect on their classroom presentations about their essays of genre-based multimodal text analysis.	Leading the students to reflect on their thorough learning activities on analysing multimodal texts.

**Table 2.** The cycles of instructional activities (Feez, 1998).

No.	Cycle	Explanation
1.	Building knowledge of genre-based multimodal text analysis.	Guiding the students to comprehend multimodal texts and genre-based multimodal text analysis.
2.	Modelling of genre-based multimodal text analysis.	Introducing and familiarising the students with the features (semiotic resources) in multimodal texts and analytical frameworks of multimodal text analysis.
3.	Joint genre-based multimodal text analysis.	Scaffolding the students to analyse a multimodal text collaboratively.
4.	Independent genre-based multimodal text analysis.	Encouraging the students to identify semiotic resources, select an appropriate analytical tool, prepare supportive literature and individually perform genre-based multimodal text analysis.
5.	Linking of related texts.	Supporting the students to scrutinise the correlations between their results of genre-based multimodal text analyses and others.

This study used thematic analysis to analyse the data. Thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is an analytical procedure that analyses, manages, depicts, and informs themes contained within a data set. Furthermore, King (2004) and Braun and Clarke (2006) affirmed that thematic analysis provided an adaptable strategy and plentiful, particular, and diverse data facilitating the researchers to refashion them to fit demanded empirical investigations. Similarly, Braun and Clarke (2006) claimed that it did not require the specific theoretical and technical insight of distinctive qualitative frameworks. Practically, the analysis encompasses six major stages, namely (1) familiarising with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Building Students' Knowledge of Multimodality

Basically, building knowledge on multimodality was a springboard for raising the students' MCC. Activating the students' schemata on multimodality facilitates them in establishing a fundamental foundation before performing multimodal texts analysis. As a matter of fact, the students taking Grammar in Multimodal Discourse (hereafter, GiMD) were equipped with both theoretical and practical learning experiences on multimodal issues. Pujianto et al. (2014) added that each activity in the Building Knowledge of the Field (BKOF) stage is performed to assist the students in brainstorming. Based on a theoretical viewpoint, the students were introduced to various multimodal teaching materials, such as gestures, colours, symbols, genre, and mood as represented in Excerpt #1:

Excerpt #1

Interviewer : What is GIMD (Grammar in multimodal discourse) learning like? Could you explain it in general?

Student #1 : Essentially, in GIMD, we learned about the meaning of language. It can be seen not from the word. Oh, it turns out that the language only contains words. Just talking like that, but there are also other aspects of modalities that can be viewed from the language itself, from

the colours, the symbols, and the mood coming out from the genre. Similar to the Foundation of Functional Grammar (FFG) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) learned in the previous semesters

Besides, GiMD was a continuum of the previous courses, namely Foundation of Functional Grammar (hereafter, FFG) and Critical Discourse Analysis in English Language Teaching (hereafter, CDA in ELT). To illustrate, FFG is a course aiming at introducing the students to a meaning-based theory of grammar, specifically functional grammar under the umbrella of Systemic Functional Linguistics (hereafter, SFL). Furthermore, this course enables the students to (1) have a solid understanding of the key topics in functional grammar, (2) analyse texts as the foundation of functional grammar, and (3) relate the analysis to the concerns of critical discourse analysis and multimodal discourse analysis, (4) be aware of ideological contents of a text-based from the point of view of functional grammar, (5) value grammar as a tool for meaning-making and social participation, and (6) play roles as text users, text participants and text analysts (Abdullah, 2017). Regarding CDA in ELT, this course enables the students to (1) possess a holistic understanding of the key topics in CDA based on the four schools of thought, (2) possess the capacity to analyse texts based on seven schools of CDA, (3) be able to relate the analysis to the concerns of CDA in education, (4) engage students with a critical analysis of different curriculum and educational documents and practises, and (5) enhance critical awareness of how educational texts and practises portray particular conflicting discourses (Abdullah, 2019a). However, these courses merely focus on textually oriented analysis where language is considered the primary data.

Unlike FFG and CDA in ELT, GiMD emphasizes that the meaning-making process is based on non-linguistic dimensions (e.g., image, music, gesture, architecture, etc.) as semiotic resources integrated across sensory modalities (e.g. visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory, and kinaesthetic) represented in multimodal texts, discourses, and events (Abdullah, 2019b). Equally, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) asserted that multimodal texts are the texts where meanings are manifested in assorted semiotic modes. Also, Oostendorp (2015, p. 42) verbalised “multimodality as an analytical tool providing ways to describe semiotic practises or representation in all their richness and complexity”. With this in mind, the students are expected to shift their language learning paradigms from mono-modal to multimodal perspectives.

From a practical standpoint, the students were guided to gain valuable experience in putting the theories they had learned into practice. In this regard, students were encouraged to analyse multimodal texts (for example, educational posters, university websites, and English language teaching textbooks) provided by the teacher or chosen by themselves. Also, they were commenced with diverse multimodal analytical frameworks, such as multimodal discourse analysis on compositional meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), Kress’ model of multimodal social semiotic (MSS) communication (Kress, 2010), and semiotic approach to analysing textual and non-textual representations of cultures (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

#### **4.2 Engaging the Students with Theoretical and Practical Learning Activities**

Another attempt to raise the students’ MCC was by engaging them with theoretical and practical learning activities. In this investigative context, one of the

researchers was the teacher of the GiMD course. Initially, they were requested to work collaboratively in a group consisting of five to six students for each group. Then, they were supplied with multimodal texts, such as educational websites, gestures, and space and movement. Also, they discussed such issues to obtain a wider and more profound comprehension of multimodality. In practice, they selected a topic for genre-based multimodal text analysis based on multimodal texts offered by the teacher (e.g., educational websites, gestures, and space and movement). Moreover, they decided to choose one of the multimodal analytical tools, such as multimodal discourse analysis on compositional meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), Kress' model of multimodal social semiotic (MSS) communication (Kress, 2010), and the semiotic approach to analyse such multimodal texts (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Once they have analysed and discussed the analysing results and interpretations, they disseminated them to their teacher and classmates, as seen in Excerpts #2 and #3:

Excerpt #2

Interviewer : Uhm ok, what were you learning during joining the multimodality class? Anyway, what was the label of the course?

Student #3 : Eh Grammar in Multimodal Discourse.

Interviewer : Okay, Grammar in Multimodal Discourse, what did you learn?

Student #3 : Eh, I learned many things in such a course. As an example, I learned how to analyse the website of an educational institution, symbols, logos, gestures, spaces, movements, and other modes.

Excerpt #2 indicated that Student #3 learned various issues in the GiMD course, such as analysing educational websites, and their logos and symbols. Additionally, she learned gestures produced by a teacher while teaching English in the classroom. The teacher was displayed in a video projected by the LCD projector. Furthermore, she also elaborated that she learned spatial and kinaesthetic modes in the course. Unfortunately, she did not give more information about what and how she learned multimodality in the GiMD course.

Excerpt #3

Interviewer : Did you have a discussion or another similar activity?

Student #4 : I think mini-research.

Interviewer : All right, did you think that the learning method applied by the teacher was effective or not?

Student #4 : Well, in my opinion, it's already effective, because it's complete. We learned both the theories and practices.

Referring to Excerpt #3, Student #4 informed that she perceived that the teaching process through genre-based multimodal texts analysis remains effective as reflected in her utterance, "Well, in my opinion, it's already effective, because it's complete. We learned both the theories and practises". In other words, linking theories to practises in learning activities provides an opportunity for the students to articulate their metacognitive knowledge and manifest it into strategic knowledge (Pintrich, 2002). On the one hand, he noted that metacognitive knowledge deals with general cognition and awareness of someone's cognition. It enables the students to plan, monitor, and regulate their learning and thinking.

On the other hand, strategic knowledge refers to "general strategies for learning, thinking and problem-solving" (Pintrich, 2002, p. 220). This type of knowledge encompasses a wide range of knowledge about students' strategies for comprehending

what they hear, read, and conceptualise in classroom learning activities. In a nutshell, incorporating metacognitive and strategic knowledge into multimodal learning activities enables them to effectively achieve the targeted learning objectives.

Furthermore, engaging the students in theoretical and practical learning activities enables them to cultivate their analytical and critical thinking skills. In this regard, O'Halloran et al. (2015) postulate that the primary objective of the pedagogical approach in teaching and learning multimodal analysis is to foster the students' analytical and critical thinking skills and to build their self-assured, accountable, and vigorous characteristics in the light of producing, distributing and consuming the current knowledge and information.

Moreover, the New Group London (1996) proposes four underpinnings of a multimodal pedagogical approach, namely (1) 'situated practice' accentuating cultivating the students' meaning-making experiences with texts from authentic situations and contexts, (2) 'overt instruction' of a metalanguage of design building the systematic and explicit teaching of an analytical vocabulary for understanding the design processes and decisions entailed in systems and structures of meaning' (Jewitt, 2009), (3) 'critical framing' functioning to construe social contexts and purposes of meaning configurations, and (4) 'transformed practice' viewing students to implement their recently acquired skills and shapes them to be 'purposeful meaning-makers and designers of multimodal texts.

### 4.3 Assigning Analytical and Reflective Task-based Learning Activities

The next attempt assigns analytical and reflective task-based learning activities (Danielsson & Selander, 2016). In this attempt, the students were given several tasks while learning multimodal issues. Those tasks comprised multimodal analysis rehearsal, collaborative assignments, reflective journal writing, and project-based learning (hereafter, PjBL) or mini-research. This evidence is supported by Student #1 verbalising that "...we were required to make a reflective journal, do mini-research, and analyse rehearsals".

Excerpt #4

Interviewer : All right, hmm, did you have other additional tasks beyond your daily classroom learning activities?

Student #1 : No, I didn't. However, we were required to make a reflective journal, do mini-research, and analyse rehearsals.

Essentially, multimodal analysis rehearsal and collaborative assignments are a few of the tasks or assignments aiming to enable the students to analyse, discuss and interpret their multimodal analysis results. In these tasks, the students collaborate with their groups and analyse particular multimodal texts (e.g., educational poster, university website, ELT textbook, etc.). These tasks encourage them to pinpoint the envisioned and actual inferential liaison among questions, concepts, descriptions, and other types of representation for the sake of generating beliefs, judgments, experiences, reasons, information, or opinion (Facione et al., 1995).

To support them in attaining convincing arguments and relatively proper interpretation of data analysis results, they were guided to explore various relevant information from credible resources, such as journals (e.g. Visual Communication, Journal of Pragmatics, Social Semiotics, RELC Journal, Discourse & Communication,



Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics, Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, etc.), books (e.g., *Multimodal Transcription and Text Analysis* (Baldry & Thibault, 2010), *Enregistering Identity in Indonesian Television Serials: A Multimodal Analysis* (Goebel, 2011), *Multimodal Teaching and Learning: The Rhetorics of the Science Classroom* (Kress et al., 2001; Matsumoto, 2015), *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), *Multimodal Studies: Exploring Issues and Domains* (O'Halloran & Smith, 2011) and websites (<http://multimodal-analysis-lab.org/>) (O'Halloran et al., 2015). By doing so, the students' engagement could be enhanced through these task-based learning activities.

Another task is reflective journal writing. Theoretically, Wellington (2000, p. 118) defined reflective journals as a kind of "annotated chronological record or a 'log' of experiences and events". In terms of the current study's context, it was intended to assist students in expressing what they were taught about genre-based multimodal text analysis that differed from what they already knew. Furthermore, it aimed to highlight their perspectives on the implementation process and comment on the application of theory to practice relating to the method. Moreover, it functioned to communicate the extent to which what they thought they knew was captured in their genre-based multimodal texts analysis. Also, it helped them state what could have been conducted to enhance their multimodal communicative competence. Likewise, it enabled them to convey the impacts of implementing genre-based multimodal text analysis. Eventually, it allowed them to designate the strengths and weaknesses of implementing genre-based multimodal text analysis. These are aligned with Moon's (2001) concept, contending that reflection includes experiences, events, specific descriptive feelings, personal viewpoints, and critical evaluation. Similarly, students' reflections on learning activities attest that they could intertwine their existing experiences with previous learning (Feuerstein et al., 2006). Therefore, reflective task-based learning activities advocated for the students to play their roles as text analysts or critical literacy practitioners (O'Halloran et al., 2015).

Additionally, Project-Based Learning (hereafter, PjBL) was another task assigned to the students as their final tasks or final projects before accomplishing the GiMD course. PjBL is a state-of-the-art technique for learning involving various and critical approaches to succeed in this current age. It empowered the students to manage their learning by exploring, collectively scrutinising, and fabricating projects based on their knowledge (Bell, 2010). Specifically, the students were guided to work collaboratively from meeting 14 to 16 to finalise their final tasks. In meeting 14, they were required to discover a research topic, outline investigative key points and prepare for data collection. Supplementary to such activities, they were tasked to design an outline of the research article and prepare data collection because of classroom time constraints. In meeting 15, they were called for reviewing the obtained data, consulting analytical practises, and composing a succinct research article. Similar to meeting 14, they were demanded to analyse the gained data and finish writing a research article as the subsequent assignment. Finally, in meeting 16, they must submit their final tasks in the form of a research article to the teacher. By doing so, PjBL, a flexible methodology, capacitates the students to promote multitudinous skills in an integrated, meaningful, and ongoing activity (Foss et al., 2008).

#### 4.4 Providing Constructive Feedback to the Students' Learning Performances

One of the pivotal teaching practises to allow the students to reach improved learning performances was through corrective feedback (hereafter, CF) provision. Dealing with the student's classroom learning activities, such as classroom presentation, text-based analysis, and classroom discussion, the teacher commonly accorded CF to their learning performances. The feedback in this context functioned as a mirror reflecting their strengths and weaknesses while learning multimodality. Additionally, the students must promote constant learning development (Lyster et al., 2003). Technically, the teacher gave constructive feedback to the students by appreciating their strengths (e.g., oral presentation performances) and informed their weaknesses (e.g., inappropriate exemplification). As noted by Ajayi (2009), the indispensable literacy issue which should be highlighted by the teacher(s) is to generate students' pedagogical alternatives incorporating their perspectives, prior learning experiences, and identities. In other words, feedback should not only concern how the students correct their mistakes and enhance their learning performances but also how they can harmonise their perspectives, experiences, and identities. At the same time, the students elucidated that the teacher's scaffolding and feedback played a vital role in teaching and learning multimodal texts. This is represented in the following excerpt:

Excerpt #5

Interviewer : Did you get feedback from the teacher once you had accomplished the tasks?

Student #1 : Eh, we normally obtained feedback from the teacher in terms of reflection or appreciation after we finished presenting an issue in teaching materials. For instance, he said, "you have presented the materials well". On the other hand, he also informed us about our learning weaknesses. Furthermore, he re-explained the teaching materials to confirm the students' multimodal knowledge.

Given these facts, appropriate corrective feedback enables the students to diagnose their mistakes and discover proper solutions for their learning problems. Nonetheless, inappropriate use of CF may psychologically discourage them to communicate and engage in classroom learning activities.

#### 4.5 Raising Awareness of the Contributions of Multimodality to Prospective English Teachers' Competences

Once the students joined the GiMD course and participated in miscellaneous learning activities, especially genre-based multimodal texts analysis (e.g., building knowledge of genre-based multimodal text analysis, modelling of genre-based multimodal text analysis, joint genre-based multimodal text analysis, independent genre-based multimodal text analysis, and linking of related texts), their understanding on multimodality enhanced significantly. For instance, before learning multimodality, they claimed that the prospective English teachers should individually master four major language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Rose, 2018). Nonetheless, after learning multimodality, their paradigms on how meaning is constructed and deployed have shifted from mono-modal to multimodal perspectives (Firmansyah, 2018) and pedagogy (Suherdi, 2015). This paradigmatic shift represents

their awareness as prospective English teachers of the contributions of multimodality to prospective English teachers' competencies. Such a fact is delineated as follows:

Excerpt #6

Interviewer : All right, you are one of the English prospective teachers in this faculty, aren't you?

Student #3 : Hmm

Interviewer : As a student in your faculty, what do you think about multimodality? Did it offer you valuable knowledge to facilitate you in developing your teacher's professionalism?

Student #3 : I think yes. This course provided me with valuable knowledge. For example, I've just known that GiMD explores discursive practises related to meanings represented in movements, either teachers' or students' movements. In other words, such gestures and movements could affect learning activities, such as the teacher's gestures influencing students' learning performances.

Therefore, as prospective English teachers, they were expected to own not only linguistic competence (grammatical competence) but also sociocultural competence, strategic competence, actional competence, and discourse competence (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995), and multimodal communicative competence (Royce, 2002). In a similar vein, Fernández-Pacheco (2016) contended that the emphasis of the new pedagogy of multiliteracies lies on teaching how to comprehend and produce multimodal texts by combining miscellaneous modes including language and altering the students' role (prospective English teachers) as meaning makers to be meaning re-makers or modifiers.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This research has depicted how genre-based multimodal texts analysis (GBMTA) raised the students' multimodal communicative competence. Five major findings have emerged in this study, namely (1) building their knowledge on multimodality, (2) engaging with theoretical and practical learning activities, (3) assigning analytical and reflective task-based learning activities, and (4) providing constructive feedback to their learning performances, and (5) raising awareness of the contributions of multimodality to prospective English teachers' competences.

Viewed from its contributions, the present study offers contributions from theoretical, practical, and empirical lenses. Theoretically, this study supplies valuable contributions to the theoretical underpinnings of teaching multimodality, particularly in the English as a foreign language (EFL) context. Practically, the present study recommends essential information for the TESOL practitioners, linguists, and English language students about the pivotal roles of genre-based multimodal texts analysis to raise multimodal communicative competence. Empirically, this study extends the body of research on multimodality in language education, such as English language teaching practises.

Even though this study offers valuable findings, a final note on its limitations emerges. More specifically, such limitations encompass time constraints and a single data collection technique (semi-structured interview). For these reasons, future studies should employ longitudinal investigative attempts, and exert triangulated data collection techniques (e.g., observation, document analysis, or questionnaire administration).

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## **YouTube Teaching Materials with Peer Support to Improve Students' Mastery of Subject Content Learning**

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigated the effectiveness of using YouTube teaching materials with peer support on students' mastery of subject content learning, motivation, obstacles, and benefits they acquired in learning through this media. This study involved 60 undergraduate students attending the English Language Teaching Method Course (ELTMC) at a university in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. The study used mixed methods: quantitative and qualitative. A quasi-experimental with pre-test and post-test design was used to see the effectiveness of using YouTube teaching materials with peer support and without peer support on students' mastery of the course. The instruments used to collect the data were tests and an open-ended questionnaire. The findings revealed that using YouTube teaching materials with peer support significantly improved students' mastery of the subject content of ELTMC compared to those without peer support. The study also reported that only 13 of 30 students had problems learning the subject via the media in the experimental group with peer support. The problems were the speed of speaking by the native speakers,*

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*lengthy videos, different English accents that were difficult to absorb, and unclear video sounds. Meanwhile, the benefits include the presence of the native speakers in the videos who are creative and accurate in the language being learned (i.e., English), the joy and positive challenges they got from watching the videos and having discussions afterward with peers. The availability of peer assistance enabled students to comprehend the teaching material delivered through actual media on YouTube on a deeper level.*

**Keywords:** Authentic media, English language, peer support, teaching method, YouTube.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning English in Indonesia is conducted mainly by English teachers who have graduated from university in English language education from various universities in Indonesia and overseas. Usually, these teachers teach English using the same skills and knowledge. Nowadays, teachers cannot only use traditional methods to teach English in the classroom. Instead, they need to also use media such as computers, the Internet, mobile phones, YouTube, Zoom, Google Meet, and Google Classroom (Marhamah et al., 2022; Muslem et al., 2019). Consequently, governments, teachers, and other parties involved in increasing the quality of education in Indonesia should work harder to compete with technology development.

Researchers have done much previous empirical research on how the use of technology such as videos, YouTube, CALLs, and mobile phones can improve students' learning outcomes and performance levels (Alshumaimeri, 2015; Hussin et al., 2020; Pasaribu, 2020; Sevy-Biloon & Chroman, 2019). Terantino (2011) pointed out that YouTube can be used in the classroom to teach foreign languages and subject content because it is believed that in some way, the use of the media of YouTube in the classroom can replace the role of teachers. YouTube is now very popular globally, with more than two billion viewers. In addition, 51% of YouTube viewers go to YouTube weekly, and 52% of teenagers and adults often share videos with other people worldwide (Terantino 2011). Videos from YouTube have also been used in classes in language learning contexts to enhance students' competence and motivation (Oddone, 2011).

Today, lecturers teach English teaching methods using individual or group lectures, discussions, and presentations in the teaching and learning process. Lecturers use PowerPoint to describe topics to students. Instructors provide topics for class assignments. However, the implementation of YouTube videos in the English Teaching Methodology Course (ELTMC) is still limited. Furthermore, non-native teachers and trainers still have difficulty applying these media in the classroom (Pasaribu, 2020). Therefore, the present study investigated the effectiveness of using authentic media on YouTube with peer support on the students' abilities to master the subject and their motivation levels in the Indonesian context. Moreover, the objectives of this study are to find the answers to the following research questions:

1. Does the use of YouTube teaching materials with peer support improve students' mastery of the English Language Teaching Method Course (ELTMC)?

2. Does the use of YouTube teaching materials with peer support and without peer support increase students' motivation in learning the English Language Teaching Method Course (ELTMC)?
3. What problems do students face in learning the subject matter by using YouTube teaching materials with peer support?
4. What advantages do students gain in learning the subject matter by using YouTube teaching materials with peer support?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 The Use of YouTube Teaching Materials in English Language Teaching**

The term 'technology' is a common aspect of education. Mitcham (1987) defined technology as humans making or using material artifacts in all forms and aspects. Nowadays, technology is a part of the needs of the lives of human beings for various purposes. Technology such as mobile phones, Facebook, and Twitter is a means of communication worldwide (Tri & Nguyen, 2014). Mobile phones are used for communication purposes and for teaching subject matter (Dunn et al., 2013; Thomas & Muñoz, 2016; Yudhiantara & Nasir, 2017). Additionally, YouTube can also play as a media form for teaching a subject matter to students (Berk, 2009; Fleck et al., 2014).

Implementing authentic media of technology with peer support has been found to improve students' learning of a subject matter (Hussin et al., 2020). It enables students to learn through repeated discussion (i.e., conversation) with their peers either inside or outside the classroom (Watkins & Wilkins, 2011). Students learned about native English speakers' cultures through this media (Almurashi, 2016; Kim and Kim (2021)). YouTube teaching videos through peer support may create innovative and exciting learning experiences to increase students' mastery of the concepts of a particular subject and increase motivation levels. Brame (2016) claimed that the effective use of videos as an educational tool can enhance students' engagement and promote active learning. Therefore, YouTube may also enable students to obtain new, authentic teaching materials, and with peer support, this is a reform compared to the traditional classroom lectures that students typically received in the past. By employing this media in the process of teaching and learning English in the EFL context, students do not only acquire knowledge from the native speaker presented in the YouTube teaching videos but also understand the native speakers' body language and actions that are visually visible through the presentation of these materials (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

### **2.2 Authentic Media of YouTube in English Language Teaching Method**

Today, YouTube is a medium prepared for teaching and learning purposes (Sevy-Biloon & Chroman, 2019). YouTube is not a new tool in education in developed countries and using and browsing it is relatively easy (Alfarwan, 2019). But, it is not the case in developing countries like Indonesia, where YouTube in the classroom is something new. Sevy-Biloon and Chroman (2019) reported that many teaching and

learning processes now use this media for teaching purposes, especially in countries where English is a foreign language. In this case, students lacked access to authentic English speakers and thus YouTube can be one of the ways to solve this problem. They also noted that using this media enabled students to develop skills for more precise communication between the students and fluent English speakers.

YouTube teaching materials allow students to deal with native speakers' lectures in the classroom through videos. Teachers or lecturers can access the teaching media from YouTube, then select the appropriate teaching material relative to the subject they teach. However, they need to be effective in finding suitable materials that can help them temporarily replace their role in the classroom. By using the videos from YouTube, they can send the materials via e-mail, WhatsApp, Facebook, or other electronic means to their students (Annamalai, 2015; Tri & Nguyen, 2014). Moreover, they should be creative in providing authentic teaching media in the classroom to create a situation that enables their students to participate in a real-life learning context (Alfarwan, 2019). When using these sorts of media in teaching are used and the class becomes student-centered, teachers or lecturers become facilitators in the classroom during the teaching and learning process (Keiler, 2018). Their role inside or outside should facilitate students' learning process in solving their learning problems.

### **2.3 Peer Support in Learning English Language Teaching Method Course**

Cooperative learning is one of the most effective ways of learning and is used mainly by students to improve their learning performance (Ivone, et al., 2020). Many collaborative learning models exist in learning in or outside the classroom. Lecturers or students can also use virtual learning to learn the subject matter, especially when discussing complex subjects involving peer support. Students can discuss a particular topic through peer support. They can share knowledge and experience to enrich their achievements through this support. Peer support plays an essential role in the learning process either in or outside the classroom among their peers (Visser, 2005).

There have been many previous studies regarding the implementation of peer support in language learning and content subject learning (De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Ertmer et al., 2007). Grgurovic and Hegelheimer (2007) studied multimedia with subtitles and peer interaction to improve English language skills among high and low-achieving students. Through peer support, students shared their experiences and knowledge and gave feedback to other students (Bold, 2008; Chu & Chu, 2010; Martin, 2010). Peer support arrangements have also been found to represent a practical and promising approach for supporting regular students and those with disabilities who can access the learning and social opportunities within inclusive classrooms (Carter et al., 2015).

### **2.4 Motivation in English Learning English Language Teaching Method**

Motivation is one of the primary variables influencing the process of teaching and learning a second language or any other subject inside and outside the classroom. There is a strong correlation between students' achievement and motivation in learning English (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Motivation and ability can play an essential role in learning a second language (Gardner, 2010). According to Oletic and Ilic (2006), the reason why students persevere and attempt to learn English is due to their ability

and motivation. For instance, if someone has the motivation to get a higher score on a TOEFL test, he or she will increase their learning effort to get the highest score. Motivation is divided into two categories, namely, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Intrinsic motivation comes from inside a person, whereas extrinsic motivation comes from outside when undertaking a task. Lack of motivation in learning decreases students' abilities to achieve and advance language proficiency and subject content (Sevy-Biloon & Chroman, 2019).

The variable motivation refers to the driving force in any situation. In the context of social education as a learning engine, the model has three motivational factors for learning a second language or a subject (Gardner, 2010). First, the motivated individual expends effort to learn the language or subject matter (persistent and consistent attempt to understand the material by doing homework, seeking out the opportunities to learn more, doing extra work, and others). Second, the motivated individual wants to achieve the goal by expressing a strong desire to learn the language and achieve success. Finally, the motivated individual enjoys learning the language (such an individual will say that it is fun, a challenge, and enjoyable, even though at the time when enthusiasm may fade). In this case, all three elements, effort, desire, and positive affect, are necessary to distinguish between more motivated individuals and those who are less motivated (Gardner, 2010).

Many previous studies have been conducted in the field of language and content subject learning through multimedia learning devices with peer support to enhance students' motivation (Berk, 2009; Burke & Fedorek, 2017; Klobas et al., 2018). The findings by Berk (2009) demonstrated that both the verbal and visual components of a video provide the ideal fit for the qualities of the need of students today, referred to as the Net Generation. Learning through videos is a viable method of tapping their many bits of intelligence and learning styles. Selecting relevant video clips for certain classes, and implementing those clips as a systematic teaching method is among the ways to reach effective learning outcomes (Berk, 2009). Furthermore, Burke and Fedorek (2017) research on flipped classrooms. They found that this type of classroom increases student involvement and knowledge of class material. The active learning environment of the flipped class created higher levels of student involvement.

Finally, Klobas et al. (2018) explored the impact of excessive YouTube viewing on academic motivation. The results of their study revealed that stronger motivation to use YouTube for information and learning was linked to less obsessive behavior, whereas stronger motivation to use YouTube for amusement was linked to more compulsive behavior. To conclude, YouTube addiction has a negative impact on academic motivation (Klobas et al., 2018).

### 3. METHODS

This current study employed a pre-experimental approach with pretest and post-test design, and an open-ended questionnaire, to observe the effectiveness of using YouTube teaching materials with peer support to students attending the English Language Teaching Method Course (ELTMC). The problems and benefits of the application of this method were also explored.

### **3.1 Participants**

The participants of this study consisted of 60 undergraduate students enrolled in the ELTMC at the Department of English Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, Indonesia. They consisted of 54 female and six male students from various regions around Indonesia with heterogeneous English proficiency levels. Of these students, 30 students were in the experimental group and the other 30 students were in the control group.

Usually, the first researcher taught the class using conventional media, discussing, and lecturing techniques. However, for the present study, he used YouTube teaching materials with and without peer support to teach the subject inside and outside the classroom. Students had a small amount of YouTube teaching materials when they had previously learned the ELTMC; thus for this study, he utilized more YouTube teaching materials with peer support and without peer support to study their improvement in grasping the subject, motivation to study, and examine the problems and benefits of this method during the learning process. The teaching materials used in the present study were teaching methods that the researchers have selected to meet the subject contents. The coordinator of the course had also validated these materials.

### **3.2 Research Procedure**

First, the students were given a pretest before delivering the treatment to the class. The test consisted of all teaching methods outlined in the course syllabus. The pretest was given to both the experimental and control groups. After that, the researchers started the teaching and learning process using YouTube teaching materials with peer support and without peer support. The students obtained the same teaching materials for the subject matter. However, the way of learning is different. The experimental group with peer support learned and discussed the teaching materials with their peers. While the control group was taught without peer support and learned the teaching materials individually. A learning process in and out of the classroom was where the researchers enter their respective classrooms to teach instructional materials to two of these groups.

The researchers played a YouTube video related to ELTMC at each meeting. Each meeting discussed a technique for both groups. After watching the teaching material, the researchers asked the students in the experimental group to sit in pairs and discuss the material they watched with their peers. Meanwhile, the control group students studied individually. The students first paid attention to the presented video, and then the researchers played the video the second time. The students noted what they could get from the video for the second time. Here, in the experimental group, they worked in groups, meanwhile, in the control group they work individually. Next, the researchers instructed the students to discuss the teaching materials presented in the video with their peers for ten minutes. Next, the researchers led the discussion by engaging students to interact with other students to discuss what they had obtained from the submitted material.

This course consisted of ten meeting sessions for each group. The topics of the learning materials covered eight methods of English Language Teaching, namely, Grammar Translation Method, Audio-Lingual Method, Direct Method, Total Physical Response, Communicative Approach, Silent Way Method, Community Language

Learning, and Problem Based Language Teaching and Learning. Finally, the researchers involved the students from both groups in summarizing the lesson they had learned, followed by reflection on what they had learned in that class session, each of which lasted for 90 minutes.

A post-test after the treatments was also given to examine if the material mastery improved for both groups. The data from these pre-tests and post-tests were analyzed using SPSS (Arkkelin, 2014). Finally, the researchers distributed an open-ended questionnaire (Züll, 2016) to all of the 30 students to find out the problems they had encountered and the advantages they had gained during the teaching and learning process using YouTube videos. The open-ended questionnaire was separated into four categories to study students' motivation in learning with authentic media on YouTube with peer support: attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction.

The researchers sent the open-ended questionnaire to the students via email. The students also responded to these questions via e-mail to the researchers. The reasons for choosing this approach to collect data for the second research question were that first, face-to-face interviews with the students were not possible during the time due to Covid-19 and the governments' social restrictions. Second, despite phone calls were possible, the researchers wanted to gain data from all of the participants, therefore, the open-ended questionnaire was the most feasible way to do so within the time limitation. The qualitative data were then analyzed based on the stages of qualitative analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which are being familiarized with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

#### 4. RESULTS

Paired t-test in the experimental group with peer support was done to determine the difference in the post-test and pretest scores, to see whether there was an increase using N-Gain, and to select the difference in mean before and after treatment. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The results of the experimental group with peer support.

Group		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	N-Gain
Pair 1	The learning achievement of the experimental group with peer support (before)	54.0333	30	9.36790	0.74
	The learning achievement of the experimental group with peer support (after)	88.3333	30	6.53021	

Table 1 shows the experimental group's mean, standard deviation, and N-gain. From the mean value before and after treatment, it can be seen that students' learning achievement using YouTube teaching materials in the learning process is better, namely getting an average deal after treatment of 88.33 and 54.03 before treatment. Meanwhile, the deviation of the data from average was 6.53, meaning that the data spread from the standard when compared to the pre-treatment value of 9.36. While the N-gain value is 0.74, indicating that using YouTube teaching materials in the learning process increased student learning outcomes and is categorized as high.

Meanwhile, paired t-test of the control group without peer support was done to determine the difference in the post-test and pretest scores, whether there was an increase or not using N-Gain, and the difference in the mean before and after using the same method in the learning process. Detailed values can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The results of the control group without peer support.

Group		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	N-Gain
Pair 1	Learning achievement of the control group without peer support (before)	52.6667	30	7.48946	0.21
	Learning achievement of the control group without peer support (after)	63.0667	30	6.24739	

Table 2 shows the control group's mean, standard deviation, and N-gain. From the mean value before and after processing, it can be seen that the learning results of students using YouTube teaching materials without peer support in the learning process were not better than those of the experimental group with peer support, with an average score of 52.66 before treatment. The deviation of the data from the average is 6.24, meaning that the data was not too spread out from the norm compared to the pre-treatment value of 7.48. The N-gain value is 0.21, indicating no increase in students' learning outcomes (categorized as low) by using traditional methods in the learning process.

#### 4.1 T-test Comparison of the Groups With and Without Peer Support

The unpaired t-test of the groups with peer support and without peer support was conducted to determine the difference in post-test scores on the learning outcomes, whether there was an increase or not using N-Gain, and the difference in mean between the experimental group and the control group using the independent t-test and sample t-test. It can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Learning achievement results in the groups with and without peer support.

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N-Gain	t-count	t-table	Sig.
The experimental group with peer support	30	88.3333	6.53021	0.74	15.313	2.04	.000
The control group without peer support	30	63.0667	6.24739	0.21			

Based on Table 3, the output group statistics show the number of subjects from the groups experimented, 30 students with peer support and 30 students without peer support. When viewed from the mean (average) value, students' learning achievement in the experimental group with peer support using YouTube teaching materials was higher than without peer support. The value of the standard deviation of the experimental group with peer support is 6.53, meaning that the data is more varied than the average when compared to the Standard Deviation value of the control group without peer support (6.24). The experimental group's N-Gain value with peer support is 0.74. The experimental group without peer support was 0.21, which means that the N-Gain value of the experimental group using YouTube teaching materials during the learning process was better than that without peer support. A more significant increase



in students' learning outcomes is included in the high category. In contrast, the N-Gain value in the control group without peer support obtained lower learning achievement results.

Based on the independent sample t-test statistic results, it was found that the  $t\text{-count} > t\text{-table}$  and the Sig. (2-tailed) were 0.000. Because of the value of Sig. (2-tailed)  $0.000 < \text{significant level } (\alpha = 0.05)$ , then there is a significant difference between students' achievement in the experimental group taught using YouTube teaching materials with peer support and without peer support. So it can be concluded that there is a significant influence of YouTube teaching materials with peer support in the learning process.

#### 4.2 The Students' Motivation in Learning the Subject by Using YouTube Teaching Materials with Peer Support

The open-ended questionnaire to explore the students' motivation in learning using YouTube teaching materials with peer support was divided into four parts: attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction. Table 5 shows that the level of motivation for engagement was 67.89%. It can be concluded that the students' learning motivation on the attention indicators is within the high category. Next, the percentage obtained for the fitness indicator is 73.78%, which indicates that the relevance of using YouTube in learning is high. Then, the confidence indicator reports 84.93%, which is in the very high category. Moreover, the analysis showed that the percentage value obtained for the satisfaction indicator is 87.24%, which is in the same category as the confidence indicator. Thus, it can be concluded that using YouTube teaching materials with peer support had motivated students to learn the ELTMC significantly.

**Table 4.** The summary of students' motivation learning using YouTube teaching materials with peer support.

Indicators	The total score of each indicator	Percentage (%)	Category
Attention	1833	67.89	High
Relevance	664	73.78	High
Confidence	637	84.93	Very high
Satisfaction	916	87.24	Very high

#### 4.3 The Problems Faced by Students in Learning Using YouTube Teaching Materials with Peer Support

The results of the open-ended questionnaire received from the 30 students revealed that 13 of the 30 respondents stated that they sometimes had some problems learning the lesson using this media. The following are some themes that emerged from the response of the participants who claimed to have problems.

##### 4.3.1 *The speed of speaking*

The first theme which emerged as the problem is the speed of speaking of the native speakers from the videos presented by their lecturers in the ELTMC.

- (1) Yes, sometimes I have (problems). The difficulty I have is usually about the speed of speaking of the speakers in the videos. It is harder for me to translate than comprehend it since they speak English very fast, and English is not my native language. That is the only difficulty for me. (Student 1)
- (2) Sometimes I have difficulty understanding the material presented, because of the uncomfortable classroom situation and the language in the videos that is difficult to understand because it is too fast...their use of language is sometimes difficult to understand due to the lack of vocabulary knowledge. (Student 4)
- (3) I find it difficult if native speakers speak very fast. (Student 6)
- (4) Yes, I have difficulty because sometimes the native speakers speak fast, not clear...so sometimes I cannot catch what they say. (Student 10)

#### *4.3.2 The sound quality of the videos*

Besides the speed of the native speakers which was deemed fast to the ears of the EFL students, the sound quality of the videos also effected their comprehension. These are as stated by the following students.

- (5) Yes, sometimes. If the speaker does not talk clearly, or maybe the sound system, is more like old videos, so the sound quality is bad...difficult for me to understand. (Student 2)
- (6) There may be some difficulty such as when the speaker in the video is talking too fast, so it is difficult to understand or grasp the meaning of the speaker...the speaker's voice in the video is also difficult to hear because the volume of the speaker's voice is weak, this also makes it a bit difficult for us to know what the speaker is talking about. (Student 18)
- (7) Yes, sometimes I have difficulty hearing because some learning videos explain the pronunciation material too fast, and some are unclear, so I find it difficult to understand. (Student 19)
- (8) Yes, sometimes I have difficulty because some learning videos explain the material too fast, so I find it difficult to understand. (Student 24)

#### *4.3.3 Lengthy and tedious videos*

Other students reported on the duration of the video which was considered lengthy and caused boredom. This further led them to lose focus on the lesson being learned. These problems are as reported by the following students.

- (9) For understanding the lesson, I do not have problems, but there is one video, and the duration is too long, which makes me feel bored and so sleepy to watch, and sometimes the sound is small and unclear. (Student 3)
- (10) Maybe there are some, sometimes you provided us videos of long duration material. It makes it difficult for us to understand and remember the material presented because if we watch it too long, we become confused and lose focus. And then sometimes the sound is small, so it is hard to translate, but after discussing it with friends, I think I can handle it. (Student 21)

#### *4.3.4 Varieties of English accents*

The accent was also a challenge to the students. Not all native English speakers speak in the same accent. The videos shown could be from native speakers of

American English, British English, and Australian English, hence, they all exhibited differences in pronunciation, causing the students to have difficulty detecting the words being said.

- (11) Yes, I found some difficulties when watching because some of the videos used were of poor sound quality and not interesting. I also had difficulty understanding if the speaker in the video had a different and difficult accent (to me), (the accent) I rarely hear. (Student 23)
- (12) Yes, I have. I felt the main difficulty was hearing what the speaker said in the video. Sometimes the speaker talks too fast, with different pronunciations (i.e., accent) and there are no subtitles. In addition, the quality of the speaker's voice and speed are also very influential in the learning process like this. (Student 26)

#### **4.4 The Advantages of Learning Using YouTube Teaching Materials with Peer Support**

On the contrary, the other 17 respondents claimed they did not have any problems learning the subject matter taught using YouTube teaching materials with peer support. In addition, they enjoyed the lessons. The themes which emerged for the advantages of learning with this method are as the following.

##### *4.4.1 Native speakers are more creative and accurate in the videos*

Among the reasons they provided was that the natives were seen to be more creative and accurate in providing explanations and examples of the topic being learned.

- (13) Yes, because the native speakers are very creative in explaining the material or giving examples, which makes it easy for me to understand the contents of the material. (Student 23)
- (14) No, I do not find any difficulty with it. The explanation is clear, and I thought authenticity is one of the best ways the teacher can employ in the classroom. Students can be more creative because the materials are based on daily activities. (Student 13)
- (15) I do not have any difficulty understanding the lesson via YouTube that I watched; the explanation was clear. (Student 14)

##### *4.4.2 Joyful and challenging*

Despite some students having difficulty in understanding native speakers of different accents, some found them joyful and challenging positively. When the voices are clear, these students found no obstacles in understanding the speakers, as expressed in the following excerpts.

- (16) I do not have any difficulty learning the lesson because the explanation of the speakers on the YouTube I watch is very clear. I enjoyed the videos. (Student 12)
- (17) Not all videos I watch are easy to understand because of the use of language that is difficult to understand in pronunciation, but if the voice is clear, it helps me to understand better. So I can summarize easily. It is challenging but in a positive way. (Student 5)

#### *4.4.3 Peer support helped improved their knowledge and language skills*

When the researchers asked for further clarification from the respondents on whether the use of YouTube teaching materials, with peer support, could enhance their knowledge and understanding of the lesson, most students said that they agreed and supported the researchers in using this media in the learning process because they could improve their knowledge and understanding by learning from each other. The learning process was also claimed by the students to increase their speaking and listening skills.

- (18) Yes, of course, it can increase my knowledge and understanding of this subject matter, because, in all the videos, there are many explanations, step by step, and also many examples...we (me and my peer) can repeat and replay the videos until we really understand the materials presented in the videos. (Student 8)
- (19) Yes, media is very important in teaching language because it creates new opportunities for engaging students and improves my knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. It is fun to watch and increases my interest in learning. I can discuss it with peers if I don't understand. (Student 11)
- (20) Yes, it can improve my knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. I learned a lot from the videos. The materials presented in the videos covered all the subject matter contents, and even the examples provided were clear. My peer and I can see and discuss directly the first-hand practice in teaching using each teaching method shown in the video. Moreover, it can improve my listening and speaking skills. (Student 15)

## **5. DISCUSSION**

This study showed that using YouTube teaching materials with peer support could significantly improve the students' achievement in learning the ELTC. This result is supported by several previous studies which also revealed similar outcomes to the research (Almurashi, 2016; Hussin et al., 2020; Watkins & Wilkins, 2011). Kim and Kim (2021) further acknowledged that educational YouTube videos help expand students' perspectives on cross-cultural understanding as it leads them to academic pursuits and engagement while watching the videos.

The current study results are also in line with previous studies in that the use of technology can improve students' performance (Dunn et al., 2013; Thomas & Muñoz, 2016; Yudhiantara & Nasir, 2017). Using YouTube teaching materials as the authentic media can also help students improve their language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing because they listen directly to a native speaker in the media. Fleck et al. (2014) also reported that using YouTube videos in teaching and learning English could improve students' achievements. A study conducted by Sevy-Biloon and Chroman (2019) reported that the implementation of YouTube videos in the teaching and learning subject matter could also improve students' outcomes. The use of YouTube teaching materials can also enhance students' learning styles either in or outside the classroom.

Another finding of the current study was that using YouTube teaching materials with peer support improved students' motivation in learning in the ELTMC. Motivation is essential when undertaking any activity, therefore, using the right media is critical in influencing students' motivation and performance (Masgoret & Gardner,

2003). In other words, the students' motivation increased due to the media and support from partners with whom they comprehensively discussed the teaching materials. This activity made students learn together to understand the teaching material. As a result, their motivation increased compared to when they learned individually (Sevy-Biloon & Chroman, 2019). Additionally, Klobas et al. (2018) also found that compulsive YouTube videos can increase students' motivation to learn. From the videos, they can improve the contents of the subject matter and their English, especially listening and speaking skills. Therefore, this media does not only offer content of the subject but also improves language skills (Muslem et al., 2019).

The students' motivation in this study is high using this method assumably due to the advantages that they posed in the open-ended questionnaire. The first one was that they deemed the native speakers in the videos to be more creative and accurate in the language being learned (i.e., English). Richards and Renandya (2002) have noted that this media assists students in not only acquiring language knowledge from the native speakers in the YouTube videos but also learning their body language and actions. The second one was the joy and positive challenges they got from watching the videos and further discussing the materials with peers. Peer involvement in learning and discussion (Hussin et al., 2020) and recurring discussion among them (Watkins & Wilkins, 2011) promote learning enthusiasm. The third one was that the presence of peer support helped students to understand on a deeper level the authentic teaching materials from YouTube. After watching the material from the YouTube videos, students can discuss and share the information. Previous studies supported this finding (Chu & Chu, 2010; Martin, 2010) as they reported that media learning with peer support improves students' learning experiences, reflections, and self-efficacy. Students can repeat and review their lessons multiple times using this media until they fully understand the teaching materials. Therefore, having YouTube videos delivered by native speakers as the teaching materials can improve their subject matter mastery and language skills more effectively.

Nevertheless, several problems were also exposed by the students, such as the speed of speaking by the native speakers, lengthy videos, different English accents that were difficult to absorb, and unclear video sounds. From these findings, recommendations can be put forward to the lecturers, that is they are to thoroughly check and study the educational YouTube videos before presenting them to the students. This process is important because the effective use of videos as an educational tool enhances students' engagement and encourages active learning (Brame, 2016).

## 6. CONCLUSION

Implementing authentic YouTube teaching materials with peer support can significantly improve students' achievement. Additionally, the study also revealed that using this media can increase EFL students' motivation to learn English. Even though most of the students did not find any difficulty while learning with this method, some of the students did. And the problems they faced while using this method included the fast speed of the native speakers' speaking in the videos, lengthy and tedious videos, a variety of English accents that led to confusion, and low quality of video sounds. Nevertheless, the benefits they expressed in the open-ended questionnaire made this

method ameliorate or more acceptable. They are the presence of the native speakers in the videos who are creative and accurate in the language being learned (i.e., English), the joy and positive challenges they got from watching the videos and having discussions afterward with peers. The availability of peer assistance enabled students to comprehend the teaching material delivered through actual media on YouTube on a deeper level.

However, there are also some limitations of the present study. This study only involved 60 students who attended one course. A larger sample size and availability of other control groups, such as with traditional instruction or in-person instruction with a native speaker, will provide a better understanding of the effect of YouTube teaching materials with peer support.

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## **Integrating English Subject Materials into Islamic Boarding School Curriculum Context: Insights from Aceh, Indonesia**

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### **Abstract**

*Issues surrounding curriculum integration have been discussed worldwide. Some argue that curriculum integration contributes meaningfully to empowering students' multi knowledge and skills, while others claim that curriculum integration has detrimental effects on teachers and students' study load. This qualitative study investigates the English teachers' and Islamic boarding school principals' perceptions of integrating English subject materials of Curriculum 2013 into the Islamic boarding school curriculum context. Eleven participants (two Islamic boarding school principals and nine English teachers teaching at two Junior Islamic boarding schools in Banda Aceh) were selected purposively. The findings indicate that integrating English materials into the Islamic boarding school curriculum positively contributes to developing students' general and Islamic-related knowledge. The results also suggest that the integration of English materials into the Islamic boarding school curriculum can be performed by switching the listed materials in the syllabus of Curriculum 2013 with the Islamic-related materials. The study unveils that among these curricula integration challenges are the inadequacy of Islamic-related knowledge that the*

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*teachers master and the subject overload. These two main issues are the main challenges to integrating the English materials into the Islamic boarding school curriculum.*

**Keywords:** Curriculum, English learning materials, Islamic boarding school, Islamic education.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The integrated curriculum is the most popular way of designing primary education curricula (Fraser, 2000; Ollila & Macy, 2019). It is believed that curriculum integration may increase students' engagement in the teaching and learning process, further helping them synchronize information connected with their prior knowledge and experiences (Niemelä, 2021). In addition, this curriculum integration ensures that the teaching and learning process is relevant and related to students' lives in the real world (Beane, 1996; Rennie et al., 2011). Throughout this curriculum integration, several essential concepts and skills can be taught meaningfully and interestingly to students.

Curriculum integration is one of the educational approaches which lays the foundation for lifelong learning for students (McPhail, 2018). Its teaching and learning approach involves a combination of subjects, establishes a relationship among concepts, emphasizes projects, and utilizes teaching and learning sources beyond textbooks (Akib et al., 2020). In addition, according to Brown (2016), curriculum integration engages students as active learners who make the most of their decisions about what they study.

In the context of Indonesia, an integrating curriculum can be carried out as long as the local content curriculum follows the existing rules and still refers to the National Education Standards. Nevertheless, an integrated curriculum may have a specific meaning for certain educators. This may mean connecting one subject to another or dynamically engaging various subjects to show their correlation.

Nowadays, Islamic boarding school institutions cannot be separated from the Muslim life in Indonesia (Ali, 2019). Islamic school institutions thrive throughout the Indonesian archipelago, including in Aceh. To ensure that the schools fulfill the national government's educational service and quality requirements, Islamic boarding schools integrate Islamic values into their national-based curriculum.

Islamic boarding school curriculum focuses and emphasizes religious studies and science. This integration enables the students who are learning at Islamic boarding schools to master Islamic-related knowledge, and at the same time, they also master sciences. The trend of integrating science and general knowledge into Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia has increased in the last few years (Azis & Anwar, 2016; Muhammad, 2017). The integrated curriculum is expected to influence lesson planning and become a reference for curriculum design so that individuals can personally and socially interact regarding essential issues (Beane, 2016; Hudson, 2012a).

In Aceh, the number of students studying at Islamic boarding schools increases significantly. This phenomenon is reasonable because the province of Aceh implements Islamic law in which its educational core is based on the *Quran* and *Sunnah (Hadits)* values (Habiburrahim, 2018; President of Republic of Indonesia,

2006). Most parents in Aceh consider that studying at Islamic boarding schools may give their children an excellent opportunity to learn general and Islamic education. Parents believe that studying general and Islamic education enables their children to master the sciences and possess good moral characters (Muluk et al., 2019). Curriculum 2013, in addition, provides an excellent opportunity to prepare students to obtain knowledge that meets the Acehnese educational core values.

While extensive research has been conducted exploring curriculum integration, there was a paucity of empirical studies carried out in integrating English teaching and learning materials into Islamic education, particularly at Islamic boarding school institutions in Indonesia. As such, this current research intends to fill in this research gap by answering the following questions:

- What are the teachers' opinions about curriculum integration?
- How do the English subject materials of Curriculum 2013 integrate into the Islamic boarding school curriculum?
- What are the challenges in integrating English subject materials of Curriculum 2013 into the Islamic boarding school curriculum?

Thus, the perspectives of the English teachers and heads of Islamic boarding schools regarding curriculum integration, the ways to integrate the English subject materials of the Curriculum 2013 into the Islamic boarding school curriculum, and the challenges of integrating the English subject materials of the Curriculum 2013 into the Islamic boarding school curriculum served as the major investigation of this study.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Curriculum Integration**

Integrating a curriculum is an effort to unite a curriculum by combining two different curriculum contexts that can enrich the teaching and learning quality. McDowall and Hipkins (2019) mention that curriculum integration provides chances to connect diverse subjects. It intends to develop a more efficient curriculum delivery and offer students a more meaningful learning experience. In addition, curriculum integration has the potential to become a way to show students how similar abilities or skills may be applied across different disciplines. Curriculum integration is generally part of a more comprehensive set of educational practices involving inquiry-based learning and other types of learning that make use of time flexibility and cooperative teaching across various levels of classes (McDowall & Hipkins, 2019).

Integration of the curriculum emphasizes learning arrangements and approaches that can establish a good connection with a lesson being discussed between a teacher and students (Long et al., 2010; Murdoch, 2015). Such a perspective corroborates the idea of the integrated curriculum becoming a way of creating better and more meaningful education. In addition, an integrated curriculum may also become an effective approach in helping develop relevant and manageable education. It has advocated a constructive view of learning. Additionally, as it helps students prepare for lifelong learning curriculum integration, every school should perceive education as one way of learning skills students need, particularly when facing modern life challenges, rather than a separate and segmented discipline (Akib et al., 2020).

From the Islamic perspective, it is expected that the integration of the curriculum at Islamic boarding schools may nurture students not only to be Muslim intellectuals who have noble characters and are pious but also to be scientists and technocrats who could always stand at the forefront of Islamic community development (Muhammad, 2017). In the same vein, Muhammad (2017) adds that integrating Islamic values into general knowledge or science aims to encourage people to not separate science and religion, the world and the hereafter, technology, and ethics, and race and skin color. Islamic scientists are expected to have a noble character to get a high predicate, both in the eyes of humans and in the sight of Allah. According to Istikomah (2017), the integration of science and religion, particularly at Islamic boarding schools, cannot be carried out formally by justifying the verses of the Qur'an on every scientific discovery or only by connecting the verses of Allah with science that has long been studied and applied by humans in the order of life in this universe. The most important thing is a paradigm shift based on understanding science to suit the Islamic scholarship related to metaphysical, religious, and sacred texts.

## **2.2 Islamic Boarding School Curriculum**

In the context of Islamic education, the Islamic educational philosophy proposed by Al-Faruqi (1989) follows the values of the Qur'an and Sunnah (Prophet Muhammad tradition), which reflects the principles and the spirit of Islam that constitutes its view upon the essence of education. Al-Faruqi significantly influenced the development of higher education in the Islamic world, which reflected his ideas and vision (Rahman et al., 2015).

According to Kazeem and Balogun (2013), Islamic education is complete and all-inclusive since it embodies all religious-related and secular-related knowledge disciplines. Thus, Islamic education should improve the healthy development of a human's whole personality by training the spirit, intellect, rational self, emotions, and physiological senses (Kazeem & Balogun, 2013).

Conferring to Zarkasyi (2015), nowadays, Indonesia's Islamic boarding schools employ a modified curriculum befitting the curriculum that simultaneously emphasizes Islamic-related subjects and a modern instruction method. A well-incorporated curriculum within the Islamic education system can help generate students with a stable and balanced soul (*al-nafs*), intellect, and emotions for a better future generation (Rosyad, 2020; Shalihin et al., 2019). To this end, the curriculum should be well prepared, involving thorough planning and paying close attention to specifics and functional issues.

Islamic education has recognized that there is no knowledge segregation. Islam regards science and Islamic-related knowledge as two inseparable entities that all Muslim scholars should master. Silahuddin (2014) states that the national education primary concepts are also applied to Islamic education. In the Islamic context, the curriculum embraces diverse subjects in accordance with the Islamic spirit to achieve systemic and dynamic educational goals. However, the rapid development of information today is undeniable. As such, Islamic education needs to adapt to this fast-paced information era. It requires a conceptualization and reorientation of Islamic education to impact teaching and learning substantially (Syukron, 2017).

Waghid (2014) points out that to be sustainable in the modern context, the core of Islamic education should be reformulated to help solve various modern issues

encountered by Muslims. Yet, reconceptualization or reformulation of Islamic education is not easy since it needs to maintain Islamic values while incorporating modern elements into its system (Rosyad, 2020). Integrating science, including other generic skills (communication skills, ICT skills, teamwork skills, and problem-solving skills) into the Islamic boarding school curriculum enables the students to improve their academic qualifications that eventually pave their future life terrains successfully.

## 2.3 Curriculum 2013

### 2.3.1 *The Implementation of Curriculum 2013*

Curriculum 2013 or K13 (*Kurrikulum 13*) has been implemented since 2013/2014 based on the circular letter of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 156928/MKK.A/KR/2013. This curriculum concerns students' attitudes, knowledge, and skill competence. The curriculum also expects that students have a good manner and discipline. Thus, Curriculum 2013 is commonly known as the character-based curriculum.

Indonesian school curricula have undergone several changes throughout the years due to several factors, including teaching and learning needs and technological advancement (Hawanti, 2014; Shalihin et al., 2019; Silahuddin, 2014). Regarding curriculum 2013, Mulyasa (2013) mentions that this curriculum allows students to use their own knowledge to evaluate the right character values and display good behavior in everyday life. Curriculum 2013 focuses on three aspects of assessment: affective, cognitive, and psychomotor. In addition, the curriculum also emphasizes subject integration, character education, and thematic lessons (Michie, 2019). Hasan (2013) adds that the curriculum balances soft and hard skills with varied standards, including competence, content, process, and assessment. Specifically, Curriculum 2013 intends to motivate the teachers to improve their abilities in looking for new knowledge as much as possible. Nowadays, students have mastered the way to look for information by using modern technology. Yet, students should be encouraged to be more responsible and critical about their behaviors and become a more productive, creative, innovative, and effective generation.

### 2.3.2 *English Subject Learning Materials Integration*

In this global era, mastery of foreign languages is a must for Islamic boarding school students (Aulia et al., 2021). Muslim scientists are expected to master the contents of the Quran and apply them in social life. On the other hand, technological advancement has penetrated all human life aspects. As such, Islamic societies, including students studying at Islamic boarding schools, are expected to be able to utilize this technological development for the sake of Islamic community welfare.

It is understood that the amount of valuable information regarding science and technological development is available in various foreign languages, one of which is English. This requires students at Islamic boarding schools to learn English well. To this end, Islamic boarding schools, as the front-line educational institutions in developing Islamic education, should integrate their teaching and learning materials, especially English subject learning materials, into their curriculum (Wastyanti, 2019).

English learning materials refer to all things that teachers and learners can utilize to facilitate learning. The learning materials could be videos, DVDs, emails, YouTube, dictionaries, books, photocopied exercises, newspapers, photographs, live talks, instructions, student tasks, and discussions between learners (Tomlinson, 2011). Islamic boarding schools that combine national and religious curricula can unite their teaching and learning materials by integrating the material in the guidebooks and syllabus with agreed religious materials. English teachers can adjust their teaching materials provided in the teacher handbook with related religious studies regarding the English subject materials. This adjustment, in addition, should be based on both core and basic competencies stipulated in the targeted lesson plans.

Tomlinson (2011) adds that teaching materials include discussions, talks, debates, and other seminar activities. Therefore, in integrating English teaching materials, English teachers at Islamic boarding schools can use various extracurricular activities conducted at these schools, including *Muhadharah* (Islamic talks), debate, and other Islamic seminars by using English to strengthen students' English skills. Students at Islamic boarding schools should be habituated to reading English texts and critically analyzing issues written in such texts. It is also urged that the English teachers at Islamic boarding schools be more creative in choosing the teaching and learning materials to suit both Islamic teachings as part of the core focuses of the schools and general education as prescribed in the teachers' and students' handbooks.

The integration of English teaching and learning materials at Islamic boarding schools could be accomplished through a variety of teaching and learning strategies, such as peer discussions, role-plays, cooperative learning forums, and other events unique to Islamic boarding schools (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). It is strongly advised that schools prepare various processes, including the planning, teaching, and learning stages, as well as the assessment stage, while integrating English learning resources supplied in English manual books (Budiarta et al., 2018). Teachers must understand the aim of the handbooks' mandatory contents and then incorporate their essences or substances into the contexts of Islamic boarding schools.

### **3. METHODS**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This qualitative study focused on integrating English subject teaching and learning materials of Curriculum 2013 into the Islamic boarding school curriculum context at two Islamic boarding schools in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. As a qualitative study, this study sought to explore and understand the information from individuals and groups that describes social and human problems (Creswell, 2014). We believed that this qualitative study could give us a deep insight into the views of the Islamic boarding school teachers and leaders. For this reason, we employed a case study approach to explore these stakeholders' responses to figure out appropriate ways of integrating English subject materials in the Curriculum 2013 comprehensively into the Islamic boarding school curriculum. We used a case study approach as we believed that this approach could generate a certain complex issue in a real context (Yin, 2018).

### 3.2 Participants

This study took place at two Islamic boarding schools in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. Eleven participants participated in the study, consisting of two Islamic boarding school principals and nine English teachers teaching at these two Islamic boarding schools. We purposively selected those participants based on their roles at the schools and their teaching experiences. We only selected the English teachers whose teaching experience was more than ten years, expecting that they have had adequate experience in implementing Curriculum 2013, both its original and revised version.

To carry out this research, we obtained permission from the schools. We received an approval letter to conduct this study after providing the required documents and filling out the research permit application. In addition, we also provided the consent forms for the participants who were interested in taking part in this study. Their names are kept confidential and anonymous in reporting the data to keep all participants' safety and privacy.

### 3.3 Data Collection

The primary data for this study came from interviews. We developed the interview questions regarding integrating English subject teaching and learning materials of Curriculum 2013 into the Islamic boarding school curriculum context for the study purposes. We conducted the interviews in Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian language) following the participants' preferences. All interview transcripts were later translated into English, and all presented quotes in this study are based on the translation of the interviews.

We employed semi-structured interviews to explore more information that fit the research questions proposed in this study. The interviews took approximately 30 to 60 minutes for each participant. We carried out face-to-face and one-on-one interviews to ensure that the interviewees could properly express their ideas (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). We did not employ a specific framework when interviewing our participants. To put our participants at ease and prepare them to answer our main questions about the integration of the English material, we first have a few minutes of discussion about their teaching experiences at Islamic boarding schools. We began exploring the problems of incorporating English materials from the Curriculum 2013 into Islamic boarding schools in greater depth once our participants felt confident and comfortable doing so.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The interview results were fully transcribed to obtain information related to the research questions, and then open coding was used to code the transcribed data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). We carefully selected, simplified, and abstracted more appropriate information during the transcribing process. After coding the data, we identified common emerging themes from all interview results into categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Richards, 2009). Finally, we reported the findings based on the themes that emerge from the interview process.

#### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This study explores important information regarding integrating English subject teaching and learning materials of Curriculum 2013 into the Islamic boarding school curriculum context. By interviewing the Islamic boarding school principals and English teachers, we hope to gain valuable insights related to effective ways to better reform curriculum integration. These interview results are reported under specific themes.

##### **4.1 Teachers' Views on Integrated Curriculum**

The findings indicate that all participants of this research have the same opinion on the integrated curriculum. They agree that curriculum integration has brought significant changes in managing teaching and learning material. The participants need to integrate their general knowledge into Islamic understanding to meet the Islamic boarding school curriculum objectives. This curriculum integration, in the end, can enhance both teachers' and students' general and Islamic knowledge. The teachers believe that the curriculum integration provides good opportunities for students to enhance their general knowledge and Islamic-related knowledge. This is summarized in the following excerpt:

- (1) The integrated curriculum is not a new product for us here at the boarding school. We have practiced our teaching by integrating the national curriculum and the Islamic boarding school curriculum. In the beginning, we see that there are some approaches that we need to change, including how to adjust the materials that we use to meet the curriculum K13. But when we are familiar with it, it is not difficult to do it. We believe that this curriculum integration is a good way to improve our general and Islamic knowledge. This curriculum integration is good not only for us as teachers but also for students. Before we teach our students with particular materials provided in the textbook, we need to enrich our Islamic understanding of related issues that we can use to teach our students. At this point, students can study two important fields of knowledge. While they are learning English, they also learn Islamic teachings. In the end, we here at boarding school equip our students with general and Islamic knowledge. (P3, 8, 9)

The usefulness of curriculum integration has also been acknowledged by another participant, saying that students studying at boarding schools have a twofold advantage: they have an excellent opportunity to study general knowledge, including science, humanities, languages, and Islamic-related teachings. This finding corroborates [Hudson's \(2012b\)](#) and [Beane's \(2016\)](#) research findings, revealing that curriculum integration enhances the understandings and abilities of the students in different learning areas at the same time. This knowledge integration will produce qualified Indonesian future generations, namely those who have good skills in the sciences along with noble characters.

- (2) Integrating Curriculum 2013 into the Islamic boarding school curriculum enables students to expand their general and religious education simultaneously. Students have a great opportunity to study general study fields like foreign languages and sciences, while at the same time they learn about their religious teachings. Students also recite Al-Quran and interpret and understand its meaning in the nighttime. As a result, this curriculum integration will strengthen students' general skills and enrich their religious values. In the future, we will have a generation that is good at general knowledge and good at religious understanding. (P1, 3)



To support the quotation above, the other two participants (Islamic boarding school principals) also assert that integrating Curriculum 2013 into the Islamic boarding school curriculum can produce generations who master science and technology and become faithful individuals.

- (3) We see that the integration of Curriculum 2013, including English lessons in the Islamic boarding school curriculum, is extraordinary. English is the world's language, and everyone must master it, including students studying in Islamic boarding schools. They will be the next generation of our nation. We must educate generations who master IPTEK (science and technology) and *IMTAK* (faith and piety). We are sure that these students will be our good future generations because they have sufficient general and Islamic knowledge. (P1,2)

When asked specifically about integrating English subject teaching and learning materials into the Islamic boarding school curriculum, most teachers said that students studying at Islamic boarding schools mostly pursue their knowledge at numerous well-known universities in Indonesia by choosing various favorable study fields, including sciences. The participants add that if the students studying at Islamic boarding schools *can* master English well, they will be able to comprehensively absorb and analyze information and knowledge written in English. This will provide additional values for our future generation, specifically those who have a good understanding of science, a noble personality in national life, a good moral character, and are moderate and tolerant.

- (4) We are proud of students who graduated from Islamic boarding schools. Many of them continue their education at some well-known universities in Indonesia. In addition, by having good English skills, they can read and digest information published in English. Besides mastering sufficient scientific knowledge, they have good religious knowledge as well. We need more generations who have these knowledge combinations in the future. (P4,5,7)

The excerpts in (4) indicate that the integration of Curriculum 2013 into the Islamic boarding school curriculum positively impacts students' educational development. Teachers believe that this curriculum integration allows students to focus on their general knowledge. However, at the same time, they also have a chance to study more about Islamic teaching values, including interpreting the meaning of the Quran that they recite. When both general education and religious education unite, this may enable students to be ethical and have good moral character (Mustapha et al., 2016).

## 4.2 Integrating English Materials

The findings regarding integrating English teaching and learning materials available in Curriculum 2013 into the Islamic boarding school curriculum reveal two themes: approaches to integrating curriculum and English materials integration.

### 4.2.1 Approaches to integrating curriculum

The participants state that there should be a clear regulation and willingness from every stakeholder involved in this curriculum integration intention to successfully integrate Curriculum 2013 into the Islamic boarding school curriculum. They mention

that every regulation and policy will run effectively if all concerned entities have the same vision in viewing the goals that have been formulated.

- (5) In order to integrate the curriculum, there should be clear rules from the school so that there are clear guidelines for us (teachers) who will implement it in the field. We also think this clear regulation and policy can be part of legal standing, giving us the same perception about such regulations and ways of implementing teaching and learning programs. Our school has some regulations that integrate teaching materials to suit the Islamic boarding school curriculum. (P3, 8, 9)

In addition, the participants agree that Islamic boarding schools should have a clear regulation or policy on guidelines for providing the teaching and learning process, as well as what forms of Islamic-related teaching materials are permitted and prohibited. Teachers, for example, are still unsure about providing sex education and reproductive health information, which are still considered taboo in Islamic boarding schools. They also believe that the regulation enables them to have the same understanding of the curriculum integration objective and the materials that suit Islamic boarding schools' teaching and learning values. The English teachers assert that the Islamic boarding schools should provide their own materials regarding the book the teachers and the students have. This is critical to have the same standardized English materials teachers use in teaching English subjects at Islamic boarding schools. They said that teachers could not simply use the material based solely on their interest because they need to select the materials related to the prescribed materials in the English handbook for the students to succeed in the exit examination test (*Ujian Akhir Nasional* or the National Final Exam). The substitute materials related to Islamic teachings and values that teachers might use should be stated clearly in the Islamic boarding school curriculum and syllabus. We noticed that the English teachers used the English book issued by the ministry of education during the interviews.

Besides the law that governs this curriculum integration, another participant says that the teachers teaching at Islamic boarding schools should have the same perception of the objective of curriculum integration at Islamic boarding schools. The participant adds that the main mission of the Islamic boarding school is to provide students with science and religious knowledge. These two cores are the focus of our school, which makes Islamic boarding schools differ from non-boarding schools.

- (6) The teacher must have the same perception of the Islamic boarding school. An Islamic boarding school is a place where students study sciences and, at the same time, learn religious knowledge. These learning combinations distinguish Islamic boarding schools from other schools. (P1)

He ends his conversation with a meaningful message:

- (7) Islamic boarding schools nurture students' minds and enrich their souls. (P1)

After providing some information on regulations that can strengthen the intention of integrating the curriculum, the participants share their understanding of integrating English subject materials into the Islamic boarding school curriculum. This teaching and learning material integration is reported under the 'English material integration' theme.

#### 4.2.2 English materials integration

The integration of English subject materials in Curriculum 2013 into the Islamic boarding school curriculum is by adjusting the teaching and learning materials available in the handbook used by teachers and students for the English subject. Yet, the participants say that they cannot integrate all the English materials provided in the textbook. They usually integrate texts with the same format, for instance, narrative texts. The participants added additional text related to a story about Islamic teachings in the narrative texts. This is reported by a participant as follows:

- (8) The implementation of curriculum integration at our school does not apply to all materials; it depends on the discussion topic. For example, in a narrative text, we use additional text that resembles the narrative text provided in the textbook, as an Islamic text regarding the fasting concept in Islam. We use this text because we think that while learning about a narrative text, students also get information about fasting and its benefit. This kind of material exchange and integration will assist students to learn a narrative text and increase their religious understanding of the essence of fasting. (P9)

Another participant also claims that it is easy to integrate the English subject materials in Curriculum 2013 into the Islamic boarding school curriculum by adjusting its texts. This teacher says that the most important thing for students in understanding the targeted skills (listening, speaking, and reading comprehension) that they need to master after learning a chapter in the English textbook. As long as the teachers teach the targeted skills prescribed in the textbook appropriately, they can use various materials to enlighten their students' English skills. This teacher says that:

- (9) For me, the most important thing is to ensure that my students know the core and basic competence of learning a topic prescribed in a lesson plan. To accommodate the curriculum *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school curriculum), I use Islamic materials as my additional teaching and learning resources. I sometimes add an extra text about performing *shalat jamaah* (congregational prayer) and its eminence. (P5)

Another participant (P8) also agrees that the most common way of integrating English subject materials in Curriculum 2013 into Islamic boarding schools is to modify the English-related topics with other religious topics. This topic is always in line with the syllabus, but the participant chooses different materials related to the focus and skills specified in the syllabus. For instance, the participant adds that she modifies the content of English speech, part of an extracurricular activity at an Islamic boarding school. She asks her students to deliver an English speech in front of the class about the benefit of prayer from a health perspective.

- (10) Oftentimes, I ask my students to deliver English speeches by choosing a topic related to Islamic teachings like prayer and its benefits from a health perspective. (P8)

Like participant 8, participant 7 also said that she always adds some Islamic materials that relate to the texts provided in the book.

- (11) I would like to add more Islamic texts to my reading topics. For instance, in unit 10, activity 5, identifying the people in the picture of the Bright textbook, I try to find texts that describe Islamic philosophers. (P7)

Integrating English materials into the Islamic boarding school curriculum can also be conducted through English listening-related topics. Incorporating listening skills with related topics and materials has been explored in some research (e.g., Berke, 2000; Hudson, 2012a; Tavit, 2010). In addition, McPhail (2018, p. 6) says that "... bringing two subjects together, students might be 'hooked-in' to subjects they were less interested in". In the Islamic boarding school context, teachers can use various religious speeches or Da'wah/Ceramah recordings which Muslim preachers deliver in English. Again, this approach assists students in developing their listening skills and enhances their Islamic understanding. Participant 11 reported that "In the listening practice of unit 1 activity 7 of the Bright handbook, instead of listening to "Look at the speaker" song, I ask my students to listen to Abu Ammaar Yasir Qadhi's lecture. Abu Ammaar is one of the well-known preachers in Islam". This participant adds that "... listening to Islamic lectures will give students two benefits: knowledge about listening skills and knowledge about Islam". Again, these materials substitutions should always meet the syllabus contents and standards, including learning objectives, level of material difficulties, and assessment procedures (Manan et al., 2020).

The participants also acknowledge that the English subject teaching and learning materials integration at Islamic boarding schools can be implemented by adding extracurricular programs at a certain time. For instance, a teacher can use the Muhadharah program (an extra class for English and Arabic speaking programs) to link the materials prescribed in the syllabus with Islamic content knowledge.

Participant 11 said that:

- (12) To cover the target of the Islamic boarding school curriculum, we normally use the Muhadharah program to synchronize the materials listed in the syllabus of Curriculum 2013. (P11)

The effectiveness of this curriculum integration to improve students' particular skills and knowledge is evident. Hinde (2005) and Hudson (2012b) assert that curriculum integration involving the materials and skills in diverse subjects may help better students' learning experiences.

### **4.3 Challenges of Integrating English Subject Materials**

The results of integrating English subject teaching and learning materials into the Islamic boarding school curriculum context are reported under two themes: lack of teachers' competence in Islamic teaching knowledge and subject overload.

#### *4.3.1 Teachers' lack of Islamic teachings knowledge*

The majority of respondents say there are many challenges in integrating English subject teaching and learning materials of Curriculum 2013 into the Islamic boarding school curriculum. The teachers sometimes do not have a good understanding of the Islamic teaching topics that they can integrate with the topic prescribed in the textbook. They sometimes have to study more to find the right information about issues of Islamic teachings that they want to integrate into the topic prescribed in the syllabus. Besides, the selected materials should align with the materials determined in Curriculum 2013. This is reported by participants 6 and 10 as follows:

- (13) Sometimes we face many difficulties and problems in integrating the teaching and learning materials at school. First of all, we have to understand the topic that we will teach to our students, and then we have to find another teaching resource that is compatible with the materials specified in the syllabus. We cannot just simply find the Islamic teaching texts or audios. We need to analyze if the materials meet the Curriculum 2013 requirements and the students' ability to understand such materials. (P6, 10)

The lack of teachers' knowledge of Islamic related teachings is also admitted by participant 8, saying that:

- (14) I graduated from the English language department. I merely focused on improving my English language skills during my undergraduate studies. Rarely do I study Islamic teachings in greater depth. I have very limited knowledge of Islamic teachings. So it is a bit difficult to integrate the English learning material into the Islamic boarding school curriculum. (P8)

In any case, the inadequacy of Islamic-related knowledge can hamper a teacher in selecting teaching and learning materials that suit the topic listed in the syllabus. Teachers can be reluctant to choose appropriate Islamic materials that link to the syllabus of Curriculum 2013 because they worry that they cannot master the issues of Islamic knowledge well. This can be problematic if the students ask questions relating to the materials which are being discussed. Participants 3, 7, 9, and 11 reported:

- (15) We are not brave enough to carelessly choose Islamic materials if we do not understand their content. We are afraid of being unable to answer students' questions correctly when they ask questions regarding the issues we are discussing. (P3, 7, 9, 11)

The excerpt in (15) indicates a close relationship between teachers' understanding of Islamic knowledge and their ability to variously select Islamic texts and movies or videos that they can use as the substitute or additional materials that meet the syllabus requirement. With this regard, [Hinde \(2005, p. 108\)](#) states that "... when teachers are knowledgeable about content areas and integrate them effectively, students' achievement increases". Teachers' inability to select the teaching and learning materials leads them to focus merely on the materials found in the textbook. To this end, curriculum integration cannot be performed appropriately.

#### 4.3.2 *Subject overload*

Subject overload is also one of the most common themes that emerge during the interview process. Teachers claim that students studying at Islamic boarding schools have to study extra hours and subjects. In the morning time, students need to learn all subjects prescribed in Curriculum 2013. They also have to study more subjects relating to Islamic teachings and knowledge in the evening and nighttime. English is one of the subjects of this curriculum 2013. It means that in the morning time, students must study English to fulfill the national curriculum requirement. In the evening time, in addition, students should also join an English program and other Islamic-related studies to meet the Islamic boarding school curriculum targets. This condition takes both students' and teachers' time; they need to prepare themselves to study in the morning and the evening. According to teachers, such overloading may negatively affect both students and teachers, especially in arranging an appropriate time for a certain subject. This grievance is expressed by some teachers as extracted in the following quotation:

- (16) The problem here is that there are so many subjects that students need to study, while the allocated time for learning is limited. On the one hand, we have to ensure that all materials prescribed in the syllabus should be taught completely, while on the other hand, we need to teach other Islamic-related subjects. Sometimes we cannot finish even a chapter within an allocated time. It is difficult for us and students to understand much information simultaneously. (P4, 5, 6, 8, 10)

Subject overload and limited study time are also the driving factors that prevent the maximal performance of curriculum integration (Rodriguez, 2020). Research by Chester et al. (2013) concludes that curriculum integration emerges various impacts on teachers' work, including excessive workloads faced by both teachers and students. In various countries, curriculum or subject overload has been reported in some research (e.g., Dare et al., 1997; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 2010; Rennie et al., 2011; Sethi & Khan, 2020; Vinson, 2001). Teachers assert that learning for long hours makes students tired and unable to focus. The teachers would instead focus on the materials described in the syllabus than using other Islamic-related resources.

- (17) Sometimes we cannot bear to see children too tired from studying. They have a long study time; they study in the morning, evening, and in the night time as well. They also have so much homework to work with. Often, some students are sleepy due to fatigue. So, sometimes we prioritize the material listed in the syllabus and Curriculum 2013 so that the students will pass the UAN. (P7, 8, 10, 11)

Long hours of study and subject overload are other main issues in curriculum integration. Often, teachers must focus on teaching materials that have been written in the syllabus because the final target of teaching and learning is that students must be able to pass the exit examination test. When this becomes the main target, teachers will no doubt work all out to focus on the teaching and learning materials that have been assigned rather than take a risk by selecting materials that are not listed in the curriculum or the syllabus.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The current study unveils some important facts in exploring teachers' perception towards integrating English subject teaching and learning materials of Curriculum 2013 into the Islamic boarding school curriculum context. This study highlights that integrating English subject teaching and learning materials into the Islamic boarding school curriculum significantly enhances students' general knowledge, including English language skills and Islamic knowledge. This knowledge integration may, in addition, produce quality generations: generations who have a strong background in science and technology and generations who have good religious knowledge and strong morals and spirituality.

In integrating the English teaching and learning materials into the Islamic boarding school curriculum, the participants recommend that there should be clear guidelines or regulations that support this curriculum integration process. Aside from clear guidelines, the participants also suggest that the teachers at Islamic boarding schools should have the same vision, ensuring that curriculum integration can be implemented successfully.

Regarding integrating English subject teaching and learning materials into the Islamic boarding school curriculum, this research suggests that adjusting the prescribed materials or texts available in the Curriculum 2013 with the texts related to Islamic teachings is the most common approach that the teachers employ. This unveils that teachers need to comprehensively understand the information and knowledge provided in the texts to link it meaningfully with the Islamic teaching resources.

Teachers' inadequacy of Islamic-related knowledge and the subject overload that students have to study are the two most common challenges teachers face in integrating English materials into the Islamic boarding school curriculum. Teachers acknowledge that sometimes they are not brave enough to substitute the listed materials with Islamic-related materials because they do not have a good understanding of the information and knowledge provided in the substituted resources. In this regard, teachers tend to focus more on the materials suggested in the syllabus of Curriculum 2013 rather than taking a risk by adding more additional materials taken from Islamic learning resources. Subject overload is also part of the teachers' concern in integrating these two curricula. Teachers argue that students at Islamic boarding schools have to study more subjects. This can be problematic for teachers and students in managing their learning time.

This study provides information for teachers, schools, and government authorities in overseeing curriculum integration that is not easy to deal with. Even though the number of participants involved in this study is relatively small and does not involve other relevant stakeholders, the findings provide important information on curriculum integration issues from the perspectives of teachers and school leaders. The limitation of this study can function as an important consideration for further researchers to involve not only teachers but also students and other government authorities. The involvement aims to seek their opinions regarding the best practice of integrating English subject teaching and learning materials into the Islamic boarding school curriculum.

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## Enhancing Grammar Competence of Vocational School Students through the Omygram Learning Chart

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### Abstract

*Various methods and approaches have been used to support English learning. However, there is still a lack of information on how the grammar competence of vocational students can be improved in the Malaysian context. This study aims to build the Omygram learning chart and identify its effects on the achievement level of the students in Program Vokasional Menengah Atas (PVMA), or the upper-secondary vocational programme, on their English grammar competence. The study involved two secondary schools in Johor, Malaysia, employing a quasi-experimental design. A descriptive analysis from SPSS showed the increment in the mean score for the post-test of the treatment group of 5.58, higher than the control group (0.33) after the intervention was applied. The results of t-test showed no significant difference in achievement between pre-test and post-test for the control group [ $p = 0.504$ , ( $p > 0.05$ )]. On the other hand, the result of the t-test for the treatment group showed a significant difference in achievement between the pre-test and post-test [ $p = 0.000$ , ( $p < 0.05$ )].*

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*Students' motivation after using the Omygram learning chart was also high. In conclusion, the development of the Omygram learning chart is proven to effectively increase students' achievement in English. This confirms that developing learning aids improves students' grammar competence and motivates them to learn the language better. As a result, the goal of producing a skilled workforce in TVET (Technical Education and Vocational Training) and possessing soft skills will be more achievable.*

**Keywords:** Achievement, grammar competence, Omygram learning chart, motivation, *Program Vokasional Menengah Atas* (PVMA).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

There is a demand for students to master English in today's world. Most books, journals, encyclopaedias, and scientific printed materials are available in English. Hence, students need to be proficient in the language to deepen their knowledge and gather information. In terms of employment opportunities, workers with better English proficiency have more opportunities for career advancement (Ting et al., 2017).

However, many students have difficulty mastering English and do not even reach the minimum level to pass the subject (Albalawi, 2016; Dağtan & Cabaroğlu, 2021). Although English has been taught as early as primary school, it remains a difficult foreign language to master (Dağtan & Cabaroğlu, 2021; Darus & Subramaniam, 2009; Harun & Abdullah, 2020). Students living in rural areas often face this problem as they rely heavily on teachers for information and revisions (Harun & Abdullah, 2020; Lazim, 2020). Most of them have limited English literacy achievement (Che Musa et al., 2012; Lazim, 2020). University students also face the same problem, especially during job interviews, which require them to communicate in English (Dandu et al., 2020). As a result, it is difficult for university graduates to obtain employment.

The government, private agencies, universities, and schools have implemented various methods and approaches to improve language proficiency among students. However, the results have not been encouraging (Che Musa et al., 2012; Harun & Abdullah, 2020). English is difficult to master, especially for academically weak learners such as PVMA (*Program Vokasional Menengah Atas*, or the upper-secondary vocational programme) students. The Malaysian Certificate of Education (MCE) 2020 has shown a decrease in the average grade of English, which is 5.85 compared to 5.81 in 2019 (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2020). In terms of average grades, smaller numbers indicate better results. This average grade is also the highest recorded for core subjects in MCE. It proves that the mastery of most students in this subject is still weak. Besides that, a review of the current literature found that there is still a lack of studies in English language teaching conducted among vocational students in Malaysia, which can be referred to or reflected by the local English language teachers and practitioners concerning English language teaching practices in technical education institutions (Abu Bakar et al., 2019).

## 1.1 Problem Statement

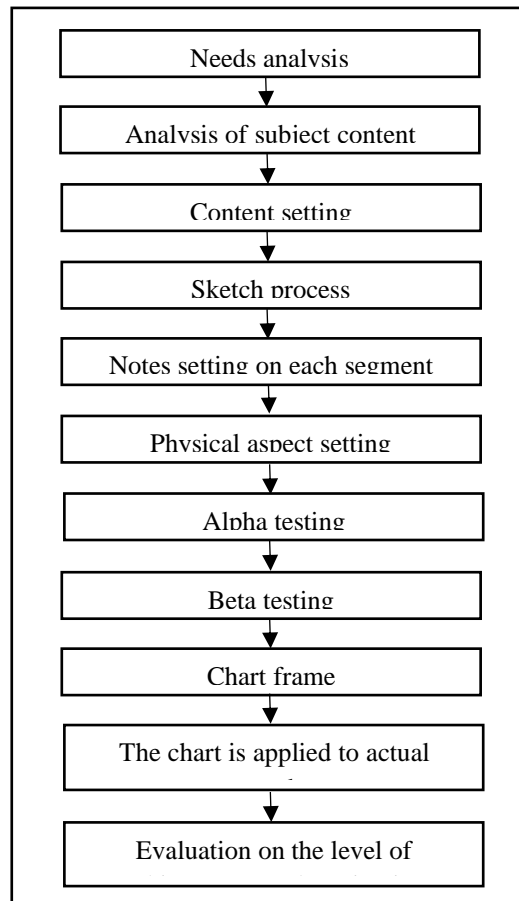
Learning grammar is a fundamental feature of the English language, although it is hard to master (Mortazavi & Barjesteh, 2016; Yusob, 2018). When communicating, either verbally or written, a set of structural rules that shape words and string together sentences into paragraphs and comprehensible arguments is needed. Without them, the message could not be delivered effectively. That is why it is important to master grammar if students wish to master English well. Studies show that students have been unable to write essays properly due to poor grammar and a lack of English vocabulary (Moses & Mohamad, 2019; Pratiwi, 2015). Another study summarises that students are weak in applying correct grammatical rules in their writings, especially subject-verb agreement and use of singular and plural forms (Darus & Subramaniam, 2009). Lacking vocabulary has also become a big problem for students in sentence construction. Weak grammar contributes to the difficulty of mastering the English language (Chiou, 2019).

Thus, there is a need for an appropriate technique to teach grammar. Due to the emphasis on functional English to serve a communicative purpose of language learning, the learning aids for English grammar are lacking in the market (Mahbub, 2018). With more attention to other language skills, grammar is seen as the least important and is often taught incidentally through other skills without proper assessment and preparation (Yusob, 2018). That is why we rarely found physical learning aids for English. Suppose that there are materials related to English in the market, in that case, most of them are related to reading comprehension skills (Mortazavi & Barjesteh, 2016) or non-authentic materials such as books, handouts, worksheets, and modules (Sorohiti & Aini, 2021). The same problem also occurs in Malaysia. The lack of learning aids causes most teachers to rely entirely on computer usage, LCD projectors, and other ICT facilities to teach grammar (Yusob, 2018). Learning grammar through these methods does not help in terms of student engagement because they are passive and promote one-way communication only without involving the use of many senses.

This situation is different from other subjects such as Geography and Science, which have many learning aids, such as globes, compasses, maps, and thermometers. We know that using learning aids will help students better understand the lessons taught and attract them to learn. It is proven true in a study by Hughes (2016), which concludes that the application of learning aids could make the learning process more attractive and engaging. However, most teachers still use the conventional structural method of teaching English grammar (Yusob, 2018). Teachers prefer to use the grammar-translation method, where the learners' mother tongue is used and seen as important in explaining the meaning of the target language. Sometimes, teachers are not provided with enough facilities, which makes them go back to the traditional method of teaching and learning, which is chalk and talk, which lacks students' involvement (Mahbub, 2018; Yusob, 2018). Thus, it is difficult for students to understand the topics taught because no other stimuli can strengthen their understanding. Students are also less motivated to learn because the learning and teaching process is carried out using conventional methods. The students have to memorise many grammatical patterns rather than be encouraged to learn how the patterns are used in many different contexts (Jong & Tan, 2021).

## 1.2 Research Objectives and Questions

This study aims to design and develop a learning aid for grammar that is easy, concise, and on the go to facilitate the comprehension of PVMA students in English. The developing chart is related to grammar for the topic of plurals, known as Omygram. Omygram stands for ‘Oh my diagram!’, derived from the title of a popular TV series in Malaysia called ‘Oh My English!’. This chart is produced purposely for the topic of plurals, but not from the combination of some existing learning aids. Figure 1 shows the development process of the chart.



**Figure 1.** The development process of the Omygram learning chart.

The Omygram learning chart is a non-electronic physical teaching aid used in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, teachers can use it anytime and anywhere and save time because it is unnecessary to prepare before using it. The chart is easy to operate. So, students can use it even without a user manual. It can be operated only by matching the same colours. Its attractive colours can also entice students to use it. This chart is also light and can be carried anywhere easily. In addition, its modest size simplifies the storage process. On top of that, teachers will not face any problems as they face when applying technology-aided lessons, like the lack of comprehensive internet coverage, limited computer lab usage time, lack of technology-based facilities in schools, and lack of technology accessibility (Nathan & Renganathan, 2020).



about the lessons and concepts can be delivered more precisely and easily than verbal methods (Arora & Kumar, 2019). The proof is that learning aids, such as 3D-printed models in medical and surgical education, resulted in better performance and learning experience (AlAli et al., 2018). The application of learning aids is vital in learning activities as it involves using many senses (Rosli et al., 2018). Therefore, students can understand a topic that is taught more easily. Interesting learning aids, such as crossword puzzles in language learning, could enhance students' learning experience (Arora & Kumar, 2019).

Students will also be more addicted and involved in the learning process. This is in line with Hughes (2016), who found that learning aids such as computers and robots can help students understand many aspects of engineering and computer science better. This is because the application makes learning and teaching more attractive and engaging to students. These learning aids can be used for all subjects, including English and Mathematics. This is proven by De Andrade and Fachada (2021) through their study on PyXYZ, a 3D wireframe software rendering framework for educational purposes which has been used with positive results in a mathematics course. This framework provides a simple-to-understand tool that students can build a more sophisticated engine while learning mathematics. Besides that, with learning aids, students can repeat studying the topic even without the presence of a teacher (Sorohiti & Aini, 2021).

## **2.1 The Use of Learning Aids for English Grammar**

Grammar aspects in learning English are often considered difficult, tedious, and complex (Aarts et al., 2012). This is because students have been taught too much and in-depth grammar skills to the point of neglecting the communicative aspect, which is also an important aspect of learning English (Yew, 2008). A study showed that grammar activities in most textbooks in Malaysia still maintain the traditional method, namely the structural method (Chung, 2006). This means that grammar teaching still does not integrate communicative language teaching. This structural method is unattractive and challenging for students to understand the lesson taught. This opinion is in line with a study by Chang (2011) about the grammar-translation method, a traditional method of teaching grammar. Teachers will teach language structures through this model, which students will then practice in oral or written exercises. Although this method helps improve students' grammar skills, students cannot use it flexibly and well in daily communication. This method of teaching grammar has traditionally restricted students from developing their communicative competencies.

Thus, Chang (2011) studied which method was better, the grammar-translation method or the communicative approach, for college students in Taiwan. The results found that students from the treatment group taught using the grammar-translation method improved grammar compared to students from the control group using the communicative approach. In conclusion, the best way to improve grammar skills among college students in Taiwan was by combining both methods, namely the grammar-translation method and the communicative approach. Through the communicative approach, students were emphasised on the fluency aspect while the grammar-translation method involved the accuracy aspects. Thus, both were important for a person to master English well.



Many studies apply learning aids in teaching and learning English to make grammatical teaching activities more communicative. The suggestions include teaching grammar through games and technology and using more fictional books, stories, and fairy tales during lessons. A study by Aminova (2016) suggested teaching grammar through games because games were time-filling and students gained great educational value. Most grammar games made learners use the language instead of thinking about learning the correct forms. Examples of popular games are flashcards and Kahoot! (Sorohiti & Aini, 2021). Games like Kahoot! attract students as a fun atmosphere could make any subject easier to understand. Students are also happy to learn with Kahoot! application. Ismail et al. (2018) found that the gamification implementation concepts using the Kahoot! platform as a teaching aid was well accepted by vocational college students.

A study by Campos (2020) revealed that online games appeared to be a booster that neutralised one virtual interaction with other players and helped learn more about daily English vocabulary. This showed social interaction between players and made grammar learning more relaxed and more communicative. It can also be implemented as blended learning relevant to the English language class for the students to learn without teacher aid. Using games to learn grammar effectively motivated students to learn English. Several issues related to game-based learning needed to be addressed for effective English learning experiences. Games required much time to prepare, and additional materials were often required (Selvan & Renganathan, 2020). At times, a teacher could not finish the game-based lessons due to a lack of class time. There were also instances where students were too noisy when playing games, and thus classroom management became difficult.

Among the examples of teaching grammar using technology is the flipped classroom strategy (Al-Harbi & Alshumaimeri, 2016). The researchers chose several videos based on the textbooks and uploaded the videos to the Edmodo site before the class began. This provided active learning opportunities for interaction. The statistical analysis conducted on the post-test showed that the flipped classroom strategy could improve students' grammar achievement in English. This study also found that students held positive attitudes towards the flipped classroom. It gave them more opportunities to communicate in English and helped them improve their pronunciation, and supported their understanding of the lesson by repeating the video. Moreover, Edmodo can also be one of the educational learning networks used to provide an easy way for teachers to administer online classroom activities. It has been used widely across the globe. Implementing Edmodo would contribute to autonomous learning where the students do and accomplish the tasks provided independently (Baharudin & Md. Yunus, 2018). Findings from a study indicated positive outcomes among the participants after learning grammar via this tool. However, there was a constraint to applying technology in the learning process. One of the flaws was the advent of big data, which required more stable cyberspace connection and advanced computer technology, which may not be accessible to students in rural areas and urban poor of developing countries (Basca, 2020).

Some websites are specially developed for students who want to learn English grammar. Students learn subjects using materials built on the web (online). Through this method, students can create an active and motivating learning environment and promote exploration (Beaudoin, 2004). The study on the online website to enhance students' grammar ability showed that this method offered grammar learning with an

attractive style as there were animated elements and interactive exercises (Ekaningsih, 2017). However, problems emerged where students needed to sit in front of a computer with an internet connection all the time (Aarts et al., 2012). Along with modernisation, as computers become smaller and more portable, so-called 'smartphones', essentially low-powered hand-held computers, become popular. They offer a new way of studying grammar on the go because they can be used without a continuous internet connection (Aarts et al., 2012).

Besides the learning aids discussed earlier, Kolb's experiential learning cycle can also be considered a learning aid in studying grammar. In a study by Lazim (2020), Kolb's experiential learning cycle in a reflective journal has improved students' grammar and vocabulary knowledge retention. Participants who went through the experiential learning cycle were more conscious of their learning and aware of their mistakes. It was in line with a study by Sudirman et al. (2021) that indicated reflective journals were useful for students to make critical reflections and self-discovery responses.

### **3. METHODS**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design. The research design was chosen because the selection of respondents was not conducted randomly (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The design of this study involved two groups, namely the treatment group and the control group. Both groups were required to sit for a pre-test at the beginning of the experiment. Next, both groups had their teaching and learning processes accordingly. The treatment group applied the Omygram learning chart as a learning aid during the process. Meanwhile, the control group had their teaching and learning process conventionally, without any aids. The learning process went on for ten weeks. Lastly, all group members sat for a post-test after finishing the learning process. The interval length for pre-test and post-test data collection was ten weeks because the period was sufficient to see significant changes in terms of a dependent variable against an independent variable (Cohen et al., 2000). A survey was conducted to evaluate students' motivation after using the Omygram learning chart within the twelve weeks. Only the treatment groups were involved in this survey.

#### **3.2 Population**

The study population consisted of Form 4 (i.e., Grade 10) PVMA students throughout Johor. The samples were Form 4 PVMA students from two schools in Johor: 24 students from School A and 19 students from School B. The students had a weak level of proficiency in English. This was based on the results of the English subject in the lower secondary assessment they occupied in Form 3 (i.e., Grade 9). Samples were selected by random cluster sampling.

### 3.3 Research Instrument

Three types of instruments were developed to meet the purpose of the study and answer the research questions. The developed instruments went through a process of validity and reliability. The instruments designed were pre-test and post-test questions (a quiz regarding plurals nouns), a questionnaire on students' motivation, and a checklist form.

#### 3.3.1 *Pre-test and post-test questions*

The pre-test and post-test questions were developed to evaluate students' knowledge of plurals topics. The questions were formulated based on a table of item specifications to produce quality questions to assess students' overall achievement. A total of three experts, English teachers from the Ministry of Education, were appointed to review the questions and verify them. The researchers constructed 40 question items containing three levels of thought based on Bloom's Taxonomy. The levels of thought involved were understanding and knowledge, application, and analysis. Of the 40 questions formulated, 20 were understanding and knowledge level questions (50%), 12 application-level questions (30%), and 8 analysis level questions (20%).

#### 3.3.2 *Questionnaire on students' motivation*

A questionnaire was used in this study because it was time and cost-effective. In addition, the data obtained from this method were more consistent than data obtained through the survey method. The purpose of the questionnaire was to study students' perception of the Omygram learning chart in enhancing their motivation. The questionnaire was adapted from a previous study by [Shroff and Keyes \(2017\)](#). Through the questionnaire developed by [Shroff and Keyes \(2017\)](#), motivational factors have been integrated into the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). This aimed to study the relationship between intrinsic motivational factors towards the level of student acceptance and the use of mobile applications in learning. The researchers made modifications to the questionnaire based on the needs and cognitive levels of the respondents. As a result, four intrinsic motivation scales in the new questionnaire were formed: competency, choice, interest, and desire. A total of five experts from a university and schools in Johor were appointed to review the questionnaire and verify it. The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale (1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neither agree nor disagree, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly Agree). The questionnaire consisted of five parts, as follows:

- Part A : Demographics
- Part B : Students' perception of the Omygram learning chart in enhancing students' motivation from the competency aspect
- Part C : Students' perception of the Omygram learning chart in enhancing students' motivation from the choice aspect
- Part D : Students' perception of the Omygram learning chart in enhancing students' motivation from the interest aspect
- Part E : Students' perception of the Omygram learning chart in enhancing students' motivation from the desire aspect

The total number of questions for each part was four (Part B), four (Part C), five (Part D), and four (Part E) questions. The mean values were interpreted to three levels for items in each part based on Table 1.

**Table 1.** Interpretation of mean score (source: [Jamil, 2002](#)).

Mean score	Interpretation
1.00 – 2.33	Low
2.34 – 3.67	Medium
3.68 – 5.00	High

### 3.3.3 Checklist form

The experts used the checklist form to evaluate the chart that had been developed. The construction of items in the checklist form was based on the needs or criteria in the product development. Three experts from a university in Johor State validated the checklist form. There are five parts in the checklist form as follows:

- Part A : Demographics
- Part B : Content
- Part C : Physical design
- Part D : User friendly
- Part E : Interest

In parts B, C, D, and E, a 5-point Likert scale was used (1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neither agree nor disagree, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly Agree). The total number of questions for each part was nine (Part B), eight (Part C), eight (Part D), and ten (Part E) questions.

## 3.4 Data Analysis

The data gained from the study were analysed by using descriptive analysis through SPSS. The descriptive analysis described the frequency distribution, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Next, to interpret the mean score value obtained, the researchers referred to the mean score interpretation table adapted from [Jamil \(2002\)](#). The analysis of effectiveness of the Omygram learning chart on students' achievement was analysed by measuring the difference between the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test for both groups and the paired-sample t-test.

## 4. RESULTS

The results analysis referred to two constructs: the effectiveness of the Omygram learning chart towards students' achievement on the topic of plurals and students' perception of the Omygram learning chart in enhancing their motivation. The results are shown in tables.

### 4.1 The Effectiveness of Omygram Learning Chart towards Students' Achievement in the Topic of Plurals

The analysis of the effectiveness of the Omygram learning chart towards students' achievement in the topic of plurals was carried out by measuring the

difference between the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test for both groups and the paired-sample t-test. The pre-test and post-test questions were used as the instrument for this purpose. Table 2 shows the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test for the control group and treatment group. For the control group, the mean score for the post-test increased by 0.33. Meanwhile, for the treatment group, the mean score for the post-test is 23.16, which increased by 5.58. It shows that the increment in the mean score for the treatment group is higher than the control group after the intervention was applied.

**Table 2.** Mean scores of the pre-test and post-test.

Group	Mean score (pre-test)	Mean score (post-test)	Increment
Control	15.21	15.54	0.33
Treatment	17.58	23.16	5.58

For the paired-sample t-test, the analysis is shown in Table 3. Based on Table 3, there is no significant difference in mean score value for pre-test and post-test for the control group [ $p = 0.504$ , ( $p > 0.05$ )]. For the treatment group, there are significant differences in mean score values for pre-test and post-test [ $p = 0.000$ , ( $p < 0.05$ )]. The results in the treatment group show that there is a significant difference in students' achievement after the Omygram learning chart was applied in class.

**Table 3.** Paired-sample t-test of the control group and treatment group.

Group	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed) (p)	Mean dif	Std error dif
Control	-0.678	23	0.504	-0.333	0.491
Treatment	-7.719	18	0.000	-5.579	0.723

## 4.2 Students' Perception of the Omygram Learning Chart in Enhancing Students' Motivation.

### 4.2.1 Students' perception of the Omygram learning chart in enhancing students' motivation from the competency aspect

Based on Table 4, students' perception of the Omygram learning chart in enhancing students' motivation from a competency aspect is high. The analysis showed that the overall mean score for the competency aspect is 3.815. Besides enhancing respondents' ability to study grammar (4.0), respondents also thought they had enough skills to use the Omygram learning chart (3.84). All items in this aspect state high mean scores except for item 4, which is medium. The item, 'I think I am competent in my lesson performance when using the Omygram learning chart', received the respondents' medium level of perception.

**Table 4.** Mean score of competency aspect.

No.	Item	Mean	Level
1	The use of the Omygram learning chart can enhance my ability to study.	4.0	High
2	I think I have enough skills to use the Omygram learning chart.	3.84	High
3	I think I'm efficient with the Omygram learning chart.	3.79	High
4	I think I am competent in my lesson performance when using the Omygram learning chart.	3.63	Medium
	Overall	3.815	High

#### 4.2.2 Students' perception of the Omygram learning chart in enhancing students' motivation from the choice aspect

Based on Table 5, the overall mean score for the choice aspect is 3.45, at a medium level. The two items that received a medium level of perception are item 3, 'I think I can handle the Omygram learning chart myself without referring to anyone' and item 4, 'I think I can tell about ways to delve into the contents of the Omygram learning chart'. Two items had high levels in the mean score: item 1, 'I think I am free to use the Omygram learning chart at any time', and item 2, 'I think I am free to use the Omygram learning chart as long as I want'.

**Table 5.** Mean score of the choice aspect.

No.	Item	Mean	Level
1	I think I am free to use the Omygram learning chart at any time.	3.68	High
2	I think I am free to use the Omygram learning chart as long as I want.	3.74	High
3	I think I can handle the Omygram learning chart myself without referring to anyone.	2.84	Medium
4	I think I can tell about ways to delve into the contents of the Omygram learning chart.	3.53	Medium
	Overall	3.45	Medium

#### 4.2.3 Students' perception of the Omygram learning chart in enhancing students' motivation from the interest aspect

Table 6 shows the analysis of students' perception of the Omygram learning chart in enhancing students' motivation from the interest aspect. Overall, the mean score is 3.76. It means that students' perception of the chart in the interest aspect was high. Item 1, 'I feel good about anything I learn while using the Omygram learning chart', states the highest mean score of 4.05. Besides that, item 2, 'I think the use of colour on the Omygram learning chart confuses me', and item 4, 'the Omygram learning chart prompts my curiosity to use it', also showed high levels of mean score reading of 3.68 and 3.84. However, another two items, items 3 and 5, received a medium level of perception from the students.

**Table 6.** Mean score of the interest aspect.

No.	Item	Mean	Level
1	I feel good about anything I learn while using the Omygram learning chart.	4.05	High
2	I think the use of colour on the Omygram learning chart confuses me.	3.68	High
3	The Omygram learning chart keeps me focused on the lessons.	3.58	Medium
4	The Omygram learning chart prompts my curiosity to use it.	3.84	High
5	Through the Omygram learning chart, I am excited to explore the topic of plurals.	3.63	Medium
	Overall	3.76	High

#### 4.2.4 Students' perception of the Omygram learning chart in enhancing students' motivation from the desire aspect

Table 7 shows that students' perception of the Omygram learning chart in enhancing students' motivation from the desire aspect was high. It can be seen in the

high mean score reading, which is 3.72. Most of the items in the desire aspect stated a high mean score reading except for item 4, 'I expect that I will continue to use the Omygram learning chart in the future', which stated a medium mean score reading (3.63).

**Table 7.** Mean score of the desire aspect.

No.	Item	Mean	Level
1	I want to use the Omygram learning chart regularly while studying.	3.68	High
2	I want to continue using the Omygram learning chart in my learning activities.	3.84	High
3	I want to use the Omygram learning chart as often as possible at appropriate times.	3.74	High
4	I expect that I will continue to use the Omygram learning chart in the future.	3.63	Medium
	Overall	3.72	High

Table 8 shows the overall analysis of students' perception of the Omygram learning chart in enhancing students' motivation. According to Table 8, the average mean score is 3.69. The result showed that students' perception of the Omygram learning chart in improving their motivation was high.

**Table 8.** An overall analysis of the mean score.

No.	Aspect	Mean	Level
1	Competency	3.815	High
2	Choice	3.45	Medium
3	Interest	3.76	High
4	Desire	3.72	High
	Overall	3.69	High

## 5. DISCUSSION

As discussed earlier, two research problems being investigated in this research were the students' grammar competence and students' perception of the application of the Omygram learning chart. The findings showed that applications of the Omygram learning chart were efficient in enhancing students' achievement in the topic of plurals to answer the first research question. The analysis of the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test for treatment and control groups showed a significant increase in the score in the treatment group after students use the Omygram learning chart in their learning sessions. This was because the learning aid helped students understand the concept of plurals better. It is in line with a study by [Ta et al. \(2020\)](#), which indicates the use of the integrated framework for chemical safety and chemical security as a teaching aid to facilitate the learning and teaching process involving chemical safety and security, which had helped students to understand better.

A study by [Arora and Kumar \(2019\)](#) also states that good learning aids could enhance students' learning experience, allowing them to understand a topic more easily. Besides that, the paired-sample t-test analysis also showed a significant difference in students' achievement after the Omygram learning chart was applied in class. It proved that the learning aid helped increase students' achievement in learning grammar. By using the Omygram learning chart, students became interested to learn

more about plurals and tried to operate the aid themselves. It is in line with a study by Rosli et al. (2018), stating that a learning aid like assembling and dismantling a stationery rack helps increase interest in the study because it enhances the psychomotor capabilities of slow learners. As a result, they succeed in mastering the concept of plurals as the Omygram learning chart involves the use of many senses (Rosli et al., 2018).

For the second research problem, students' perception of applying the Omygram learning chart, the analysis was divided into four intrinsic motivation scales: competency, choice, interest, and desire. Competent means the ability, knowledge, and skills to do something efficiently or successfully (Buch et al., 2015). It provides information on tasks and activities that an individual has to complete. In this study, the competency aspect means measuring students' level of abilities, knowledge, and skills using the Omygram learning chart. The overall analysis for the competency aspect showed a high mean score reading. Item 2, 'I think I have enough skills to use the Omygram learning chart', showed the highest mean score. It is in line with a study by Sorohiti and Aini (2021), which is that with learning aids, students can repeat studying the topic even without the presence of a teacher. This clearly showed that the students were confident and skilful in handling the Omygram learning chart themselves as it was easy to operate. This is important because operating learning aids can help users save time and energy. Therefore, they can focus on understanding the topic with the assistance of the chart.

Besides that, item 1, 'the use of the Omygram learning chart can enhance my ability to study', also showed high reading in the mean score. This further strengthened the findings of a study by Arora and Kumar (2019). They state that learning aids can reduce a teacher's job because information about lessons and concepts can be delivered precisely and easily. Teachers' jobs also become easier because the Omygram learning chart helps improve students' ability to study. Therefore, the teachers' jobs became lighter as they only acted as facilitators. This opinion is reinforced by the findings by Campos (2020), who indicates that online games as a learning aid can be implemented as blended learning relevant to the English language class for the students to learn without a teacher's aide. The only item that received a medium level of perception from the respondents was item 4, 'I think I am competent in my lesson performance when using the Omygram learning chart'. The respondents might feel that the Omygram learning chart helped them to understand the topic better, but at the same time, they did not agree that the learning chart was the only reason that made them competent in English. The analysis showed that respondents had a good perception of the Omygram learning chart, which could help them enhance their motivation in learning English in terms of competency.

For the second aspect, choice, the overall mean score was at a medium level. This means that students' perception of the Omygram learning chart in enhancing students' motivation from the choice aspect was medium. The choice aspect in the motivational factor means the subjective experience an individual feels when doing something autonomously, not controlled (Reeve et al., 2003). In other words, there is no element of coercion for respondents to choose how to use the Omygram learning chart. In this study, the choice aspect was used to ensure whether a respondent had the choice to determine if the period was appropriate to use, the duration of use, references, and how to use the learning chart. Although the overall analysis showed a medium level of perception from respondents, two items from the choice aspect still offered a



high reading of the mean score. The two items are 'I think I am free to use the Omygram learning chart at any time' and "I think I am free to use the Omygram learning chart as long as I want'. From the results, it can be concluded that the respondents were free to decide how they wanted to operate the chart and could operate it themselves but might need help at times when they had problems understanding the chart's operation. It proved that the respondents had the autonomy to decide when and how long to use the chart. In other words, an individual who is free to make choices for himself will feel motivated to complete his work.

As for the third aspect, interest, the student's perception of the chart in the interest aspect was high. In a learning environment, high interest means encouraging individuals to use existing experiences to deepen new knowledge and motivate them to engage in various learning activities (Chen & Law, 2016). Therefore, individuals with a high interest in a job will be encouraged. The aspect of interest in this study served to see how the Omygram learning chart could inculcate the students' interest in having fun using it, focusing more on lessons, encouraging curiosity, and further deepening the topic of plurals. Items that showed a high level of perception in this aspect were 'I feel good about anything I learn while using the Omygram learning chart' and 'the Omygram learning chart prompts my curiosity to use it'. It is proven true in a study by Aminova (2016), which indicates that learning grammar through aids like games is not just time-filling, but students gain great educational value, too. The analysis proved that the Omygram learning chart could cultivate students' interest in having fun using it, be more focused in lessons, and encourage curiosity to delve into the topic of plurals. It is in line with Hughes (2016), who found that learning aids make learning and teaching more attractive and engaging.

The 'desire to use' is developed from a 'behavioural desire' or behavioural intention and is defined as the strength of one's desire to perform certain behaviours (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). A study on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) shows that behavioural purpose positively affects behaviour (Lu et al., 2017). The frequency of using something, for example, computer technology, is very closely related to an individual's behavioural desire to use the technology. This aspect examined the respondents' desire to use the Omygram learning chart regularly and permanently in the future and the expectation of continuing to use learning aids. From the analysis, the overall mean score for the desire aspect was high. Most items in the desire aspect showed a high mean score reading, except for item 4. The items that received high perception from respondents were 'I want to use the Omygram learning chart regularly while studying', 'I want to continue using the Omygram learning chart in my learning activities', and 'I want to use the Omygram learning chart as often as possible at appropriate times'.

From the results, the respondents intended to continue to use the Omygram learning chart when they have the opportunity and as often as possible. It is in line with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), stating that this desire will encourage respondents to regularly use the Omygram learning chart at any time possible in the future. Indirectly, the respondents felt motivated to learn English because of the implementation of the Omygram learning chart. It is in line with De Andrade and Fachada's (2021) study; they conclude that learning aids can be a powerful tool for motivating students, as it makes it relatively simple to achieve something interesting by trying and operating with the aids.

## **5.1 Implications of the Study**

Policy transformation in the field of Technical Education and Vocational Training (TVET) in Malaysia emphasises the production of a highly-skilled workforce as prescribed in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013–2025) (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2013). It should meet the needs of the skilled and semi-skilled workforce in TVET. Hence, technical students should be equipped with sufficient technical and soft skills, including being competent in English communication skills and immediately assimilating into the working environment. Therefore, this study is important to help PVMA students explore one of the important grammar topics, plurals. This is because, as earlier discussed, mastery of grammar helps increase one's English language proficiency (Mortazavi & Barjesteh, 2016; Yusob, 2018). As a result, the goal of producing a skilled workforce in TVET and possessing soft skills will be more achievable.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis of this study, it can be concluded that there was a difference in achievement between the treatment group after the intervention and the control group that used the conventional method. There was an increment in the mean score for the post-test of both groups. The increment for the treatment group was significantly high, 5.58, compared to the control group, which was 0.33. It means that the use of the Omygram learning chart in increasing students' achievement in the topic of plurals was proven to be successful. Besides that, the paired-sample t-test showed that there was a significant difference in mean score value for the pre-test and post-test [ $p = 0.000$ , ( $p < 0.05$ )] of the treatment group. For the control group, there was no significant difference in the mean score value for the pre-test and post-test [ $p = 0.504$ , ( $p > 0.05$ )]. The results in the treatment group showed that there was a significant difference in students' achievement after the Omygram learning chart was applied in class. It proved that the learning aid helped increased the students' understanding of learning grammar.

As for the motivational construct, the analysis revealed that the Omygram learning chart was significant in enhancing students' motivation in learning English, especially on the topic of plurals. The mean score for the three aspects showed a high level in interpretation, while the only aspect that showed a medium level was choice. The three aspects are competency, interest, and desire. Overall, the average mean score for students' perception of the Omygram learning chart in enhancing students' motivation is high, 3.69. Therefore, students are more attracted and motivated to learn.

Despite having answered the research problems initially posed in this present study, it however only included a small number of participants. A larger sample is recommended for other researchers interested in furthering the research to make the findings more comprehensive, robust, and accurate.

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## Improving Learners' Critical Thinking and Learning Engagement through Socratic Questioning in Nominal Group Technique

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### Abstract

*Critical thinking is assumed as one of the essential skills in today's era. One of the ways to foster students' critical thinking is through discussion that provokes their curiosity. Unfortunately, in the online setting, some studies reported that students face challenges in online discussion. Therefore, teachers should find a way to optimize students' engagement in online discussions. The Nominal Group Technique (NGT), which this paper argues for proposing a potential way in improving students' participation and their critical thinking in an online discussion, is less used as a teaching strategy in educational practices. With the integration of Socratic Questioning, this research implemented a pre-experimental method with a one-shot design aimed at investigating the effectiveness of the NGT implementation in Critical Reading Classes conducted online combining both synchronous and asynchronous settings. Pre- and post-tests were implemented in two classes involving 52 students in six meetings. The descriptive statistics and t-test analysis had been implemented to find out the differences in students' critical thinking skills before and after the NGT implementation. The result showed that there was a significant improvement in students' critical thinking skills at  $p < 0.001$ , which confirmed that NGT with the integration of Socratic Questioning had a significant effect on the improvement of students' critical thinking skills in an online context.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Literacy has been the main challenging issue faced by Indonesian citizens. Based on PISA 2018 (Program for International Students Assessment) conducted by OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), Indonesian students performed low score which was categorized as below average based on OECD standard, specifically in the area of reading literacy (OECD, 2018). Indonesian students only reached 30% of the total reading skill score that covers the skills to find the main ideas in a medium text, identify the explicit information, as well as reflect on the goals and type of the text. It indicates that Indonesian students have a very low level of reading skills compared to the average OECD standard which reaches 70%. Indonesia has participated in PISA for 10 years, yet, only 29% of Indonesian students reported having a growth mindset in 2018 (OECD, 2018).

The Indonesian government has been responsive to this literacy issue through a national program called *Gerakan Literasi Nasional* (GLN or National Literacy Movement) to support the improvement of the literacy skill of Indonesian citizens. As a proactive response, the English Language Education Program (ELEP) in the Faculty of Cultural Studies, Universitas Brawijaya, has reformulated the curriculum to integrate critical thinking skills into English Language Teaching. Critical Reading is the course replacing extensive reading that is projected as a course that helps the students to support their critical thinking skills, specifically in English language reading.

The initiative of ELEP to have a Critical Reading course was part of the scientific decision-oriented to both faculty's and students' needs. Critical Reading is a course that encourages students to evaluate, predict, and organize ideas by decision making, inferences formulation, and conclusion making based on relevant and valid evidence (Vaseghi et al., 2012). Among five critical reading skills, the faculty considered that more complex critical reading skills such as synthesizing, questioning, and applying are more useful than the simpler critical reading skills such as skimming and reviewing (Sutherland & Incera, 2021). In addition to the need for faculty requiring the students to have more complex critical thinking skills, the existing condition of Indonesian future EFL teachers showing moderate levels of concern on their ability on inductive reasoning is mostly below average (Moeljono & Lintang Sari, 2021). Critical thinking skill is crucial to support the second language reading as it is a skill that is mostly used by the students in academic context both in and out of class (Vaseghi et al., 2012). The skills of reading critically play a crucial role to prepare students to comprehend text and instruction that helps them to understand and evaluate the text scientifically from various perspectives (Behrman, 2006). Previous research has postulated the needs and the urgency of critical thinking integration into pedagogical practices (Behrman, 2006; Moeljono & Lintang Sari, 2021; Sutherland & Incera, 2021; Vaseghi et al., 2012). Therefore, effective teaching strategies to boost students' critical thinking are important to address.

Today's era requires the academic field to prepare the students not only to acquire information but also to critically evaluate the acquired information in order to



help them critically decide on the correct and valid information that can help them solve their personal and social problems (Snyder et al., 2002). ELEP offers students the Critical Reading course which encompasses the improvement of critical thinking in English reading based on Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTs) of Bloom Taxonomy. This course is offered as expected to support the students to read critically with a problem-solving approach, strengthening their growth mindset, nurturing critical thinking through an effective discussion, and evaluating information critically.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced online learning as the only option. It leaves challenges to the implementation of the Critical Reading course as the main student-centered teaching approach with a case-based method that requires an effective and active group discussion to trigger the students' critical thinking skills. This online learning has invited the lecturer and the students into one digital interaction which indirectly creates a distance between the student with the lecturer, their peers, as well as the learning process. It challenges the lecturer to creatively design meaningful learning that can help students to optimize their interaction with the learning environment including the lecturer, their peers, and the learning materials (Jones, 2005). Engaging students optimally in learning activities not only requires the benefits use of technology but also requires the innovative and interactive teaching method that enhances engagement, collaboration, and connectivity among students with the lecturer, students with their peers, and students with the learning activities.

Activities related to ideas evaluation, problem-solving, and decision making are the significant skills that are projected to be acquired by the students. Group discussion is one of the activities which is promising to support the aforementioned expected skills in the Critical Reading course (Garrison et al., 1999). Yet, the group discussion method cannot ensure the participation of all members of the group (Williams & Lahman, 2011). One of the discussion methods that can guarantee the participation of all students is the Nominal Group Technique.

Nominal Group Technique (NGT) is a structured method to support the group discussion by inviting all of the group members to contribute their ideas to the discussion (Macphail, 2001). The use of NGT in an educational context has been widely reported as an effective method to support the active learning as well as improve the students' active participation and their engagement in discussion both online and in the face to face learning mode (Abdullah & Islam, 2011; Macphail, 2001; Madar, 1982; Miller, 2009). The benefits of NGT implementation in an educational context include the ability to engage all of the students in a group including those with passive participation, to improve problem-solving and critical thinking skills (Abdullah & Islam, 2011; Macphail, 2001; Madar, 1982; Miller, 2009).

The effectiveness of NGT in improving students' critical thinking skills and promoting students' engagement in online discussion has been reported in detail by Miller (2009) who compared the students' performance in the NGT group and brainstorming group. It showed that the students' joining NGT was proven to be more active and critical with an average of 64 response for each group compared to the students joining the brainstorming group which showed only 42 responses for each group. This difference was statistically proven to be significant ( $t=3.98$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) (Miller, 2009).

Based on the aforementioned arguments, the researchers would like to apply NGT as a learning method to support students' engagement in an online discussion setting that would be integrated with Socratic Questioning. Socratic Questioning is the

questioning method based on the great philosopher Socrates that invites the students to continually investigate the subject by guiding them with thoughtful questions (Lee et al., 2014). The use of Socratic Questioning has been well reported as an effective strategy in improving the students' learning engagement and their collaborative learning which helps them develop their critical thinking skills (Elder & Paul, 1998; Lee et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2005).

This research reported the implementation of the NGT with the Socratic Questioning integration in the Critical Reading course aiming to improve students' critical thinking skills and the students' online discussion engagement in English reading. Critical review related to the role of NGT, students' engagement, and critical thinking skills have been framed to offer an insightful contribution to English language teaching in online practices, specifically in the Indonesian context. Despite the widespread proof of NGT as an effective technique in improving students' critical thinking skills, less research has reported the use of NGT in English Language Teaching. Therefore, this research intends to fill in the gap.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Advocating the critical review of this research, this section highlights the review of the relevant literature which is structured into four topics of discussion: English literacy and critical thinking, students' engagement toward peer discussion in online learning, Nominal Group Technique in educational practices, and Socratic Questioning.

### **2.1 English Literacy and Critical Thinking**

As a lingua franca, English plays a significant role in Indonesia as it has a vital role in international communication, media and information distribution, dissemination of knowledge, science, and technology, and also acts as a medium of intellectual development (Lauder, 2008). Regrettably, Indonesian students' English literacy skills are in a low category according to English Proficiency Indicator by English First (EF EPI) which involved 100 countries. Indonesia takes the 74<sup>th</sup> position of 100 countries and takes the 15<sup>th</sup> position of 24 ASEAN countries with a 453 EF EPI score that is categorized as low (EF, 2021). Meanwhile, the ratification of English as the operational language in the ASEAN charter in 2009 forced ASEAN countries to make English the foreign or second language besides the national language, including Indonesia (Kirkpatrick, 2012). The gap between the expected English literacy skills and the existing condition of English literacy skills in Indonesia has challenged the education field experts, specifically English language education practitioners to find out an effective solution to minimize the gap.

Regardless of the significant and strategic issues of English literacy skill that is ideally important to be well mastered by most Indonesian students as it actively contributes to the international affairs, English literacy has been reported to play critical roles such as developing cultural understanding, providing international contribution, and also supporting the students' personal growth (Atherton, 2005; Macken-Horarik, 2014). Being English literate is pivotal recalling the fact that most information and knowledge are delivered in English. One of the effective ways to

improve English literacy is by enhancing critical thinking skills. Critical thinking skills support higher-order thinking and problem solving as highlighted by Bloom's taxonomy as the highest level of thinking involving the act of evaluating that focuses on the ability in making a decision based on critical analysis (Vaseghi et al., 2012). Therefore, integrating English language teaching with critical thinking skills is crucial although there is any formal agreement on how to teach it (Vaseghi et al., 2012).

National Council for Teachers of English defines critical thinking skills as a process of thinking that intensifies the behavior in evaluating information logically and in solving the problem based on evaluative decision making (Madison, 2016). The main goal of fostering critical thinking skills is teaching students 'how to think' instead of only teaching them 'what to think'. Fostering critical thinking in teaching English as Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia not only requires the strategies of how to think critically but also requires cultural sensitivity to the English language which has a very different culture compared to Indonesia (Vaseghi et al., 2012). Hence, the critical thinking skill will give a significant influence on English literacy, specifically the reading skill since it is more applicable to helping students read information, reading for pleasure, and also reading for academic matters that potentially improve their English acquisition.

## **2.2 The Students' Engagement toward Peer Discussion to Critical Thinking Skill**

Students' engagement in college activities or commonly termed college engagement is one of the predictors of college success (Astin, 2014). College engagement is defined as the students' investment in college activities both cognitive and affective activities (Astin, 2014). There are three aspects of college engagement namely cognitive engagement, affective engagement, and behavioral engagement that invite the reciprocal connection between students and the college community (Kuh, 2007; Pace & Kuh, 1998). When the students are more engaged in the college activities by actively interacting with the institution, they are believed to have more capability in developing their college skills and their self-confidence, particularly in completing their higher studies (Astin, 2014).

Students' engagement in an online learning setting fully depends on interaction (Kennedy, 2020). Peer interaction is highly suggested to improve the students' engagement in online learning that can be reached out through discussion (Xia et al., 2013). A strategic discussion is reported to be more effective in engaging students in an asynchronous discussion that is by equipping the students with clear instruction and by giving them time to prepare their responses compared to an impromptu discussion with random topics and group members (Darabi et al., 2013). Furthermore, researchers also claimed that peer interaction in focus group discussion is proven to successfully improve the students' ability to think critically and to have higher-order thinking skills by encouraging them to give comments and appreciate others' opinions (Szabo & Schwartz, 2011). Students expect the lecturer to provide clear and less ambiguous instructions in the discussion so they can prepare themselves to be actively engaged in the discussion. Moreover, lecturers are also expected to provide timely, friendly, and constructive feedback (Nwankwo, 2015).

The online discussion provides potential benefits to improve the critical thinking skill of the students by optimizing the peer interaction in some conditions specifically (Lee & Martin, 2017):

- (1) the lecturer is more focused on quality rather than quantity in designing the discussion technique, smaller numbers in one group are highly suggested,
- (2) the lecturer needs to provide a clear and directed instruction to create a more effective discussion environment, and
- (3) the lecturer needs to assure that s/he provides supportive and constructive feedback.

### 2.3 Nominal Group Technique in Educational Practices

The aforesaid explanation of the role of discussion in enhancing students' critical thinking has shaped a conclusion that the most effective discussion should meet the following criteria: (1) inviting small numbers of students, (2) providing clear and directed instruction, and (3) providing supportive and constructive feedback. The Nominal Group Technique (NGT) has met those aforementioned criteria of effective discussion; moreover, it also offers the assurance of full participation of all group members. The NGT has been well known as a discussion technique that is usually applied in decision making, this technique guarantees that all of the participants participate and share their ideas. It has been widely used as an evaluative discussion technique in many disciplines such as medical, ICT, policymaking, management, and also education (Macphail, 2001).

The implementation of NGT in educational settings mostly deals with curriculum design and evaluation. Nonetheless, it is also used in pedagogical practices as an instructional method. The NGT has been reported as an effective discussion technique that provides room for passive students to generate ideas and trigger them to actively participate in learning (Chapple & Murphy, 1996). The NGT is also reported successfully in improving students' productivity and their problem-solving ability through a systematic discussion (Madar, 1982).

The NGT steps in this research are modified to suit the class situation. The process of NGT application consisted of five steps as seen in Figure 1 and a detailed explanation is provided in the following subheading. The steps can be implemented in synchronous and asynchronous settings. It consists of the silent ideas generation, series discussion of ideas, voting and ranking, concluding, and report writing.



**Figure 1.** The process of NGT application.

The steps to the NGT are as the following:

#### 1. Step 1: Silent Idea Generation

The first step of the NGT application is silent idea generation. Silent idea generation is meant to invite students to share their opinion in one statement without any clarification. The term silent in this step means that the students share their ideas in a written form (not verbally).

2. Step 2: Series Discussion of Ideas

The second step is the series discussion of ideas. In this step, the student who is assigned as the facilitator should clarify the ideas shared by all of the group members in Step 1.

3. Step 3: Voting and Ranking

The third step is voting and ranking. In this step, the facilitator shares the ideas that have been discussed in Step 2 and invites all of the members to vote and rank each idea.

4. Step 4: Concluding

The fourth step is concluding the most voted idea that has been voted in Step 3. The most voted idea will be the final group decision and will be reported to the class. If there are more than one ideas that have a similar vote, then the discussion can be repeated from Step 2.

5. Step 5: Report Writing

The report writing is the final step that should be done by the students who is assigned as a facilitator. S/he writes their discussion report that has been provided by the lecturer.

#### 2.4 Socratic Questioning: A Potential Method to Foster Critical Thinking Skill

Verbal interaction is believed to be the most powerful method to improve critical thinking skills. Socratic Questioning, after the name of the great Philosopher, is a method to develop critical thinking skills by triggering the rationale dialogue and questioning among the students and the instructors (Elder & Paul, 1998; Lee et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2005). Socratic Questioning provides thoughtful questions to stimulate students to continuously probe the subject of the discussion by triggering their inductive reasoning (Lee et al., 2014). It encourages the students to be curious by guiding them with some provocative questions to continuously probe their opinion. There is six taxonomy of Socratic Questioning (Elder & Paul, 1998):

- (1) Questions about the questions that ensure that the students understand the given question,
- (2) Questions of clarification that invite the students to verify or give additional information on their opinion,
- (3) Questions that probe assumptions that ask the students to explain the reliability of an assumption,
- (4) Questions that probe reasons and evidence that require the students to give additional examples and reasons to support their statements,
- (5) Questions about viewpoints or perspectives that ask the students to see the matters from alternative viewpoints, and
- (6) Questions that probe implications and consequences that assist the students to explain the implication or the cause-and-effect of an action.

### 3. METHODS

This study used a quantitative approach by applying the pre-experimental research with a one-shot study design. It aimed to report the effectiveness of the NGT to improve the students' critical thinking skills from two Critical Reading classes.

### 3.1 Design and Participants

The pre-experimental research with a one-group pre-post-test design was applied to measure the effectiveness of the use of NGT in improving the students' critical thinking skills and engagement in online discussion within a similar group (Ary et al., 2010). This research involved 52 students from the Department of English Language Education, Faculty of Cultural Studies, Universitas Brawijaya, who were attending two different Critical Reading classes that consisted of 39 females and 13 males (see Table 1). All of the classes are taught by the researchers and have been given the same treatment on the topic of the course as well as the NGT and Socratic Questioning implementation.

**Table 1.** Research participants' demography.

Category	N	%
Total Class	52	100
A	27	51.9
B	25	48.1
Gender		
Male	12	23
Female	39	77

The intervention by using the NGT was implemented in six meetings with 100 minutes per meeting that consisted of 50 minutes of students' discussion using the NGT and 50 minutes of reflection. This research implemented the three steps in pre-experimental research, which included administering the pre-test, implementing the NGT in Critical Reading classes, and administering the post-test (Ary et al., 2010).

The students' engagement in online discussion was measured through a pre and post-survey that was implemented before and after the intervention. The survey consisted of six questions with 5 Likert scales from the least to the most agreed response (1-5). The questionnaire was adopted from Buelow et al. (2018) and had been statistically validated. As the Pearson's correlation showed a significant correlation and the Cronbach alpha score was bigger than .60, it indicates that all of the questionnaire items are valid and reliable (Goss-Sampson, 2019).

### 3.2 Instruments

The first instrument used in this research was the Critical thinking test designed by the Assessment Day that can be freely accessed on their website (<https://www.assessmentday.co.uk/free/watson-glaser/freetest1/FullTest/>). The test covers five sections of critical thinking measurements, namely Argument analysis, Assumptions, Deduction, Inferences, and Information interpretation. The second instrument used was the questionnaire adapted from Buelow et al. (2018) that measures the students' engagement during online discussion. The questionnaire consists of six questions inquiring about the students' experience in the online discussion, their active participation during the discussion, their community engagement by helping classmates, and getting actively involved in the conversation. Statistical validity and reliability have been implemented to guarantee the validity of the instruments. The Pearson's correlation was employed to verify the validity of the

instruments, while Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability of the instruments.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

The data was collected through a critical thinking pre-test and pre-survey on online discussion engagement which was administered online using Google Classroom. The pre-test and pre-survey were administered at the beginning of the class before the students were treated with the NGT and Socratic Questioning. The form was administered asynchronously using Google Classroom. After implementing six meetings of intervention by using the NGT and Socratic Questioning as the strategy of students' discussion, the critical thinking post-test and post-survey on online discussion engagement were also administered online by using Google Forms.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed by using the JASP (Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program) statistical software, which was by calculating the paired samples t-test to see the significant result of the intervention by comparing the students' pre-test and post-test results on their critical thinking test and comparing the students' perception on their online discussion engagement before and after the NGT implementation. To assure that the dependent variables ( $X=NGT$ ) were measured on a continuous scale (online critical thinking skill test and online engagement survey), this research also reported the test of normality result, the descriptive statistics, and the result of paired sample t-test (Goss-Sampson, 2019).

## **4. RESULTS**

This section elucidates the findings of this research which encompasses the exploratory explanation of the procedures of NGT in Critical Reading Class to improve the students' critical thinking skill and their engagement in an online discussion. It is followed by the results of the intervention which were measured by comparing the students' critical thinking skills before and after the implementation of NGT and the pre-and post-surveys of online discussion engagement.

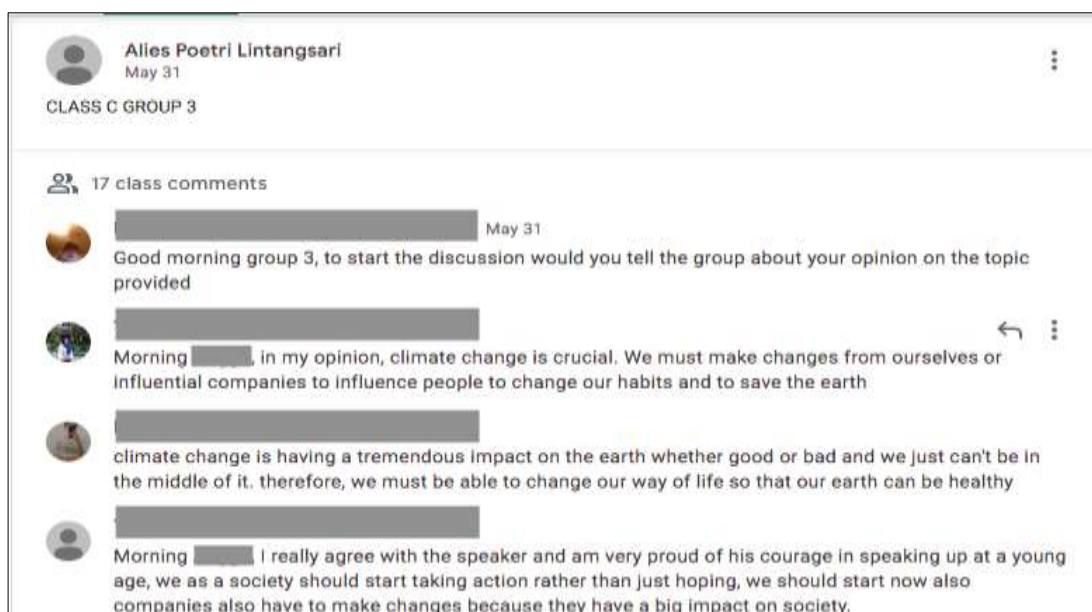
### **4.1 Procedures in Implementing the Nominal Group Technique in Critical Reading Class**

The Nominal Group Techniques (NGT) had been implemented six times during the six meetings that consisted of four meetings in synchronous sessions using Google Meet and two meetings in asynchronous sessions using Google Classroom. Each meeting consisted of 100 minutes which is divided into 50 minutes of the NGT application and 50 minutes of reflection. In each meeting, the lecturer grouped the students into five groups with 5-6 students in each group. Every student took part as a facilitator in facilitating the discussion by using NGT with different topics of discussion in each meeting. In each meeting, the lecturer provided some articles, speeches, and news on various topics covering mental health, environmental issues,

gender equality, and also inclusive education as a discussion trigger. There was no specific question for the group; the lecturer only asked the group to discuss and finally decided their group's decision related to the most priority issues, drew arguments, and also conclusions related to the topics being discussed.

#### 4.1.1 Step 1: Silent idea generation

Figure 2 shows the example of silent idea generation in asynchronous sessions.



**Figure 2.** The example of silent idea generation in asynchronous sessions.

In this step, the student who facilitated the discussion invited each member of her/his group to share ideas or responses toward the topic of discussion and type those responses in a discussion report form. The discussion report form contained two parts, the first part was the report on the discussion that consisted of five parts representing the five steps of the NGT, and the second part is the self-evaluation report. The student who facilitated the discussion should write the response of the group members and wrote them in the discussion report form. The response should be in the form of arguments or assumptions that should be critically clarified in Step 2. In synchronous mode, some students preferred to share their ideas verbally, and some others preferred to share their ideas by writing through the chatbox. While in asynchronous mode, all of the responses were given in the written form as seen in Figure 2. This first step was the step that assured all of the members of the group contributed to the discussion.

#### 4.1.2 Step 2: Series discussion of ideas

The steps included asking for clarifications, probing assumptions, probing reasons and evidence, providing points of view, as well as providing implications and consequences. The lecturer provided guided questions that were adapted from Socratic Questioning of critical thinking (Lee et al., 2014). The guided questions helped the facilitator and the students to critically evaluate their ideas through the five steps as seen in Table 2. Each step was equipped with guided questions that helped the



facilitator invite the group members to evaluate their ideas that have been shared in step one through a critical thinking framework. In this step, every student could support or object to other arguments if they thought that the arguments were strong or otherwise. This step was the longest step of all because the students practiced their critical thinking skills by evaluating their own and other students' arguments based on the provided guided questions and steps of argument clarification.

**Table 2.** Guided questions based on Socratic Questionings (source: Lee et al., 2014).

Steps	Guided Questions
Asking clarifications	Could you give me an example? Could you explain that further? Why do you say that?
Probing assumptions	What are you assuming? Why have you based your reasoning on it? Why do you think the assumption holds here?
Probing reasons and evidence	What led you to believe that? What is your evidence? What are your reasons for saying that?
Points of views	Can/did you see this another way? What is an alternative?
Implications and consequences	What are you implying by that? When you say (x), are you implying (y)? What effect would that have? What else must also be true?

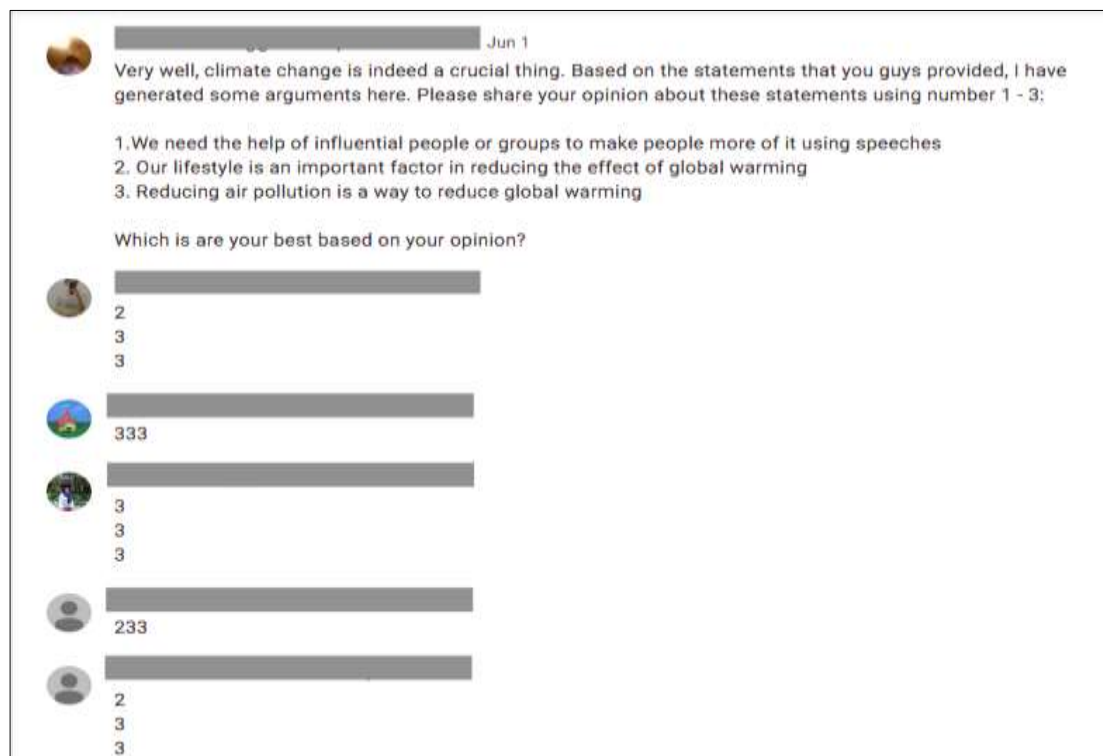
Figure 3 illustrates the implementation of the second step of the NGT (series discussion of ideas) in an asynchronous setting. In the asynchronous session, the facilitator invited members to share their clarification on their previous claims that they have shared in Step 1.

The screenshot shows a chat conversation on May 31. The first message is from a user with a brown profile picture, asking for evidence and reasons for climate change. The second message is from a user with a blue profile picture, discussing the speaker's point about climate change being crucial and mentioning Antarctica. The third message is from a user with a grey profile picture, citing [www.urg.uk](http://www.urg.uk) for reasons to care about climate change. The fourth message is from a user with a brown profile picture, citing <https://climate.nasa.gov/effects/> for observable effects like melting glaciers and shifting animal ranges. The fifth message is from a user with a grey profile picture, agreeing that climate change is critical and warning of doom if no action is taken.

**Figure 3.** Example of series discussion of ideas in asynchronous mode.

#### 4.1.3 Step 3: Voting and ranking

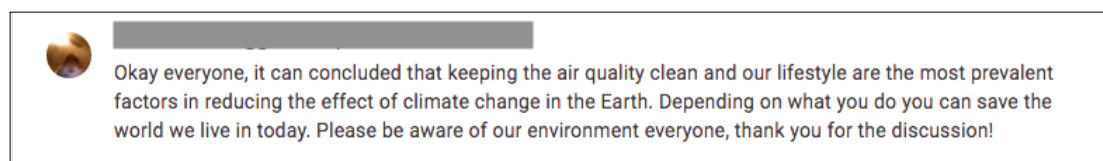
In this step, the facilitator summarized the result of the discussion into some agreed ideas and then put it on a list to be voted on and scored by all of the group members. Each member was allowed to score every idea based on their own consideration. After all of the members gave their scores for each idea, the facilitator summed up the score of each idea and ranked them from the most to the least scored ideas. The example of Step 3 is illustrated in Figure 4. It shows that the facilitator condensed the discussion in Step 2 into three ideas, and he invited all members of the group to score each idea.



**Figure 4.** Example of voting and ranking in asynchronous mode.

#### 4.1.4 Step 4: Concluding based on final voting result

The facilitator then concluded the discussion based on the final ranking (the most voted ideas) as their final group decision. Figure 5 is an example of Step 4 in asynchronous mode.



**Figure 5.** The example of concluding based on the final voting result in asynchronous discussion.

#### 4.1.5 Step 5: Report writing

The facilitator was given sometimes to write the report based on the provided format. The report writing illustrated the steps of discussion and consisted of the students' responses to the topic of discussion. At the end of the report, the lecturer also provided some questions to the facilitator related to her/his response to the discussion and group decision. After the facilitator finished her/his report writing, she/he gave a presentation to the class to reflect on the group discussion activities and to report the group's final decision. In this part, the lecturer became the facilitator to facilitate the discussion represented by the facilitators of each group. Although the lecturer provided the same topic, the same source, and the same instruction, each group had a different final decision. The lecturer facilitated the discussion by also using the NGT, she collected the final decisions of each group and let the class decide which one they thought most appropriate by applying voting and ranking in Step 3.

## 4.2 Students' Critical Thinking Skill

The first measurement to validate the effectiveness of the NGT was the students' critical thinking test. The test of critical thinking skills which measured the students' skills in evaluating arguments (6 questions), assumptions (9 questions), deduction (7 questions), inferences (10 questions), and interpreting information (7 questions) was conducted through the pre-and post-tests that was implemented before and after the implementation of the NGT. The test had been statistically validated, and based on the validity result, it was found that there were some invalid items, yet all of the items were reliable with the Cronbach alpha score of .65, which is considered an acceptable level of reliability.

The test of normality on students' critical thinking test showed that the assumption of normality is violated as the  $p .0038 < .05$  (see Table 3). Therefore, the non-parametric equivalent Wilcoxon's rank test was applied to see the significant difference between the pre-and post-tests.

**Table 3.** Test of Normality (Shapiro-Wilk) of students' critical thinking test.

		<b>W</b>	<b>p</b>
Post-test	Pre-test	.95	.038

Note: Significant results suggest a deviation from normality.

The Wilcoxon's signed-ranked test confirmed that the implementation of the NGT with the integration of Socratic Questioning had successfully increased the students critical thinking skills as the  $p < .001$ .

**Table 4.** Paired samples t-test.

<b>Measure 1</b>	<b>Measure 2</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>p</b>
Pre	Post	97.500		< .001

Note: Wilcoxon signed-rank test.

The descriptive statistics of students' critical thinking scores showed a significant improvement between the pre-and the post-tests. As shown in Table 5, the mean score of the post-test was highly improved ( $M=28.019$ ) from the pre-test result ( $M=21.288$ ).

**Table 5.** Descriptive statistics of critical thinking score.

	N	Mean	SD	SE
Post-test	52	28.02	6.83	.95
Pre-test	52	21.29	5.54	.77

### 4.3 Students' Engagement in Online Discussion

The second measurement to validate the effectiveness of the NGT implementation was the survey on students' engagement in online discussion. The survey invited the students to give 5 Likert scale responses to six questions on their engagement during the NGT implementation. The test of normality (Shapiro-Wilk) was administered to test the data distribution, it showed that the  $p .041 < .05$  (see Table 6) indicating that the normality assumption is violated, therefore, the Wilcoxon's signed-rank test was administered to test the hypothesis (Goss-Sampson, 2019).

**Table 6.** Test of Normality (Shapiro-Wilk).

		W	p
Post-survey	Pre-survey	.95	.041

Note: Significant results suggest a deviation from normality.

The Wilcoxon's signed-rank test result showed that  $p .140 > .05$ , indicating that there were no statistically significant differences in the students' perception toward the use of the NGT in supporting them to be more engaged in online discussion (as shown in Table 7).

**Table 7.** Paired samples t-test.

Measure 1	Measure 2	W	df	p
Pre-survey	Post-survey	424.500		0.140

Note: Wilcoxon signed-rank test.

Based on the comparison of the pre-and post-surveys on students' engagement in the online discussion, it is reported that the students' perceptions toward their engagement in the online discussion did not have any significant differences before and after the implementation of the NGT as shown in Table 8. The descriptive result between pre-and post-surveys shows a slight improvement from the  $M=3.0$  in the pre-survey result to  $M=3.2$  in the post-survey result.

**Table 8.** Descriptive statistics of the pre-survey and post-survey on online discussion engagement.

	N	Mean	SD	SE
Post-survey	52	3.22	.57	.08
Pre-survey	52	3.09	.52	.07

## 5. DISCUSSION

Fostering critical thinking skills has drawn the attention of educators at every level specifically at a higher level of education. Some methods have been previously proposed to promote students' critical thinking skill which focuses on active learning

such as debate and discussion (Greenlaw & DeLoach, 2003; Lee et al., 2014). Although the discussion has been argued as one of the effective ways in fostering students' critical thinking, it faces challenges when it comes to the online setting.

One of the promising techniques that are the potential to be implemented in improving students' engagement in online learning that can indirectly foster their critical thinking skills is the Nominal Group Technique (NGT). With the integration of Socratic Questioning, the use of the NGT in the Critical Reading classes had successfully improved the students' critical thinking skills as the  $p < .001$  and Cohen's  $d$  also confirmed that the NGT had a large effect on the improvement of students' critical thinking skill (see Table 5). Yet, the result of the students' perception toward their engagement after the NGT implementation showed insignificant improvement ( $p(0.12) > 0.05$ ), this result also reported similar results to other previous research. Some studies have testified that students had low engagement during online learning. As reported by Ubu et al. (2021), who invited 255 Indonesian EFL learners in a survey study, revealed that the learners had low attention, had less commitment to learning especially in the online discussion, were academically engaged only for the sake of compliance, and set up their achievement on the minimum requirement. Additionally, studies carried out by Mulia (2020) and Suhaimah and Setyowati (2021) also elaborated that the online learning contexts hinder the students' participation in online discussion and make the English learning less interesting.

Given the fact that many studies have reported the effectiveness of the NGT to improve the students' participation in discussion (Chapple & Murphy, 1996; Macphail, 2001; Madar, 1982; Miller, 2009; Zastrow & Navarre, 1977), this research offers the potential use of the NGT as the pedagogical instruction by combining the procedures in the NGT that ensure the participation of all students with the Socratic Questioning method in the form of guided questions that helped the students to be on track to the discussion's process and to trigger their critical thinking skill. Socratic Questioning has been proved to be effective in enhancing the students' collaborative learning, particularly by provoking the students' intellectual curiosity that triggers the development of their critical thinking skills (Elder & Paul, 1998; Yang et al., 2005). The use of Socratic Questioning is also effective to support the students to be more explorative in finding the novel, justified, and critical ideas for the discussion compared to those who are not treated with Socratic Questioning (Lee et al., 2014).

To ensure the optimal benefits of the NGT use in improving the students' critical thinking skills in the Critical Reading course, some considerations must be taken. As proposed by Lee and Martin (2017), an effective discussion should be able to improve peer interaction, have more focus on quality rather than quantity that is by keeping a smaller number of students in one group, provide a clear, specific, and directed instruction, as well as provide supportive and constructive feedback. With the proposed scenario offered by this research, all of the aforementioned considerations to create an optimal and effective online discussion environment can be well obtained.

## 5.1 Implication of Study

English as the global language has a significant influence on education in Indonesia since most of the information and knowledge is delivered in English. It makes the position of the English language in Indonesia crucial. The practices of English language teaching should be responsive in accommodating the needs of

English literacy, yet, being English literate is not sufficient without being critical. Therefore, critical thinking skill needs to be integrated into the curriculum and the learning process. A students-centered and collaborative learning approach should be well navigated to provoke the students to be more critical, brave, yet evaluative in responsible and scientific ways.

This research offers two insights to improve students' critical thinking skills in an ELT setting, first is ensuring the full and optimal participation of all students through a structured discussion technique and the second is providing the vivid and specific discussion instruction completed by the thought-provoking guided questions, time, and space for the students to prepare. Improving critical thinking skills is not merely done by inviting the students to be critical, but more importantly by training them to be evaluative, responsible, scientific, and analytical. Before having the ability to think critically, students need to feel safe, comfortable, and happy in sharing their ideas. Appreciating students' preferences in selecting a medium to share their opinions is also one of the important things to implement in all teaching environments.

The integration of Socratic questioning and Nominal Group Technique in Critical Reading class is influential to enhance the students' critical thinking as well as their engagement in the discussion process. Nominal Group Technique ensures the students' active participation with a structured discussion technique, while Socratic questioning helps students to think critically through a structured way of thinking. With careful design and implementation, this technique is predicted to offer a significant and comparable result for future implementation.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The Nominal Group Technique (NGT), which is deemed potential in improving students' participation and their critical thinking in an online discussion, was integrated with Socratic Questioning in this research. The study which involved 52 students in six meetings of two Critical Reading classes at a state university in Malang, Indonesia, revealed that there was a significant improvement in students' critical thinking skills at  $p < 0.001$ . This confirmed that the NGT with the integration of Socratic Questioning had a significant effect on the improvement of students' critical thinking skills in an online context.

Although the researchers have explained the use of the NGT with Socratic Questioning in Critical Reading classes to improve the students' critical thinking and participation in discussions, this research further suggests more participants be involved in future related studies. Qualitative data through observations and interviews are recommended to be done as well with the participants. By covering these limitations, it is expected that more comprehensive results can be obtained.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## Mobile Learning Application: Infusing Critical Thinking in the EFL Classroom

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### Abstract

*The emergence of mobile learning applications facilitates the pedagogical approach to developing students' critical thinking. However, there is a scarcity of investigation on mobile learning applications' impact on developing critical thinking as the learning outcome. Thus, this study reports the effect of a mobile learning application, 'English with Noni', designed to infuse critical thinking instruction in EFL classes on students' critical thinking level by employing a sequential explanatory mixed-method approach. A quasi-experimental study was conducted to examine the critical thinking level of 65 students of a junior high school in Jakarta, Indonesia, by administering a post-test assessed using a SOLO rubric. Semi-structured interviews to explore students' responses from using the 'English with Noni' application and class observation contributed to the qualitative findings. The quantitative result showed that the critical thinking level of the experimental group using this application improved significantly more than the controlled group did. The qualitative result suggested that the experimental group had positive responses to using it. They confirmed that it was interesting. They also admitted that it*

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*contributed to developing their critical thinking (i.e., predicting, providing reasons, expressing viewpoints, finding alternatives, and making conclusions), language skills (i.e., listening, reading, and writing), and sub-skill (vocabulary). The findings imply that critical thinking activities and learning affordances provided in the 'English with Noni' application is a potential tool to enhance students' critical thinking infused in the EFL class, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic situation, by emphasizing self-regulated learning.*

**Keywords:** Critical thinking, infused learning, mobile learning application, SOLO taxonomy.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking has become a global issue in the field of education and constitutes the main goal in education (Alnofaie, 2013; Chou et al., 2019; Espey, 2018; Saxton et al., 2012). Encouraging the students to think critically benefits them to succeed in their academic or future life. It entails more attention to be cultivated in the classroom to equip the students with the twenty-first-century skill. Nevertheless, its necessity remains understudied in the ELT context (Alnofaie, 2013; Defianty & Wilson, 2019).

A dearth of critical thinking practice in English classes occurs due to some factors such as assessment instruments, learning materials, education systems, teachers' recognition, pedagogical knowledge, and skill. Chou et al. (2019) revealed that teachers lack assessment instruments for measuring students' critical thinking, and the materials used do not facilitate students' critical thinking (Soufi & See, 2019). The education system in some countries, such as Thailand (Nanni & Wilkinson, 2015), Iran (Afshar & Movassagh, 2014), and Indonesia (Ilyas, 2015), emphasized more on rote memorization than critical thinking development. The teachers' recognition and pedagogical knowledge and skill are insufficient. Thus a small number of teachers do introduce critical thinking (Han & Brown, 2013), but they do not know how to effectively teach critical thinking to students in English language learning (Defianty & Wilson, 2019; Saxton et al., 2012; Soufi & See, 2019). They focused more on grammar and contents of the textbooks (Zhang, 2018) and language accuracy (Soufi & See, 2019) than critical thinking instruction.

Though critical thinking is essential, some studies discover that deficiency of critical thinking occurs around the world (Stapleton, 2011). First, the study conducted by Stapleton (2011) found Hong Kong high school students were not good at critical thinking. Second, Mehta and Al-Mahrooqi (2015) identified that Oman EFL undergraduates still had problems in developing their language and critical thinking. Third, Espey (2018) revealed that only a few college students in the United States had improved in critical thinking. In addition, the twelfth graders in South Africa (Jager, 2012) and senior high school students in Indonesia (Ilyas, 2015) did not have sufficient critical thinking since their learning materials did not encourage them to think critically.

Consequently, mobile learning has the potential to develop students' critical thinking (McCann, 2015) due to its affordances, such as easy access without time and

place restrictions (Ghorbani & Ebadi, 2020) and rich multimedia input to give interactive experience to the students (Booton et al., 2021). In addition, Ma (2017) explicated that it provides an online dictionary to aid the students to learn, mainly to understand the vocabulary. Furthermore, Floyd (2011) described that the more vocabulary students know, the better their critical thinking.

Even though mobile learning is potential for students' learning improvement, there is a scarcity of studies on the impact of mobile learning applications on developing critical thinking through the emergence of mobile learning applications that facilitate the pedagogical approach to develop students' critical thinking (Chen et al., 2019). Thus, Hwang and Fu (2019) proposed an investigation of mobile language learning to gain critical thinking since it is sparse. A body of research delving into mobile-assisted language learning in terms of mobile learning applications often focuses on the language skills and sub-skill such as listening (Sorayyaei & Nasiri, 2014), oral presentation (Barrett et al., 2021), vocabulary (Sandberg et al., 2011; Stockwell, 2007), and grammar (Ghorbani & Ebadi, 2020). Hwang and Fu (2019) also agree that mobile language learning was mostly used to master listening, speaking, reading, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary as the learning outcomes.

Moreover, the result of a preliminary study conducted through a reading pre-test for Indonesian junior high school students suggested that their critical thinking was inadequate. Therefore, there is a clear need to continue investigating mobile learning and its impact on students' critical thinking in EFL settings. To address this urgency, this study has two purposes. First, this study aimed to investigate whether Indonesian junior high school students' critical thinking was developed or not through a mobile learning application named 'English with Noni' by providing critical thinking activities infused in English learning, for example, the use of a dictionary, teachers' feedback, and multimedia-based content, English subtitle, and navigation pane. The 'English with Noni' application activities refers to Ilyas' critical thinking framework (Ilyas, 2015). The students' critical thinking is measured using the SOLO (Structure of Observed Learning Outcome) rubric developed by Biggs and Tang (2011). The SOLO rubric is suitable for response (Gopal & Stears, 2007) or open-ended questions (Patterson, 2021). It fits to gauge learning outcomes of different subjects, levels, and assignments (Chan et al., 2002). Second, the aim is also to identify students' responses to using the 'English with Noni' application. Therefore, the following research questions are formulated:

1. Is there a significant difference in critical thinking level between students using the 'English with Noni' application and those using printed modules (without using the 'English with Noni' application)?
2. What are students' responses to using the 'English with Noni' mobile application?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Critical Thinking

Scholars have not clearly defined critical thinking since there is no consensus (Aloqaili, 2012; Cáceres et al., 2020; Toy & Ok, 2012). It is grounded in Dewey's work, known as reflective thinking concerning what to believe or do to enable someone to raise the question, search the information or evidence, and think about the reasons

for making the decision (Ennis, 2015). Some scholars conceptualized it as cognitive skills, a set of abilities, and thinking behavior. Critical thinking is a cognitive skill (Facione, 2015; Ayçiçek, 2021) that consists of analysis, interpretation, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation (Facione, 2015). Ayçiçek's (2021) definition is similar to Facione's (2015), but he added some cognitive skills such as making a decision, searching the reliable and valid data, and making evaluations. Similarly, Varenina et al. (2021) addressed critical thinking as skills to infer, reason, analyze, synthesize, evaluate and interpret data. Furthermore, Florea and Hurjui (2015) and Zubaidah et al. (2018) depicted it as the ability to make a plausible decision and solve problems. It is also conceptualized as an approach to understanding someone's thoughts, ideas, and problems by looking at the other perspectives (Vidoni & Maddux, 2002). In addition, Boulton-Lewis (1995) and Angeli et al. (2003) delineated critical thinking as seeking and explaining reasons and points of view by acknowledging credible sources. To conclude, critical thinking is characterized as cognitive skills to analyze, explain, interpret, synthesize, evaluate, make a decision, and solve the problems by considering different points of view and valid and reliable evidence.

One pedagogical approach to developing students' critical thinking is through the questions (Chen et al., 2019). Questioning is an effective strategy for EFL students to trigger their critical thinking (Defianty & Wilson, 2019). Open-ended (Almulla, 2018) and provoking questions (Bai, 2009) can improve students' critical thinking skills. This study addresses Ilyas' (2015) critical thinking framework by examining twenty critical thinking taxonomies, strategies, programs, and tests (Ilyas, 2015). Ilyas' (2015) critical thinking framework (see Table 1) consists of critical thinking questions comprising questions for:

- asking for clarification,
- assumption,
- reasons and evidence,
- viewpoints or perspectives,
- implication, consequences, and alternative,
- question,
- predictions,
- agreement and disagreement, and
- summary and conclusion

**Table 1.** Ilyas' (2015) critical thinking framework.

Questions to probe	Example
Clarification	What does it mean?
Assumption	What can you assume?
Reasons and evidence	Can you tell me your reason?
Viewpoints or perspective	What do you think of online learning?
Implication, consequences, and alternatives	What is the best solution to solve the problem?
Prediction	What will probably happen if people ignore wearing masks during the pandemic?
Agreement and disagreement	Do you agree with them? Why?
Summary and conclusion	What can you conclude?

## 2.2 SOLO Rubric as a Critical Thinking Assessment

Saxton et al. (2012) deciphered that critical thinking assessment should emphasize the process of thinking, not accentuate the correct answer. It requires applying the proper instruments to measure students' critical thinking. Accordingly, Ku (2009) clarified no consensus has been reached to measure critical thinking because the measurements depend on the purpose, format, and context. Concerning this matter, SOLO (Structure of Observed Learning Outcome) fits to measure the students' critical thinking (Chan et al., 2002). Stålné et al. (2016) noted that it is one of the most prominent measurements to assess complex students' learning performance.

SOLO taxonomy was developed by Biggs and Tang (2011) as a systematic manner of portraying students' performance to master many academic tasks. The organized and hierarchical manner is useful for the teachers to develop students' thinking skills. SOLO taxonomy is used to classify students' different levels of responses (Gopal & Stears, 2007). It consists of five levels: prestructural, unistructural, multistructural, relational, and extended abstract (see Table 2). Furthermore, Lueg et al. (2016) described prestructural and unistructural levels as unsatisfactory, multistructural levels as surface learning, and relational and abstract levels as deep learning. The prestructural level addresses students' responses that miss the point and repeat the questions (students do not understand), while the unistructural level refers to students' responses that meet only one part of a task and miss other important attributes or points. The emphasis of the multistructural level is on students' responses that do not focus on the key issue and are only listing, describing, and narrating (showing a load of facts). The next level is the relational level showing students' responses to arguing a case, comparing and contrasting, and providing causal explanation and interpretation. The highest level, namely extended abstract emphasizes students' responses beyond what has been given and are coherent whole as well as breakthroughs or reflection.

Although the SOLO taxonomy has not been widely used to measure critical thinking in EFL classes in Indonesia, studies in other contexts have shown that it can provide valuable insights into students' developing abilities to apply critical thinking. Through task-based interviews, Patterson (2021) employed the SOLO rubric to assess cryptography understanding. Students' presentations and interviews of grade five in science class in Cape town (Gopal & Stears, 2007) and written essays of students aged 16-18 in Zimbabwe (Munowenyu, 2007) were assessed using the SOLO rubric.

## 2.3 Mobile Learning Application

Mobile learning or MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning) has specific characteristics and affordances to support learning. It enables the students to learn a language anywhere and anytime without the time and place restrictions (Ghorbani & Ebadi, 2020; Koutromanos & Avraamidou, 2014). It is flexible (Önal et al., 2019), so it is used in the classroom setting and outside of class (Ma, 2017). Its technology is portable (Booton et al., 2021; Şad et al., 2020) with an easy wireless internet connection (Elaish et al., 2019; Şad et al., 2020). It enables students to learn at their own individualized pace (personalized) (Elaish et al., 2019; Şad et al., 2020). It provides multimedia input (Booton et al., 2021) and touch screen devices that give an interactive experience to the students (Booton et al., 2021). It also provides an online

dictionary assisting and scaffolding the students to learn the language (Ma, 2017; Şad et al., 2020).

Previous studies showed that mobile learning application supports students' learning performance, such as language skills, sub-skill, and critical thinking. Sandberg et al. (2011) examined the mobile learning application to encourage vocabulary learning. Besides, Wang (2017) applied the Learn English Audio and Video mobile application for developing reading skills. Ataeifar et al. (2019) also used MALL, Voice Thread, and Twitter to enhance speaking skills. Mobile learning application promotes not only students' language skills and sub-skill but also their critical thinking. Ebadi and Rahimi (2018), who applied mobile learning named WebQuest, discovered that students' critical thinking and academic writing skills developed, while Yang et al. (2013) investigated a virtual learning environment using Moodle and found that it contributed positive impact on students' critical thinking skills. A study conducted by Lee et al. (2016) also suggested that the mobile learning game designed for the Android platform, GPS, and Google Maps leveraged the students' critical thinking. Moreover, Prahani et al. (2020) scrutinized the mobile-based learning application for web and android versions and showed that the mobile-based learning application gained students' critical thinking skills.

Moreover, several studies suggested that the students had a positive response to using mobile learning applications (Fujimoto, 2012; Lin, 2014; Sorayyaei & Nasiri, 2014). In a similar vein, Ebadi and Rahimi's (2018) finding indicated that students responded positively after using WebQuest. Further, Barrett et al. (2021) discovered students' positive comments while they learned English using a designed mobile learning application named English Oral Presentation Application.

### **3. METHODS**

A mixed-method approach, both quantitative and qualitative, was employed to address the research questions. A posttest-only design to a quasi-experimental study (Creswell, 2012) was used to examine the impact of 'English with Noni' application on the students' critical thinking. A qualitative approach was also undertaken to explore the experimental group's response to using the application.

#### **3.1 Participants**

A convenience sampling method was selected for the participants comprising the eighth graders of a public junior high school located in West Jakarta, Indonesia, ranging from 12 to 14 years old. They were from a low-socioeconomic group. The participants consisted of the experimental group (Class A) with 30 students (13 males and 17 females) and the control class (Class B) with 35 students (15 males and 20 females). Their names were pseudonyms for confidentiality. They had similar English proficiency levels measured using reading tests administered in the preliminary study.

#### **3.2 Instruments and Procedure**

The data were collected through a post-test. The post-test comprised reading, listening, and writing sections referring to critical thinking questions developed by

Ilyas (2015). The test was validated by the two experts who are experienced in the field of ELT and critical thinking. In the reading section, students were asked to answer one explicit question and three implicit questions referring to probing reasons and evidence, providing alternatives, and predicting to promote critical thinking. In the listening section, they were asked to watch an animated video with English subtitles and answer one question to conclude. They were also asked to make a short essay to express their viewpoint or perspective in the writing section. Their answers were assessed using the SOLO rubric (as shown in Table 2). The students' answers were scored by two raters, an expert in the ELT assessment and the researcher separately.

**Table 2.** SOLO (Structure of Observed Learning Outcome) taxonomy rubric.

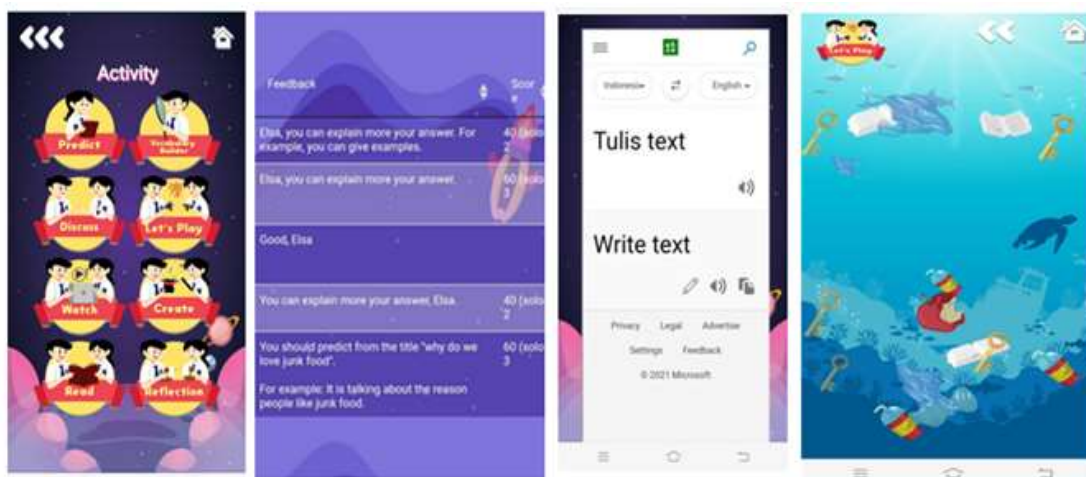
Level	Score	Converted score	Description
Prestructural	1	20	Students' responses miss the point (they do not understand). Students' responses repeat the questions.
Unistructural	2	40	Students' responses meet only one part of the task. Students' responses miss other important attributes.
Multistructural	3	60	Students' responses do not address the key issue and just show a low of facts. Students' responses are only listing, describing, and narrating.
Relational	4	80	Students' responses are arguing a case, comparing and contrasting, and providing causal explanations and interpretations.
Extended Abstract	5	100	Students' responses are beyond what has been given. Students' responses are a coherent whole. Students' responses have breakthroughs or reflections.

Informed consent was obtained from school principals, teachers, and students. The students of two groups (experimental and control groups) participated voluntarily. The experimental group (Class A) used the developed 'English with Noni' application to provide critical thinking activities. It provides critical thinking activities or exercises, including a simple game in the post-reading activity to stimulate and motivate students to learn. It is also equipped with a dictionary and feedback space consisting of teachers' comments and scores (see Figure 1). It provides backward and forward touch screens to help the students replay the content or repeat the exercise they want and pitch control to slow down or fast forward the video play. The video also has subtitles to help them while listening. In the first session, the experimental group of students installed the 'English with Noni' application on their mobile phones by following the teacher's (researcher) instructions. They were given the username and password to access it. They were trained and introduced to all of its features. The teaching and learning process took 12 meetings. Meanwhile, the control group (Class B) was also instructed similar to the experimental group, but they were provided the printed modules containing similar activities. They were asked to use their digital or printed dictionary to build their vocabulary. The instructional process was also for 12 meetings. They were given written feedback in their modules or oral feedback.

Both experimental and control groups were explained the SOLO rubric as the assessment instrument. Subsequently, they practiced critical thinking in English instruction by encouraging them to express their reasons and evidence, viewpoints or perspectives, alternatives, predictions, agreements or disagreements, and conclusions.



Both of the groups had two 70-minutes periods each week on a different day. After a few meetings, they had to learn at home using Zoom meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, in the last meeting (twelfth meeting), those groups took the post-test (reading, listening, and writing sessions), which was undertaken and supervised by the teacher. The questions were presented via Zoom meeting, and the students were asked to send their answers to the teacher's WhatsApp privately and synchronously.



**Figure 1.** Features of 'English with Noni' application.

The semi-structured interviews were undertaken with 15 students (seven males and eight females) of the experimental group to explore their responses to using the 'English with Noni' application via mobile phone. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interview was conducted via phone calls. It took approximately 15 minutes for each participant to be interviewed. The interview protocol adapted [Lin's \(2014\)](#) work on Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), addressing students' perceived usefulness, ease of use, and satisfaction. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. The interview used the Indonesian language to explore the students' answers deeply. The results were confirmed by the students to establish credibility ([Creswell, 2012](#)).

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

For quantitative analysis, this study employed a non-parametric test, the Mann-Whitney test, to investigate the students' critical thinking level between groups learning with the 'English with Noni' application and without it (the printed modules) because the data were not normally distributed. The normality of data was examined through histogram, Skewness, and Shapiro-Wilk. Besides, the students' responses to using the application through interviews were analyzed qualitatively by employing thematic analysis. The interviews transcribed were coded and categorized.

## **4. RESULTS**

### **4.1 Students' Critical Thinking Level**

The post-test comprised of reading, listening, and writing sections were examined by using the Mann-Whitney test. The results showed that the experimental

group's mean was 64.00 and the control group was 46.29. There is a significant difference between those groups with a p-value of 0.001 (see Table 3).

**Table 2.** Mean difference and Mann-Whitney test of both groups.

Indicators	Experimental group	Control group	P-value
Mean	63.07	46.29	0.0001
Median	64.00	48.00	
Std. Deviation	9.377	10.728	
Std. Error	1.712	1.813	

As shown in Table 4, the experimental group was at the multistructural level, and the control group was at the unistructural level. SOLO rubric showed that the multistructural level is at 60 points, and the control group is at 40 points (see Table 2). The Mann-Whitney test result indicated that the critical thinking level of students using the 'English with Noni' application was better than those learning without it. In more detail, each section of the post-test between the experimental and control group is in Table 4.

**Table 3.** The mean differences in critical thinking areas of the two groups.

Post-test	Experimental group		Control group	
	Level	Point		Level
<b>Reading section</b>				
Reason and evidence question	Multistructural	3	Reason and evidence question	Multistructural
Prediction question	Multistructural	3	Prediction question	Multistructural
Alternative question	Multistructural	3	Alternative question	Multistructural
<b>Listening section</b>				
Conclusion question	Unistructural	2	Conclusion question	Unistructural
<b>Writing section</b>				
Viewpoint question	Relational	4	Viewpoint question	Relational
The average	Multistructural	3	The average	Multistructural

The experimental group outperformed in the reading section compared to the control group. The reading section providing reason and evidence questions suggested different results between the experimental and control groups. The experimental and control groups were multistructural and unistructural, respectively. However, those groups had a similar level at predicting and giving alternatives for the problem, namely multistructural level. Secondly, the experimental and control group were similar in the listening section containing the conclusion question. They were at the unistructural level. Thirdly, the experimental group was more improved than the control group to express their viewpoint in the writing section. The experimental group was at the relational level, whereas the control group was at the unistructural level. The samples of students' original answers are in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Sample of students' original answers to each section.

Section	Critical thinking question	Question	Experimental group	Control group
Reading	Reason and evidence	Why are plastics dangerous to marine life? Explain your answer	S10: Dangerous, because it can damage the ecosystem and the environment because impeding breeding and contaminating seawater (multistructural)	S30: Because many animals want to live in the sea. If there is a lot of plastic waste in the sea then the animals in the sea will die (unistructural)
Listening	Conclusion	What can you conclude from Daisy, Oliver, and Alfie's conversation? Explain your answer	S1: The video talks us about using the simple word present tense in everyday compilation conversations while we are at school and everywhere (unistructural)	S26: What they talked about was about a daisy who liked jack but feels that is impossible. with all their daisy busy they can't go together (unistructural)
Writing	Viewpoint	You can't go outside your home because of the Coronavirus outbreak. You also cannot go to school. You must spend your activities at home. What do you think about it? Make a paragraph to explain that issue (You can relate to your own experience)	S23: A very good and appropriate step from the government because that way fewer people will be infected with the virus. Because if we keep doing outside activities so many people will be infected, because we do a lot of hand contact with other people that we don't know if the person has been infected or not then this is the right step in a situation like this. However, if it continues in the house, people will be lazier and may experience weight gain. Because what is done in the house just playing on a cell phone eating and sleeping all day long makes people become lazy and repeat it tomorrow (relational)	S14: I think it's very good to not go outside of the home because of the virus corona. We must obey the rules of government for social distancing (unistructural)

As shown in Table 5, in the reading section, the experimental group was at the multistructural level. For example, S10 just listed her ideas; her answers indicated that

she could not explain them critically (i.e., she only mentioned some effects of contaminated marine life, but she could not explain the reasons for the damaged ecosystem). On the other hand, the reading section revealed that the control group was at the unistructural level. For example, S30 only provided one idea (i.e., she just mentioned animals in the sea will die). Furthermore, in the listening section, both groups' samples were at the unistructural level. For instance, S1 and S26 only provided one idea and missed the other important points or ideas. It indicated that they were not able to conclude what they watched. The sample of the experimental group's answers in the writing section noted their position at the relational level. Here, S23 was seen able to provide a causal explanation and compare and contrast some arguments. However, the control group was at the unistructural level. At this point, S14 expressed one idea to respond to the question without explicating his argument.

#### **4.2 Students' Responses to Using 'English with Noni' Application**

The next research question explored the students' responses to using the 'English with Noni' application. The students of the experimental group were interviewed to explicate their learning experiences. The themes that emerged from the data are language and critical thinking skill improvement, the impact of written feedback and dictionary in the application, and the positive feeling to learn using it.

##### *4.2.1 Language and critical thinking skill improvement*

When asked about the language skills progress after learning using the 'English with Noni' application, all students reported that their language skills such as reading (100%), listening (100%), and writing (100%) were quite improved compared to the previous experiences. All of them (100%) also perceived that they had more vocabulary than before. The interview excerpts translated into English were as follows:

- S3 : My reading skill is better than before.
- S16 : I think my listening skill is better because I know grammar and pronunciation better. If I do not understand, I replay the video and take notes of new vocabulary.
- S7 : My writing is better though I lacked vocabulary at first. But now, I am encouraged to open the dictionary frequently.
- S1 : I have more vocabulary than before. I also understand them.

The students were also asked how their critical thinking skills improved after using the application. Student fairly improved their critical thinking skill such as predicting (100%), providing reasons (100%), expressing viewpoint (100%), finding the alternative (100%), and making conclusions (100%). However, one student (7%) felt that she had difficulty in accomplishing the critical thinking questions at first, but later on, she got used to it. Their report can be seen in the following excerpts.

- S10 : I know how to make a prediction.
- S4 : At first, I was confused about giving reasons. But I gradually understand and can give them now.
- S1 : It is easier for me to express my opinion.
- S9 : I can give solutions to problems.
- S14 : My ability to conclude is better.

#### 4.2.2 *The impact of written feedback and dictionary on the application*

Concerning the questions ‘Are the feedbacks in ‘English with Noni’ application useful to accomplish your work better?’ and ‘Is the dictionary useful to accomplish your work?’ All of them (100%) revealed that the teacher’s written feedback was valuable and impacted their learning. Besides, all students (100%) reported that the dictionary provided in it aided them to learn, especially to find the meaning of the words that they did not know.

S14 : The feedback is useful. Before doing my task, I look at the feedback first.

S13 : It (the feedback) benefits me because I can learn deeply.

S10 : It is useful for me because I know my mistake and know to improve in the future.

It seems that the most beneficial feature of the application was the feedback, as expressed in the responses above. Obtaining feedback from the teachers assisted them to do a reflection on their learning by identifying their mistakes, and encouraged them to make corrections and do better in the future. The dictionary which was always ready and available for them to use as long as the internet was good was also a good impact on their learning. The dictionary enabled them to conduct a quick search and translate new words instantaneously.

S5 : The dictionary is useful because sometimes I do not know new words, and I search for them using the dictionary.

#### 4.2.3 *The positive feeling to learn using it*

The students were also asked, ‘Do you think that the ‘English with Noni’ application is beneficial for you?’ Approximately 93% of them (14 students) had a positive feeling about using the application, meanwhile, 7% (1 student) was neutral. They felt that it developed their English language skill, increased their motivation to learn English, aided them in learning English to be more fun and easier, providing them with a dictionary to translate.

S4 : The application is good because it helps us to learn English faster. The activities are fun and get us engaged. We gain a lot of new vocabulary. Our reading and listening are better.

Most of all, almost all of the students claimed that this activity was a gained learning experience compared to learning without technology assistance. The use of the application in language learning encouraged their individual learning and growth, enhanced peer collaboration, and resulted in better engaged and effective learners by connecting them and turning them into active learners.

S9 : It is good. It is hard if we find difficult words in the textbook. But the ‘English with Noni’ application is equipped with a dictionary. We can work together or individually to find new words and translate them using it, so it becomes easier to understand.

Overall, the findings indicated that students had positive responses to using the ‘English with Noni’ application that impacted their critical thinking, language skills, and sub-skills. It included tasks or exercises that required students to communicate their arguments, opinions, predictions, conclusions, and alternatives in response to critical thinking questions.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The quantitative findings showed that mobile learning ‘English with Noni’ was more effective than the printed modules. The average score of students was 64.00 and 46.29 for experimental and control groups, respectively. Furthermore, the critical thinking level of the experimental group achieved the multistructural level, and the control group was at the unistructural level. The findings indicated that the experimental group outperformed the control group in terms of critical thinking levels. The finding was consistent with the results from previous studies conducted by [Vidoni and Maddux \(2002\)](#), [Yang et al. \(2013\)](#), [Ebadi and Rahimi \(2018\)](#), and [Chang and Yeh \(2021\)](#) that mobile learning had the potential to enhance students’ critical thinking. The finding could be due to mobile learning ‘English with Noni’ providing the affordances to support students’ learning so that students had opportunities to access and learn the material and teachers’ feedback easily and watched the video several times anytime and anywhere. The teachers’ feedback provided a chance for the students to identify their mistakes. The feedback was beneficial for them to complete their tasks ([Ataeifar et al., 2019](#); [Ghorbani & Ebadi, 2020](#)).

The mobile learning ‘English with Noni’ was also equipped with a dictionary to help them scaffold or express their idea if they had limited vocabulary. The dictionary aided the students to accomplish their tasks ([Ma, 2017](#); [Şad et al., 2020](#)). The mobile learning ‘English with Noni’ also facilitated the students to learn based on their individualized pace, which corroborated [Elaish et al.’s \(2019\)](#) and [Şad et al.’s \(2020\)](#) findings.

This finding suggested that mobile learning ‘English with Noni’ provided an instructional environment to encourage students’ critical thinking. It consisted of the activities or exercises containing critical thinking questions which engaged the students to express their reasons, viewpoints, prediction, conclusion, and find the alternatives ([Ilyas, 2015](#)). The finding was in agreement with [Ebadi and Rahimi \(2018\)](#), who revealed that mobile learning in terms of WebQuest provided the contents stimulating students’ critical thinking in analyzing, evaluating, and giving the reason.

Though students’ critical thinking level in the experimental group was quite better, it remained at the multistructural level. They had not reached relational and extended abstract levels. The finding was in contrast to [Hammer and Griffiths’ \(2015\)](#) that the students at the multistructural level were less sophisticated to argue, compare, or interpret their idea. They were sophisticated if they were at a relational level representing the ability to argue, compare, contrast, provide the causal explanation and interpret the ideas, concepts, or facts. The students in this study did not attain a relational or extended abstract level might be due to insufficient critical thinking practice. Learning critical thinking needs time because it is a developmental process in which teachers habituate the students to have thinking routines so it encourages them to have critical thinking skills steadily ([Gunawardena & Wilson, 2021](#)). It also needs much effort and continual practice to reach the expected critical thinking ([Marashi & Mirghafari, 2019](#); [Yulian, 2021](#)).

The qualitative findings further showed that students perceived that their critical thinking skills, English language skills (reading, listening, and writing), and sub-skill (vocabulary) developed after using the ‘English with Noni’ application. The findings are by supported [Chang and Yeh \(2021\)](#) that the students admitted the mobile learning application contributed to their critical thinking development due to the activities

provided and the opportunities to give diverse answers. The students' answers are not emphasized on the right or wrong ones (Hammer & Griffiths, 2015) but on the process to think (Saxton et al., 2012). The findings are also in line with Fujimoto's (2012) work that students who responded to mobile learning applications gained their vocabulary, grammar, writing, and listening. Previous related studies noted as well that mobile learning applications developed students' vocabulary (Stockwell, 2007), writing (Mallampalli & Goyal, 2021), and reading (Lin, 2014).

In addition, the qualitative finding showed that the students found the application to be easy in accessing the features in it, such as the dictionary, teachers' feedback, and students' score. A similar finding was reported by Chen et al. (2019) that a user-friendly and well-designed mobile learning application encouraged and maximized the students to accomplish their assignments easily and avoided students' frustration as they could use it with ease. And this is expected to contribute to developing students' critical thinking. The students felt that the dictionary provided in the 'English with Noni' application was an aid learning tool for them especially to find the meaning of words and to accomplish their exercise. This finding concurred with Rahimi and Miri's (2014) work that the mobile dictionary helps students find the vocabulary faster. The mastery of vocabulary can improve the students' language skills, such as reading, listening, and speaking (Zhang & Pérez-Paredes, 2021). The more vocabulary knowledge they had, the better critical performance they had because critical thinking might be influenced by it (Floyd, 2011).

The qualitative finding indicated that students positively perceived the use of the 'English with Noni' application due to the distinctive features such as a post-reading game (called the 'Let's Play' part) and a video with subtitles and pitch control. The findings corroborated Sorayyaei and Nasiri's (2014) study, suggesting that students' positive responses to using mobile phone learning are because it developed their language learning and provided exciting and innovative learning. The post-reading game provided could increase the students' motivation to learn (Koutromanos & Avraamidou, 2014; Önal et al., 2019). Besides, the mobile learning 'English with Noni' provided videos with English subtitles and pitch control. Those mobile learning features could encourage the students to watch and replay as many times as they wanted (Wang, 2017).

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The students' critical thinking skills can be fostered by incorporating mobile learning applications. The study showed that the mobile learning of the 'English with Noni' application had an impact on developing students' critical thinking more effectively. The students' critical thinking will be more developed if they are continually trained as it is a developmental process. Furthermore, the students positively perceived that the use of 'English with Noni' application contributed to their language skills (reading, writing, and listening) and sub-skill (vocabulary) as well as critical thinking development in predicting, providing a reason, expressing a viewpoint, finding the alternatives and making conclusions.

The study has implications for the teachers and students. The mobile learning 'English with Noni' was found to enable the teachers to teach their students critical thinking infused in the English instruction by concerning the critical thinking

questions, assessment in terms of the SOLO rubric, and feedback. The application also helped cultivate the students' critical thinking and language skills and sub-skill, thus they could be taught simultaneously and explicitly. The implication for the students is that they could learn critical thinking and the English language without time and place restrictions. They also could learn based on their pace (self-pace) due to the affordances of the application. Moreover, it enables them to have self-regulated learning.

The present study employed a small number of EFL students; therefore, generalizations cannot be made. Large-scale research with various participants from different levels is needed to investigate their critical thinking by using the mobile learning 'English with Noni' application for further study. In addition, this study did not further observe the long term possible difficulties that the students might face in using the application and its relation to their learning outcomes, which is regarded as the limitation of the study. Therefore, future related research should carry out a longer learning process with the 'English with Noni' application to develop students' critical thinking in an EFL setting since this present study only took one semester.

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## Mobile Learning Application: Infusing Critical Thinking in the EFL Classroom

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### Abstract

*The emergence of mobile learning applications facilitates the pedagogical approach to developing students' critical thinking. However, there is a scarcity of investigation on mobile learning applications' impact on developing critical thinking as the learning outcome. Thus, this study reports the effect of a mobile learning application, 'English with Noni', designed to infuse critical thinking instruction in EFL classes on students' critical thinking level by employing a sequential explanatory mixed-method approach. A quasi-experimental study was conducted to examine the critical thinking level of 65 students of a junior high school in Jakarta, Indonesia, by administering a post-test assessed using a SOLO rubric. Semi-structured interviews to explore students' responses from using the 'English with Noni' application and class observation contributed to the qualitative findings. The quantitative result showed that the critical thinking level of the experimental group using this application improved significantly more than the controlled group did. The qualitative result suggested that the experimental group had positive responses to using it. They confirmed that it was interesting. They also admitted that it*

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*contributed to developing their critical thinking (i.e., predicting, providing reasons, expressing viewpoints, finding alternatives, and making conclusions), language skills (i.e., listening, reading, and writing), and sub-skill (vocabulary). The findings imply that critical thinking activities and learning affordances provided in the 'English with Noni' application is a potential tool to enhance students' critical thinking infused in the EFL class, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic situation, by emphasizing self-regulated learning.*

**Keywords:** Critical thinking, infused learning, mobile learning application, SOLO taxonomy.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking has become a global issue in the field of education and constitutes the main goal in education (Alnofaie, 2013; Chou et al., 2019; Espey, 2018; Saxton et al., 2012). Encouraging the students to think critically benefits them to succeed in their academic or future life. It entails more attention to be cultivated in the classroom to equip the students with the twenty-first-century skill. Nevertheless, its necessity remains understudied in the ELT context (Alnofaie, 2013; Defianty & Wilson, 2019).

A dearth of critical thinking practice in English classes occurs due to some factors such as assessment instruments, learning materials, education systems, teachers' recognition, pedagogical knowledge, and skill. Chou et al. (2019) revealed that teachers lack assessment instruments for measuring students' critical thinking, and the materials used do not facilitate students' critical thinking (Soufi & See, 2019). The education system in some countries, such as Thailand (Nanni & Wilkinson, 2015), Iran (Afshar & Movassagh, 2014), and Indonesia (Ilyas, 2015), emphasized more on rote memorization than critical thinking development. The teachers' recognition and pedagogical knowledge and skill are insufficient. Thus a small number of teachers do introduce critical thinking (Han & Brown, 2013), but they do not know how to effectively teach critical thinking to students in English language learning (Defianty & Wilson, 2019; Saxton et al., 2012; Soufi & See, 2019). They focused more on grammar and contents of the textbooks (Zhang, 2018) and language accuracy (Soufi & See, 2019) than critical thinking instruction.

Though critical thinking is essential, some studies discover that deficiency of critical thinking occurs around the world (Stapleton, 2011). First, the study conducted by Stapleton (2011) found Hong Kong high school students were not good at critical thinking. Second, Mehta and Al-Mahrooqi (2015) identified that Oman EFL undergraduates still had problems in developing their language and critical thinking. Third, Espey (2018) revealed that only a few college students in the United States had improved in critical thinking. In addition, the twelfth graders in South Africa (Jager, 2012) and senior high school students in Indonesia (Ilyas, 2015) did not have sufficient critical thinking since their learning materials did not encourage them to think critically.

Consequently, mobile learning has the potential to develop students' critical thinking (McCann, 2015) due to its affordances, such as easy access without time and

place restrictions (Ghorbani & Ebadi, 2020) and rich multimedia input to give interactive experience to the students (Booton et al., 2021). In addition, Ma (2017) explicated that it provides an online dictionary to aid the students to learn, mainly to understand the vocabulary. Furthermore, Floyd (2011) described that the more vocabulary students know, the better their critical thinking.

Even though mobile learning is potential for students' learning improvement, there is a scarcity of studies on the impact of mobile learning applications on developing critical thinking through the emergence of mobile learning applications that facilitate the pedagogical approach to develop students' critical thinking (Chen et al., 2019). Thus, Hwang and Fu (2019) proposed an investigation of mobile language learning to gain critical thinking since it is sparse. A body of research delving into mobile-assisted language learning in terms of mobile learning applications often focuses on the language skills and sub-skill such as listening (Sorayyaei & Nasiri, 2014), oral presentation (Barrett et al., 2021), vocabulary (Sandberg et al., 2011; Stockwell, 2007), and grammar (Ghorbani & Ebadi, 2020). Hwang and Fu (2019) also agree that mobile language learning was mostly used to master listening, speaking, reading, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary as the learning outcomes.

Moreover, the result of a preliminary study conducted through a reading pre-test for Indonesian junior high school students suggested that their critical thinking was inadequate. Therefore, there is a clear need to continue investigating mobile learning and its impact on students' critical thinking in EFL settings. To address this urgency, this study has two purposes. First, this study aimed to investigate whether Indonesian junior high school students' critical thinking was developed or not through a mobile learning application named 'English with Noni' by providing critical thinking activities infused in English learning, for example, the use of a dictionary, teachers' feedback, and multimedia-based content, English subtitle, and navigation pane. The 'English with Noni' application activities refers to Ilyas' critical thinking framework (Ilyas, 2015). The students' critical thinking is measured using the SOLO (Structure of Observed Learning Outcome) rubric developed by Biggs and Tang (2011). The SOLO rubric is suitable for response (Gopal & Stears, 2007) or open-ended questions (Patterson, 2021). It fits to gauge learning outcomes of different subjects, levels, and assignments (Chan et al., 2002). Second, the aim is also to identify students' responses to using the 'English with Noni' application. Therefore, the following research questions are formulated:

1. Is there a significant difference in critical thinking level between students using the 'English with Noni' application and those using printed modules (without using the 'English with Noni' application)?
2. What are students' responses to using the 'English with Noni' mobile application?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Critical Thinking

Scholars have not clearly defined critical thinking since there is no consensus (Aloqaili, 2012; Cáceres et al., 2020; Toy & Ok, 2012). It is grounded in Dewey's work, known as reflective thinking concerning what to believe or do to enable someone to raise the question, search the information or evidence, and think about the reasons



for making the decision (Ennis, 2015). Some scholars conceptualized it as cognitive skills, a set of abilities, and thinking behavior. Critical thinking is a cognitive skill (Facione, 2015; Ayçiçek, 2021) that consists of analysis, interpretation, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation (Facione, 2015). Ayçiçek's (2021) definition is similar to Facione's (2015), but he added some cognitive skills such as making a decision, searching the reliable and valid data, and making evaluations. Similarly, Varenina et al. (2021) addressed critical thinking as skills to infer, reason, analyze, synthesize, evaluate and interpret data. Furthermore, Florea and Hurjui (2015) and Zubaidah et al. (2018) depicted it as the ability to make a plausible decision and solve problems. It is also conceptualized as an approach to understanding someone's thoughts, ideas, and problems by looking at the other perspectives (Vidoni & Maddux, 2002). In addition, Boulton-Lewis (1995) and Angeli et al. (2003) delineated critical thinking as seeking and explaining reasons and points of view by acknowledging credible sources. To conclude, critical thinking is characterized as cognitive skills to analyze, explain, interpret, synthesize, evaluate, make a decision, and solve the problems by considering different points of view and valid and reliable evidence.

One pedagogical approach to developing students' critical thinking is through the questions (Chen et al., 2019). Questioning is an effective strategy for EFL students to trigger their critical thinking (Defianty & Wilson, 2019). Open-ended (Almulla, 2018) and provoking questions (Bai, 2009) can improve students' critical thinking skills. This study addresses Ilyas' (2015) critical thinking framework by examining twenty critical thinking taxonomies, strategies, programs, and tests (Ilyas, 2015). Ilyas' (2015) critical thinking framework (see Table 1) consists of critical thinking questions comprising questions for:

- asking for clarification,
- assumption,
- reasons and evidence,
- viewpoints or perspectives,
- implication, consequences, and alternative,
- question,
- predictions,
- agreement and disagreement, and
- summary and conclusion

**Table 1.** Ilyas' (2015) critical thinking framework.

Questions to probe	Example
Clarification	What does it mean?
Assumption	What can you assume?
Reasons and evidence	Can you tell me your reason?
Viewpoints or perspective	What do you think of online learning?
Implication, consequences, and alternatives	What is the best solution to solve the problem?
Prediction	What will probably happen if people ignore wearing masks during the pandemic?
Agreement and disagreement	Do you agree with them? Why?
Summary and conclusion	What can you conclude?

## 2.2 SOLO Rubric as a Critical Thinking Assessment

Saxton et al. (2012) deciphered that critical thinking assessment should emphasize the process of thinking, not accentuate the correct answer. It requires applying the proper instruments to measure students' critical thinking. Accordingly, Ku (2009) clarified no consensus has been reached to measure critical thinking because the measurements depend on the purpose, format, and context. Concerning this matter, SOLO (Structure of Observed Learning Outcome) fits to measure the students' critical thinking (Chan et al., 2002). Stålné et al. (2016) noted that it is one of the most prominent measurements to assess complex students' learning performance.

SOLO taxonomy was developed by Biggs and Tang (2011) as a systematic manner of portraying students' performance to master many academic tasks. The organized and hierarchical manner is useful for the teachers to develop students' thinking skills. SOLO taxonomy is used to classify students' different levels of responses (Gopal & Stears, 2007). It consists of five levels: prestructural, unistructural, multistructural, relational, and extended abstract (see Table 2). Furthermore, Lueg et al. (2016) described prestructural and unistructural levels as unsatisfactory, multistructural levels as surface learning, and relational and abstract levels as deep learning. The prestructural level addresses students' responses that miss the point and repeat the questions (students do not understand), while the unistructural level refers to students' responses that meet only one part of a task and miss other important attributes or points. The emphasis of the multistructural level is on students' responses that do not focus on the key issue and are only listing, describing, and narrating (showing a load of facts). The next level is the relational level showing students' responses to arguing a case, comparing and contrasting, and providing causal explanation and interpretation. The highest level, namely extended abstract emphasizes students' responses beyond what has been given and are coherent whole as well as breakthroughs or reflection.

Although the SOLO taxonomy has not been widely used to measure critical thinking in EFL classes in Indonesia, studies in other contexts have shown that it can provide valuable insights into students' developing abilities to apply critical thinking. Through task-based interviews, Patterson (2021) employed the SOLO rubric to assess cryptography understanding. Students' presentations and interviews of grade five in science class in Cape town (Gopal & Stears, 2007) and written essays of students aged 16-18 in Zimbabwe (Munowenyu, 2007) were assessed using the SOLO rubric.

## 2.3 Mobile Learning Application

Mobile learning or MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning) has specific characteristics and affordances to support learning. It enables the students to learn a language anywhere and anytime without the time and place restrictions (Ghorbani & Ebadi, 2020; Koutromanos & Avraamidou, 2014). It is flexible (Önal et al., 2019), so it is used in the classroom setting and outside of class (Ma, 2017). Its technology is portable (Booton et al., 2021; Şad et al., 2020) with an easy wireless internet connection (Elaish et al., 2019; Şad et al., 2020). It enables students to learn at their own individualized pace (personalized) (Elaish et al., 2019; Şad et al., 2020). It provides multimedia input (Booton et al., 2021) and touch screen devices that give an interactive experience to the students (Booton et al., 2021). It also provides an online

dictionary assisting and scaffolding the students to learn the language (Ma, 2017; Şad et al., 2020).

Previous studies showed that mobile learning application supports students' learning performance, such as language skills, sub-skill, and critical thinking. Sandberg et al. (2011) examined the mobile learning application to encourage vocabulary learning. Besides, Wang (2017) applied the Learn English Audio and Video mobile application for developing reading skills. Ataeifar et al. (2019) also used MALL, Voice Thread, and Twitter to enhance speaking skills. Mobile learning application promotes not only students' language skills and sub-skill but also their critical thinking. Ebadi and Rahimi (2018), who applied mobile learning named WebQuest, discovered that students' critical thinking and academic writing skills developed, while Yang et al. (2013) investigated a virtual learning environment using Moodle and found that it contributed positive impact on students' critical thinking skills. A study conducted by Lee et al. (2016) also suggested that the mobile learning game designed for the Android platform, GPS, and Google Maps leveraged the students' critical thinking. Moreover, Prahani et al. (2020) scrutinized the mobile-based learning application for web and android versions and showed that the mobile-based learning application gained students' critical thinking skills.

Moreover, several studies suggested that the students had a positive response to using mobile learning applications (Fujimoto, 2012; Lin, 2014; Sorayyaei & Nasiri, 2014). In a similar vein, Ebadi and Rahimi's (2018) finding indicated that students responded positively after using WebQuest. Further, Barrett et al. (2021) discovered students' positive comments while they learned English using a designed mobile learning application named English Oral Presentation Application.

### **3. METHODS**

A mixed-method approach, both quantitative and qualitative, was employed to address the research questions. A posttest-only design to a quasi-experimental study (Creswell, 2012) was used to examine the impact of 'English with Noni' application on the students' critical thinking. A qualitative approach was also undertaken to explore the experimental group's response to using the application.

#### **3.1 Participants**

A convenience sampling method was selected for the participants comprising the eighth graders of a public junior high school located in West Jakarta, Indonesia, ranging from 12 to 14 years old. They were from a low-socioeconomic group. The participants consisted of the experimental group (Class A) with 30 students (13 males and 17 females) and the control class (Class B) with 35 students (15 males and 20 females). Their names were pseudonyms for confidentiality. They had similar English proficiency levels measured using reading tests administered in the preliminary study.

#### **3.2 Instruments and Procedure**

The data were collected through a post-test. The post-test comprised reading, listening, and writing sections referring to critical thinking questions developed by

Ilyas (2015). The test was validated by the two experts who are experienced in the field of ELT and critical thinking. In the reading section, students were asked to answer one explicit question and three implicit questions referring to probing reasons and evidence, providing alternatives, and predicting to promote critical thinking. In the listening section, they were asked to watch an animated video with English subtitles and answer one question to conclude. They were also asked to make a short essay to express their viewpoint or perspective in the writing section. Their answers were assessed using the SOLO rubric (as shown in Table 2). The students' answers were scored by two raters, an expert in the ELT assessment and the researcher separately.

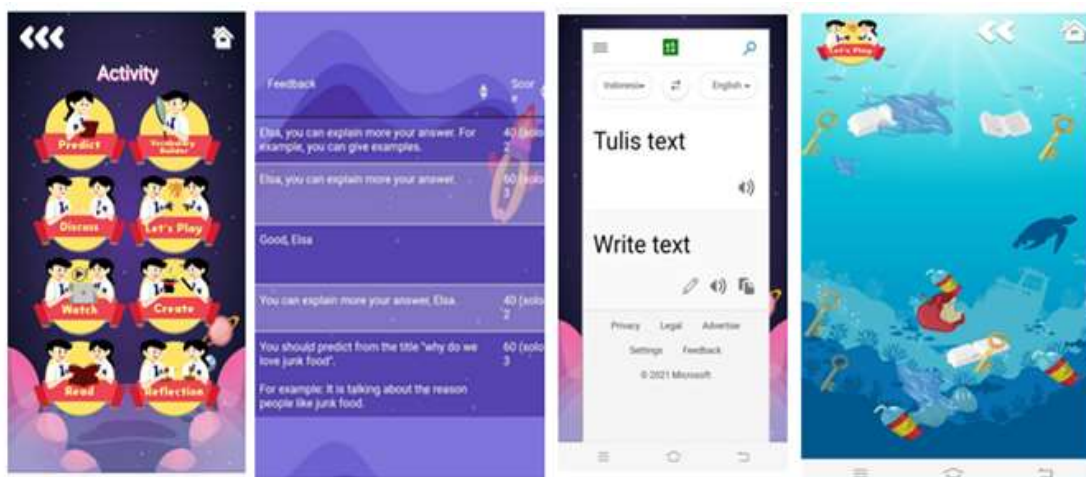
**Table 2.** SOLO (Structure of Observed Learning Outcome) taxonomy rubric.

Level	Score	Converted score	Description
Prestructural	1	20	Students' responses miss the point (they do not understand). Students' responses repeat the questions.
Unistructural	2	40	Students' responses meet only one part of the task. Students' responses miss other important attributes.
Multistructural	3	60	Students' responses do not address the key issue and just show a low of facts. Students' responses are only listing, describing, and narrating.
Relational	4	80	Students' responses are arguing a case, comparing and contrasting, and providing causal explanations and interpretations.
Extended Abstract	5	100	Students' responses are beyond what has been given. Students' responses are a coherent whole. Students' responses have breakthroughs or reflections.

Informed consent was obtained from school principals, teachers, and students. The students of two groups (experimental and control groups) participated voluntarily. The experimental group (Class A) used the developed 'English with Noni' application to provide critical thinking activities. It provides critical thinking activities or exercises, including a simple game in the post-reading activity to stimulate and motivate students to learn. It is also equipped with a dictionary and feedback space consisting of teachers' comments and scores (see Figure 1). It provides backward and forward touch screens to help the students replay the content or repeat the exercise they want and pitch control to slow down or fast forward the video play. The video also has subtitles to help them while listening. In the first session, the experimental group of students installed the 'English with Noni' application on their mobile phones by following the teacher's (researcher) instructions. They were given the username and password to access it. They were trained and introduced to all of its features. The teaching and learning process took 12 meetings. Meanwhile, the control group (Class B) was also instructed similar to the experimental group, but they were provided the printed modules containing similar activities. They were asked to use their digital or printed dictionary to build their vocabulary. The instructional process was also for 12 meetings. They were given written feedback in their modules or oral feedback.

Both experimental and control groups were explained the SOLO rubric as the assessment instrument. Subsequently, they practiced critical thinking in English instruction by encouraging them to express their reasons and evidence, viewpoints or perspectives, alternatives, predictions, agreements or disagreements, and conclusions.

Both of the groups had two 70-minutes periods each week on a different day. After a few meetings, they had to learn at home using Zoom meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, in the last meeting (twelfth meeting), those groups took the post-test (reading, listening, and writing sessions), which was undertaken and supervised by the teacher. The questions were presented via Zoom meeting, and the students were asked to send their answers to the teacher's WhatsApp privately and synchronously.



**Figure 1.** Features of 'English with Noni' application.

The semi-structured interviews were undertaken with 15 students (seven males and eight females) of the experimental group to explore their responses to using the 'English with Noni' application via mobile phone. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interview was conducted via phone calls. It took approximately 15 minutes for each participant to be interviewed. The interview protocol adapted [Lin's \(2014\)](#) work on Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), addressing students' perceived usefulness, ease of use, and satisfaction. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. The interview used the Indonesian language to explore the students' answers deeply. The results were confirmed by the students to establish credibility ([Creswell, 2012](#)).

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

For quantitative analysis, this study employed a non-parametric test, the Mann-Whitney test, to investigate the students' critical thinking level between groups learning with the 'English with Noni' application and without it (the printed modules) because the data were not normally distributed. The normality of data was examined through histogram, Skewness, and Shapiro-Wilk. Besides, the students' responses to using the application through interviews were analyzed qualitatively by employing thematic analysis. The interviews transcribed were coded and categorized.

## **4. RESULTS**

### **4.1 Students' Critical Thinking Level**

The post-test comprised of reading, listening, and writing sections were examined by using the Mann-Whitney test. The results showed that the experimental

group's mean was 64.00 and the control group was 46.29. There is a significant difference between those groups with a p-value of 0.001 (see Table 3).

**Table 2.** Mean difference and Mann-Whitney test of both groups.

Indicators	Experimental group	Control group	P-value
Mean	63.07	46.29	0.0001
Median	64.00	48.00	
Std. Deviation	9.377	10.728	
Std. Error	1.712	1.813	

As shown in Table 4, the experimental group was at the multistructural level, and the control group was at the unistructural level. SOLO rubric showed that the multistructural level is at 60 points, and the control group is at 40 points (see Table 2). The Mann-Whitney test result indicated that the critical thinking level of students using the 'English with Noni' application was better than those learning without it. In more detail, each section of the post-test between the experimental and control group is in Table 4.

**Table 3.** The mean differences in critical thinking areas of the two groups.

Post-test	Experimental group		Control group	
	Level	Point		Level
<b>Reading section</b>				
Reason and evidence question	Multistructural	3	Reason and evidence question	Multistructural
Prediction question	Multistructural	3	Prediction question	Multistructural
Alternative question	Multistructural	3	Alternative question	Multistructural
<b>Listening section</b>				
Conclusion question	Unistructural	2	Conclusion question	Unistructural
<b>Writing section</b>				
Viewpoint question	Relational	4	Viewpoint question	Relational
The average	Multistructural	3	The average	Multistructural

The experimental group outperformed in the reading section compared to the control group. The reading section providing reason and evidence questions suggested different results between the experimental and control groups. The experimental and control groups were multistructural and unistructural, respectively. However, those groups had a similar level at predicting and giving alternatives for the problem, namely multistructural level. Secondly, the experimental and control group were similar in the listening section containing the conclusion question. They were at the unistructural level. Thirdly, the experimental group was more improved than the control group to express their viewpoint in the writing section. The experimental group was at the relational level, whereas the control group was at the unistructural level. The samples of students' original answers are in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Sample of students' original answers to each section.

Section	Critical thinking question	Question	Experimental group	Control group
Reading	Reason and evidence	Why are plastics dangerous to marine life? Explain your answer	S10: Dangerous, because it can damage the ecosystem and the environment because impeding breeding and contaminating seawater (multistructural)	S30: Because many animals want to live in the sea. If there is a lot of plastic waste in the sea then the animals in the sea will die (unistructural)
Listening	Conclusion	What can you conclude from Daisy, Oliver, and Alfie's conversation? Explain your answer	S1: The video talks us about using the simple word present tense in everyday compilation conversations while we are at school and everywhere (unistructural)	S26: What they talked about was about a daisy who liked jack but feels that is impossible. with all their daisy busy they can't go together (unistructural)
Writing	Viewpoint	You can't go outside your home because of the Coronavirus outbreak. You also cannot go to school. You must spend your activities at home. What do you think about it? Make a paragraph to explain that issue (You can relate to your own experience)	S23: A very good and appropriate step from the government because that way fewer people will be infected with the virus. Because if we keep doing outside activities so many people will be infected, because we do a lot of hand contact with other people that we don't know if the person has been infected or not then this is the right step in a situation like this. However, if it continues in the house, people will be lazier and may experience weight gain. Because what is done in the house just playing on a cell phone eating and sleeping all day long makes people become lazy and repeat it tomorrow (relational)	S14: I think it's very good to not go outside of the home because of the virus corona. We must obey the rules of government for social distancing (unistructural)

As shown in Table 5, in the reading section, the experimental group was at the multistructural level. For example, S10 just listed her ideas; her answers indicated that

she could not explain them critically (i.e., she only mentioned some effects of contaminated marine life, but she could not explain the reasons for the damaged ecosystem). On the other hand, the reading section revealed that the control group was at the unistructural level. For example, S30 only provided one idea (i.e., she just mentioned animals in the sea will die). Furthermore, in the listening section, both groups' samples were at the unistructural level. For instance, S1 and S26 only provided one idea and missed the other important points or ideas. It indicated that they were not able to conclude what they watched. The sample of the experimental group's answers in the writing section noted their position at the relational level. Here, S23 was seen able to provide a causal explanation and compare and contrast some arguments. However, the control group was at the unistructural level. At this point, S14 expressed one idea to respond to the question without explicating his argument.

#### **4.2 Students' Responses to Using 'English with Noni' Application**

The next research question explored the students' responses to using the 'English with Noni' application. The students of the experimental group were interviewed to explicate their learning experiences. The themes that emerged from the data are language and critical thinking skill improvement, the impact of written feedback and dictionary in the application, and the positive feeling to learn using it.

##### *4.2.1 Language and critical thinking skill improvement*

When asked about the language skills progress after learning using the 'English with Noni' application, all students reported that their language skills such as reading (100%), listening (100%), and writing (100%) were quite improved compared to the previous experiences. All of them (100%) also perceived that they had more vocabulary than before. The interview excerpts translated into English were as follows:

- S3 : My reading skill is better than before.
- S16 : I think my listening skill is better because I know grammar and pronunciation better. If I do not understand, I replay the video and take notes of new vocabulary.
- S7 : My writing is better though I lacked vocabulary at first. But now, I am encouraged to open the dictionary frequently.
- S1 : I have more vocabulary than before. I also understand them.

The students were also asked how their critical thinking skills improved after using the application. Student fairly improved their critical thinking skill such as predicting (100%), providing reasons (100%), expressing viewpoint (100%), finding the alternative (100%), and making conclusions (100%). However, one student (7%) felt that she had difficulty in accomplishing the critical thinking questions at first, but later on, she got used to it. Their report can be seen in the following excerpts.

- S10 : I know how to make a prediction.
- S4 : At first, I was confused about giving reasons. But I gradually understand and can give them now.
- S1 : It is easier for me to express my opinion.
- S9 : I can give solutions to problems.
- S14 : My ability to conclude is better.



#### 4.2.2 *The impact of written feedback and dictionary on the application*

Concerning the questions ‘Are the feedbacks in ‘English with Noni’ application useful to accomplish your work better?’ and ‘Is the dictionary useful to accomplish your work?’ All of them (100%) revealed that the teacher’s written feedback was valuable and impacted their learning. Besides, all students (100%) reported that the dictionary provided in it aided them to learn, especially to find the meaning of the words that they did not know.

S14 : The feedback is useful. Before doing my task, I look at the feedback first.

S13 : It (the feedback) benefits me because I can learn deeply.

S10 : It is useful for me because I know my mistake and know to improve in the future.

It seems that the most beneficial feature of the application was the feedback, as expressed in the responses above. Obtaining feedback from the teachers assisted them to do a reflection on their learning by identifying their mistakes, and encouraged them to make corrections and do better in the future. The dictionary which was always ready and available for them to use as long as the internet was good was also a good impact on their learning. The dictionary enabled them to conduct a quick search and translate new words instantaneously.

S5 : The dictionary is useful because sometimes I do not know new words, and I search for them using the dictionary.

#### 4.2.3 *The positive feeling to learn using it*

The students were also asked, ‘Do you think that the ‘English with Noni’ application is beneficial for you?’ Approximately 93% of them (14 students) had a positive feeling about using the application, meanwhile, 7% (1 student) was neutral. They felt that it developed their English language skill, increased their motivation to learn English, aided them in learning English to be more fun and easier, providing them with a dictionary to translate.

S4 : The application is good because it helps us to learn English faster. The activities are fun and get us engaged. We gain a lot of new vocabulary. Our reading and listening are better.

Most of all, almost all of the students claimed that this activity was a gained learning experience compared to learning without technology assistance. The use of the application in language learning encouraged their individual learning and growth, enhanced peer collaboration, and resulted in better engaged and effective learners by connecting them and turning them into active learners.

S9 : It is good. It is hard if we find difficult words in the textbook. But the ‘English with Noni’ application is equipped with a dictionary. We can work together or individually to find new words and translate them using it, so it becomes easier to understand.

Overall, the findings indicated that students had positive responses to using the ‘English with Noni’ application that impacted their critical thinking, language skills, and sub-skills. It included tasks or exercises that required students to communicate their arguments, opinions, predictions, conclusions, and alternatives in response to critical thinking questions.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The quantitative findings showed that mobile learning ‘English with Noni’ was more effective than the printed modules. The average score of students was 64.00 and 46.29 for experimental and control groups, respectively. Furthermore, the critical thinking level of the experimental group achieved the multistructural level, and the control group was at the unistructural level. The findings indicated that the experimental group outperformed the control group in terms of critical thinking levels. The finding was consistent with the results from previous studies conducted by [Vidoni and Maddux \(2002\)](#), [Yang et al. \(2013\)](#), [Ebadi and Rahimi \(2018\)](#), and [Chang and Yeh \(2021\)](#) that mobile learning had the potential to enhance students’ critical thinking. The finding could be due to mobile learning ‘English with Noni’ providing the affordances to support students’ learning so that students had opportunities to access and learn the material and teachers’ feedback easily and watched the video several times anytime and anywhere. The teachers’ feedback provided a chance for the students to identify their mistakes. The feedback was beneficial for them to complete their tasks ([Ataeifar et al., 2019](#); [Ghorbani & Ebadi, 2020](#)).

The mobile learning ‘English with Noni’ was also equipped with a dictionary to help them scaffold or express their idea if they had limited vocabulary. The dictionary aided the students to accomplish their tasks ([Ma, 2017](#); [Şad et al., 2020](#)). The mobile learning ‘English with Noni’ also facilitated the students to learn based on their individualized pace, which corroborated [Elaish et al.’s \(2019\)](#) and [Şad et al.’s \(2020\)](#) findings.

This finding suggested that mobile learning ‘English with Noni’ provided an instructional environment to encourage students’ critical thinking. It consisted of the activities or exercises containing critical thinking questions which engaged the students to express their reasons, viewpoints, prediction, conclusion, and find the alternatives ([Ilyas, 2015](#)). The finding was in agreement with [Ebadi and Rahimi \(2018\)](#), who revealed that mobile learning in terms of WebQuest provided the contents stimulating students’ critical thinking in analyzing, evaluating, and giving the reason.

Though students’ critical thinking level in the experimental group was quite better, it remained at the multistructural level. They had not reached relational and extended abstract levels. The finding was in contrast to [Hammer and Griffiths’ \(2015\)](#) that the students at the multistructural level were less sophisticated to argue, compare, or interpret their idea. They were sophisticated if they were at a relational level representing the ability to argue, compare, contrast, provide the causal explanation and interpret the ideas, concepts, or facts. The students in this study did not attain a relational or extended abstract level might be due to insufficient critical thinking practice. Learning critical thinking needs time because it is a developmental process in which teachers habituate the students to have thinking routines so it encourages them to have critical thinking skills steadily ([Gunawardena & Wilson, 2021](#)). It also needs much effort and continual practice to reach the expected critical thinking ([Marashi & Mirghafari, 2019](#); [Yulian, 2021](#)).

The qualitative findings further showed that students perceived that their critical thinking skills, English language skills (reading, listening, and writing), and sub-skill (vocabulary) developed after using the ‘English with Noni’ application. The findings are by supported [Chang and Yeh \(2021\)](#) that the students admitted the mobile learning application contributed to their critical thinking development due to the activities

provided and the opportunities to give diverse answers. The students' answers are not emphasized on the right or wrong ones (Hammer & Griffiths, 2015) but on the process to think (Saxton et al., 2012). The findings are also in line with Fujimoto's (2012) work that students who responded to mobile learning applications gained their vocabulary, grammar, writing, and listening. Previous related studies noted as well that mobile learning applications developed students' vocabulary (Stockwell, 2007), writing (Mallampalli & Goyal, 2021), and reading (Lin, 2014).

In addition, the qualitative finding showed that the students found the application to be easy in accessing the features in it, such as the dictionary, teachers' feedback, and students' score. A similar finding was reported by Chen et al. (2019) that a user-friendly and well-designed mobile learning application encouraged and maximized the students to accomplish their assignments easily and avoided students' frustration as they could use it with ease. And this is expected to contribute to developing students' critical thinking. The students felt that the dictionary provided in the 'English with Noni' application was an aid learning tool for them especially to find the meaning of words and to accomplish their exercise. This finding concurred with Rahimi and Miri's (2014) work that the mobile dictionary helps students find the vocabulary faster. The mastery of vocabulary can improve the students' language skills, such as reading, listening, and speaking (Zhang & Pérez-Paredes, 2021). The more vocabulary knowledge they had, the better critical performance they had because critical thinking might be influenced by it (Floyd, 2011).

The qualitative finding indicated that students positively perceived the use of the 'English with Noni' application due to the distinctive features such as a post-reading game (called the 'Let's Play' part) and a video with subtitles and pitch control. The findings corroborated Sorayyaei and Nasiri's (2014) study, suggesting that students' positive responses to using mobile phone learning are because it developed their language learning and provided exciting and innovative learning. The post-reading game provided could increase the students' motivation to learn (Koutromanos & Avraamidou, 2014; Önal et al., 2019). Besides, the mobile learning 'English with Noni' provided videos with English subtitles and pitch control. Those mobile learning features could encourage the students to watch and replay as many times as they wanted (Wang, 2017).

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The students' critical thinking skills can be fostered by incorporating mobile learning applications. The study showed that the mobile learning of the 'English with Noni' application had an impact on developing students' critical thinking more effectively. The students' critical thinking will be more developed if they are continually trained as it is a developmental process. Furthermore, the students positively perceived that the use of 'English with Noni' application contributed to their language skills (reading, writing, and listening) and sub-skill (vocabulary) as well as critical thinking development in predicting, providing a reason, expressing a viewpoint, finding the alternatives and making conclusions.

The study has implications for the teachers and students. The mobile learning 'English with Noni' was found to enable the teachers to teach their students critical thinking infused in the English instruction by concerning the critical thinking

questions, assessment in terms of the SOLO rubric, and feedback. The application also helped cultivate the students' critical thinking and language skills and sub-skill, thus they could be taught simultaneously and explicitly. The implication for the students is that they could learn critical thinking and the English language without time and place restrictions. They also could learn based on their pace (self-pace) due to the affordances of the application. Moreover, it enables them to have self-regulated learning.

The present study employed a small number of EFL students; therefore, generalizations cannot be made. Large-scale research with various participants from different levels is needed to investigate their critical thinking by using the mobile learning 'English with Noni' application for further study. In addition, this study did not further observe the long term possible difficulties that the students might face in using the application and its relation to their learning outcomes, which is regarded as the limitation of the study. Therefore, future related research should carry out a longer learning process with the 'English with Noni' application to develop students' critical thinking in an EFL setting since this present study only took one semester.

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## Listening Journals to Promote Students' Critical Thinking Skills in an Integrated Listening-Speaking Course

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### Abstract

*This study aims to explore whether there is a significant improvement in students' critical thinking (CT) skills after implementing listening journals as one of the tasks in the Critical Listening and Speaking II course. This study also reports students' responses to the implementation of listening journals. In this mixed-method study, students' CT skill was measured using a Critical Thinking Self-Assessment (CTSA) Scale prior to and subsequent to the listening journal implementation period. Meanwhile, a reflective questionnaire with open-ended questions was employed to reveal students' responses to the implementation of the listening journals' tasks. Fifty students studying in the fourth semester of an English education department in a private university in Indonesia participated in this study. A paired-samples t-test result suggested a significant improvement in students' scores from the pre- to the post- CT self-assessment ( $t = -4.136$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In addition, the qualitative data obtained from the reflective questionnaire showed that the dominant responses from the students were positive towards the listening journal task. The findings of this study suggest that listening journals can be an effective strategy to help foster learners' critical thinking while developing listening and other skills. Even so, some felt the process was too monotonous and difficult. Thus, suggestions for future research are offered to improve the journal's future design and implementations.*

**Keywords:** Critical thinking, Critical Thinking Self-Assessment (CTSA) Scale, listening journals, listening skill.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In the EFL classroom, listening is an essential skill since it is the most used skill in daily communication and enables learners to receive language input (Etemadfar et al., 2020). Therefore, listening plays an essential role in helping learners interact with language input and facilitating the emergence of other language skills (Etemadfar et al., 2020; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). At the same time, listening is often perceived as the most difficult (Chen, 2017) and complex skill (Bidabadi & Yamat, 2014) since it requires listeners to receive sounds and interpret meaning at the same time the aural text is given.

Listening, despite its complexity, has received the least attention (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). When compared to the other language skills, it is said to be the least understood and least researched (Vandergrift, 2008). It emphasizes the importance of listening as a skill that must be studied for its development, particularly in teaching students how to listen more effectively. One of the ways to teach effective listening is through the metacognitive approach (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012), which enables learners to take control and reflect on their learning (Chen, 2017).

Metacognition and critical thinking (hereafter, CT) are inseparable concepts (Mbato, 2019). Both of them address the ability to take responsibility for one's thinking, using this thinking to make decisions and analyze information, and evaluate and assess learning (Uzuntiryaki-Kondakçi & Çapa-Aydin, 2013). Therefore, CT becomes an essential academic ability that plays an essential role in developing language skills, particularly listening (Aghaei & Rad, 2018; Etemadfar et al., 2020).

Other than listening skills development, there are other reasons behind the urgency of fostering EFL learners' CT skills, particularly in the Indonesian context. According to some research, many Indonesian students still have poor CT ability (Atayeva, 2019). Besides, the correct implementation of CT in Indonesian classroom instructions is still lacking (Mbato, 2019). It might be because the educational approach in Indonesia is still based heavily on memorization rather than the development of higher thinking skills (Indah & Kusuma, 2016; Pertiwi et al., 2021; Samanhudi & Linse, 2019).

As reported by the literature, particularly in the language learning context, having CT is crucial for EFL learners and is believed to support the development of language skills (Harizaj & Hajrulla, 2017; Zarei & Zarandi, 2015), including listening and speaking. One of the ways to foster CT in listening skills is through journaling activities (Aghaei & Rad, 2018; Chen, 2017; Gilliland, 2015). In this study, therefore, a listening journal was implemented as a primary task in the Critical Listening and Speaking 2 (hereafter, CLS 2) for the fourth-semester students of an English education department in a private university in Indonesia to facilitate the development of their listening and speaking skills and CT skills simultaneously. Aside from the aforementioned, there is a scarcity of research on how to use the listening journal to improve CT skills in an integrated listening-speaking class. It becomes the gap that this study intends to fill. With these considerations in mind, the current study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a significant improvement in students' critical thinking skills after the implementation of the listening journal in the CLS 2 course?
2. What are students' responses to the implementation of the listening journal?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Critical Thinking

Critical thinking (CT) is not a new topic (Pasaribu & Iswandari, 2019), yet discussions about it have never ceased among scholars. There are always interesting things to explore from CT, as CT is seen as one of the most important skills in education and real life (Aghaei & Rad, 2018). Besides, CT is one of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (van Laar et.al., 2017) that plays an essential role in one's success in life. In the context of ELT particularly, the integration of CT in EFL classes has been found to help learners improve their communication, expand their vocabulary, and help them to figure out how to use the language for different purposes and contexts (Harizaj & Hajrulla, 2017).

Despite the significance and popularity of CT, there has not been a single nor a clear-cut definition of it (Dummet & Hughes, 2019; Hughes, 2014; Mbato, 2019), although many experts have tried to develop it. Qamar (2016), for example, defined CT as thinking beyond the given knowledge to conclude. Similarly, Cottrell (2005) regarded CT as a cognitive activity involving analytical and evaluative ways of thinking. She also mentions that CT is a complex process of deliberation that involves a wide range of skills and attitudes. Dummet and Hughes (2019) propose a more operational definition of CT. They define CT as “a mindset that involves thinking reflectively (being curious), rationally (thinking analytically), and reasonably (coming to sensible conclusions)” (Dummet & Hughes, 2019, p. 4). These definitions emphasize that CT is a complex and advanced cognitive mechanism that needs to be continuously exercised to develop.

Understanding that CT is not a subject that needs to be taught separately but is a skill that can be included in any educational activity (Pikkert & Foster, 1996); some experts have developed and offered operational frameworks that can be adopted as the basis of classroom CT implementation (Dummet & Hughes, 2019; Hughes, 2014). However, in this research context, Hughes's (2014) framework of CT is employed to design the classroom learning activities to facilitate CT enhancement. Hughes (2014) coined the phrase ‘a stairway of critical thinking’ to refer to the cognitive thinking skills in the Bloom taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2002). This stairway of CT comprises some stages, including understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. These stages are the basis of a practical language course design that will help students develop their CT skills (Hughes, 2014). Hughes (2014) argued that by following the linear steps, educators can design courses that guide students to advance and progress their CT skills from one step to the next.

In the understanding phase, students understand the essential meaning or interpret the meaning of a word, sentence, text, or idea. To check students' understanding, teachers can test students' ability to recall and apply language in a controlled way to demonstrate that they have learned it (Dummet & Hughes, 2019). When students have comprehended a text, they are required to use the information and apply it to some contexts. It is what occurs in the applying phase. Next is the analyzing phase, where students try to question and analyze how certain information or arguments are presented in a text. In other words, students examine the text more critically instead of accepting it at face value (Hughes, 2014).

Going more advanced is the evaluating phase. According to [Hughes \(2014\)](#), in the evaluating phase, students examined the validity and relevance of the information or arguments, for example, by assessing how much of the text is factual and how much reflects the author's opinion. This phase is performed to support students' creations, which occurs in the creating stage. In the creating stage, students apply the new knowledge, facts, and evidence to develop their own opinions or create something of their own ([Hughes, 2014](#)).

## **2.2 Listening Journals**

Listening journals are a book in which students record their listening practices, as well as reflections on their listening experiences ([Schmidt, 2016](#)). [Gilliland \(2015, p. 13\)](#) introduced listening journals as listening logs, defined as "an ongoing assignment through which students document their participation in out-of-class activities and reflect on how such participation helped them improve their listening abilities." The idea of listening journals originated from learning journals that have been used generally in different fields.

In a general definition, learning journals are a tool for reflection that includes not only factual recordings about texts but also learners' evidence of work accompanied by reflective commentaries on them ([Moon, 2006](#)). The activity of writing learning journals is beneficial for students in a way that they can relate between the course material and experiences ([Connor-Greene, 2000](#)), develops creativity and critical reflection ([O'Connell & Dymont, 2007](#)), as well as evaluate concepts and theories more critically ([Bahmani, 2016](#)). Therefore, journal writing has been seen as one of the useful tools to facilitate CT skill enhancement ([Arifin et al., 2020](#); [Moon, 2006](#); [Shaarawy, 2014](#)), particularly in the EFL field.

The activity of writing journals has been adopted in the context of EFL listening classes, as reported in some previous research. One of the most recent research investigating the implementation of listening journals was conducted by [Chen \(2017\)](#). In her research, [Chen \(2017\)](#) utilized listening journals to facilitate students in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their listening activities in relation to developing students' metacognitive awareness. She found evidence that listening journals can help grow students' metacognitive awareness. It is indicated by students' ability to plan for their listening, monitor their comprehension, and evaluate their approach and outcome. Some other research exploring the use of listening journals has also been conducted in Indonesia ([Fauzi & Angkasawati, 2019](#)). Both report the effectiveness of listening journals in improving students' listening skills and comprehension.

Literature has suggested the role of journaling activities, particularly in the listening class context. However, there has not been sufficient empirical evidence on the contribution of listening journals in fostering CT skills, particularly in an integrated listening and speaking class in a higher education context. It, therefore, becomes an important issue that this research tries to explore. Adopting the definitions from [Gilliland \(2015\)](#) and [Schmidt \(2016\)](#), the listening journal used in this study was in the form of learning journals which served as a medium for the students to write what they learned from the listening materials, along with their responses and reflections.

### 3. METHODS

#### 3.1 Research Design

A mixed-method sequential explanatory study was conducted to gain a complete understanding of whether there is a significant improvement in students' CT skills after the implementation of journal writing activities, as well as students' responses to its implementation. The explanatory sequential design was adopted since it allows the researcher to collect quantitative and qualitative data in two stages, with one type of data gathering preceding and influencing the other (Creswell, 2012). The quantitative data was collected and analyzed first, followed by the qualitative data collection and analysis. In other words, the quantitative phase of the study sought to demonstrate the efficacy of the designed journal in terms of improving students' CT ability. Meanwhile, the qualitative phase helped to understand how the mechanism may have worked or not worked during the intervention (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

The CLS 2 course was a 4-credit course in which the students were assigned to listen to one to two listening passages every week in the form of a podcast or video within the lecturer-given topic. The topics were stories from around the world, the growth mindset, and entrepreneurship. Since this is an integrated listening and speaking course, the listening activities were followed-up with various speaking activities including group discussions, presentations, and individual speeches. This quantitative research phase was conducted in between these listening and speaking activities. It involved assigning the students to write a weekly listening journal as a follow-up activity for listening. In other words, this listening journal was basically a journal writing activity that was listening-based and task-based (Saad & Ahmed, 2015).

The listening journal was designed using the adaptation of Hughes' theory on "the stairway of critical thinking" (Hughes, 2014, p. 3), which comprises understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. The journal takes the following structure:

- 1) Details of the listening text, which include the text title, text type, text duration, and text source.
- 2) Understanding, which requires the students to write a summary of the text.
- 3) Analyzing, which challenges the students to identify the purpose or intent of the text or the speaker(s) in the text.
- 4) Synthesizing, which challenges the students to relate the values from the text to their existing knowledge.
- 5) Evaluating, which directs the students to evaluate what the character(s) have done in the texts/stories, or the validity of the arguments given by the speaker in the text.
- 6) Creating, which requires the students to write a personal reflection on the text and use it to write ideas in response to the same issue addressed in the text. In the creating part, students are also required to write at least one critical question in response to the text.

The assignment of this listening journal aims to provide the students with step-by-step guidance for growing their CT ability according to the stages suggested by Hughes (2014). However, a slight modification was given to adjust the contexts of listening materials. In each journal section, one guideline question was provided to help students write more easily. The questions were as follows:

**Table 1.** Listening journal guideline questions.

Sections	Questions for fictional texts	Questions for non-fictional texts
Understanding	What is the story mainly telling about?	What is the speaker mainly talking about?
Analyzing	What are the values of the story?	What are the speaker's purposes for discussing the topic?
Synthesizing	How can you relate the values from the story to your life/your surroundings and other things?	How can you relate the values from the text to your life/your surroundings and other things?
Evaluating	What would you do if you were in the character's position? Why?	Are the speaker's arguments based on valid evidence/facts and logical reasoning, rather than only based on his/her assumptions? Provide evidence.
Creating	Write your personal reflections on the story/speech, e.g., how meaningful is it for you?; What different idea(s) do you have in response to the same issue addressed in the story/speech?	

A secondary purpose of this listening journal was to help students prepare for the follow-up speaking activities. In this case, the students would perform the speaking activities based on what they had written in the listening journal. In addition, the critical question that they wrote would be used to guide the class discussion. The students participating in this research were to write fourteen journals within one semester. Seven journals were to be submitted in the mid-semester, and the rest seven journals were to be submitted at the end of the semester. There was no word limit in writing the journals.

### 3.2 Settings and Participants

This research was conducted in CLS 2, a 4-credit integrated listening and speaking course in the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) of a private university in Yogyakarta. The cluster sampling method (Ary et al., 2010) was used to select the research participants since it was impossible to select random samples due to the natural classroom settings. The participants were 50 students comprising 8 male and 42 female students. They belonged to two CLS 2 classes taught by the same lecturer using the same approaches. The course was a compulsory course taken by fourth-semester students of ELESP. Of these participants, a number of 20 students participated in interviews; these students were selected based on their availability and consent to be interviewed. They are coded as S1 for Student 1, S2 for Student 2, S3 for Student 3, and so forth, in this paper.

### 3.3 Research Instruments and Data Collection Techniques

A scale was used to collect data in the pre- and post-implementation of the listening journal to answer the first research question, which was whether or not there was an improvement in students' CT skills following the implementation of the listening journal. The scale of Critical Thinking Self-Assessment (CTSA) was developed with an adaptation from Cottrell (2005) and Mbato (2019). These scales were initially designed to help students self-measure their critical thinking skills in reading. However, the items were modified and adjusted to the context of listening skills. The CTSA scale consisted of 20 items with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from

1 = ‘strongly disagree’ to 5 = ‘strongly agree’. The CTSA scale is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The CTSA scale.

No.	Items
1	I can analyze the speaker’s argument easily.
2	I can figure out facts, experiences, and data that the speaker is using to support her/his conclusions.
3	I can recognize the signals that the speaker uses to indicate his/her argument in a speech.
4	I can find the speaker’s key points easily.
5	I can find key problems discussed by the speaker.
6	I can identify the speaker’s unfair technique used to persuade listeners.
7	I can figure out the main assumptions underlying the speaker’s thinking.
8	I can identify evidence that the speaker gives to support his/her point of view.
9	I pay attention to small details of information when listening.
10	I can weigh up different arguments fairly when listening.
11	I research to find out more about something related to the listening passage to deepen my understanding of a topic.
12	I can spot inconsistencies in a speaker’s argument easily.
13	I can identify unclear arguments given by a speaker.
14	I can evaluate the sources of information that the speaker uses as his/her references.
15	I can identify key conclusions given by the speaker.
16	When a speaker is saying something wrong, I can always spot it.
17	I can rephrase the arguments of others using my own words easily.
18	If I am not sure about what the speaker is saying, I will research to find out more.
19	I can recognize logical fallacies (wrong reasoning).
20	I understand how to structure an argument.

The scale above had been tested for reliability and internal consistency. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was .863, which suggested that the scale had a very good internal consistency validity (Pallant, 2016). In addition, the inter-item correlation of the scale was .249, indicating that the questionnaire items were correlated well. To answer the second research question on students’ responses to the listening journal task in improving their CT skills, a reflective questionnaire with six open-ended questions was employed to collect qualitative data. This questionnaire was distributed to the students at the end of the semester, subsequent to the submission of the final parts of the listening journal.

### 3.4 Data Analysis Technique

The quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistics. The data were then checked for normality using the normality test in SPSS. Then, a paired-samples t-test was performed to see if there was a statistically significant improvement in terms of students’ CT skills based on the CTSA scale results. As Pallant (2016) stated, the paired-samples t-test is used to see the changes in scores for participants at time one and again at time two, often after some intervention or event. Meanwhile, for the qualitative data, the researcher transcribed the results from the interviews. Following Braun et al. (2016), the transcripts were re-read for familiarization and coded for themes. From here, the themes were developed, refined, and named. Lastly, the findings were reported.



#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### 4.1 Students' Critical Thinking Skills Improvement

To answer the first research question, a scale of Critical Thinking Self-Assessment (CTSA) was distributed to allow participants self-assess their CT ability before and after the implementation of the listening journal task. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of students' scores of CTSA pre- and post-implementation of the listening journal task for one semester.

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Initial score of CTSA	50	49	88	68.50	8.486
Final score of CTSA	50	42	98	74.20	9.558

Based on the result of the descriptive statistics, an improvement in students' mean scores of the CT score was quite noticeable. After having experienced learning using the listening journal for one semester, the students' CT mean scores increased from 68.5 (SD=8.486) to 74.2 (SD=9.558). However, to prove the significance of the improvement, these results needed to be tested inferentially. To perform this procedure, the data first need to be assessed for normality.

**Table 4.** Tests of normality.

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Initial score of CTSA	.104	50	.200*
Final score of CTSA	.092	50	.200*

Table 4 shows the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality. It is shown that both the initial score and the final score of students' CT skills were normally distributed as indicated in the non-significant Sig. value ( $p > .05$ ). Therefore, an inferential statistics procedure could be performed to see if the improvement in the students' CT scores was statistically significant. A paired-samples t-test was subsequently conducted and the results are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Paired samples test.

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (1-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Initial score of CTSA Final score of CTSA	-5.700	9.744	1.378	-8.469	-2.931	-4.136	49	.000

Based on Table 5, the result of the paired-samples t-test showed a significant improvement of students' CT score from the pre-test (M=68.5, SD=8.486) to the post-test (M=74.2, SD=9.558), with  $t(49) = -4.136$  and  $p < .05$  (one-tailed).

The quantitative data calculation has confirmed that there is a statistically significant improvement in terms of students' CT scores subsequent to the activities of writing the listening journals for one semester. This finding has proven that the students see the listening journal as an effective tool to build their critical thinking skills. The listening journal sections which comprise understanding, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, and creating (Hughes, 2014), as well as the guideline questions provided, seem to have trained the students to examine the aural texts in a more reflective, rational, and analytical way (Dummet & Hughes, 2019).

The result gained from this statistical analysis resonates with Saad and Ahmed's (2015) finding that journal writing as a follow-up of L2 listening tasks could improve the learning quality through the encouragement of critical and analytical thinking. In addition, what this study has found agrees with Arifin et al. (2020) research findings. They reported that regular journal writing activities could help improve students' CT skills, although in varying degrees. After all, even though the quantitative data have shown the effectiveness of listening journals in fostering students' CT skills, further examinations need to be performed to understand better students' responses to the implementation of the listening journal itself.

## 4.2 Students' Responses to the Implementation of Listening Journal

An open-ended reflective questionnaire was distributed at the end of the term to explore students' responses to the implementation of the listening journals for one semester in the CLS 2 class. Data collected from this questionnaire were used to support the quantitative findings. According to the open-ended questionnaires, the majority of participants gave positive responses to the implementation of the listening journals. Six major themes indicated participants' positive responses and one major theme signified participants' concerns, as explained in the following sections.

### 4.2.1 *Effective facilitation to train CT skill*

One benefit obtained by the students participating in this study was that the listening journal could facilitate them in exercising their CT. Some students admitted that they were able to think more deeply about certain issues through analysis and careful examinations of the speakers' arguments. The following statements were quoted from students' questionnaire responses.

- (1) The journal really helps me in interpreting stories and videos from inspiring people. I also learn and think outside the box by digesting videos and stories. (S1)
- (2) This activity sharpens my mind to think critically, for example, thinking is not about understanding only but drawing relationships with any idea and experience to discover something new in life. (S2)
- (3) It helps me learn to improve my critical thinking skills toward the videos/podcast and analyze it deeper based on the aspects from the journal (understand, create, evaluate, etc.). (S3)

Critical thinking is an attribute that includes a number of skills and attitudes (Cottrell, 2005; Dummet & Hughes, 2019). The responses from students shown above clearly indicate several constructs that make up CT ability, namely thinking reasonably and analytically (Dummet & Hughes, 2019) to evaluate arguments, draw conclusions, and present a new point of view (Cottrell, 2005). Through the listening journals, the

students were able to think analytically about the aural texts. Also, they became more capable of discovering relationships between texts to come up with conclusions.

Synthesizing, which is the ability to bring together and relate information from several sources to come to a judgment (Tampubolon & Rajagukguk, 2017), becomes one of the key activities in the journal to train students' CT skills. The synthesizing phase was a substitute for the 'applying' stage in Hughes' stairway of CT since they share similar characteristics. According to Hughes (2014), applying is taking new information from texts and applying it to something. In this listening journal context, the ability to apply information is considered equal to the ability to connect to something or other pieces of information. In connection to this, the qualitative data suggest that students could practice their CT skills through the synthesizing activity, where they were required to relate or find relevant connections among the given text with other information, such as their existing knowledge, personal experiences, or other information obtained from various inputs. This point is reflected in the following students' responses:

- (4) I can analyze more deeply what I hear and can relate what I hear in my life. (S4)
- (5) I think it is helpful for me because it aids me in active listening, how I understand what someone speaks, how to analyze it, draw meaning related to my experience, and take [a] moral message for my life. (S5)
- (6) I also learned how to relate those value[s] in everyday life. (S6)

Concerning the previous point, the students feel that the journal helped them train their CT skills through questioning, which is one part at the end of the journal that requires the students to write a critical question. Questioning is one of the thinking processes since it is a crucial part of knowledge construction (Santoso et al., 2018). Some students stated that the questioning part in the listening journal facilitated them effectively to practice their CT skills as depicted in the following responses:

- (7) ... besides that, it can also make them think critically by asking various questions. (S4)
- (8) I think it is helpful for me because it aids me...on how I can ask [a] question. Someone who has critical thinking is he or she who can raise [a] question. (S5)
- (9) I guess the way how I think because, in the journal, we need to provide some critical question[s]. So, yea, it drives me to need to be able to think critical[ly]. (S7)

#### 4.2.2 Useful journal template

The usefulness of the journal template design emerged as the second theme in students' qualitative responses. According to Hughes (2014), the listening journal consisted of five core sections, as mentioned in the methods section. The five core sections are understanding, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, and creating, where each section was provided with a guideline question. The students admitted that they got benefited from this journal structure. Their statements are depicted as follows:

- (10) I think the questions in the 'Listener's response journal' template help me in critical thinking, why? Because starting from the beginning, the question was easy, then it got more and more difficult, and the question persuaded/invited me to think more deeply. (S8)
- (11) The questions are challenging to train critical and logical thinking. (S9)
- (12) Sometimes I have no idea how to dig more deeply into my mind, but the clues provided help me a lot. (S10)

The listening journals designed based on Hughes' 'stairway of thinking' was perceived as an effective tool in developing students' CT since they could take students from one step to the next to stimulate their CT skill gradually (Hughes, 2014).

#### 4.2.3 *Improve reflective ability and raise curiosity*

One of the indicators of CT skill is the ability to look at issues reflectively (Cottrell, 2005) or think reflectively to raise curiosity (Dummet & Hughes, 2019). In line with this, one of the students' responses was that the listening journal could help them improve their ability to reflect on issues. Besides, they admitted that the journaling activities challenged their curiosity.

- (13) It makes me better understand the content of what I see, and reflect on it in my life. (S4)
- (14) It can hone our critical thinking skills, and also we can do a reflection on the story in our lives. (S11)
- (15) I become a curious person when I got new information. (S9)
- (16) It makes me want to know more about the topic of the video. (S12)

According to Pluck and Johnson (2011), the perceived value of information obtained from 'deep' processing of information increases curiosity to learn more. This finding on students' increased curiosity could indicate that the students' curiosity arose as a result of the deep processing of information that occurred during their reflective practices while writing the journal. Thus, the findings above confirm the linkage between students' reflective abilities and curiosity as suggested by the literature.

#### 4.2.4 *Better comprehension of listening materials*

Other responses from the student participants suggest that the listening journal was helpful for them in comprehending listening texts. It is because they were required to write a summary in the 'understanding' section, as well as reveal intrinsic elements and make inferences from the texts in the 'analyzing,' 'synthesizing,' and 'evaluating' sections. The following statements depict some students' responses regarding material comprehension.

- (17) It is so much fun and meaningful because sometimes when I watch videos, I only watch them once and forget the content right away. but when I do the weekly listeners' journal assignment from CLS 2 class, I have the ability to remember and fully understand the whole content of the video, so it's really helpful for me! (S13)
- (18) I've learned how to organize my ideas which come from the video or podcast given by the lecturer. And it helped me to save the materials in long-term memory in my brain which is so useful. Because I could remember the material better by doing the journal. (S6)
- (19) I can easily identify the key points/arguments and write them in the journal; this helps me a lot. (S14)

From the excerpts above, it is clear that the students found listening journals beneficial to enhance their comprehension of the aural texts. Similar to this, Fauzi and Angkasawati (2019) found that the practice of listening through listening logs on WhatsApp gives a significant improvement in listening comprehension to EFL learners. Lee and Cha (2020), in another study, reported that using listening logs and classroom lessons helped the students improve their listening proficiency. They also discovered that listening log activities help grow students' metacognitive awareness,

which correlated significantly with students' listening comprehension. These two studies support the current research finding in a way that writing listening journals regularly has helped students not only foster metacognitive skills but also develop better listening comprehension.

#### *4.2.5 Improvement of English competences*

According to the responses of the participants, writing listening journals helped them improve their English competencies, including writing and listening skills, as well as vocabulary. The following are excerpts from participants' responses.

- (20) It gives me a lot of how to improve my English. Because in this part I tried to use simple English sentence[s] to relate the value of the story and my experience. (S15)
- (21) I know more new vocabulary. I also write more to complete a given journal assignment. (S16)
- (22) I like the Listeners' Response Journal Activities [be]cause it improves [s] my creativity and writing. (S17)
- (23) It improves my writing and listening skills. (S18)

In this research context, the journal writing was listening task-based, meaning that students were given a topical listening assignment with a follow-up task in the form of writing what they had listened to. This process allowed students to reflect, analyze, and create language content using their own words (Saad & Ahmed, 2015) and writing capability. From the students' responses, the listening journal was seen as a powerful activity to enhance students' writing, listening, and vocabulary in English. Thus, it is apparent that the listening journal contributed positively to not only students' thinking skills but also students' language skills (Harizaj & Hajrulla, 2017; Zarei & Zarandi, 2015).

#### *4.2.6 Foster self-discipline and motivation*

The other finding that reflects the benefits of listening journals shows that writing listening journals could foster students' self-discipline and motivation in learning. The excerpts that depict this theme are shown below.

- (24) This routine help[s] us to developing[develop] self-discipline. Also, decreasing our laziness. I'm becoming more diligent. (S19)
- (25) After having Listener's Response Journal, I feel motivated to do something more challenging and newer. (S20)

#### *4.2.7 Students' concerns about the listening journal*

Apart from the positive responses, there were also a few concerns coined by the students regarding the listening journal activities. Their biggest concern was related to boredom. The listening journal writing task was to be performed every week. As a consequence, some students admitted that sometimes they felt bored when writing the journal as they considered it a monotonous routine. The second concern was related to the length of the journal, which resulted in the long duration of accomplishing the journal. In line with this, a few students mentioned that the structure of the journal could have been simplified, where some parts could be reduced or merged with other

parts to make it more concise and efficient. The following extracts reflected students' concerns about the listening journal.

- (26) Maybe the parts in the journal can [be] reduced; I think the part synthesize and create are a bit similar, so maybe it can be compiled so that there will not [be] many columns to fill. (S10)
- (27) It needs variations in terms of the journal sequence. (S15)
- (28) ...I suggest making a comparison activity. (S19)

Similar to this finding, [Chen \(2017\)](#) also reported that despite the fact that students recognize the benefits of keeping listening journals in general, they admit that the process was ineffective and time-consuming.

Other than those concerns, a few students stated that they experienced difficulties writing the journal sections. The difficulties mentioned were in terms of using their analytical thinking skills. This concern was reflected in the following extracts:

- (29) Sometimes I'm confused to analyzing the points that connect the video or the podcast to my story life or my experience. (S18)
- (30) It is hard to analyze some parts of the listening journal because the listening material doesn't explain it. (S9)

Having students with different levels of ability in a classroom is a normal occurrence ([Tanjung & Ashadi, 2019](#); [Tomlinson, 2001](#)). Therefore, in the implementation of listening journals, teachers should provide adequate assistance for the students by regularly checking the students and helping them use suitable listening strategies to understand the texts better ([Lee & Cha, 2020](#)). Asking more critical questions may also be effective to activate students to analyze and explore the text more in-depth.

Students' responses revealed that the listening journal brings numerous benefits and values to students' competence. First, the listening journal is an effective tool to improve students' CT skills. Through regular journaling that follows independent listening activities, students become more capable of thinking critically, which is indicated through their ability to evaluate arguments, look at issues reflectively, and ask critical questions. Second, it was also found that students perceived improvements in terms of listening comprehension as well as writing skills and vocabulary acquisition. Other than those, there are some concerns coined by the students regarding the implementation of listening journals, including monotonousness and difficulties in writing the journal entries. Accordingly, in order to deal with students' issues, the role of lecturers must be highlighted. They must play a larger role in students' journal writing processes by providing timely comments and criticism in order to lessen students' challenges ([Iswandari, 2013](#)).

## 5. CONCLUSION

Through the lens of students' self-assessment of their CT skills, the present study found that the implementation of the listening journal weekly tasks could improve students' CT skills significantly. In other words, the journal writing activity that took place subsequent to listening activities could facilitate students to learn new knowledge in analytical and critical ways. In addition, the listening journal supported the utilization of students' lower-order thinking skills (LOTS) through the stages of

understanding and synthesizing parts since students had to write the summary and values of the listening texts. Students' higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) were also exercised through analyzing, evaluating, and creating stages of the listening journal. This was confirmed in the findings obtained from students' responses to the listening journal implementation. The majority of students' responses indicated that the listening journal was helpful for them not only in fostering their CT skills but also in improving their reflective ability and curiosity, allowing them to have a better comprehension of listening materials, improving English competencies, and fostering self-discipline and motivation.

Based on a few concerns revealed through students' responses, some modifications to the journal template and assignment should definitely be made so that the design of the listening journal task will not be too lengthy and monotonous in the future. After all, lecturers' role needs to be emphasized to cope with students' experiences of difficulties. They need to make more parts to students' journal writing processes by giving timely responses and feedback so that the students' difficulties can be reduced.

One of the study's limitations is that the majority of the listening materials are provided by the teacher. As a result, it is suggested that future listening journal research employ more extensive listening practices. Students' concerns about learning boredom can be alleviated in this manner.

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## Discourse Functions of Lexical Bundles in Indonesian EFL Learners' Argumentative Essays: A Corpus Study

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### Abstract

*Lexical bundles are functional units that are essential to building texts. However, lexical bundles vary due to some aspects, e.g., nativity, professionalism, text genre, etc. This study explored functional categories of lexical bundles in EFL written production, i.e., argumentative essays, focusing on 3-, 4-, and 5-word sequences employed by English major students in Indonesia. The data were taken from a learner corpus comprising 169 argumentative essays with 87.939 tokens. The lexical bundles were identified by using computerized and manual procedures. The identified bundles were then classified into functional categories and subcategories by Hyland. The results show that all functional categories were identified in the learner corpus proving the importance of those functions in students' essays. Regarding the distribution, research-oriented bundles are the most frequent bundles in the corpus, while text-oriented bundles are the least frequent. Although all functional categories were found, the structuring signals (a subcategory of text-oriented bundles) were absent in the corpus. Moreover, this study found the gap between tokens and types of each bundle function, indicating the restricted variants of bundles used by the learners. Considering the low frequency of text-oriented bundles, the absence of structuring bundles, and restricted bundles, thus the exposure of more lexical bundles serving multiple*

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*functions in writing materials is necessary, especially bundles used for organizing and structuring texts.*

**Keywords:** Functional category, learner corpus, lexical bundles, students' essays.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Lexical bundles are the combinations of three, four, or more words that are repeatedly used in discourse based on the genre or register (Cortes, 2004; Hyland, 2012). Biber et al. (1999) stated that lexical bundles are unrelated to idiomaticity or structural status, which means that lexical bundles are not meaning units; instead, they are functional units to build up and characterize a discourse (Wood, 2015). As proven by Biber et al. (1999), 30% of the words in conversations and 21% of words in academic writing are in the form of lexical bundles. In addition, Erman and Warren (2000) showed that 58.6% of spoken English discourse and 52.3% of written English discourse consist of lexical combinations. van Lancker-Sidtis and Rallon (2004) also investigated language use in the screenplay of a classic American film, 'Some Like it Hot', and figured out that 25% of the dialogues were formulaic. These findings emphasize that language is inevitably formulaic.

Lexical bundles, compared to other formulaic language concepts, are the most widely studied (Cortes, 2004) because these word sequences are frequent and measurable (Biber et al., 2004; Lee, 2020), and their occurrence is pervasive in discourse due to their vital role (Wood, 2015). Besides, the use of lexical bundles in the EFL context is crucial because they belong to the element of nativelike linguistic knowledge (Meunier, 2012). Lexical sequences, including lexical bundles, are necessary for language fluency since using correct word combinations is part of good speaking and writing (Salazar, 2011). This is because there is a tendency to use typical combinations despite the infinite potential of linguistic constructions in using language (Wood, 2015). In other words, the ability to use lexical bundles is a salient aspect to be proficient in the target language (Lee & Kim, 2017). Thus, considering the importance of lexical bundles, they should be introduced rigorously to the students, especially those in the ESL and EFL context.

Two aspects that should be concerned related to lexical bundles are the structure and the functional categories. Many studies have focused on the structure of the lexical bundles (Oktavianti & Sarage, 2021), which show that particular bundle structures might be used more often in a specific register or text genre. However, because lexical bundles are functional units that serve as the building blocks of the discourse, it is necessary to explore the functional aspects of lexical bundles. Previous studies have demonstrated that the functions of lexical bundles vary across different registers, i.e., spoken and written registers (Biber et al., 2004), text genres (Yang, 2017), and disciplines (Kwary et al., 2017; Ren, 2021). In addition, lexical bundles might have different usage tendencies related to the author's professionalism and nativity (Chen & Baker, 2010; Fajri et al., 2020). Therefore, it is important to explore the functional categories of lexical bundles comprehensively.

In the academic context, lexical bundles are pervasive because they are used at high frequency (Hyland, 2008, 2012; Hyland & Jiang, 2018). Furthermore, Gray

(2015) includes lexical bundles as the prominent features of the academic genre, which can vary across different fields. Some factors, such as professional level and nativity, hold vital roles related to the use of lexical bundles. Several studies have claimed the discrepancies in lexical bundle usage between L1 and L2 writers (Pan et al., 2016; Salazar, 2011, 2014; Yakut et al., 2021) and between professional and novice writers (Cortes, 2004). Considering that nativity and professionalism affect the usage of lexical bundles, English L2 and FL writers need to understand how lexical bundles are used in their writing to show their writing proficiency.

Previous studies on lexical bundles in the EFL academic context have mainly focused on theses or dissertations (Fitrianasari et al., 2018; Yakut et al., 2021), published articles (Pan et al., 2016; Salazar, 2014) or books (Alquraishi, 2014; Hussain et al., 2021). These studies are important to show the academic language mastery of the learners or to identify particular bundles in specific fields. However, it is also important to study the initial stage of undergraduate academic writing, e.g., students' argumentative essays.

An argumentative essay is a kind of academic prose commonly written by undergraduate students (Shin, 2018; Wingate, 2012). This writing belongs to the academic genre because writing an argumentative essay needs logical and critical thinking and the capability to connect arguments and evidence coherently (Parkinson & Musgrave, 2014). This genre was chosen because lexical bundles are more frequently used in argumentative texts than the other genre, e.g., narrative texts (Yang, 2017). In addition, some research has demonstrated that academic writing, including argumentative text, is packed with multi-word combinations (Gray, 2015; Hyland & Jiang, 2018). Regarding the aforementioned rationale, the investigation of lexical bundles in argumentative essays should be done more intensively. Common writing at the undergraduate level is an essential text type that is important for novice writers (Wingate, 2012). The investigation results can contribute to understanding the learners' writing proficiency and identify the learners' formulaic sequence knowledge, which is prominent for language mastery. However, only a few studies have been about lexical bundles in early undergraduate writing (Ädel & Erman, 2012; Bychkovska & Lee, 2017; Yang, 2017). These studies emphasized the importance of investigating lexical bundles in a more initial stage of academic writing to understand students' writing (Bychkovska & Lee, 2017) and increase language fluency and accuracy (Yang & Fang, 2021).

In the Indonesian context, lexical bundles have not been widely discussed. Most research on lexical bundles has been conducted to analyze the structure (Oktavianti & Sarage, 2021) and to examine lexical bundles theses/dissertations (Fitrianasari et al., 2018; Wachidah et al., 2020) and research articles (Budiwiyanto & Suhardijanto, 2020; Kwary et al., 2017). Only a few studies explored the functional categories of lexical bundles (Budiwiyanto & Suhardijanto, 2020; Wachidah et al., 2020), and these studies did not analyze students' essays; little is known about the discourse functions in the early academic writing stage which is crucial to find out the learners' development and to identify what should be improved or emphasized in the teaching materials. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to a better understanding of lexical bundles and their functional categories as well as provide educators and Indonesian EFL students with an insight into the effective use of lexical bundles in argumentative writing. Furthermore, this study is a corpus study that provides larger data and a more

accurate investigation of lexical bundles since lexical bundles are computer-generated (Salazar, 2014). Particularly, this research attempts to answer these questions:

- What are the functional categories of lexical bundles identified in the students' essays?
- How are the functional categories distributed in the students' essays?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Lexical Bundles**

The lexical bundle was first proposed by Biber et al. (1999) when describing American and British English grammar using the corpus approach in their book. They successfully identified word sequences frequently occurring in natural language as the building blocks of discourse. Lexical bundles refer to the word sequences (three or more sequences) that co-occur syntactically and usually characterize particular types of discourse (Biber et al., 1999; Cortes, 2004). The main procedure for studying lexical bundles is the identification process. Lexical bundles are not predefined linguistic units having multi-word combinations. Instead, they have an empirical basis by relying on the frequency criteria (Salazar, 2014; Wood, 2015). Word sequences can be recognized as lexical bundles with a particular cutoff frequency. However, frequency is not adequate and should be followed up by looking at the distribution of the bundles across texts to avoid individual idiosyncrasies (Lee, 2020; Salazar, 2014).

Another prominent characteristic of lexical bundles is their fixed structure (Cortes, 2004; Salazar, 2014). This is due to the characteristic of lexical bundles as computer-generated bundles, so they are strongly related as structure, not as a semantic unit. The structure of lexical bundles consists of sequences with embedded fragments, and most of them are not structural units. Therefore, most lexical bundles are not idiomatic since the meanings are fully retrievable from the individual words (Cortes, 2004; Wood, 2015). Although lexical bundles are associated with recurrent expressions in natural language, there is the assumption that they will be acquired easily. However, Wood (2015) underlined that acquiring lexical bundles does not happen naturally.

### **2.2 Functions of Lexical Bundles**

Previous studies have explored lexical bundles' functional categories in different registers (spoken vs. written) and enormous genres (academic vs. narrative). Biber et al. (2004) proposed a functional taxonomy to investigate bundles' functions in spoken and written academic registers by classifying bundles into four primary functions, namely stance expressions (i.e., to express the attitude of the writer or certainty toward a proposition), discourse organizers (i.e., to organize discourse), referential bundles (i.e., to refer to any entities or experiences), and special conversation functions (e.g., politeness). For more general use, Biber et al.'s (2004) taxonomy cover lexical bundles in spoken academic register and textbooks with some classifications that are particularly assigned for spoken language, namely, special conversational functions (e.g., politeness and simple inquiry). In addition, the discourse organizers focus on the topic introduction and topic elaboration, which are more relevant in spoken language.

Later, this classification was developed by [Simpson-Vlach and Ellis \(2010\)](#) by adding some new categories and subcategories, e.g., meta-discourse, textual reference, cause and effect, and discourse markers that belong to the discourse organizer category. However, Simpson-Vlach and Ellis's taxonomy is also more suitable for spoken academic registers ([Liu & Chen, 2020](#)).

Another perspective of lexical bundle functions was proposed by [Hyland \(2008\)](#). [Hyland \(2008\)](#) introduced an alternative taxonomy that focuses on the characteristics of written language. In this taxonomy, Hyland classifies the bundles into research-oriented bundles, text-oriented bundles, and participant-oriented bundles. The present study employs the functional taxonomy by [Hyland \(2008\)](#) because it is more suitable for written registers, especially for academic prose ([Liu & Chen, 2020](#)). For example, some previous studies employed Hyland's functional category, e.g., [Fajri et al. \(2020\)](#) and [Yakut et al. \(2021\)](#). [Yang and Fang \(2021\)](#) also used this framework to analyze students' essays in their studies. Table 1 presents the details of Hyland's taxonomy, along with some examples of the lexical bundles.

**Table 1.** Functional categories and subcategories.

Functional category	Explanation	Subcategory	Example
Research-oriented	To refer to entity, activity, and experience	Location	'in the present study', 'at the beginning'
		Procedure	'the use of', 'the role of', 'the purpose of'
		Quantification	'one of the', 'the magnitude of'
		Description	'the structure of', 'the surface of'
		Topic	'the currency board system', 'in the Hongkong'
Text-oriented	To organize text and its meanings	Transition signals (e.g., addition, contrast)	'in contrast to', 'in addition to', 'on the other hand'
		Resultative signals (i.e., inferential or causative relations)	'these results suggest', 'the results show', 'as a result'
		Structuring signals (organize parts of discourse and direct readers to certain parts of the texts)	'as shown in', 'in the next section'
		Framing signals (state argument, limited condition, etc.)	'with respect to the', 'in regard to', 'with the exception of'
Participant-oriented	To exhibit writers' positions and address readers	Stance features	'may be due', 'it is possible'
		Engagement features	'as can be seen', 'it should be'

Because some research used [Biber et al.'s \(2004\)](#) functional taxonomy and other studies used [Hyland's \(2008\)](#) functional taxonomy, this research frequently utilized

the terms from both taxonomies. Regarding the nature, [Biber et al.'s \(2004\)](#) category and Hyland's category share similar concepts related to the functions of bundles in discourse. In the first category, research-oriented and referential bundles share a similar aim, i.e., to attribute entities in the real world. Meanwhile, participant-oriented and stance bundles are related to speakers' attitudes and the reader's engagement. Lastly, text-oriented and discourse organizer bundles help organize the texts. Thus, although this study employs [Hyland's \(2008\)](#) functional category, the functional category terms proposed by [Biber et al. \(2004\)](#) are not replaced and are perceived as relatively and simply equal to Hyland's category.

### **2.3 Previous Studies**

There have been some studies about functional categories of lexical bundles in academic prose (e.g., [Pan et al., 2016](#); [Yakut et al., 2021](#)). Some concerns have been addressed regarding this subject, such as the nativity (native vs. non-native writers), professionalism (professional vs. novice writers), and academic prose genre (e.g., research articles, theses/dissertations, essays). Regarding the nativity (L1 vs. L2, FL), [Salazar \(2014\)](#) examined lexical bundles in the biomedical field written by native vs. non-native English writers. [Salazar's \(2014\)](#) study showed that non-native writers overuse particular bundles, resulting in repetitiveness and lack of variation. Regarding lexical bundles' functions, the L2 writers use participant-oriented bundles restrictedly compared to the other functional categories, which indicates a lack of awareness of this bundle function and lack of exposure to the bundles. In line with Salazar, [Pan et al. \(2016\)](#) also identified the discrepancies in lexical bundle use between L1 and L2 English writers and found that the proportions of functional distribution are relatively similar. However, L2 professional writers utilize fewer research-oriented bundles and more stance-oriented bundles, while L1 professionals use more research-oriented ones. Moreover, some discrepancies in lexical bundle use were found between L1 and L2 English professional writers.

Different from [Salazar \(2014\)](#) and [Pan et al. \(2016\)](#), [Bychkovska and Lee \(2017\)](#) have claimed the different lexical bundle distribution between L1 and L2 English learners. The study revealed that L2 students more frequently use stance bundles in their argumentative essays, and there were some misuses of bundles by the L2 students, which led to some pedagogical suggestions. Similar to [Bychkovska and Lee \(2017\)](#), [Shin \(2018\)](#) proved the same proportion of lexical bundles between L1 and L2 students' argumentative essays. The study showed the domination of stance expressions as many as 47.9% in the native corpus and 45.5% in the non-native corpus, followed by referential expressions (41.1% in the native corpus, and 38.5% in the non-native corpus), and discourse organizers (10.9% in native corpus, and 15.4% in non-native corpus). [Yakut et al. \(2021\)](#) also demonstrated that both L1 and L2 English writers tend to use the same bundle. Both groups used more text-oriented bundles than research-oriented bundles in dissertation writing and also used fewer participant-oriented bundles. In other words, they used more stance bundles than engagement bundles.

Although the comparison of bundles in L1 and L2 writers are intriguing, some studies also solely focus on foreign language (FL) learners (e.g., [Fitrianasari et al., 2018](#); [Yang & Fang, 2021](#)). [Fitrianasari et al. \(2018\)](#) investigated lexical bundles in EFL students' theses and found that undergraduate students more frequently use



research-oriented bundles and text-oriented bundles are more common in graduate students' theses. Later, [Yang and Fang, \(2021\)](#) also analyzed EFL students' essays in China and showed that research-oriented bundles are the most frequently used bundles concerning the type and frequency, followed by participant-oriented and text-oriented bundles. Both [Fitrianasari et al. \(2018\)](#) and [Yang and Fang \(2021\)](#) employed Hyland's functional categories to classify lexical bundles' functions. [Fajri et al. \(2020\)](#) conducted a more recent study contrasting lexical bundles produced by L1 English professional writers vs. L2 English professional writers. The study revealed the different functional categories found in both groups since L2 writers employ fewer quantification bundles than L1 writers. Both groups also utilize the text-oriented bundles more significantly (more than 50%). A different framework was employed by [Sadeghi \(2015\)](#). [Sadeghi \(2015\)](#) used the functional categories by [Biber et al. \(2004\)](#) to examine the EFL students' theses. According to the findings, the most frequent function is the referential expression (50.8%), organizing bundles (41.5%), and stance bundles (7.6%). Referential bundles in the students' theses are very frequent and significant. Regarding the proficiency of foreign language learners, [Chen and Baker \(2014\)](#) demonstrated similar distribution and patterns of bundles used across learners' proficiency levels.

Lexical bundle studies have also focused on the professionalism aspect. For example, [Chen and Baker \(2010\)](#) contrast L1 English professional writers with L1 English students. They examined lexical bundles in two corpora: The British Academic Written English (BAWE) corpus and the FLOB corpus. The study showed some differences regarding lexical bundles in L1 English professional vs. novice writers corpora emphasizing the structures and functions. For the structure, VP-based bundles outnumber the other structural categories in the native students, while NP-based bundles are the most commonly used by L1 professionals. As for the functions, native students use more discourse organizer bundles, while native professionals utilize referential bundles more recurrently. It is noticeable that advanced learners are plausible to achieve native-like writing competence.

Lexical bundle research has also been done by considering the disciplines (e.g., [Pan et al., 2016](#); [Ren, 2021](#)). [Ren \(2021\)](#) explored lexical bundles in research papers published in two fields: applied linguistics and pharmaceutical science. The study demonstrated the difference in lexical bundle functions in both disciplines because referential expressions are the most prevalent in applied linguistics articles, while stance expressions are the most dominant in pharmaceutical science articles. We can notice the different functional categories used in both fields, which exhibit the prominence of disciplines in lexical bundle distribution. Concerning a particular field, [Nasrabad et al. \(2020\)](#) discovered some new functional categories of lexical bundles used in applied linguistics published papers that were not classified in the existing functional taxonomies. Based on the findings of those studies, variations of lexical bundles are not only subject to different fields, but they might also occur within a discipline marking the linguistic characteristics of the discipline.

Based on those previous studies, it is then evident that some factors affect the use of lexical bundles in academic writing, such as nativity (L1, L2, FL learners), professionalism (professional vs. novice writers), and disciplines. Thus, researching lexical bundles is of salience and interest, especially in those areas less covered. Those studies primarily focused on published articles or theses or dissertations, university students' essays as the more initial stage of academic writing mastery are somewhat

overlooked. This study then focuses on EFL novice writers' state, i.e., university students' argumentative essays.

### 3. METHODS

This study employed a corpus approach since it compiled a learner corpus of students' essays, used a corpus tool, and conducted corpus analyses. Below are the detailed descriptions of the methods.

#### 3.1 Learner Corpus Design

The corpus was compiled from the students' argumentative essays assigned in the Writing in Academic Context course for fourth-semester students of an English education department at one of the universities in Indonesia. The participants of this research were required to have taken several writing courses in the department, namely Paragraph Writing, Essay Writing, and Writing in Professional Context. The essays were collected from the participants by conducting some writing tasks related to argumentative essays. The design of the writing task addressed several issues on the design of learner corpus as proposed by Granger (1998, 2008). There are learner variables and task variables, as in Table 2, which were necessary for selecting the participants and designing the writing task.

**Table 2.** Learner corpus variables.

Variables of learners		Variables of task	
General variables	Specific variables	General variables	Specific variables
Age: 18-20-year-old	Learning context: English as a foreign language	Written text	Type of text: argumentative essay
Sex: Female and male students	Proficiency level: intermediate	Topic: education, technology	Setting: timed
Country: Indonesia	FL: English	Genre: academic	Number of words: 500-1000 words
L1: local language(s) or Indonesian L2: Indonesian			

In addition to the variables in Table 2, some features related to the learners should also be concerned for constructing the corpus. Table 2 shows the shared features of the learners (i.e., the participants of this study), such as age, learning context, region, medium, the genre of the text, and task setting. Besides, there are the variable features of the learners, e.g., sex and L1 backgrounds.

#### 3.2 Corpus Tool

A corpus tool is necessary for corpus-driven and corpus-based research since it enables computerized procedures to collect and analyze data. The corpus tool selected for this study is LanCSBox (Brezina et al., 2020) because it can read numerous file formats and has the needed features to identify bundles and conduct analysis (*n*-gram,

frequency, and dispersion measurement). In addition, it works well with the English language data, so the learner corpus of this study is in an unannotated format.

### 3.3 Data Collection

#### 3.3.1 *Collecting the essays*

The data collection procedure involved distributing the writing task to the students. They were assigned to write argumentative essays covering one of the following topics: (1) digital minimalism helps students stay focused, (2) women should not focus on higher education, (3) online learning is more effective than offline learning, and (4) becoming viral is an important goal for millennials. The online writing task was timed to be completed within three days ranging from 500 to 1000 words. The submission was done on Google Drive for a more accessible procedure for the researchers and the participants. After the submission, as many as 169 essays were compiled into a learner corpus with 87.939 tokens.

#### 3.3.2 *Identifying lexical bundles*

The identification stage followed the corpus building as part of the data collection. Since lexical bundles are identified empirically (Cortes, 2004), there should be clear criteria for the identification. There are two identification steps in the present study, i.e., the computerized procedure and the manual procedure.

The computerized procedure was done with the assistance of a corpus tool, LancsBox. This present study explored the lexical bundles containing 3- to 5-word sequences due to several rationales: the size range is the most researched length, and it is a manageable size for both computerized and manual procedures (Lee, 2020). Many studies have focused on 3-word bundles because they display a broad range of productive expressions; thus, they are included in this study. As for the 4-word bundles, they are still manageable and more commonly produced than 5-word bundles. Besides, 4-word bundles have more apparent structures (3-word bundles are usually embedded in them) and have more evident functions (Hyland, 2008). This study also included 5-word bundles to yield a larger size of lexical bundles for the analysis to complete the investigation, as has been done by Gil and Caro (2019).

Since lexical bundles are corpus-driven procedures, some criteria are applied for the identification stage. The requirements include frequency cutoff and dispersion threshold, both of which were processed using LancsBox. The main criterion for lexical bundle identification is frequency. The commonly used cutoff frequency is ten times per million words, but the frequency can be adjusted from two to ten times for a smaller corpus (Hyland, 2012; Lee, 2020). The present study employed ten occurrences to identify the 3- and 4-word sequences. However, the cutoff frequency was changed to five hits in the corpus because 5-word bundles contain more word combinations, decreasing the frequency of use (Cortes, 2013).

The second criterion is the dispersion threshold, which refers to the distribution of bundles in multiple texts in the corpus. Many earlier studies set the occurrence of the bundles in five texts in the corpus as the dispersion threshold, but the present study utilizes a statistical measurement to calculate the dispersion. Several statistical measurements for dispersions of lexical bundles are ‘standard deviation’, ‘variation

coefficient', 'Juilland et al.'s, and some others (Gries, 2008). This study employed Gries' DP for the dispersion threshold since it is suitable for a corpus comprising many texts having different sizes (Biber et al., 2016). The dispersion values are unitless, ranging from 0 (minimum value) to 1 (maximum value). Zero value shows that the lexical bundles are only used in one corpus text, and the maximum values indicate that the lexical bundles are used in multiple corpus texts (Burch et al., 2017).

As for the following procedure, there is manual identification. The manual identification of lexical bundles was done by confirming the bundles with the following criteria: (1) the fulfillment of certain discourse functions, (2) the compositional meanings of the bundles (meaningless and functionless bundles were excluded), (3) the exclusion of proper nouns, and (94) the exclusion of free combinations (Biber et al., 2004; Hyland, 2012; Lee, 2020). Utilizing computerized and manual procedures, the identified bundles are accurate and valid for the analysis. Each author worked independently to identify the bundles manually, and the inter-rater reliability was 95%. The discrepancies were then discussed to reach 100% agreement based on their contexts.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The data that have been collected were classified based on the functional categories and subcategories adopted from Hyland (2008). This study employed Hyland's functional taxonomy by classifying lexical bundles into research-oriented, text-oriented, and participant-oriented categories. The bundles were classified based on Hyland's functional categories independently by each author and discussed to meet the agreement. However, each bundle might occupy more than one function in various contexts, e.g., 'at the end of' can serve as a time or place reference (Biber et al., 2004). An attempt to overcome this issue is by analyzing the concordances of potentially multifunction bundles and categorizing them based on their typical use (Salazar, 2014). After each bundle has been assigned to its functional category, this study investigated the frequency of category and subcategory. The findings of types and frequency of functional categories were then interpreted and connected to the previous studies to discuss and elaborate on the pedagogical implications.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 The Results of Lexical Bundles Identification

This section presents the results of lexical bundles identification. This study has identified 3-, 4-, and 5-word bundles, as displayed in Table 3. Since frequency and dispersion threshold are the criteria for inclusion, the information is also included in Table 3.

**Table 3.** List of 3-word bundles.

3-word bundles	Frequency	Dispersion	3-word bundles	Frequency	Dispersion
'the quality of'	43	0.78	'the use of'	105	0.62
'the spread of'	34	0.84	'a lot of'	96	0.55
'the development of'	33	0.79	'we have to'	21	0.89

Table 3 continued...

'the importance of'	19	0.91	'and many more'	20	0.90
'the existence of'	14	0.91	'as well as'	20	0.90
'one of them'	14	0.90	'I agree with'	18	0.88
'the number of'	14	0.93	'as long as'	17	0.89
'the most important'	10	0.93	'as a result'	14	0.91
'be able to'	61	0.68	'not only that'	10	0.93
'take advantage of'	18	0.88	'it will be'	25	0.85
'according to the'	14	0.90	'there are also'	23	0.88
'take care of'	12	0.93	'there is no'	21	0.91
'stay focused on'	18	0.91	'there are some'	18	0.90
'to sum up'	10	0.93	'and so on'	18	0.90
'in the future'	65	0.73	'as we know'	15	0.92
'in my opinion'	39	0.80	'various kinds of'	16	0.92
'in addition to'	28	0.84	'around the world'	10	0.94
'in order to'	20	0.88	'due to the'	10	0.92
'in the world'	24	0.89			

As many as 37 bundles were identified in 3-word combination, ranging from the most frequently used 'the use of' (with 105 occurrences) into the least frequent bundles 'to sum up', 'not only that', 'due to the', 'the most important', and 'around the world' (with 10 occurrences). This study also identified 4- and 5-word bundles, presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** List of 4- and 5-word bundles.

4-word bundles	Frequency	Dispersion	5-word bundles	Frequency	Dispersion
'one of the important'	30	0.85	'most value to your life'	8	0.94
'must be able to'	16	0.90	'will not be able to'	5	0.95
'that can be done'	16	0.93	'be known by many people'	6	0.96
'in the form of'	15	0.91	'to be seen and recognized'	5	0.97
'at the same time'	10	0.93	'we must be able to'	6	0.95
'as efficiently as possible'	12	0.93	'there are still many people'	5	0.96
'a lot of people'	11	0.95			
'if you want to'	10	0.94			

Table 4 shows eight bundles belonging to the 4-word combinations and six bundles belonging to the 5-word category. These numbers are significantly smaller than the number of 3-word bundles because they have longer word sequences which restrict the number of occurrences. Overall, 51 bundles (51 types) were identified in the learner corpus with 1122 tokens of bundles.

## 4.2 Functions of Bundles

Those identified bundles were categorized based on their functional categories and subcategories. In general, all functional categories and subcategories can be found in the learner corpus. Table 5 presents the complete classification of the bundles.

**Table 5.** Functional category.

Functional category	Subcategory	Lexical bundles
Research-oriented	Location	'in the future', 'at the same time', 'in the world', 'around the world'
	Procedure	'the development of', 'take advantage of', 'the use of', 'as efficiently as possible', 'that can be done'
	Quantification	'one of them', 'the number of', 'a lot of', 'and many more', 'various kinds of', 'a lot of people', 'there are still many people', 'one of the important'
	Description	'the quality of', 'the spread of', 'the importance of', 'the existence of', 'the most important', 'in the form of', 'most value to your life', 'to be seen and recognized', 'be known by many people'
	Topic	'take care of', 'stay focused on'
Text-oriented	Transition signals	'to sum up', 'in addition to', 'in order to', 'not only that'
	Resultative signals	'as a result'
	Structuring signals	-
	Framing signals	'according to the'
Participant-oriented	Stance features	'be able to', 'in my opinion', 'I agree with', 'will not be able to', 'must be able to'
	Engagement features	'we have to', 'as we know', 'if you want to', 'we must be able to'

For a more rigorous discussion, each subfunction of research-oriented, text-oriented, and participant-oriented is presented with examples from the learner corpus in the next sub-sections.

#### 4.2.1 Research-oriented

Several research-oriented bundles were identified in the learner corpus. They refer to entities, activities, and experiences in the real world to be described in texts. All subfunctions of research-oriented bundles are presented below.

##### a) Location

Referential bundles indicate time/place in the writing, such as 'in the future' and 'at the same time' that were found in the corpus.

- (1) ...so, I hope that in the future this kind of learning can continue...  
But at the same time, this era also has some negative sides...

##### b) Procedure

Procedure bundles mark the procedure, step, or implementation of something. There were 'the use of' and 'the development of' as the examples of procedure bundles.

- (2) The use of gadgets is very necessary from the smallest thing to the urgent needs such as work.  
The development of technology in the digital direction is currently growing rapidly.

c) *Quantification*

These bundles are to quantify something being described. There were some variants of quantification of bundles identified in the corpus, e.g., ‘the number of’ and ‘various kinds of’.

- (3) The photo and video sharing pictures on Instagram make users try to display photos and videos as good as possible so that people are interested, and it can increase the number of followers. Various kinds of efforts have been made by millennial circles just to go viral.

d) *Description*

Description bundles are to describe or give attributes to something. Some variants found in the corpus were ‘the quality of’ and ‘the existence’.

- (4) ...it is clear that higher education is very important for women because it will greatly affect the quality of their lives in the future. But the existence of the Covid-19 pandemic has transformed the education system into an online system.

e) *Topic*

Some topic bundles were found in the corpus, such as ‘take care of’ and ‘stay focused on’. Topic bundles are associated with the essay topic or related to the field of study being written.

- (5) People are asked to remain calm and always take care of their health to fight this virus and to maintain their body’s immune health. ...even though students are forced to study after playing on smartphones with their tired eyes, they will sleepy and feel hard to stay focused on studying.

#### 4.2.2 *Text-oriented*

These bundles are utilized to organize text and its meaning to deliver the content of the text. Transition bundles, resultative bundles, and framing bundles were found in the corpus, but surprisingly, no structuring bundle was identified. Each subfunction is presented below.

a) *Transition signals*

The bundles aim to show addition or contrast between elements, e.g., ‘in addition to’ that was found in the learner corpus.

- (6) In addition to signal constraints, online learning causes a lack of understanding of the material presented. ...everyone must adapt and be patient in order to overcome this crisis together.

b) *Resultative signals*

These bundles mark inferential or causal relationships, as in ‘as a result’ that is found in the learner corpus.

(7) As a result, our learning activities become more efficient.

c) *Framing signals*

Framing bundles attempt to frame ideas/opinions based on something/someone, and situate arguments, e.g., ‘according to the’ as found in the learner corpus.

(8) According to the data in the last five years, the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Indonesia has shown rapid development.

4.2.3 *Participant-oriented*

The other bundle functional category is the participant-oriented bundle that focuses on the texts’ writers and readers. Both stance and engagement bundles were found in the learner corpus and are exemplified below.

a) *Stance features*

These bundles are to express the writer’s attitudes and evaluations. One of the examples in the learner corpus was ‘in my opinion’.

(9) In my opinion, online learning has some advantages and disadvantages.

b) *Engagement features*

These bundles address readers directly. Some examples found in the learner corpus was ‘if you want to’.

(9) If you want to be a content creator then you should be a content creator who can be a good role model for people.

4.3 **Distribution of the Functional Categories**

Lexical bundles were also examined based on the frequency of use in the learner corpus. Table 6 presents the bundle usage proportion.

**Table 6.** Frequency of lexical bundle usage.

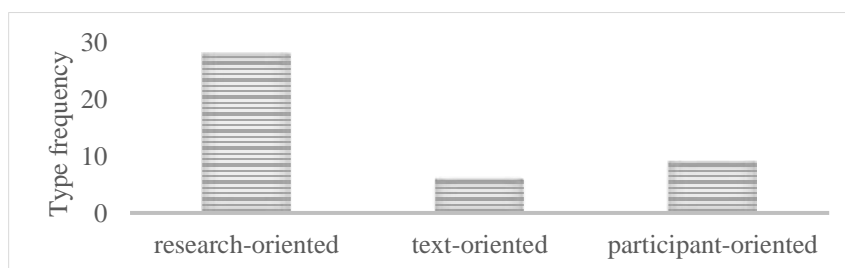
Functional category	Type		Token	
	Raw frequency	%	Raw frequency	%
<b>Research-oriented</b>				
Location	4	9.30	109	12.39
Procedure	5	11.63	184	20.91
Quantification	8	18.60	206	23.41
Description	9	20.93	154	17.50
Topic	2	4.65	30	3.41
	<b>28</b>	<b>65.11</b>	<b>683</b>	<b>77.62</b>
<b>Text-oriented</b>				
Transition signals	4	9.30	30	3.41
Resultative signals	1	2.33	14	1.59
Structuring signals	0	0.00	0	0
Framing signals	1	2.33	14	1.59
	<b>6</b>	<b>13.96</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>6.59</b>



Table 6 continued...

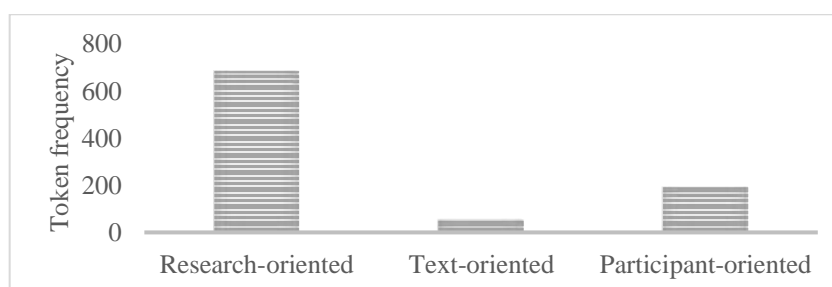
<b>Participant-oriented</b>				
Stance features	5	11.63	139	15.80
Engagement	4	9.30	52	12.39
	<b>9</b>	<b>20.93</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>28.19</b>

Table 6 shows the type and token frequency of the functional categories and subcategories, except for the structuring signal that is not found in the corpus. The type frequency showed that research-oriented was the most frequent type which is plausible because this category has more subcategories than the others. The second most frequent type was participant-oriented, while the least frequent type was text-oriented, as displayed in Figure 1.



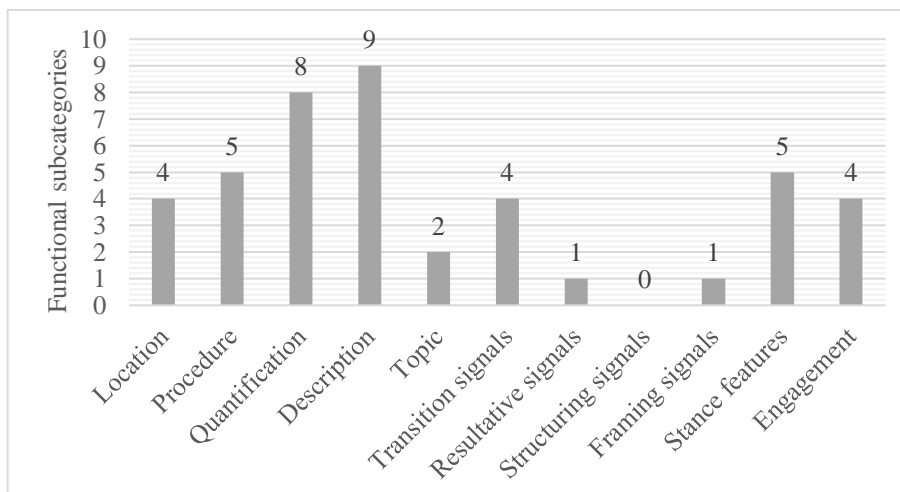
**Figure 1.** Type distribution of functional categories.

As for the token frequency, there are linear results with the type frequency, showing that research-oriented bundles were the most frequently used, followed by participant-oriented bundles and text-oriented bundles. The frequency comparison is shown in Figure 2.



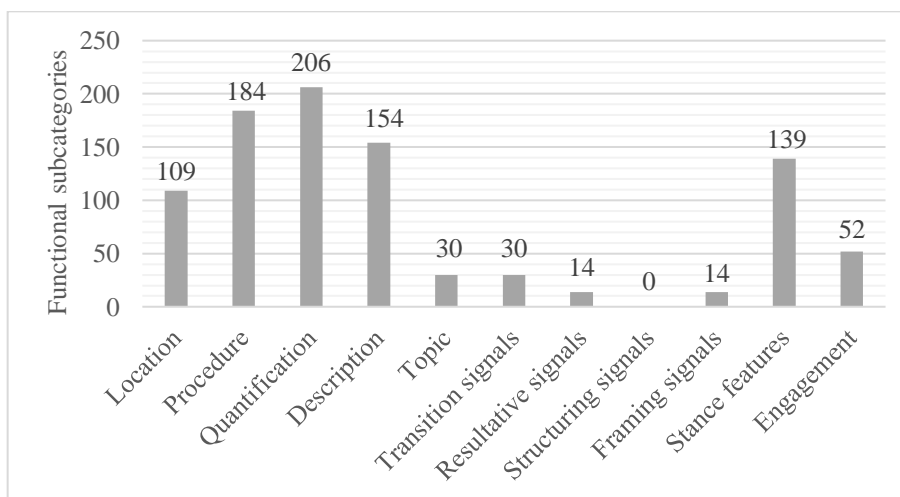
**Figure 2.** Token distribution of functional categories.

Based on the type and token distribution of functional categories, a similar state between the variants and the general use was noticed. Research-oriented bundles had the most variants of bundles, and they were also the most frequently used. Meanwhile, the participant-oriented and text-oriented bundles were the second most and the least number of bundle variants and the second most and the least frequently used. As for the subfunctions, description bundles (research-oriented) had the most variants compared to other subfunctions in the same functional category and across functional categories, followed by quantification bundles and procedure bundles.



**Figure 3.** Type distribution of functional subcategories.

Regarding the token distribution, there were some differences in the functional categories. The most frequently used subfunction was quantification (23.41%), followed by procedure (20.91%) and description (17.50). Although there were more description bundles, they were not used more frequently than quantification bundles and procedure bundles. However, the three of them still belong to the same functional category, i.e., research-oriented bundles.



**Figure 4.** Token distribution of functional subcategories.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This study revealed that, despite all functional categories being identified in the corpus, the use of research-oriented bundles outnumbers the other functional categories and text-oriented bundles were underused. The findings of all function categories are relevant to many other studies with relatively similar results (Fajri et al., 2020; Salazar, 2014). It indicates that these three functions are fundamental in constructing a discourse, especially in academic prose. However, what should be

emphasized is the distribution of the bundles in enormous texts depending on nativity, professionalism, and proficiency.

In terms of frequency, this study demonstrated the most frequent bundles are research-oriented bundles related to the substantial aspects of the discourse (e.g., time, location, description). This result corresponds to several previous studies (Biber et al., 2004; Sadeghi, 2015; Yang & Fang, 2021), emphasizing the use of research-oriented bundles (or referential bundles) in academic contexts. The results confirmed that these bundle types are prominent and salient in academic prose. However, Pan et al. (2016) stated that L1 professionals utilize more research-oriented bundles than L2 professionals showing the discrepancies that might occur due to the nativity of the writers. Interestingly, a different result was demonstrated by Salazar (2014), claiming that text-oriented bundles are the most frequently used, in contrast to the present study's finding. Like Salazar (2014), Wachidah et al. (2020) also demonstrated the high frequency of text-oriented bundles used in the results and discussion sections. It might happen due to the learners' proficiency levels, the disciplines, and the different needs of specific academic paper sections (i.e., findings and discussion). Another contrasting result was reported by Bychkovska and Lee (2017), with stance bundles as the most commonly used bundles and referential bundles as the least frequently used ones.

As for the second most frequent function, there were participant-oriented bundles. This result is in accordance with Liu and Chen (2020) and Yang and Fang (2021), who also identified participant-oriented bundles as the second most frequent, followed by text-oriented bundles as the least frequent bundles. Liu and Chen (2020) proved that referential bundles and stance bundles are prominent in academic lectures. This finding emphasized the salience of engagement with the readers and the writer's stance. As for the least frequent bundles, this study showed that the learners rarely used text-oriented bundles. There was some restricted use of text-oriented bundles, either the types or the tokens, resulting in the minimum frequency of use.

In contrast, Salazar (2014) claimed that participant-oriented bundles are the least used by non-native writers. The different result is plausible due to varying levels of learners' proficiency, different learning quality, and various needs for the academic discipline. Similarly, Wright (2019) who examined lexical bundles in the literature review section, also shared a contrasting result, showing that the second most frequent bundles are discourse organizers or text-oriented bundles, and participant-oriented bundles are the least frequent. Yakut et al. (2021) emphasized the least important bundles in the study are the participant-oriented bundles. The contrasting findings can also be found in the studies of textbooks reported by Lee (2020), showing that discourse-organizing bundles are more dominant than stance expression bundles in linguistics textbooks. Another study was conducted by Hussain et al. (2021) which demonstrated the different results arguing that discourse organizing bundles (text-oriented bundles) are frequent. However, considering the distinct characters of textbooks and scientific papers, the discrepancies might be unavoidable.

More specifically, this study showed the absence of structuring signals as the subcategory of text-oriented bundles. Structuring signals are discourse organizers or text-oriented bundles to help connect each part of the writing into a more structured whole. In the text-oriented category, there are relatively smaller members compared to research-oriented and participant-oriented bundles. For instance, transition signals only have four types, the resultative signal only has one type, and the framing signal

has one type, leaving the structuring signal with no subcategory member. The minimal use of text-oriented bundles and the absence of structuring signal bundles indicated that the learners were not fully mastered or knowledgeable in organizing their writing. Although earlier studies proved the usage deficiency of text-oriented bundles, this present study specifically addressed structuring signals as the subcategory.

Concerning the type/token ratio, the results of this study demonstrated a small ratio since the variants were limited or restricted. The number of occurrences was pretty high, but the number of variants was limited, which can be seen from, for example, research-oriented bundles. It proves that the learners already had the repertoire of lexical bundles, but it did not vary to some extent. There were finite variants of the bundles, and there was the domination of research-oriented bundles in writing. [Chen and Baker \(2010\)](#) found out the use of specific connector bundles in students writing, which shows the repetitiveness. Similarly, [Salazar \(2014\)](#) argued that non-native English writers overuse specific bundles yielding to a lack of variation.

On the contrary, [Shin \(2018\)](#) and [Yakut et al. \(2021\)](#) proved that L1 and L2 writers use the same proportion of lexical bundles. In [Shin's \(2018\)](#) study, the corpus was collected from first-year university students during the initial higher education stage. Meanwhile, [Yakut et al.'s \(2021\)](#) study focused on the doctoral dissertation as the highest level of education. These studies demonstrate the similarity of lexical bundle use between L1 and L2 English writers showing the plausible linear development of lexical bundle mastery for native and non-native writers, either in the initial or the final stage. However, it is premature to state the previous statement certainly, and thus this result invites further studies on L1 vs. L2 English written production.

The study's findings not only informed us and helped us understand the features of academic writing, but they could also inform pedagogy ([Hyland 2012](#); [Meunier, 2012](#)). Regarding the frequency of use, research-oriented bundles being used the most frequently across disciplines either by L1, L2, or FL learners indicate that these bundles are crucial in discourse construction. Regardless of the nativity and professionalism, research-oriented bundles outnumber other word sequences in the texts, so research-oriented bundles should be perceived as the basic bundles of most discourses. Based on the frequency findings, the topic subcategory had the lowest token and type frequency compared to all subcategories in the research-oriented type. Topic bundles are related to the field of research ([Hyland, 2008](#)) or associated with the topic of the academic essays. It might be due to the lack of mastery of the topic being written or the learners' ignorance. Although further studies need to be done regarding this issue, it is relevant to state that learners need to master the topic well before writing.

As for the other two bundle functions (i.e., participant-oriented and text-oriented bundles), they were used more restrictedly, as seen by the lower type and token frequencies, compared to the research-oriented bundles. Based on the result, text-oriented bundles were negligible in the study, which is quite surprising because these bundles were important to keep the writing flow. Therefore, the minimum use of text-oriented bundles should be considered seriously by writing instructors. They should introduce this bundle function and its concrete use to help learners organize their writing.

Interestingly, the absence of structuring bundles (as part of text-oriented bundles) might indicate the students' low writing proficiency. The absence of certain

bundles reveals the lack of novice writers' fluency (Hyland, 2012). Writing an essay is about combining sentences into paragraphs and combining paragraphs as a whole part. Thus, the ability to structure the essays or texts is crucial, and it can be done by using several markers that might be in the form of sequences. The absence of structuring bundles emphasized the students' inability to organize their writing. It is then crucial to expose learners to structuring bundles and train them to develop and structure their essays.

Another point to revisit is the variants of lexical bundles. Given the type and token frequency results, there was an evident gap between variants and the frequency of use. As discussed, the corpus's TTR ratio of lexical bundles was small. The variants were minimal, but the use was high, showing the learners' lack of variants in word combinations. Although lack of variation commonly happens in the L2 and EFL contexts, this should be solved by providing adequate language input related to discourse chunks or word combinations to the learners. Learners must be familiar with various bundles to enrich their lexical profile and writing quality.

Based on the study's results, it is necessary to facilitate learners with sufficient writing materials. Realizing that word bundles construct texts, students must be familiar with them. To begin with, teachers can use the Academic Formulas List I (Simpson-Vlach & Ellis, 2010) to introduce lexical bundles to the learners. By doing so, they are exposed to lexical bundles more intensively. Teachers can also use a corpus, such as the BAWE corpus, or academic sub-corpus in the COCA, to facilitate authentic and massive examples of bundles used naturally in academic prose. Some lexical bundles-related materials include the introduction to various bundles serving various functions. The emphasis should be placed on text-oriented bundles, which are absent while important in texts.

All in all, consulting corpus in designing writing materials should be taken into account. Teachers or instructors can design teaching materials comprehensively by checking the language used in an appropriate corpus (in this context, written academic corpus). Some corpora are highly recommended, such as the general reference corpus as the general information of lexical bundles usage. There are COCA and BNC2014 that are quite updated and massive so teachers (and learners) can better understand using lexical bundles. Specifically, BAWE can be recommended as an academic written corpus that comprises students' writing so teachers can explore what lexical bundles are prominent among native writers. Teachers can then focus on what should be emphasized and repeated or omitted in their teaching materials.

Besides referring to native speaker corpora, it is essential to consult a learner corpus, such as ICLE and MICUSP. Teachers might have some insights into the learners' language development by using a learner corpus, especially on lexical bundles. By doing so, teachers might find the shared principles of lexical bundle use across learners with various L1 backgrounds. In addition, learners also need to be more familiar with academic terms, which means teachers should refer to the Academic Word List and Academic Formulas List in designing and delivering writing materials. Regarding the learner corpus utilized in the present study, it can be a guide to consult teaching materials for the writing instructors or lecturers in the department. The learner corpus can be developed further into a bigger one for wider purposes.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The study's findings show that all three major functions were identified in the learner corpus. They are identified in the corpus along with the subfunctions of each function category. However, the functional categories' distribution varied as the use of certain bundles was lower than the others, with research-oriented bundles outnumbering all bundles. In contrast, text-oriented bundles were underused by the learners. This bundle distribution should be considered because in writing argumentative texts, it is also essential to use text-oriented bundles to organize the arguments. More specifically, structuring signals (the subcategory of text-oriented bundles) were absent in the learner corpus, indicating the learners' lack of discourse markers knowledge, which should be highlighted for improvement. Despite the functions, the variants of the bundles were also used limitedly compared to the bundle tokens. The low frequency and the absence of particular bundles might signal the need to introduce learners to those bundles more intensively in the writing courses.

This study involved the fourth-semester students who had passed several writing courses in the previous semesters. However, since they were not final-year students, they have not fully learned and mastered academic writing. The findings of the present study can be used to map the learning progress, considering that the fourth semester is the medium phase of the whole study period in a university. To map the learning achievement, it is expected for future researchers to conduct the study in the final year of the study to see the complete mastery of the learners. Concerning the corpus, it is also necessary to collect exemplary sources of data to get a clearer picture of the learners' language development. Furthermore, this research does not compare the learner corpus with any other control corpus; the results are solely based on the investigation of the learner corpus. Thus, it is also intriguing to have a control corpus to compare the findings from a learner corpus or a general reference corpus.

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## Adjective Clauses in -er Suffix of Occupation Definitions in Online Dictionaries

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### Abstract

*Learners' dictionaries are often intended to assist students with distinct proficiency levels. However, few studies have shown how dictionaries with different intended users were compared. This paper aimed to compare and contrast adjective clauses in -er suffix occupation definitions in two online dictionaries. Data, consisting of 33 occupation words with the suffix -er, such as 'barber' and 'waiter', were collected from the online Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE) and the online Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD) using purposive sampling. The data were analysed using syntactic analysis, focusing on the components of adjective clauses. The results showed the head noun of the adjective clauses differed; LDOCE used pronouns most frequently (80.6%), while OALD used noun phrases only (100%). The relative pronoun 'who' was used more frequently in LDOCE (48.4%) and 'whose' in OALD (62.5%). Transitive verbs were used the most in LDOCE (48.4%), but in OALD, it was linking verbs (57.9%). The additional information that affected the length of the adjective clauses was longer in OALD compared to LDOCE. The study results provide pedagogical implications for English learning-teaching by utilizing online dictionaries. English teachers and learners are encouraged to integrate dictionaries into the learning-teaching activities.*

**Keywords:** Adjective clause, -er suffix, Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

A dictionary comprises the vocabulary list of a language. The meaning of every standardized word of a language is described in a dictionary with other details depending on the kind of the dictionary. It can take various forms, from the printed, CD, and electronic, to even, as the technology grows over time, the online ones, whether monolingual or bilingual (Jin & Deifell, 2013). Its features and contents get updated over time to provide the latest words and assist the users (Li & Xu, 2015). In an online dictionary, it is even possible not only to look up a single word just like a printed one but a group of words (Lew, 2012). It can be helpful for native people or, even more importantly, for those trying to learn a new language (Utakrit & Fama, 2020).

The entries in a dictionary may help users learn information other than the words' meanings, such as pronunciation, word classes, and even syntactic components. Every word accumulated in a dictionary has its description; it can even have multiple definitions depending on the context or word class. Those descriptions can be in the form of a sentence. For example, the description of the word singer from the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary is 'a person who sings, or whose job is singing, especially in public'. In a word description from a dictionary, the users can break down the elements, from the articles (a), relative pronouns (who/whose), phrases (a person, is singing), to clauses (whose job is singing). Especially for learners who still have problems constructing grammatically correct clauses and sentences, a dictionary can be beneficial (Utakrit & Fama, 2020) as it provides actual and grammatically and contextually accurate examples.

Several studies were already conducted on dictionaries, whether on their entries (Dziemianko, 2015; Rice & Zorn, 2018) or uses in education (Alahmadi & Foltz, 2020; Rohmatillah, 2016; Santoso & Andriyadi, 2019). Indeed, a dictionary can be handy for students, not only for the vocabulary, such as meaning (Tulgar, 2017) or spelling (Abalkheel, 2020; Satake, 2018), but also for other dictionary features like noun countability (Chan, 2017), syntactic elements like phrases, sentences, and even the contextual use of the word (Hill et al., 2016; Li & Xu, 2015; Satake, 2018).

Even though many studies have investigated the use of dictionaries in learning, and some compared different dictionaries, only a few studied clause constructions used in the word definitions (Hoey, 1995; Osselton, 2007; Ptasznik, 2020), especially the adjective clauses. In this study, the researchers were interested in the construction of adjective clauses used in two online dictionaries to describe the meaning of a word. EFL students often struggle with the construction of clauses, and the struggle with adjective clause construction is relatively high (Haryanti & Setyandari, 2018; Subekti, 2017). The students' challenges in adjective clauses include incomplete sentences (dependent clause), imprecise choices of adjective pronouns, and inaccurate choices of adjective clauses compared to other clauses (Haryanti & Setyandari, 2018; Subekti, 2017). The teachers and students may observe those elements of adjective clause constructions within the word definitions in dictionaries to gain examples of the appropriate formation and use of adjective clauses.

Therefore, this study explored the adjective clause constructions in the dictionaries. In addition, some dictionaries are more suitable for beginner students such as the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, and those for more

advanced students such as the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Kizi, 2020). Hence, the researchers were interested in comparing the adjective clauses in the word descriptions from both dictionaries to see how dictionaries for different proficiency levels differ in the word definitions. The research question was formulated as follows:

- How were the adjective clauses in -er suffix occupations manifested in the online Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Dictionaries

A dictionary compiles information about the vocabulary of a language. In dictionaries, rich information about words is provided with various labels, phonetic transcriptions, examples, and other details (Wilson et al., 2020), though the definitions might be without any context. A dictionary is an "alphabetical list of words presenting meaning and consists of pronunciation information, definitions, and etymology" (Rohmatillah, 2016, p. 3). A dictionary may be monolingual, bilingual, bilingualized, or even multilingual (Rohmatillah, 2016). One example of multilingual dictionaries in Indonesia is Indonesian-English-Arabic, while the bilingualized one uses two languages (Rohmatillah, 2016). Both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries have their uses, especially for students. The monolingual dictionaries often provide more features about the word, such as grammar, collocation, and word register, while the bilingual ones provide the meaning, though students might get confused with the provided features and examples (Rohmatillah, 2016; Wilson et al., 2020).

In a recent development, monolingual English dictionaries that gather slang words or idioms, such as U-Dictionary, emerge as a corpus (Nguyen et al., 2018). It can help the non-native speakers to keep up with the most updated entries developed in different English-speaking cultures. Regarding the forms of the dictionary, it can be in the form of printed (Lew, 2012), visual, or electronic, and, as the technology rapidly grows, there is an online version of a dictionary (Jin & Deifell, 2013). One famous dictionary, MacMillan English Dictionary, even started to operate as an online dictionary only (Li & Xu, 2015).

### 2.2 Adjective Clauses

An adjective clause is one of the English clauses. A series of words with a subject and predicate can be a clause (Azar, 1999). Apart from its characteristic, which consists of at least one subject and verb, a clause may include other related information, like 'complement' and 'adjunct' (Radford, 1997). It is a smaller chunk than a sentence, but more significant than a phrase (Crystal, 1987), though it can be a sentence (Subekti, 2017). An adjective is a word class whose function describes or modifies a noun (Haryanti & Setyandari, 2018; Subekti, 2017). The function of an adjective clause is similar to an adjective, which is to alter a noun (Azar, 1999), though it might not have any adjective class words inside the clause. An adjective clause, otherwise known as a relative clause, is often preceded by a relative pronoun to

introduce the noun that the adjective clause modifies. The relative pronouns include who, which, whom, that, whose, where, or when (Haryanti & Setyandari, 2018).

[1] The man who is standing by the door is tall.

[2] The man, who is standing by the door, is tall.

As a clause can be a potential sentence, the pattern of a clause is similar to a sentence. In example [1], the pattern is SV+A, with ‘who’ as the subject and ‘is standing’ as the predicate. In a sentence pattern, the adverbial can be before or after a verb. In a clause, the adverbial is commonly after the verb. Frank (1972) proposed two forms of adjective clauses: defining and non-defining adjective clauses, whose usages are differentiated by commas. In example [1], the adjective clause gives necessary information to distinguish or specify the subject from other people, while in example [2], the adjective clause acts as an appositive, which provides additional information.

The descriptions of occupation words in dictionaries include adjective clauses. This study analysed adjective clause constructions using the occupation words with the suffix -er. Occupation words, like nouns, can be derived from verbs. The affixation process causes the word class to change (Crystal, 1987). The verbs that undergo the affixation process with derivational morphemes turn into new words and change into noun class words. According to Ljubičić (2018), several suffixes can change verbs into job titles as the noun form, including -er, -ee, -or, -ant, -ent, -ist, -eer, -ian, -ster, -ive, -ic, -ess, and -ie. Both LDOCE and OALD had occupation topics that provided the occupation words; some underwent affixation (e.g., ‘trainee’, ‘typist’, ‘teacher’), and some did not (e.g., ‘cook’). A part of those occupation words had a -er suffix. For example, the word singer is from the verb sing and suffix -er. The affixation process indicates the subject who does the work (Martini, 2016). The adjective clause is used to modify the subject and may contain information about the action the said subject does (Martini, 2016). Hence, occupation words would support this study to analyse the adjective clause construction in dictionaries.

### **2.3 Previous Related Studies**

Aside from the vocabulary, dictionaries provide proper uses or grammar. Whether it is the definitions, which are the descriptions of the words and might be decontextualized, or the sentence examples, which are more in context, dictionaries can be used as the sources of grammatically correct sentences. Various kinds of dictionaries have their benefits for learning. In the case of online dictionaries, they can support learning as it is portable (Li & Xu, 2015) and can adapt to users’ needs, such as quickly finding a word or even a group of words (Lew, 2012). Different features, labels, and information given in dictionaries make each dictionary unique.

Previous studies have focused on dictionaries. For example, to compare printed dictionaries, which are also available for computer use, Abalkheel (2020) reviewed The American Heritage College Dictionary and the Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary for linguistics student context and showed that both dictionaries were beneficial for linguistics students who studied English as the second language (ESL). As for the online dictionaries, Jin and Deifell (2013) researched the students’ preferred online dictionaries to learn in eight different languages. Each language had its preferred dictionary by the students, for example, nciku.com (Chinese), jisho.org (Japanese), or spandict.com (Spanish). In addition, Kizi (2020) studied and compiled

eight reliable online dictionaries for learning based on their entries, additional features, and target users' language levels.

However, the studies on clause constructions in dictionaries were still lacking. Regarding the investigation of clauses in dictionaries, Hoey (1995) compared and contrasted the clauses within word definitions in a dictionary, which showed the adjective clause constructions in parallel word definition pairs in dictionary entries. Osselton (2007) also investigated the when-clauses in word definitions from English learners' dictionaries and found that the clauses in some dictionaries were often shortened. Ptasznik (2020) shared the use of single-clause when-definition format for word definitions in dictionaries and elaborated on the constructions of single-clause when-definition models for word definitions. To contribute to the existing knowledge on this topic, this study wanted to compare the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (ldoceonline.com), which is pre-intermediate user friendly (Kizi, 2020), and Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionaries (oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com), which is suitable for upper-intermediate to advanced students (Kizi, 2020), especially on their adjective clauses in the word definitions.

### 3. METHODS

#### 3.1 Source of Data and Data Collection Procedure

This paper explored the adjective clauses used in word definitions from the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE) and Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionaries (OALD). This study used a descriptive design that systematically analysed the data in the form of adjective clauses from word definitions (Ary et al., 2010). The words analysed in this study were occupation words with the -er suffix, which may refer to "AGENT, PATIENT, INSTRUMENT, and INHABITANT nouns" (Kawaletz & Plag, 2015, p. 2). The AGENT function indicates the person who does the action denoted by the verb word, and it generally becomes an occupation name. For example, the verb 'sing' with the suffix -er becomes a noun 'singer', defined as 'a person who sings' (LDOCE); thus, the word 'singer' refers to AGENT. Other examples are, for instance, a 'loaner' (PATIENT), a 'cooker' (INSTRUMENT), and an 'Auckland' (INHABITANT).

The occupation entries with the suffix -er were collected from each dictionary as the criteria for the purposive sampling (Ary et al., 2010). This research used 31 occupation samples from LDOCE and 32 from OALD. The purposive sampling was used to select the occupations with the -er suffix. However, LDOCE did not have 2 out of 33 selected occupation words, resulting in 31 samples, while OALD did not have 1 out of 33 occupation words, resulting in 32 samples. The data were collected in April 2021 from the online dictionary websites <https://www.ldoceonline.com> and <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com>. Syntactic analysis was used to examine the collected adjective clauses. The syntactic analysis helps to observe the structures and elements that construct clauses (O'Grady, 2010).

#### 3.2 Framework of Analysis

The analysis of the adjective clauses from both dictionaries covered the head nouns modified by the adjective clauses, the relative pronouns used to introduce the adjective clauses, the verb forms that followed the relative pronoun, the subject complements, and the additional information, based on the theories from Radford (1997) and Azar (1999) regarding the components of an adjective clause. The instrument for this study was a structured observation sheet to note the existing data based on the keywords (Lambert, 2012). In this study, the keywords were the criteria or the instrument items in the form of adjective clause elements. The instrument had five items to note the head noun, relative pronoun, verb form, subject complement, and additional information. The data were then tabulated and presented in tables with percentages. The discussion compared and contrasted the results from both dictionaries.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the results of the research question are presented. In breaking down the adjective clauses from both dictionaries, the analysis was divided into five categories: the head noun, relative pronoun, verb form, subject complement form, and additional information.

##### 4.1 Head Noun

The head nouns that were modified by the adjective phrase differed in LDOCE and OALD. The possible forms for head nouns were pronouns or noun phrases. In Table 1, 25 analysed occupation words in LDOCE used the pronoun, ‘someone’, as the head noun (80.6%), and six of them used noun phrases (19.4%). In contrast, OALD only used noun phrases as the head noun. Both the pronoun and the noun phrase may be used as the head noun of an adjective clause, in line with Azar (1999).

**Table 1.** Head noun forms in LDOCE and OALD definitions.

No.	Head Noun	LDOCE		OALD	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Pronoun	25	80.6%	-	0%
2	Noun phrase	6	19.4%	32	100%
Total		31	100%	32	100%

##### 4.2 Relative Pronoun

To signal the adjective clause, a relative pronoun was used after the head noun. In both dictionaries, the used relative pronouns were ‘who’, ‘whose’, and ‘that’ (Table 2). In LDOCE, the relative pronoun ‘who’ was used the most in 15 out of 31 samples (48.4%), followed by ‘whose’ in 13 samples (41.9%), and ‘that’ in three samples (9.7%). In OALD, ‘whose’ was used the most in 20 out of 32 samples (62.5%), followed by ‘who’ in 11 samples (34.4%), and ‘that’ in one sample (3.1%).

In both dictionaries, the relative pronoun ‘whose’ was always followed by a job, while ‘who’ and ‘that’ were always followed by the present singular form of the verb (V1(s/es)). The higher use of ‘whose’ was in contrast to Haryanti and Setyandari (2018).

**Table 2.** Relative pronoun forms in LDOCE and OALD word definitions.

No.	Relative Pronoun	LDOCE		OALD	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	who	15	48.4%	11	34.4%
2	whose	13	41.9%	20	62.5%
3	that	3	9.7%	1	3.1%
Total		31	100%	32	100%

### 4.3 Verb Form

Aside from the subject, the defining feature of a clause is a predicate. The used predicates in both dictionaries were transitive, intransitive, and linking verbs (Table 3), in line with Radford (1997) and Azar (1999). In LDOCE, the most used verb form was transitive verbs in 15 out of 31 samples (48.4%). The linking verb was the second most used verb in 14 samples (42%), and the intransitive verb was used the least in two samples (6.4%). In OALD, however, the most used verb form was the linking verb in 19 out of 32 samples (59.4%), followed by transitive verbs (31.2%) and intransitive verbs (9.4%).

**Table 3.** Verb forms in LDOCE and OALD word definitions

No.	Verb Form	LDOCE		OALD	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Transitive verb	15	48.4%	10	31.2%
2	Linking verb	14	45.2%	19	59.4%
3	Intransitive verb	2	6.4%	3	9.4%
Total		31	100%	32	100%

### 4.4 Subject Complement Form

The additional differentiating factor for the adjective phrases in both dictionaries was the subject complement following the linking verbs. As the number of adjective clauses that used linking verbs differed in LDOCE and OALD, the number of subject complements also differed. The subject complements found were gerund, to-infinitive, and adverb, in line with Conti (2011). The most used subject complement in both dictionaries was to-infinitive, found in 11 samples in both dictionaries (78.6% in LDOCE, and 57.9% in OALD). The second most used form of subject complement was gerund: two samples in LDOCE (14.3%), and seven samples in OALD (36.8%). The least used form was adverbial, which was only used once in both dictionaries.

**Table 4.** Subject complement forms in LDOCE and OALD word definitions.

No.	Subject complement	LDOCE		OALD	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gerund	2	14.3%	7	36.8%
2	To infinitive	11	78.6%	11	57.9%
3	Adverb phrase	1	7.1%	1	5.3%
Total		14	100%	19	100%



Those four categories were the structural elements that distinguished the adjective phrases from the word definitions in LDOCE and OALD. Three of them were the basic components of an adjective clause (head noun, relative pronoun, and verb). The last category was the additional differentiating factor, the subject complement, which only differed in the number of gerunds used.

The head nouns used in LDOCE were in pronouns and noun phrases, while in OALD the head nouns were only in noun phrases. The dominant form of the head noun in LDOCE was the pronoun 'someone', while the noun phrase was 'a person' in OALD. The use of the singular form for the head noun helped the students identify the countability of the noun being described, supporting the finding from [Chan \(2017\)](#) that dictionaries helped students identify the countability. For the noun phrase, some unique cases were found in each dictionary. The noun phrase 'a man' in example (1) was only used in LDOCE. Similarly, in example (4), the compound subject a person, 'company', or 'shop' was also only used in LDOCE. On the other hand, in (2), a noun phrase with a post-modifier (a person working in a hospital) was only used in OALD. The other noun phrases, 'a scientist' and 'a person' or 'a company', had the same occurrence in both dictionaries. In some word descriptions, the head noun was the only differentiating factor for both dictionaries (in (3)).

- (1) A man who serves food and drink at the tables in a restaurant. (waiter-LDOCE)  
A person whose job is to serve customers at their tables in a restaurant, etc. (waiter-OALD)
- (2) A person, company, or shop that makes or sells jewellery. (jeweller-LDOCE)  
A person who makes, repairs, or sells jewellery and watches. (jeweller-OALD)
- (3) Someone whose job is to take X-ray photographs of the inside of people's bodies, or who treats people for illnesses using an X-ray machine. (radiographer-LDOCE)  
A person working in a hospital whose job is to take X-ray photographs to help with medical examinations. (radiographer-OALD)
- (4) A man whose job is to cut men's hair and sometimes to shave them. (barber-LDOCE)  
A person whose job is to cut men's hair and sometimes to shave them. (barber-OALD)

The relative pronoun followed the head noun to indicate the adjective clause. The relative pronoun 'that' was used the least (in (2)). As stated by [Azar \(1999\)](#), 'that' refers to both human and thing, which is less specific, while 'who' refers to a person and 'whose' shows possession. That is helpful for students since they can use that in general but often struggle with the slightly different use of 'who' and 'whose' ([Haryanti & Setyandari, 2018](#)). Those three relative pronouns were used in both dictionaries. However, 'who', whose usage is directly followed by verbs like in example (1), was dominant in LDOCE, and 'whose', whose use needs to be followed by a noun, was dominant in OALD (in (3)).

There were three verb forms following the relative pronoun used in the LDOCE and OALD dictionaries. As clauses have similar patterns to sentences, the use of those three verb forms was in line with the sentence patterns in [Burton-Roberts \(2016\)](#). The most used one in LDOCE was transitive verbs, while in OALD, it was linking verbs. In (5), LDOCE used transitive verbs ('makes', 'pours', and 'serves'), while OALD used intransitive verbs ('work'). In example (6), LDOCE also used a transitive verb ('writes'), and OALD used a linking verb ('is').

- (5) Someone who makes, pours and serves drinks in a bar or restaurant. (bartender-LDOCE)  
A person who works in a bar, serving drinks. (bartender-OALD)
- (6) Someone who writes books, stories, etc., especially as a job. (writer-LDOCE)  
A person whose job is writing books, stories, articles, etc. (writer-OALD)

Though they were used less in LDOCE, linking verbs were used in significant numbers in both dictionaries. The subject complements that followed the linking verbs in both dictionaries were gerunds, to-infinitives, and adverbials. If both dictionaries used linking verbs to describe a word, they used a similar form of subject complement (either both gerunds, both to-infinitives, or both adverbials); if the subject complement was either gerund or to-infinitive, both dictionaries derived the subject complement from the same verb (in (7) and (8)). Gerund, like in example (7) ('making and repairing'), was used less in both dictionaries. To-infinitive form was used significantly higher in both dictionaries, such as (8) ('to clean'). This is in line with [Conti \(2011\)](#) that to-infinitive is used more for subject or subject complement. The adverbials were used to describe the same word in both dictionaries (in (9)) for the officer.

- (7) Someone whose job is making and repairing wooden objects. (carpenter-LDOCE)  
A person whose job is making and repairing wooden objects and structures. (carpenter-LDOCE)
- (8) Someone whose job is to clean other people's houses, offices, etc. (cleaner-LDOCE)  
A person whose job is to clean other people's houses or offices, etc. (cleaner-LDOCE)
- (9) Someone who is in a position of authority in the army, navy, etc. (officer-LDOCE)  
A person who is in a position of authority in the armed forces. (officer-OALD)

#### 4.5 Additional Information

The other differentiating factor of the adjective clauses in both dictionaries was the additional information that added details to the word descriptions. The additional information was the objects or the adverbials. In example (10), the word descriptions from both dictionaries were the same until the verb ('sings'); however, OALD added more information. The longer and more complex description usually indicates the higher literacy of the target reader ([Biber, 2004](#)). The length of the adjective clauses was longer in OALD generally because of the additional information. However, some word descriptions in OALD were shorter, like in example (11) that used 'astronomy' as the object instead to cover stars, planets, and other sky objects. The additional information for the word definition could affect meaning acquisition for students because language learners need adequate information that can help them differentiate one definition from another ([Li & Xu, 2015](#)).

- (10) Someone who sings. (singer-LDOCE)  
A person who sings, or whose job is singing, especially in public. (singer-OALD)
- (11) A scientist who studies the stars and planets. (astronomer-LDOCE)  
A scientist who studies astronomy. (astronomer-OALD)

Some jobs with the suffix -er were not available in either LDOCE or OALD. In example (12), the word 'videographer' was available in LDOCE, but there was not any entry of this word in OALD. In contrast, the word 'demographer' was available in OALD but not in LDOCE.

- (12) Someone who records events using a video camera. (videographer-LDOCE)
- (13) A person who studies the changing number of births, deaths, diseases, etc. in a community over a period of time. (demographer-OALD)

The construction of adjective clauses in this research included the head nouns that were modified, relative pronouns, verb forms, forms of subject complement, and additional information. The head nouns modified in both dictionaries were in the forms of pronouns and noun phrases, in line with [Azar \(1999\)](#), who suggests that both forms of head nouns were appropriate to be modified with adjective clauses. As in the relative pronouns, LDOCE used 'who' more, while OALD used 'whose' more. The higher use of 'whose' was intriguing because it was in contrast to [Haryanti and Setyandari \(2018\)](#), as the relative pronoun 'whose' was used the least frequently. The verb forms used in the adjective clauses included transitive, intransitive, and linking verbs, in line with [Radford \(1997\)](#), though LDOCE used transitive verbs more and OALD used linking verbs more. As the linking verbs were also used, the adjective clauses used subject complements, which were in line with [Azar \(1999\)](#) and [Conti \(2011\)](#). Both dictionaries used to -infinitive to be the subject complement the most. To add specific information to the word definitions, the adjective clauses provided additional information of various lengths. LDOCE and OALD provided more complex descriptions of different words to make the definitions clearer ([Biber, 2004](#)).

#### **4.6 Pedagogical Implications for English Learning-Teaching**

The use of online dictionaries can help the students build their language knowledge. Online dictionaries can help to find the meaning of words and understand a string of words or sentences in the grammatical aspect ([Jin & Deifell, 2013](#)). Since students struggle with adjective clauses more than other clauses ([Pakdel & Khansir, 2017](#)), teachers can use online dictionaries to provide grammatically correct usages of adjective clauses. By observing the head noun of the adjective clause that the dictionaries offer, the students can identify the countability of the job words ([Chan, 2017](#)). The word definitions also vary the use of relative pronouns 'who', 'whose', and 'that'. As students often have difficulties with those pronouns ([Haryanti & Setyandari, 2018](#)), they can identify the relative pronoun used in the dictionary to improve their adjective clauses.

As for the verb forms, the variety supports the sentence patterns by [Burton-Roberts \(2016\)](#), and for Indonesian learners, the patterns of the adjective clauses in English are similar to those in Indonesian ([Hamsa & Weda, 2019](#)). Especially to follow linking verbs, the students can observe the alternatives other than to-infinitive that is more commonly used ([Conti, 2011](#)). Last but not least, both dictionaries had clear definitions, which hopefully could help the students' understanding and analysis in distinguishing contrasting word definitions ([Li & Xu, 2015](#)).

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This paper explored and compared the use of adjective clauses for word descriptions in online dictionaries of LDOCE and OALD. The results showed that the components of adjective clause (head noun, relative pronoun, and verb form), subject complement form, and the additional information made the adjective clauses in both dictionaries different. The most used head noun in LDOCE was pronoun ('someone') and noun phrase ('a person') in OALD. In some cases, the head noun was the only different part of the word description; for the relative pronoun, 'who' was used more

in LDOCE, while ‘whose’ was used more in OALD. The verb form used the most in LDOCE was transitive verbs, but the linking verb was used more in OALD. The subject complements that followed the linking verbs in both dictionaries were in the to -infinitive form the most. In addition, if both dictionaries used linking verbs for a word, the subject complement took the same form. Lastly, the additional information, such as objects and adverbials, caused the adjective clauses in OALD to be generally longer than LDOCE. Three definitions of -er suffix occupations are unavailable: ‘choreographer’ and ‘demographer’ in LDOCE and ‘videographer’ in OALD entries.

This research is limited to the number of the observed words. Future researchers can investigate more words from different categories, use other dictionaries, or observe different language constructions. This study implies that by finding the right words, such as occupation words, teachers can find examples of proper grammar, and language learners may use online dictionaries to acquire the examples of adjective clause uses. Therefore, teachers may integrate online dictionaries in language learning to find meaning, observe grammar and syntactic constructions, and select dictionaries to tailor students’ language knowledge and needs.

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## **Sociopragmatic Parameters of Politeness Strategies among the Sasak in the Post Elopement Rituals**

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### **Abstract**

*Arranged marriages in Asia involve the consent and approval of family members. However, marriages that condone elopement are shared among the Sasak people in Lombok. The elopement entails taking away the bride from her home without knowing her parents, close relatives, or other family members. As such, events that occur after discovering the elopement are the focus of this study. Post-elopement rituals are held to assuage both sides of the families, where the Pembayun (or adat leaders) are nominated to represent the families. The Pembayun were found to be bound by sociopragmatics in their use of politeness strategies. The analysis of sociopragmatics is based on the politeness theories of Brown and Levinson (1987). A qualitative approach that involved interviews and video*

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recordings were used to collect data from participants and non-participant observation. The study revealed that sociopragmatics play a significant role in *Pembayun*'s choice of politeness strategies such as social distance, power distribution, rank, situational, and cultural parameters. These factors determine the weightiness of the act and become the basis for politeness strategies in the deliverances of specific acts during the post-elopement rituals.

**Keywords:** Elopement ritual, politeness, Sasak culture, sociopragmatic.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is culture-specific and is a matter of self-choice, but family involvement is not negligible in arranged marriages. An example and the focus of this study is the marriage among Sasak people, which culturally accept marriage by way of elopement. Elopement among the Sasak is a form of marriage that involves kidnapping the bride from her home without the knowledge of her parents, close relatives, or other family members. The elopement's main reason is the fear that the marriage will not be approved by either side of the family, although both the bride and groom-to-be are interested in getting married (Yaqin et al., 2013). According to Yaqin and Shanmuganathan (2020), to mitigate the problems faced by the community in terms of the customs and culture after marriage, the Sasak conducted a ritual known as the *Sorong Serah* in the post-elopement ritual. Sirajudin (2001) says that the *Sorong Serah* ceremony is culturally steeped, symbolic, and interpreted to neutralize any fraud that arises from elopement. The *Sorong Serah* is a speech event involving the *Pembayun* (or *adat* 'tradition' leaders), and these traditional leaders represent and act as the spokesperson for the bride and groom's families. According to Sirajudin (2001), a *Pembayun* is assigned to initiate and convey the message on behalf of the groom's family as the aggressor of the elopement act.

The discussion between the *Pembayun* in *Sorong Serah* is a confrontational communication that includes emotions and ideas representing families (Yaqin & Shanmuganathan, 2020). Naturally, the message or act to be delivered by the *Pembayun* may contain 'threats' to the addressee's emotions or feelings, or what in pragmatics is referred to as face threats (e.g., Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1967). During the *Sorong Serah* ritual, the groom's family would seek the help of the *Pembayun Penyerah* (Ph), who is the primary spokesperson for the bride's family and is assisted by the *Pembayun Pisolo* (Po). There is only one primary representative of the bride's family, the *Pembayun Penampi* (Pi), who would speak to the groom's family.

*Pembayun*'s choice of various politeness strategies is carefully selected, and each strategy has some calculated rationalizations that are considered appropriate for communication. Brown and Levinson (1987) state by considering how face-threatening acts (FTA) are delivered rationally, two types of parameters determined the politeness strategy used for a particular FTA. The first is the payoffs that the speakers calculate from the use of the chosen politeness strategy. The payoffs are substantially related to matters such as its efficiency in terms of message clarity on the one hand and the extent to which the type of face desire must meet. Payoffs are



supposed to include specific face-to-face actions determined at the priority scale of one of these determinants in the sense that particular strategies may be chosen to meet the need for greater efficiency by reducing attention to the face.

Alternatively, to save face and protect the speakers' dignity, a politeness strategy is used in a particular utterance to deliver a clear message efficiently. Therefore, every politeness strategy used is selected by the speakers based on the calculated advantages. However, payoffs as *a priori* parameter to choose a politeness strategy must integrate with the second parameter type, i.e., social parameters. Sociologists (such as Fishman, 1972), anthropologists (such as Hymes, 1964), and sociolinguistic members (such as Bell, 1976) demonstrate some verbal interactions in certain community language speakers. Indeed, most of the linguistic choices expressed in communication are sociable. No communication involving language speakers is discussed without simultaneously discussing the role of the social parameters in such communications.

Studies on politeness have emerged in many different countries and Western countries. Studies in this field have been pioneered by Goffman (1967), which were later popularized by Brown and Levinson (1987). In East Asian countries, the stereotype of politeness has also been contested/re-examined (Matsumoto, 1988; Pizziconi, 2003; Zhan, 1992). In Southeast Asia, the politeness study in the Malay context has been studied by Johari and Zahid (2016) and Zahid and Johari (2018). In the Indonesian setting, the study of politeness was investigated by Wouk (2006) and Yaqin and Shanmuganathan (2020).

Furthermore, several studies on the Sasak language in Lombok have been widely studied by many scholars (Mahsun, 2007; Mahyuni, 2004). However, attention seems to be mostly concerned with dialect variations, code-switching, morphology, phonology, and syntax. Recent studies (Nothofer, 2012; Yusra; 2012) appear to follow a similar trend. Although there is tremendous interest in the study of Sasak people, research that deals with politeness study among the Sasak are still left unexplored. In light of this scarcity, there seems to be a need to study the Sasak language in particular events. Notably, there seems to be a need for politeness-based studies to explore the phenomena of real-life social interaction. The language is crucially involved, and the culture of the people seems to play a crucial part. Besides being scarce, such a study is intriguing for other reasons as well. In the first place, it is undeniable that the Sasak, their culture, and the language they speak are interrelated. This interrelationship is reflected in all social activities that characterize these people's lives in a community, which still preserves most of its cultural uniqueness regardless of the vast social dynamism modernization has brought to it. This community, i.e., the Sasak community, still maintains its long-preserved tradition that colors its people's life, which for one reason or another, seems to attract the attention of people from other cultures. The Sasak language has become the essential medium that interweaves all social undertakings of the people within this tradition. It is inseparable from and becomes part of the tradition itself. In this tradition, various aspects of the people's lives, which spring from their culture, interact and interrelate in a way markedly manifested in the Sasak language.

Accordingly, this study specifically tries to answer the following research question:

- What are the sociopragmatic parameters of politeness strategies used by the *Pembayun* (*adat* leaders) in various interactions of the post elopement rituals?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Politeness Strategies**

The most influential model of politeness is the face-saving view proposed by [Brown and Levinson \(1987\)](#). Concurrently, [Goffman's \(1967\)](#) version of politeness argued that people employ face-saving measures to maintain harmony and relationship ([David & Cheng, 2008](#)). Based on the theory of face by [Goffman \(1967\)](#), [Brown and Levinson \(1987\)](#) define face as the necessary will of each individual that is also understood by others. The face is divided into two types, namely, positive and negative faces. A positive face is an image of self or personality demanded by an interactant (in other words, a desire to be accepted in a particular case). In contrast, a negative face is a primary claim to take care of oneself and the right not to be disturbed (in other words, a desire not to be bothered by others). Therefore, a positive face is a matter of culture and social group that involves sharing sociocultural norms and rules and is unique from culture to culture. [Brown and Levinson \(1987\)](#) view the face as an emotional investment problem that can be subjected to loss, maintenance, and improvement. Therefore, it should be the focus and attention as a result of any interaction.

The face requires two-way communication from the parties involved. [Brown and Levinson \(1987\)](#) believe that saving each other's faces has fulfilled the shared expectations between the speaker and hearer and for the benefit of all. Therefore, they propose their theory of linguistic devices as a politeness strategy to save face. [Brown and Levinson \(1987\)](#) divide politeness into positive politeness and negative politeness. Positive politeness shows familiarity, closeness, and a good relationship between the speaker and the speaker.

In contrast, negative politeness is a means to show the social distance between the speaker and the hearer. In general, [Brown and Levinson's \(1987\)](#) theory threatens speakers' positive and negative faces and hearers involved in the interaction. Thus, requests, suggestions, advice, and threats are classified as "face-threatening acts (FTA) that endanger negative face" ([Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 65](#)). The speaker's positive face is threatened by the act of apologizing and receiving praise, according to the politeness theory.

According to [Brown and Levinson \(1987\)](#), the face is prone to threats arising from specific actions. There are discussions caused by the content or expression that causes the face to be threatened, either the speaker's face or the hearer's face. [Brown and Levinson \(1987\)](#) refer to speech acts like this as face-threatening acts. According to [Brown and Levinson \(1987\)](#), each face-threatening act has a different weightiness, and it is up to the speakers to determine appropriate politeness strategies.

### **2.2 Sociopragmatic Parameters**

The sociopragmatic parameters that influence a speaker's choice of politeness strategies in verbal communication comprise three essential variables. These are the social distance (D) between the speakers and the addressee, the power distribution (P) that shows the power of the speakers on the addressee, and the rank of imposition (R). [Brown and Levinson \(1987\)](#) claim that these sociological variables are culturally specific. Society's culture defines the distribution of power and social distance among participants and the imposition associated with an act. Since the D, P, and R at the

same time characterize each FTA, they, along with other variables such as ‘setting’ and ‘scene,’ determine the weight of the FTA. The weight of FTA is evident in terms of accumulated values D, P, R, and other variables. Hence, the higher the cumulative value of the higher FTA D, P, and R, the more the need to choose a higher politeness strategy. Note that calculating the result of ‘payoffs’ of cumulative values for D, P, and R is subjected to the speaker’s priority scale to each social dimension with a particular FTA. The value for both D and P is low, and the R-value is quite moderate. The speaker can still choose a higher strategy if he puts a very high R position for some reason.

It should be noted that the submission of values to these social parameters is without a free context. A high-value assignment for P to participants, for example, is a context that is structured in the sense that the context defines it. In other contexts, participants’ roles may be clearly defined so that P needs to give different values to him. Although the value of P given to participants in the role is set by its context, there is no guarantee that the value of P will remain stable throughout the event. In this regard, [Brown and Levinson \(1987, p. 79\)](#) point out that “other situational sources of power may contribute to or adjust or entirely override such stable social variations”. Thus, every social dimension will be assessed based on the situational variables in communication. It was further stated that every social variable is a ‘context relative’ concerning [Brown and Levinson \(1987\)](#). Thus, with situational factors entering the values for this social dimension, “the values assessed hold only for S and H in a particular context, and for a particular FTA” ([Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 79](#)).

Some experts argue that [Brown and Levinson’s \(1987\)](#) politeness theory can only be applied to Western cultures and is unsuitable for East Asian language analysis ([Ide, 1989](#); [Matsumoto, 1988](#)). [Matsumoto \(1988\)](#) argues that the negative face rescues to preserve one’s territory, which differs from the Japanese culture, where individuals are more concerned with adhering to expected behavioral norms in certain social situations. Using the example of politeness in Japanese culture, [Matsumoto \(1988\)](#) shows that politeness is obligatory on many occasions among Japanese people, even without face-threatening acts. On the other hand, some experts argue that aspects of the [Brown and Levinson’s \(1987\)](#) model are still relevant for analysts exploring the technical concepts of analysis (see [Grainger, 2018](#); [Harris, 2003](#); [Kiyama et al., 2012](#)). [O’Driscoll \(2007\)](#) argues for [Brown and Levinson’s \(1987\)](#) work adjustments to be used in cross-cultural interactions. [Holmes et al. \(2012\)](#) find that concepts from [Brown and Levinson \(1987\)](#) were useful in the workplace interaction analysis.

### 3. METHODS

#### 3.1 Research Design

The study uses a qualitative approach, as it involves all aspects, including the characteristics and roles concerning the sociopragmatic politeness strategies used by the Sasak *Pembayun* in the post-elopement rituals. The researchers argue that [Brown and Levinson’s \(1987\)](#) models can explain the ongoing relationship between the participants in the context of ritual discourse (i.e., the Sasak post-ritual elopement). The current study thus aims to analyze the interaction where politeness strategies of the [Brown and Levinson \(1987\)](#) models can be applied. The politeness strategies are

not considered to contain a predetermined meaning but to establish meaning from various aspects of context. As the phenomenon of politeness does not operate in a vacuum, politeness develops in the socio-cultural context of society.

### 3.2 Participants

The participants used in this study were six *Pembayun* (*adat* leaders), who were selected from one district in East Lombok regencies. The choice of this district was based on a historically-based that they are still adhering to the Sasak traditions. Another reason for the choice was that this district's standard Sasak language is spoken. The participants were determined based on snowball sampling, i.e., information from acquaintances who knew of families engaged in post-elopement rituals. Each informant-related information served as an addition, a comparison, or contrast to the dissenters' information engaged in a ritual.

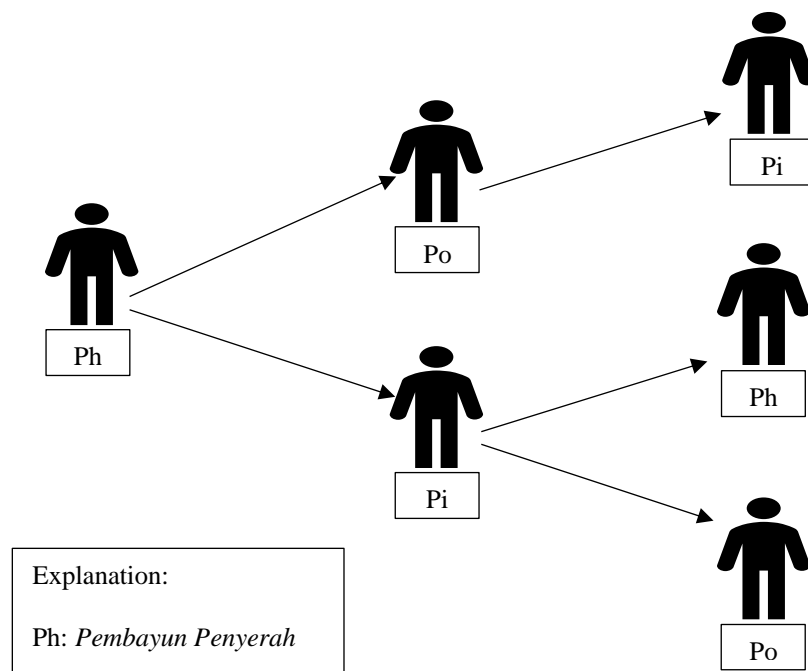


Figure 1. Participants of a snowballing chain.

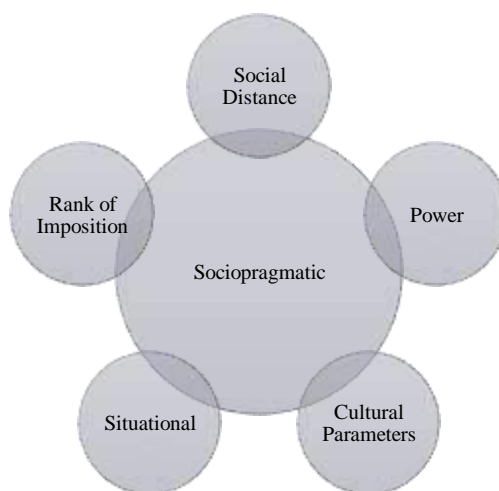
### 3.3 Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data in the study was obtained through audio/video recordings with a total duration of nine hours of conversation recorded at fifteen elopement rituals. The entire exchange between the *Pembayun* was presented as it was and was not edited nor revised. Each stage in the *Sorong Serah* marriage ceremony ritual was between 50 and 70 minutes. The length of each data varied as the negotiations differ according to how fast the family relented to accept the settlement. The researchers used two kinds of observation methods, namely, participant and non-participant observation. Both methods required the researchers to conduct video recordings and notetaking in a particular location while interacting with the participants (i.e., family members and the *Pembayun*). Semi-structured interviews were carried out to allow the participants

to talk and provide information about the conversation concerning particular rituals, the *Pembayun*'s roles, the strategies used to negotiate, and any other information about elopement practices in the analysis and discussion.

#### 4. RESULTS

The results of the sociopragmatic parameters of politeness strategies used by the *Pembayun* in various interactions of the post elopement rituals are shown in Figure 2. In the rituals, sociopragmatic parameters, such as social distance, power distribution, rank, situational, and cultural characteristics, play an important influence in the *Pembayun*'s choice of politeness strategies. These elements govern the significance of the act and serve as the foundation for the politeness strategies used throughout the post-elopement rituals.



**Figure 2.** Sociopragmatics of politeness strategies in the post elopement rituals.

Each of the sociopragmatic parameters of politeness strategies found in the post elopement rituals is described in the following subsections.

##### 4.1 Social Distance

The difference is related to the reciprocal social distance; if the participant is socially distant, they will defer to each other. This social distance is indicated using the refined speech level, as shown in the following Extract (1). In the extracts, Po to *Pembayun Pisolo*, and Pi to *Pembayun Penampi*.

- (1) Po: *Alhamdulillahirrabilalamin, sekewenten dewek titian pacing maring ragendane sami ring, pengarse agung, sekewenten dewek titiang puniki pendikayanan tuk dane Pembayun dewek titiang hingkang mangsih suksame kebaos punang, sekewenten dewek titiang nunasan kenapa kanundang-undangan, ulem-uleman. Yen sampun napak utawi durung ngantos pangandike dawek.* [Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Universe, as a wise spokesperson, I just told you all. However, I'm only a delegate entrusted by *Pembayun Penyerah*, who is still outside the area, to ask about the completeness of the invitation. If you have the answer, you are welcome to answer.]

- Pi: *Nggihdane agung, patuthikang dados rage same rauh maring genah puniki, nggih sadurung dewek titiang puniki atur piatur hikang yugye pacang piware nggih, dewek tiang pacang ngatur ruwiyen ajikrame puniki semapan sane wonten hingkang ring kiwetengen.* [Yes, Sir, the noble spokesperson (polite) who had just arrived at the place. Before I answer this question, I will first introduce the people who have been in this *ajikrame* (customary meeting) event, both right, left, and behind (me).]

The exchange in (1) is between Po (for the groom) and Pi (for the bride) in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony. The social distance between them was reflected in the use of refined speech. The Po saluted Pi as a ‘wise spokesperson,’ giving him due deference while humbling himself as ‘only a delegate.’ In reciprocation, the Pi paid equal respect by stating the *Pembayun Penyerah* (Ph), who was also the main representative of the groom’s family, was waiting to be invited into the premise where the discussion was taking place by the Pi and the bride’s family as a ‘noble spokesperson.’ In this instance, the social distance was great, and the language was refined. It would be inappropriate to use plain language by any of the *Pembayun* under such circumstances to offend the addressee because it was considered rude and improper. As the groom’s family was considered the aggressor, refined language was highly expected. Furthermore, social distance also indicated the ‘status’ of the families and should be given priority. Although the *Pembayun* may be friends or acquaintances and maybe close in an informal social setting, such proximity may be reduced when they are in such formal settings as the post-elopement rituals.

When speakers are from the same side or are close acquaintances, the language used is less formal when addressing each other. For example, consider how Ph delivered a request to Pi, as shown in the following extract (2).

- (2) Ph: *Nugrahe sane pacang maparing ragendane antuk sareng sami dawek nugrahe tiang ngiring aruan bian niki.* [Sorry, I am telling you to make haste because it is already very late (afternoon).]  
Pi: *Nggih sesampun dewek ugi puniki jagi napakin arep ragen, silak rapetan, silak.* [Well, I have finished talking; please do move forward.]  
Ph: *Silak, embe aik nao no?* [Please, have some palm water?]
- (3) Pi: *Ampure, nunasan tang. Ape jaminan niki sampun pas keloek bekek kesepakatan? Ampure.* [Sorry, I beg you. Does an agreement guarantee this deposit?]  
Ph: *Nggih sampun.* [Yes, it’s done.]

The exchange in extracts (2) and (3) involved participants Ph and Pi, who were a part of the discussion in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony. The use of plain language in extract (2) reflected how the participants placed their social closeness as a high priority. In this case, the friends’ status dominated the conversation during the ceremony. In (3), the participants, in turn, acted in their respective roles in the formal ceremony of the *Sorong Serah* ceremony so that the friendship status was virtually absent. Social distance value among them was higher because of the circumstances surrounding the communication between them in a formal situation.

## 4.2 Power Distribution

Theoretically, when a speaker has higher power than the addressee, there is no politeness strategy in communicating the face-to-face action required by the speaker. However, age and event formality may need the speaker to use specific politeness

strategies irrespective of their authority over the addressee. The study also found that certain factors could increase the cost of FTA to the addressee until the speaker, regardless of its power to the addressee, would use a specific politeness strategy in communication.

- (4) Pi: *Sampun sah paripurna kang ajikrame. Kang sapungkure benjang sape sira tan onang wicara malih.* [After *ajikrame* has been validated and completed, then you have no right to speak anymore.]  
 Ph: *Antuk jero Pembayun, yen sampun putus ajikrame, tan onang wecana malih.* [As stated by *JeroPembayun*, if the *ajikrame* has been implemented, then we have no right to speak.]

The discussion in extract (4) was part of the conversation between Pi and Ph, which occurred at the bride's home in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony. Pi (as the host) had power over Ph in matters relating to the marriage rituals. The difference in power was represented by the asymmetry of speech used in it, where Ph used the refined level of Sasak language. In contrast, Pi used the plain level Sasak language. In extract (4), the rules of the language held by the Sasak community limited the refined language levels from Ph to Pi and justified the use of normal levels. These norms included Pi or any other person in the same situation of being a *perwangse* (honorable). The position of a *Pembayun* in the Sasak marriage in Lombok is such that all people in this community should speak refined languages (Mahyuni, 2004; Yaqin et al., 2013; Yusra, 2012). Admittedly, the speech-level case used in the discussion between Pi and Ph in (4) above appeared to require specific clarification beyond what is held in the theoretical model of linguistic politeness.

### 4.3 Rank of Imposition

Face-threatening acts (FTAs) to addressees are determined by the natural factors of FTA, power distribution, the social distance between participants, and situational factors. It was found that FTAs such as demand has high imposition, but depending on the social factors and the circumstances that affect them, different politeness strategies were used.

The factor of the situation determined the magnitude of FTA for the addressee. Situational factors such as the level of imposition and social distance between participants and the situation variables can increase the cost of FTA. By request, for example, it is naturally possible, and it may have a higher impact than others. However, the height of the impact of the request seems to be the speaker's prerogative to assess it based on the evaluation of all contextual variables on the medium of action. Consider, for example, the following requests presented in the context of other communications.

- (5) Pi: *Pelungguh tang, ketaon tiang napi niki adat sakral adat Sasak pewaris kang adiluhung. Ampure pak kadus, sadurung dewek titiang niki ketampi sekadi pengandike-pangandike wonten ubaye dawek kebaos maring kadus. Kembekne dek te jauk tandé aji niki?* [You know that this is a sacred Sasak custom and a good legacy from the time of our ancestors. Before that, I wanted to apologize to the village chief. As mentioned earlier, there is an agreement (*ajikrame*) with the village chief. Why you don't bring that precious symbol?]
- (6) Pi: *Enggih alhamdulillah wassyukurillah sekali pangandike sampun tependikayang pinak hajat sampun kantong ring akse ring arep sami penglingsir-penglingsir enggih manggederes jeles dawek adeqsak pedas penggitan adek dendek arak meong dalem karung tang.* [All right,

praise to God. As has been said, I hope all those who are here are well informed. To make it clear, please open it so it does not look like buying a cat in a sack.]

- (7) Pi: *Ampure ape arak tande adat Sasak ajikrame niki?* [Sorry. Is there a custom symbol of the *krame*?]

Extracts (7), (8), and (9) were requests for action. In (7), the ‘request’ required a positive politeness strategy where the addressee submitted an ‘*aji*’ or price symbol (a penultimate *Pembayun*, a female representative). Extract (8) presented the use of hedging or gratuitous strategies; negative politeness strategy (represented by having ‘as said’). This demand required the addressee to open the *harte berana*, the girder (groom). In this case, the speaker conveyed the request to bring ‘signaling’ as an off-record politeness strategy. Some of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness strategies used by the speakers could be seen in the utterance of the request of extract (8) by using the direct strategy with positive politeness while demand in extract (9) used the direct strategy with negative politeness. Request in extract (9) used an off-record politeness strategy. In other words, the request in extract (9) was the highest weight on the addressee due to an off-record politeness strategy. At least that could be deemed as the consideration of each speaker about the weightiness of the request.

Thus, in those extracts (i.e., 7, 8, 9), speakers were more compelling than addressees, indicating the value of the power (P). The social distance, only in extract (8), indicated some degree of social distance as suggested by the refined language level, which may be associated with the event’s formality. However, the highest value of the distance in demand in extract (8) was corrected with the lowest politeness strategy. Therefore, how demand in extracts (7, 8, 9) was interchangeable but was not attributed fundamentally to the distribution of power or social distances between speakers and addressees.

The social dimension remaining with politeness strategies used in each request may be associated with the rank of imposition, respectively. This R is the discussion of how much damage the request will cause to the addressee’s face. These judgments should be based on their assessment of situational factors and other social dimensions.

#### 4.4 Situational Variable

The situational variable broadly defines the context and thereby determines the value of the social parameters based on which politeness selection strategy is made to a specific FTA. In this concept, the choice of politeness strategy is not associated with only ‘who is presenting FTA to whom’ but with ‘who delivers FTA to whom under what circumstances.’ In this view, the distribution of power, social distance, and imposition are subject to specific circumstances and, together with it, determine the weight of FTA and be the basis for choosing the politeness strategy required to reduce it accordingly.

In certain communicative events, a state variable may be very dominant, overcoming the social parameters. For example, a particular action must be conveyed in specific circumstances that consider where the communication occurs, for example, the request in extract (10).

- (10) Ph: *Suruk ne becatan, dengan sak iak milu menserah no! Mobil uah nganteh ne!* [Ask people who will join in the *Sorong Serah* ceremony! The car has been waiting for a long time!]



What was specific in this request was bald on record, in plain speech level, but the speaker delivered it in one shout. The speaker addressed an invitation to a young man (who would take part in the *Sorong Serah* to the bride's house), about twelve meters from him. Therefore, in such a situation, shouting was a temporary requirement of the expressions that carry the act as efficiently as possible, a case that has room for correction. Thus, the minimum correction used in the request did not necessarily indicate that the action was not severe. On the contrary, it was due to the establishment of communication (spatial distance between the speaker and the addressee), which caused the speaker to place communication efficiency over the precedence of weight control. From another point of view, such a setting lowers the rank of the imposition of the act so that it poses a minimum threat to the addressee's face.

#### 4.5 Cultural Parameter

Concerning polite or impolite behavior, cultural parameters relate to the values held by the people on what is considered polite behavior and what is not. In other words, such values are the sources of any cultural parameters that come out and are used to guide and, in some ways, control their politeness behavior, for example, the discussion between the Pi and Ph in extract (11) below.

- (11) Pi: *Angkak kesak lupak pikun lalok, lek jelon side nyunata neno.* [Why am I so naive on the day you held the circumcision.]  
 Ph: *Dek ne loek sik kebadak, aran jak roah kodek-kodek.* [I didn't tell many people, because it is not a special ceremony.]  
 Pi: *Dekke lek bale waktu no, tiang le Lombok tengah.* [I was not at home at the time; I was in Central Lombok.]  
 Ph: *Insy Allah lamun tebegawe malik jak, pasti tiang dateng bebadak, ance teleteo endeng nyiur.* [God willing, if there is a ceremony later, I should tell and ask for coconuts.]

In (11), Pi delivered an apology and empathized with excessive statements because he could come to his son's ceremony. In the Sasak culture, such an excuse is unacceptable without the addressee asserting that there is nothing to apologize for, which is expressed in respect of the addressee's face and, more importantly, to show politeness. Ph's responded, "*dek ne loek sik kebadak aran jak roah kodek-kodek*" (I didn't tell many people because it is not a special ceremony), which seems to justify why the addressee could not come because he did not invite many people. Thus, the addressee did not lose face because of his apology. However, the politeness shown by Ph was not only that but he was also shown as humble (line 2).

In line with (4), Ph indicated the repetition of the previous utterance in which he reinforced what has been said in line (4). The utterance in line (2) seems to justify the negativity that caused him to be absent in his circumstance. By saying, "*Insy Allah lamun tebegawe malik jak, pasti tiang dateng bebadak, ance teleteo endeng nyiur*" (God willing, if there is a ceremony later, I should tell, and will come to ask for coconuts), the speaker reported that his absence did nothing because in the future he will be invited to attend the event. The following phrase, "*ance teleteo endeng nyiur*" (and will come to ask for coconut) this utterance was an excessive utterance showing that the speaker was very humble. Keep in mind that this utterance may also contain the addressee's power distribution, which is the speaker's mode of showing simplicity. Extract (11) was an essential parameter of politeness because, in

some instances, the speaker would choose the politeness strategy in which politeness is a culture embodied in the Sasak community.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The study's findings revealed that sociopragmatics play a significant role in *Pembayun*'s choice of politeness strategies such as social distance, power distribution, rank, situational, and cultural parameters. These factors determine the weightiness of the act and become the basis for politeness strategies in the deliverances of specific acts during the post-elopement rituals (see Figure 2).

Social distance is positively associated with the degree of deference used (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The more socially farther, the more respect the reciprocal social distance. This means that those socially distant people are more inclined to defer from one another. Social distances are also found to be the determinants of speech-level choices. The higher the social distance, the more conducive it is to use, and the more exceptional is the Sasak language. The more diminutive social distance is, the more the need to use plain language becomes. Concerning Matsumoto (1988), honorifics in such situations also determine politeness. Therefore, the refined language indicates social distance and respect, while plain language is associated with social closeness and acceleration.

Concerning the power distribution within the social parameters, the study found that the distribution of power between speakers related to deference, options (level) speech, and politeness strategies in one event, speeches involving participants with different powers are characterized by respecting speech-level choices. Unlike social distance attributes, the respect associated with power distribution is essential with no counter-feedback. Deference is given by the less powerful to the more powerful. In this case, the less powerful speakers use a higher, refined speech while the more powerful may likely use plain language. However, Mahyuni (2004) suggests that they must use appropriate language, especially concerning a person's status in the 'hierarchy.' Matsumoto (1988) also suggests when a person of higher status is involved, distance and power are given markedly higher values. Age and event formality was also specific factors that influenced a politeness strategy in communication.

Moreover, the nature of the FTA determines the imposition of FTA as some FTA is naturally higher than the others, either universally or culturally specific. For example, the form of commands generally can be considered more impactful than demand. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the threats to the negative face are higher than the threat to the positive face, giving a higher figure in negative politeness than those given to positive politeness. However, faces, particularly the difference between positive and negative faces, are ignored in this case (Ishiyama, 2009; Pizziconi, 2003). This strategy may be a problematic view because it is not clear if the request, or order, for example, is more of a result of criticism. Demand may not be as beneficial in some cultures as in some other cultures. In certain cultures, people may be tolerant of open criticisms more than those in different cultures, where criticisms are seen directly as a form of rudeness.

On the other hand, the situational variable plays an essential role in choosing a politeness strategy. This situational variable affects the distribution of power and social

distance between speakers and addressees and the imposition of FTA. For example, the degree of formalities of communication events to enhance the imposition of FTA, which in turn requires a higher politeness strategy to use in such circumstances. It has also been revealed that the dealings of specific audiences can cause the speaker to be indebted to the addressee. This case resulted in the increased power of the addressee in subsequent communications between them. Discussions in previous sections also revealed that the absence or presence of the public affects the imposition of the FTA.

The data further revealed that utterances and speech acts they take or relate to the cultural environment affect the communication's meaning and benefit. The cultural environment defines the purpose of the utterances in it. Therefore, the command act stated at the refined speech level in a plain imperative, indicating the use of a bald on record politeness strategy, should be decoded and interpreted in the cultural setting of the 'only post elopement marriage ritual' in which it occurs. It seems logical or reasonable to see the relationship between utterance or speech act in this case (i.e., the 'command'). Therefore, in this context, the cultural environment limits the occurrence of the behavior in the same way as all its meanings and significance attached. Concerning this, the cultural environment serves as a cultural parameter that hinders the people in the culture from behaving in a certain way under certain circumstances. Meanwhile, [Ide \(1989\)](#) argued to favor more culture-specific politeness examples in Japanese, but [Matsumoto \(1988\)](#), on the other hand, advocated a universal framework that includes cultural variability, both scholars stressing the importance of recognizing relationships. Concerning polite or impolite behavior, cultural parameters relate to the values held by the people on what is considered polite behavior and what is not. In other words, such values are the sources of any cultural parameters that come out and are used to guide and, in some ways, control their politeness behavior.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Based on the data, this study showed that the sociopragmatic parameters of politeness strategies used by the *Pembayun* (*adat* leaders) in various interactions of the post elopement rituals included social distance, power distribution, rank, situational, and cultural parameters. These factors ascertain the weightiness of each act by the *Pembayun* and thus became the basis for their politeness strategies in conversations during the post-elopement rituals.

The politeness strategies of the Sasak *Pembayun* (*adat* leaders) are used to show the following. First, the relationship between language and culture is such that the Sasak community's linguistic behavior conforms to that community's culture and reflects how cultural values and norms are embedded in the social activities of its people in which language acts as the vehicle for such activities. Second, politeness is a manifestation of Sasak's community cultural values. It is one of the virtues they sought and critically observed in their lives as manifested in their communicative behaviors. Third, the notion of politeness and the strategy in which it is achieved in communication is culture-bound and culture-specific. Although this position departs from [Brown and Levinson's \(1987\)](#) universal postulate, it does not necessarily imply that such a postulate is ignored in the present study. Fourth, politeness reflects Sasak culture, which pervades the people's social interaction, verbal and non-verbal. In verbal interactions, politeness is embedded in the speech acts of the participants, which are delivered according to the underlying strategy chosen, depending on the degree of

politeness intended and the kind of intensity of the effect it is meant to produce. Fifth, the notion of politeness is in corollary to the principle of balance and harmony held by Sasak people in their life. They hold that communication involves affecting other people's emotional states and negatively threatening other people's feelings is against their cultural and social norms.

Despite this research has answered the research question on the politeness strategies among *Pembayun* (*adat* leaders) of Sasak people in the post elopement ritual, thus, future research is recommended to investigate the politeness strategies, particularly concerning the level of education of the *Pembayun* in the post elopement rituals. Furthermore, there are still other pragmatic and semantic issues, also sociological factors influencing the choice of politeness strategies, that can still be investigated in this ceremony.

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## Speech Acts and Language Styles of Biden's Victory Speech for Promoting Peace Values

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### Abstract

*The importance of language in expressing ideas and ideologies has always been a focus of public debate in politics. The persons in charge of the reins of power become a source of concern, as well as the language they use. As a result, this research looks into the speech acts, language styles, and how they express peace values from Biden's victory speech. A qualitative research design was used. Biden's pragma stylistics and peace values were extracted from his victory speech in Wilmington, Delaware on November 7, 2020. This study focused on three aspects, namely: categories of illocutionary acts, language style based on sentence structure, and peace values. The data were analyzed following these stages: data condensation, data display, and drawing/verifying conclusions. The results showed that the most common illocutionary type employed in diverse language styles in Biden's victory speech was commissive. Presumably, politicians have become accustomed to making promises or making commitments in order to entice citizens to vote for them. In addition, two types of peace values (inner peace and social peace) were discovered along with three types of language styles: parallelism, antithesis, and repetition (epizeuxis, anaphora, and anadiplosis), with more than half of the data employing parallelism as the language style. The majority of Biden's speech focused on social peace to keep social life free of internal strife.*

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**Keywords:** Biden's speech, EFL learning context, language styles, peace values, speech acts.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Language is the main form of communication used to convey written or spoken messages (Ondondo, 2015). Basically, language is not only used in formal circumstances but also informal circumstances. Language in formal circumstances is identical to language in the workplace and state (political affairs), while informal circumstances are commonly referred to as everyday life. In political affairs, the role of language in conveying ideas and ideologies has always been the center of public attention. Through political language, people can grasp how language is utilized by those who want to maintain power, those who want to run the power, and those who want to obtain power (Beard, 2001). Thus, the people who hold the reins of power become the subject of concern, and they are as notable as the language they express.

Joe Biden, a prominent figure in the United States, became the center of attention when delivering his victory speech over Donald Trump. In Wilmington, Delaware, he deployed the euphoria in front of American citizens by conveying his thoughts through a victory speech. In such a case, thoughts and expressions are part of the language (Ghani & Hussain, 2021). According to Taiwo (2008), several frameworks can be utilized in examining political languages, such as pragmatics, linguistic stylistics, discourse analysis, political rhetoric, and critical discourse analysis. Other than linguistic stylistics, another branch of stylistics is called pragma-stylistics (Waheeb, 2017). It is derived from a combination of two approaches, namely pragmatics and stylistics. In this case, pragma-stylistics can be used to examine how pragmatic sources such as speech acts can be applied to attain stylistic effects.

According to Searle (1969), speech acts are carried out through a language. As a means of communication, one of the functions of language is to express ideas such as beliefs, attitudes, and values (Jones, 2016). Similarly, there are certain moral or ethical values that the speaker intends to transmit through language in a political speech (Kulo, 2009). Values can be found not only in political speeches but also in educational settings, such as in the EFL classroom. In this situation, the term 'peace education' is used to describe the process of educating learners to become good human beings. In Indonesia, peace education is now included in the 2013 Curriculum as part of character education (Susilawati et al., 2019). Teachers are to impart peace values to learners during the teaching and learning process so that they have a strong understanding of the role of peace values. This value must be taught since Indonesia, as a multicultural society, is prone to intertribal disputes which lead to a loss of unity. Inner peace, social peace, and peace with nature are three fundamental sources, according to Balasooriya (2001).

Several researchers have explored the studies on Biden's victory speech from various frameworks such as pragmatics-deixis (Ricca & Johan, 2021), critical discourse analysis-Fairclough's 3D model (Ghani & Hussain, 2021), linguistics-systemic functional linguistics (Darong, 2021), and pragmatics-speech acts (Baby et al., 2020). Seen from several previous studies, it is revealed that there has been no research on the pragma-stylistics of Biden's victory speech. Besides, those previous studies have only concentrated on one approach without relating the results to another

approach. In contrast to several previous studies, this current study examines the pragma stylistics used by Biden in his victory speech on peace values. Therefore, this study attempts to reveal:

- (1) What are Biden's illocutionary acts that can be used to promote peace values?
- (2) What are Biden's language styles (based on sentence structure) that can be used to promote peace values?
- (3) How does Biden's pragma stylistics reflect the peace values?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Categories of Illocutionary Speech Acts

Austin (1962) proposed three types of speech acts: locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act. A locutionary act denotes an action that is used to give information by stating the utterances. In contrast, the illocutionary act refers to the acts that denote the speaker's primary purpose in doing the speech act. As stated by Austin (1962), the illocutionary act is an act that demands the interlocutor to do something in the situation of pragmatics. This form of act denotes the speaker's intended meaning. For perlocutionary act, it indicates the results or effects of stating something. In this case, Searle (2002) classified the illocutionary act into five categories: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declaration.

1. Assertive denotes what the speaker believes in a situation. This type can be seen in the words 'state', 'guess', 'suggest', 'assert', and 'conclude'.
2. Directive refers to what the speaker wants in a situation. It can be represented through the words 'invite', 'beg', 'order', 'permit', 'command', 'pray', 'ask', and 'request'.
3. Commissive indicates what the speaker intends or commits for future action. This category can be reflected in the words 'guarantee', 'promise', 'vow', 'swear', and 'pledge'.
4. Expressive means what the speaker feels in a situation. It can be pointed from the words 'congratulate', 'deplore', 'apologize', 'condole', 'welcome', and 'thank'.
5. Declaration denotes what the speaker causes in a situation, for instance, 'I resign', 'I bet', and 'I declare'.

By applying illocutionary acts in discourses, the interlocutor is assisted in capturing the speaker's intentions properly.

### 2.2 Keraf's Language Style

The characteristics of the speaker's language can be easily revealed using the theory of language style based on sentence structure. Both Searle's (2002) illocutionary acts and Keraf's (2006) language style (based on sentence structure) can be combined and applied to Biden's victory speech. Biden's illocutionary acts were initially categorized using Searle's (2002) theory, and then his linguistic style was examined using Keraf's (2006) theory. In that way, Biden's thoughts and feelings are clearly expressed. Keraf (2006) proposed four categories of language style, namely language style based on diction (which word is the most appropriate?), language style based on tone (which suggestion is expressed?), language style based on sentence



structure (how to put the main point in a sentence?), and language style based on either direct or indirect meaning (whether the reference still retains its denotative meaning or has been deviated). In language style based on sentence structure, there are five main categories: climax, anticlimax, parallelism, antithesis, and repetition (epizeuxis, tautologies, anaphora, epistrophe, symploche, mesodiplosis, epanalepsis, and anadiplosis).

1. Climax denotes a language style with a progressively expanding idea of the mind (Keraf, 2006), for example, 'let a woman recognize her obligations to herself, her family, her country, and her God'. Here, there is a developing idea from the word 'herself' to 'her God'.
2. Anticlimax refers to a language style with a decreasingly expanding idea of the mind (Keraf, 2006), for instance, 'she lost her family, her job, and her house plants'. In this case, a decreasing idea can be seen from the critical level ('family') to the unimportant level ('house plants').
3. Parallelism indicates balancing two or more ideas with a similar or the same grammatical structure (Young, 2009), for example, 'where there is smoke, there is fire'. In this example, a similar grammatical structure can be seen in the two clauses: 'there is smoke', and 'there is fire'.
4. The term 'antithesis' refers to a language style that uses opposing terms to create a contrast (Belle, 2009), for instance, 'patience is bitter, but it has a sweet fruit'. The words 'bitter' and 'sweet' have a contrasting effect in this speech. According to [Online Cambridge Dictionary \(2020\)](#), bitterly describes a circumstance that produces severe agony, whereas sweet describes a pleasant and satisfying state. As a result, the meanings of both words are opposed.
5. Repetition is a sound repetition of the significant sentences, phrases, words, and syllables to put pressure on a discourse (Keraf, 2006). According to Keraf (2006), there are eight categories of repetition.
  - a) Epizeuxis emphasizes the value of a word by repeating it numerous times in a line, for example, 'it's a rainbow! it's a rainbow!'. The example clearly demonstrates that the same utterance is repeated twice without any additions or deletions. Thus, this repetition emphasizes the word's significance.
  - b) Tautotoes refers to word repetition in construction, for instance, 'you accuse me, I accuse you, you and I become enemies'. By repeating the words 'you', 'I', and 'accuse', this example demonstrates the process of developing a good understanding of the utterance's meaning.
  - c) Anaphora refers to the repeating of the first word in each line or sentence that follows, for example, 'we came, we saw, we conquered'. The subject we (the first word) is repeated three times in this example to apply pressure.
  - d) Epistrophe refers to the recurrence of a word at the end of a line or sentence in a sequence, for instance, 'face the dawn, fear the dawn, own the dawn'. The word 'dawn' is repeated three times at the end of a sentence to emphasize it.
  - e) Symploche refers to the repeating of a word or phrase at the beginning and end of a line or sentence in a row, for example, 'for want of a nail the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost'. The repetition of the above instance occurs both at the beginning of a sentence ('for want of a ...') and at the end of the sentence ('was lost').

- f) Mesodiplosis refers to word repetition in the middle of successive lines or phrases, for instance, ‘one, but not two; three, but not four; five, but not six’. Another technique to put pressure is by repeating the phrase ‘but not’ three times in the middle of consecutive sentences.
- g) Epanalepsis is word repetition at the end of a clause or sentence from the word or phrase that starts it, for example, ‘the king is dead, long live the king!’ This example denotes that the phrase the king at the end is repeated from the phrase ‘the king’ at the beginning of the sentence.
- h) Anadiplosis refers to the repetition of the last word or phrase of the previous clause. For instance, ‘he opened a café, a café that ruined his financially’. In this example, the phrase ‘a café’ in the second clause gets a repetition of the phrase ‘a café’ in the first clause.

### 2.3 Peace Values

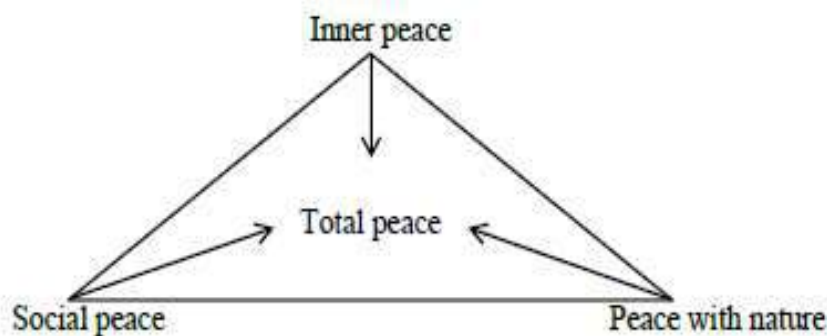
Literally, the word ‘peace’ originated from the Latin ‘*pax*’, which points to the absence of war (Farneubun, 2013). In such a case, peace is interpreted narrowly since it is more than that. Not only does it mean the war absence, but it also means the absence of violence such as social degradation, conflict, oppression, injustice, life threats, poverty, discrimination, exploitation, and so on (Balasooriya, 2001). In an educational context, learners are guided to become excellent and wise citizens who can participate in social roles (Tan et al., 2017). Thus, the peace values are integrated with the school system to understand these values from an early age.

According to Balasooriya (2001), there are three types of peace values: inner peace, social peace, and peace with nature. Inner peace denotes peace of mind where there is psychological or spiritual calm in a person, for instance, good health, harmony and peace with oneself, and absence of inner conflicts, sense of freedom, joy, spiritual peace, insight, compassion, feelings of kindness, appreciation of art, and contentment. Social peace indicates how to maintain a social life away from internal conflict, or it can be said as learning to live together, for example, harmony arising from human relationships at all levels, love, conflict reconciliation and resolution, democracy, friendship, community-building, unity, human rights, mutual understanding, tolerance of differences, acceptance, morality, brotherhood, and cooperation. The last is peace with nature which refers to human relations with other creatures that are constitutionally controlled in a community (does not only belong to human beings)—for example, harmony with the natural environment and mother earth.

Recognizing and understanding the categories of peace sources is significant to perform since these sources provide the basis for building peace (Balasooriya, 2001). Peace must be viewed holistically either at the personal level, social level, or ecological level. Here, total peace can arise due to the cooperation of all peace sources. Figure 1 represents the explanation above.

Through the combination of pragma-stylistics and categories of peace values, all kinds of discourse, including speech, can be used as learning media (e.g., in the EFL learning context) since they contain peace values found through the speech acts and language styles used. Peace education can be implemented in a variety of ways, including through the use of learning media, learning materials, learning methods, and learning evaluation models. Furthermore, linguistic or speech strategies when communicating with learners can also be used for teaching peace values (Nurhadi,

2016). In such a case, pragmatic-stylistic strategies are linguistic techniques that describe the use of strategies and styles as the speech intersection.



**Figure 1.** Sources of peace (Balasooriya, 2001).

### 3. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design, especially political discourse analysis since it was conducted based on descriptive data. According to Miles et al. (2014), the types of qualitative data are in the form of handwritten, audio or video recordings, and documents. Through a qualitative approach, this study sought to portray and examine the obtained data in the form of words or phrases. The data sources were a video of Joe Biden's victory speech delivered on a Saturday night, November 7, 2020, in Wilmington, Delaware. The duration of the video was approximately 15 minutes. Biden's victory speech video was chosen since it contained President-elect Joe Biden's pledges to be a president for 'everybody' and the high number of viewers on YouTube exceeds 1.2 M.

The data collection techniques were done in two types: transcription done by the researchers, and documentation. Dornyei (2007) stated that transcription is a technique to provide a written report of the spoken words to comprehend the data thoroughly. This technique can be done by selecting the required data only. In this study, transcriptions of the video were made to comprehend Biden's pragma stylistics. Moreover, the documentation technique was also employed for the peace values taken from Biden's pragma stylistics. The intended document in this case referred to Biden's video transcription which consists of 1.826 words or 8.281 characters (no spaces). This technique assists in enhancing the current analytical task and increasing confidence in the conclusion (Miles et al., 2014).

Miles et al. (2014) recommended three major processes for data analysis: data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. When the text transcription of Joe Biden's victory speech became available, the research procedure was as follows: (1) selecting and listing the illocutionary acts and language style based on the sentence structure; (2) classifying the data obtained from video transcriptions based on Searle's (2002) type of illocutionary acts and Keraf's (2006) language style (based on the sentence structure), and (3) analyzing the data gained based on the categories of peace values proposed by Balasooriya (2001).

## 4. RESULTS

The study explores the pragma-stylistics in Joe Biden's victory speech and its relation to the peace values. The following are the study results, which are divided into five points based on the types of illocutionary acts.

### 4.1 Assertive Illocutionary Acts

Table 1 displays the first category of illocutionary acts, namely assertive. Assertive denotes what the speaker believes in circumstances (Hanks, 2018). The followings are the data display of assertives in Biden's victory speech. The words, phrase, or sentence in focus is underlined.

**Table 1.** Assertives in Biden's victory speech.

No.	Speech	Kinds of language style	Types of peace value
1	Folks, the people of this nation have spoken. <u>They've delivered</u> us a clear victory, <u>a convincing victory, a victory</u> for we, the people. <u>We've won</u> with the most votes ever cast for a presidential ticket in the history of the nation (Excerpt 1).	Parallelism Repetition (anadiplosis)	Social peace (democracy)
2	Once again, America's bent the arc of the moral universe more toward justice. Kamala Doug, <u>like it or not</u> , you're family. You become an honorary Biden, there's no way out (Excerpt 2).	Antithesis	Social peace (acceptance)
3	<u>It's</u> not some mysterious force beyond our control. <u>It's</u> a decision, a choice we make (Excerpt 3).	Repetition (anaphora)	Inner peace (promoting spirit)

(1) Excerpt 1:

"Folks, the people of this nation have spoken. They've delivered us a clear victory, a convincing victory, a victory for we, the people. We've won with the most votes ever cast for a presidential ticket in the history of the nation".

Biden utters assertive speech act in Excerpt 1 to state his absolute victory over Donald Trump. Here, Biden utilized parallelism and repetition (anadiplosis) to manifest his belief. The parallelism in speech is seen in the grammatical structure of words, 'they've delivered' and 'we've won'. Those two phrases are both formed from the same tense. Meanwhile, the repetition of anadiplosis type is occurred in the phrase 'a convincing victory, a victory for us'. It depicts a repetition of the last phrase of the previous clause, which is used to create a great deal of emphasis. Overall, this utterance denotes social peace, particularly democracy, since Biden said that his victory came from the people's vote. Another language style in assertive illocutionary acts is also manifested in the following speech.

(2) Excerpt 2

"Once again, America's bent the arc of the moral universe more toward justice. Kamala Doug, like it or not, you're family. You become an honorary Biden; there's no way out".

In Excerpt 2, Biden affirmed that Kamala Doug is part of the Biden family, whether somebody likes it or not. The term 'Biden's family' is for Kamala Doug,

currently vice president and all-American citizen. The antithesis in the speech utilizes an opposite meaning from the phrase, 'like it or not', to show the contrasting effect. Furthermore, this assertive illocutionary act depicts social peace with the focus on accepting the extended family within the scope of a country. Assertive with different language styles are also pointed out in the speech below.

(3) Excerpt 3

"It's not some mysterious force beyond our control. It's a decision, a choice we make".

The assertive speech act in Excerpt 3 states that the demonization era in America can be ended with a concerted effort; this is not an impossibility. In this speech, Biden employed repetition of anaphora type, which is shown in the first word 'it's'. This first word is repeated in each subsequent sentence for convincing. Besides, these two sentences indicate Biden's inner peace, mainly to promote a spirit of the American citizens to remain optimistic about change for the better.

#### 4.2 Directive Illocutionary Acts

Table 2 shows the second category of illocutionary acts, namely the directive discovered in Biden's victory speech. Directive refers to what the speaker wants in a situation, getting the interlocutors to do something (Hanks, 2018). Table 2 displays data of directives in Biden's victory speech.

**Table 2.** Directives in Biden's victory speech.

No.	Speech	Kinds of language style	Types of peace value
1.	We're always looking <u>ahead</u> . <u>Ahead</u> to an America that is freer and more just. <u>Ahead</u> to an America that creates jobs with dignity and respect. <u>Ahead</u> to an America that cures diseases like cancer and Alzheimer's. <u>Ahead</u> to an America that never leaves anyone behind. <u>Ahead</u> to an America that <u>never gives up, never gives in</u> , this great nation (Excerpt 4).	Repetition (anadiplosis) Repetition (anaphora) Parallelism	Social peace (compromise and resolution)
2.	There's never been anything, <del>never been anything</del> <u>we've been not able to do when we've done it together</u> (Excerpt 5).	Repetition (epizeuxis) Parallelism	Inner peace (promoting spirit)

(4) Excerpt 4

"We're always looking ahead. Ahead to an America that is freer and more just. Ahead to an America that creates jobs with dignity and respect. Ahead to an America that cures diseases like cancer and Alzheimer's. Ahead to an America that never leaves anyone behind. Ahead to an America that never gives up, never gives in, this great nation".

In Excerpt 4, Biden directed his citizens to always think positively in the future. Here, Biden utilized three language styles at once, namely repetition (anadiplosis), repetition (anaphora), and parallelism, to manifest his intention. The repetition of anadiplosis type is shown in the sentences 'we're always looking ahead'. 'Ahead' portrays a repetition of the last word of the previous clause. Besides, repetition of anaphora type is also shown in the first word 'ahead' five times. Moreover, parallelism can be indicated by the phrase 'never gives up, never gives in' since they have a similar

grammatical structure. Concerning the peace values, this directive illocutionary act denotes social peace focusing on compromise and resolution since America desires to be a great nation by creating jobs, curing severe pain, etc. The following speech also indicates another language style in directive illocutionary acts.

(5) Excerpt 5

“There’s never been anything, never been anything we’ve been not able to do when we’ve done it together”.

Directive speech act on Excerpt 5 is uttered to encourage American citizens to have a positive thinking that all is well if they work it out together. In this speech, Biden used repetition of epizeuxis type, which is shown in the phrase ‘never been anything’ and parallelism in the sentence ‘we’ve been not able to do when we’ve done it together’. Biden utilizes both language styles to emphasize the positive vibes to his citizens. This sentence shows Biden’s inner peace, significantly boosting spirits.

### 4.3 Commissive Illocutionary Acts

Commissives found in Biden’s victory speech are shown in Table 3 as a part of illocutionary acts. Commissive refers to what the speaker intends or commits for future action. The followings are the data display of commissives in Biden’s victory speech.

**Table 3.** Commissives in Biden’s victory speech.

No.	Speech	Kinds of language style	Types of peace value
1.	I pledge to be a president who seeks <u>not to divide but unify</u> , who <u>doesn’t see</u> red states and blue states, only <u>sees</u> the United States (Excerpt 6).	Antithesis	Social peace (unity)
2.	It will be constructed out of <u>compassion, empathy, and concern</u> (Excerpt 7).	Parallelism	Social peace (mutual understanding)
3.	<u>We will</u> not leave. <u>We will</u> lead not only by the <u>example of our power but by the power of our example</u> (Excerpt 8).	Repetition (anaphora) Parallelism	Inner peace (promoting spirit)
4.	The United States of America, ladies, and gentlemen, there’s <u>never, never</u> been anything we’ve tried we’ve not been able to do (Excerpt 9).	Repetition (anadiplosis)	Inner peace (promoting spirit)

(6) Excerpt 6

“I pledge to be a president who seeks not to divide but unify, who doesn’t see red states and blue states, only sees the United States”.

In Excerpt 6, Biden pledged himself to be a president for everyone. He emphasized that statement by using repetition of antithesis twice: (1) ‘not to divide but unify’ and (2) ‘doesn’t see red states and blue states, only sees the United States’. The antithesis in the speech is marked with negative sentences followed by positive sentences through the word ‘but’ and ‘only’. Thus, it refers to the opposite meaning. Employing this language style, Biden attempted to depict social peace with a focus on unity in the country. Commissive with diverse language styles is also represented in the speech below.

(7) Excerpt 7

“It will be constructed out of compassion, empathy, and concern”.

This commissive speech act is spoken to warrant that the country's development will be carried out in tandem with those three emotions. In this excerpt from the speech, Biden used parallelism in three nouns: ‘compassion’, ‘empathy’, and ‘concern’. The promise made by Biden shows social peace concerning mutual understanding where the leader attempts to grasp the needs of his people. Another language style in commissive illocutionary acts is also shown in the following speech.

(8) Excerpt 8

“We will not leave.

We will lead not only by the example of our power but by the power of our example”.

In Excerpt 8, Biden committed to never leaving his people and leading the United States by combining the example of their power and the power of their example. The promise of the elected president is delivered through repetition (anaphora) and parallelism. The anaphora can be seen in the sentence, ‘we will not leave. we will lead’. This type depicts that the subject, ‘we’, appears twice. Other than anaphora, Biden also utilized parallelism which is indicated by the same grammatical structure: ‘not only by the example of our power but by the power of our example’. Concerning peace values, this commissive illocutionary act refers to the inner peace of Biden in spreading the spirit to American citizens. The last example of commissive illocutionary acts is also indicated in the speech below.

(9) Excerpt 9

“The United States of America, ladies, and gentlemen, there's never, never been anything we've tried we've not been able to do”.

The commissive speech act above is uttered to guarantee that everything can be tried to be done. The language style of repetition (anadiplosis) existed to emphasize a particular meaning. The word ‘never’ appeared in which the repetition of the last word of the previous phrase. The emphasis made by Biden is intended to show his inner peace by spreading his spirit to all his citizens, whether they support his leadership or not.

#### 4.4 Expressive Illocutionary Acts

Table 4 indicates the fourth category of illocutionary acts, namely expressive discovered in Biden's victory speech. Expressive refers to expressing the psychological state of a speaker's or interlocutor's action. Table 4 displays the expressives in Biden's victory speech.

**Table 4.** Expressives in Biden's victory speech.

No	Speech	Kinds of language style	Types of peace value
1.	And to my campaign team and all the volunteers and all who gave so much of themselves to make this moment possible. <u>I owe you. I owe you. I owe you</u> everything (Excerpt 10).	Repetition (epizeuxis)	Social peace (showing gratitude)

Table 4 continued...

2.	And all those who supported us. <u>I'm proud of</u> the campaign we built. <u>I'm proud of</u> the coalition we put together, the broadest and most diverse coalition in history (Excerpt 11).	Repetition (anaphora)	Social peace (showing gratitude)
3.	God loves you all. <u>May God</u> bless America, and <u>may God</u> protect our troops (Excerpt 12).	Parallelism	Inner peace (promoting spiritual peace)

## (10) Excerpt 10

“And to my campaign team and all the volunteers and all who gave so much of themselves to make this moment possible. I owe you. I owe you. I owe you everything”.

Biden speaks this expressive speech act to thank his campaign team and volunteers who supported him in the presidential election. He expressed his gratitude by saying ‘I owe you. I owe you. I owe you’ to emphasize his feeling. This kind of repetition is called epizeuxis, in which there is direct repetition several times. This expression also includes one of the peace values: social peace, focusing on showing gratitude to the supporters.

## (11) Excerpt 11

“And all those who supported us. I'm proud of the campaign we built. I'm proud of the coalition we put together, the broadest and most diverse coalition in history”.

In Excerpt 11, Biden also expressed his gratitude to his campaign team and coalition for their support. However, he delivered his gratitude in a different style of language, namely by using the repetition of anaphora. This repetition can be seen in the clause ‘I'm proud of’ twice. In this excerpt from the speech, Biden gave the example of social peace concerning showing gratitude. Another language style in expressive illocutionary acts is also shown in the following speech.

## (12) Excerpt 12

“God loves you all. May God bless America, and may God protect our troops”.

This last expressive speech act is spoken to express Biden’s spiritual feelings. He ended his speech by chanting a prayer that God would bless America and its people. The language style used in this prayer is parallelism. It can be examined from the grammatical structure of the sentence, ‘may God bless America, and may God protect our troops’. This sentence contains coordinating conjunction that connects the two clauses. The expression made by Biden indicates his inner peace to share spiritual peace among citizens.

#### 4.5 Declaration Illocutionary Acts

Declarations found in Biden’s victory speech are shown in Table 5 as a part of illocutionary acts. Declaration refers to a speech act where the speaker creates a new state by declaring that the state is valid. Table 5 displays declarations in Biden’s victory speech.



**Table 5.** Declaration in Biden's victory speech.

No	Speech	Kinds of language style	Types of peace value
1.	<u>You're going to</u> have one of your own in the White House, and <u>Jill is going to</u> make a great first lady (Excerpt 13).	Parallelism	Social peace (community-building)
2.	<u>They are</u> not our enemies. <u>They are Americans.</u> <u>They're Americans</u> (Excerpt 14).	→ Repetition (anaphora) → Repetition (epizeuxis)	Social peace (unity)
3.	Folks, <u>I'm a proud Democrat, but I will govern as an American president</u> (Excerpt 15).	Antithesis	Inner peace (wise)

(13) Excerpt 13

"You're going to have one of your own in the White House, and Jill is going to make a great first lady".

In Excerpt 13, Biden declared that his wife, Jill Biden, would represent America's educators in the White House. Apart from being an English lecturer, she will also be the great first lady of America. In declaring this speech, Biden employed parallelism to manifest his intention. A similar grammatical structure can indicate this with coordinating conjunction 'and' between two sentences. Concerning the peace values, this declaration denotes social peace, focusing on community-building since Biden only mentions the American educators' community.

(14) Excerpt 14

"They are not our enemies. They are Americans. They're Americans".

These three sentences are used to declare that Donald Trump's supporters are not the enemy of Biden's supporters. To emphasize that situation, Biden directly used two repetitions: anaphora and epizeuxis. The repetition of anaphora is shown in the clause 'they are' three times and the repetition of epizeuxis is denoted for the last two sentences: 'They are Americans. They're Americans'. By using those two different language styles, Biden intended to share one of the peace values: social peace with the concern for unity for all American citizens.

(15) Excerpt 15

"Folks, I'm a proud Democrat, but I will govern as an American president".

In Excerpt 15, Biden declared that he would professionally be president for all Americans even though he was from the Democrat (his party). To stress it vigorously, he utilized the repetition of antithesis in the sentence, 'I'm a proud Democrat, but I will govern as an American president'. The antithesis is marked with the conjunctive word 'but' which indicates to connect between contrasting ideas. Through this language style, Biden attempted to portray inner peace by focusing on his wisdom.

## 5. DISCUSSION

As shown in the results section, five categories of illocutionary acts were found in Biden's victory speech. In this case, commissive is the most common illocutionary

type realized with various language styles. This finding is consistent with Hashim's (2015) results that the commissive category was the most prevalent in political speech acts. It is because politicians have become accustomed to making promises or making commitments in order to entice citizens to vote for them. These findings are linked to the relationship between politicians and the language they utilized. Politicians have primary objectives in mind when giving a speech. It corresponds to the illocutionary role, which encapsulates the speaker's primary goal in delivering the speech act (Hanks, 2018). In this circumstance, interlocutors can apply illocutionary acts theory to grasp the speaker's intended meaning. Moreover, politicians have become accustomed to using a variety of language styles to express their thoughts and feelings (Abuya, 2012). This study also discovered that Biden utilizes various language styles in his victory speech, such as parallelism, antithesis, and kinds of repetition (epizeuxis, anaphora, and anadiplosis).

In Biden's victory speech, parallelism was used as the language style in more than half of the data. As stated by Al-Ameedi and Mukhef (2017), politicians utilized more parallelism to convince and persuade listeners. Several language styles are described by Keraf (2006), such as climax, anticlimax, and different kinds of repetition (tautotoes, epistrophe, symploche, mesodiplosis, epanalepsis), were not used by Biden in his victory speech. It might be because those linguistic styles are more common in literary works, whereas Biden's victory speech is more grounded in reality, in this case, direct speech.

Apart from the pragma stylistics, peace values are also found in Biden's victory speech. Two out of three types of peace values emerged in Biden's victory speech, themed 'Time to Heal in America'. In Biden's victory speech, inner peace (e.g. promoting spirit and wisdom) and social peace (e.g. unity, democracy, acceptance, mutual understanding, compromise, and resolution) were discovered. The majority of Biden's speech contains values of social peace. It corresponds to the concept of social peace: how to sustain a social existence free of internal conflict, or how to learn to live together (Balasooriya, 2001). After his victory over Trump, Biden endeavored to encourage his citizens to unite and live in peace for the sake of America's future development. Thus, Biden inserted more social peace into his victory speech than inner peace. In this study, peace with nature did not occur in Biden's victory speech since the topic might not be in accordance with the setting, the purpose, and the participants of his speech.

After gaining the comprehensive data, the data can be part of learning materials to promote peace values in the EFL classroom. Regarding the appropriate educational context for speeches, EFL high school learners are the most appropriate. As demanded by the 2013 Curriculum, speaking has become one of the productive language skills that English teachers in Indonesia should teach at the high school level (Jufri, 2016).

In the EFL learning context, peace values also become a significant thing since they are used to educate learners on how to become good human beings with good character. In most Indonesian schools, textbooks are the primary source of information during the teaching and learning process (Zahri, 2018). Nonetheless, learners basically can learn many things, including peace values, from various learning media such as videos. During the teaching and learning process, teachers can utilize videos to teach learners about the peace values that are notable to possess; one example could be a video of Biden's victory speech.

Many studies have shown that using video as a learning medium for learners, particularly in EFL classrooms, is effective (Kamelia, 2019). It appears that employing films can provide a relaxed environment for learners while also encouraging them to be more active and absorb the information. It is because video combines both pictures and audio so that learners can directly see the materials. Learners are expected to grasp the importance of peace values pleasingly through pragma stylistics and peace values found in videos of victory speeches.

## 6. CONCLUSION

According to the findings and discussion, Biden's victory speech contained a variety of illocutionary acts, including assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declaration. However, as politicians are accustomed to making promises or commitments in order to attract citizens, the most common illocutionary type in using various language styles is commissive. In this study, the five illocutionary types use a variety of language styles, including parallelism, antithesis, and repetition (epizeuxis, anaphora, and anadiplosis), with more than half of the data employing parallelism as the language style.

In terms of peace values, Biden's victory speech highlighted two of the three categories of peace values, namely inner peace and social peace. Nonetheless, most of Biden's speeches contain social peace values, which are in line with the concept of social peace, notably how to preserve a social existence free of internal conflict, or learning to live together. Furthermore, besides using textbooks, teachers in the EFL classroom can utilize videos to teach learners about peace values. Learners can appreciate the relevance of peace values by using pragma stylistics and peace values found in victory speeches.

Exploring other types of each illocutionary acts is highly recommended for future related research. For instance, the assertive illocutionary act itself is divided into six categories (stating, informing, affirming, boasting, complaining, and denying). More acts can be studied and retrieved by studying each one in more depth. In addition, future research can also use other recent theories to investigate categories of illocutionary acts.

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## APPENDIX

**Table A1.** Data analysis (with A: Assertive, Di: Directive, C: Commissive, E: Expressive, De: Declarative).

No.	Speech	Types of illocutionary act					Kinds of language style	Types of peace value
		A	Di	C	E	De		
1.	Folks, the people of this nation have spoken. <u>They've delivered us a clear victory, a convincing victory, a victory</u> for we, the people. <u>We've won</u> with the most votes ever cast for a presidential ticket in the history of the nation.	√					Parallelism  Repetition (anadiposis)	Social peace (democracy)
2.	Well, I must admit, it surprised me tonight. We're seeing <u>all over this nation, all cities and all parts of the country</u> , indeed across the world, an outpouring <u>of joy, hope</u> , renewed faith in tomorrow to bring a better day.	√					Parallelism	Social peace (unity)
3.	And I'm humbled by the <u>trust and confidence</u> you placed in me.				√		Parallelism	Inner peace (compassion)
4.	I pledge to be a president who seeks <u>not to divide but unify</u> , who <u>doesn't see</u> red states and blue states, only <u>sees</u> the United States.			√			Antithesis	Social peace (unity)

Table A1 continued...

5.	I'll work <u>with all my heart, with the confidence of the whole people</u> , to win the confidence of all of you.			√			Parallelism	Social peace (promoting responsibilities)
6.	I sought this office <u>to restore</u> the soul of America, <u>to rebuild</u> the backbone of this nation: the middle class; and <u>to make</u> America respected around the world again, and <u>to unite</u> us here at home.			√			Parallelism	Social peace (unity)
7.	It's <u>a task, the task</u> of our time.		√				Repetition (anadiplosis)	Inner peace (promoting spirit)
8.	<u>You're going to</u> have one of your own in the White House, and <u>Jill is going to</u> make a great first lady.					√	Parallelism	Social peace (community-building)
9.	Once again, America's bent the arc of the moral universe more toward justice. Kamala Doug, <u>like it or not</u> , you're family. You become an honorary Biden, there's no way out.	√					Antithesis	Social peace (acceptance)
10.	And to my campaign team and all the volunteers and all who gave so much of themselves to make this moment possible. <u>I owe you. I owe you. I owe you everything.</u>				√		Repetition (epizeuxis)	Social peace (showing gratitude)
11.	And all those who supported us. <u>I'm proud of</u> the campaign we built. <u>I'm proud of</u> the coalition we put together, the broadest and most diverse coalition in history.				√		Repetition (anaphora)	Social peace (showing gratitude)
12.	I mean it. And especially those moments when this campaign was at its lowest ebb, the African American community stood up again for me. <u>You've always had my back, and I'll have yours.</u>	√					Parallelism	Social peace (mutual support)
13.	I said at the outset, I wanted to represent this campaign to represent and look like America. We've done that. Now that's what I want the administration to <u>look like and act like.</u>	√					Parallelism	Social peace (unity)

Table A1 continued...

14.	It's time to <u>put away</u> the harsh rhetoric, <u>lower</u> the temperature, <u>see</u> each other again, <u>listen</u> to each other again; and to make progress, we have to stop treating our opponents as our enemies.	√				Parallelism	Social peace (unity)
15.	<u>They are</u> not our enemies. <u>They are Americans.</u> <u>They're Americans.</u>				√	Repetition (anaphora) Repetition (epizeuxis)	Social peace (unity)
16.	I believe it's this: America has called upon us <u>to marshal the forces of decency</u> , <u>the forces of fairness</u> ; <u>to marshal the forces of science</u> , and <u>the forces of hope</u> in the great battles of our time.	√				Parallelism	Social peace (cooperation)
17.	<u>The battle to</u> control the virus, <u>the battle to</u> build prosperity, <u>the battle to</u> secure your family's health care.	√				Repetition (anaphora)	Social peace (cooperation)
18.	<u>The battle to</u> achieve racial justice and root out systemic racism in this country; and <u>the battle to</u> save our planet by getting climate under control.	√				Repetition (anaphora)	Social peace (cooperation)
19.	The battle to <u>restore</u> decency, <u>defend</u> democracy and <u>give</u> everybody in this country a fair shot. That's all they're asking for. A fair shot.	√				Parallelism	Social peace (cooperation)
20.	We cannot <u>repair</u> the economy, <u>restore</u> our vitality or <u>relish</u> life's most precious moments, hugging our <u>grandchildren</u> , our <u>children</u> , our <u>birthdays</u> , <u>weddings</u> , <u>graduations</u> , all the moments that matter most to us, until we get it under control.	√				Parallelism	Social peace (compromise and resolution)
21.	On Monday, I will name a group of leading scientists and experts as transition advisers to <u>help</u> take the Biden-Harris Covid plan and <u>convert</u> it into an action blueprint that will start on January 20, 2021.			√		Parallelism	Social peace (cooperation)

Table A1 continued...

22.	It will be constructed out of <u>compassion, empathy, and concern.</u>			√		Parallelism	Social peace (mutual understanding)
23.	Folks, <u>I'm a proud Democrat, but I will govern as an American president.</u>				√	Antithesis	Inner peace (wise)
24.	<u>I'll work as hard for those who didn't vote for me as those who did.</u>			√		Parallelism	Inner peace (wise)
25.	Let this grim era of demonization in America begin to end <u>here and now.</u>		√			Parallelism	Inner peace (promoting spirit)
26.	<u>It's</u> not some mysterious force beyond our control. <u>It's</u> a decision, a choice we make.	√				Repetition (anaphora)	Inner peace (promoting spirit)
27.	And that's the choice I'll make, and I'll call on <u>Congress, Democrats and Republicans</u> alike, to make that choice with me.			√		Parallelism	Social peace (cooperation)
28.	We must make the promises of the country real for everybody, no matter <u>their race, their ethnicity, their faith, their identity, or their disability.</u>		√			Parallelism	Social peace (justice)
29.	<u>We</u> have an opportunity to <u>defeat</u> despair, <u>to build</u> a nation of prosperity and purpose. <u>We</u> can do it.		√			Parallelism Repetition (anaphora)	Inner peace (promoting spirit)
30.	<u>We will not leave. We will</u> lead not only by the <u>example of our power but by the power of our example.</u>			√		Repetition (anaphora) Parallelism	Inner peace (promoting spirit)
31.	I know <u>I've always</u> — believe many of you heard me say it — <u>I've always</u> believed we can define America in one word: possibilities.	√				Repetition (anaphora)	Social peace (compromise and resolution)
32.	We're always looking <u>ahead. Ahead</u> to an America that is freer and more just. <u>Ahead</u> to an America that creates jobs with dignity and respect. <u>Ahead</u> to an America that cures diseases like cancer and Alzheimer's. <u>Ahead</u> to an America that never leaves anyone behind. <u>Ahead</u> to an America that <u>never gives up, never gives in, this great nation.</u>		√			Repetition (anadiplosis) Repetition (anaphora) Parallelism	Social peace (compromise and resolution)



Table A1 continued...

33.	There's <u>never been anything, never been anything we've been not able to do when we've done it together.</u>		√			Repetition (epizeuxis) Parallelism	Inner peace (promoting spirit)
34.	<u>And I hope — and I hope</u> it can provide some <u>comfort and solace</u> to the 230,000,000 Americans who've lost a loved one to this terrible virus this year.				√	Repetition (epizeuxis) Parallelism	Social peace (compromise and resolution)
35.	Let us be the nation that we know we can be. <u>A nation united, a nation strengthened, a nation healed.</u>		√			Parallelism	Social peace (compromise and resolution)
36.	The United States of America, ladies, and gentlemen, there's <u>never, never</u> been anything we've tried we've not been able to do.			√		Repetition (anadiplosis)	Inner peace (promoting spirit)
37.	God loves you all. <u>May God</u> bless America, and <u>may God</u> protect our troops.				√	Parallelism	Inner peace (promoting spiritual peace)
38.	<u>Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.</u>				√	Repetition (epizeuxis)	Social peace (showing gratitude)



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## Acehnese Lexical and Grammatical Collocations of the North Aceh Dialect

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### **Abstract**

*This research dealt with collocations used in the North Aceh dialect. It analyzed the part of speech categories into which collocations of the North Aceh dialect can be grouped. This research focused on the grammatical collocations and lexical collocations used in the Blang Mee village of Bireuen District, Aceh, Indonesia. This is a descriptive qualitative using case study looking into the villagers' use of Acehnese collocations. Six Acehnese speakers were selected as the language informants. They were fifty years old or above and never traveled or lived outside of Blang Mee. Data were extracted from interviews with these speakers who were asked to discuss general topics in Acehnese. The analysis was performed using a framework on collocation categories by Benson et al. The results of the analysis showed both lexical and grammatical collocations used by speakers in North Aceh. Lexical collocations were found in the forms of verb (denoting creation or activation) + noun combinations, verb (meaning eradication or nullification) + a noun, adjective + noun combinations, noun + verb combinations, noun + noun combinations, adverb + adjective combinations, and verb + adverb combinations. Grammatical collocations came in the following combinations: noun + preposition combinations, adjective + preposition combinations, preposition + noun combinations, and collocational verb patterns. The collocations used by the North Aceh dialect speakers indicate the uniqueness of their dialect within other dialects spoken by the Acehnese.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Acehnese has several different dialects even between neighboring villages, which may sometimes cause communication difficulties (Durie, 1985). This situation has caused the speakers of the language to make some efforts to fully understand the speakers of different regions. The diversity of dialects in the Acehnese language affects the collocations used by people from different regions (see Asyik, 1987, p. 9). The writers chose the dialect of North Aceh to research since its dialect is considered the standard form of Acehnese (see Aziz, 2016; Durie, 1985) while keeping in mind that Acehnese dialects of other regions also deserve equally detailed analysis in further research. Aziz (2016) notes that the North Aceh dialect, in general, is standard, and neutral among the four different main Acehnese dialects spoken in Aceh province: North Aceh, Pidie, Greater Aceh, and West Aceh. Aziz (2016) also argues that the North Aceh dialect has become the standard because it is widely used for public speeches in formal venues like radio broadcasts for local radio station news-reading. A similar discussion has previously been available (see Asyik, 1987; Durie, 1985; Hanafiah & Makam, 1984; Sulaiman, 1977; Wildan, 2010).

Literature on collocation has been abundant, but none has been available on Acehnese collocations. Hence, this study is set to find out the lexical collocations and the grammatical collocations used in the North Aceh dialect. Collocations are divided into two main groups: grammatical collocations and lexical collocations (Benson et al., 1986; Benson et al., 2010). Grammatical collocations are phrases made by combining a dominant open-class word such as nouns, verbs, or adjectives and a grammatical word like a preposition or grammatical, a structural pattern like a clause or an infinitive. Lexical collocations are phrases that only have nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs combinations. Collocations come from lexicon studies defined in many different ways (Wu et al., 2016). Nation (2004) considers collocations to be the words frequently coming together. Collocations are words that co-occur, but not all words that come together are considered collocations (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2005). McCarthy and O'Dell (2005) state that these combinations sound natural to native speakers, but foreigners need to make a special effort to learn these as they are often difficult to guess. In other words, as Popescu (2019) puts it, these are combinations that sound correct to people who have spoken the language all their lives. Popescu (2019) continues to point out that there are two ways of understanding collocations, in a broad and narrow sense. In its narrow sense, collocation refers to the combination of words formed when two or more words are often used together in a way that sounds correct. The phrases 'a rough wind', 'deadly blow', and 'a rough sea' are collocations. In its broad meaning, collocation refers to the regular use of some words and phrases with others, and in a special way that is difficult to guess (Popescu, 2019, p. 14). Collocations are also known by other terms such as 'lexical bundles' and 'fixed expressions' (Ulfa & Muthalib, 2020).

Although some studies related to collocations in Acehnese, such as Muliawati et al. (2019) suggest that Acehnese speakers still understand certain Acehnese idioms tested in their studies, a more recent study has shown the lack of understanding and

use of Acehnese vocabulary by younger speakers of the language (Muthalib et al., 2020). This phenomenon begs for more studies and analyses on Acehnese words and phrases to provide more insights and understanding on this topic. Therefore, the present study attempts to specifically analyze the Acehnese collocations used in the North Aceh dialect. The following research questions are addressed in this study:

- What are the lexical collocations used in the North Aceh dialect?
- What are the grammatical collocations used in the North Aceh dialect?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Collocations

The term collocation was first introduced by Firth (1957) to refer to lexical meaning at the syntactic level while the contextual meaning of a word depends on the words which come together (Firth, 1957; Hung & Chin, 2018). Nattinger (1987) suggests that language is a ‘compositional’ process in which many of its words co-occur together, forming single units of meaning. He calls these lexical phrases or word combinations collocations. However, collocations range from ‘lexico-grammatical unit’ to ‘free combination’. The term ‘collocation’ is actually only one among other terms for the similar concept of word combination. Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992, p. 21) define collocations as “strings of words that seem to have certain ‘mutual expectancy’, or a greater-than chance likelihood that they will co-occur in any text”. This term has two different perspectives: collocation relating to meaning and collocation with no semantic relationship. In a collocation, one word is prominent over others and determined as the base word, while the other is called the collocate (Hausmann, 1984; Kolesnikova & Gelbukh, 2012).

Halliday and Hasan (2001) consider collocation as a means of cohesion. The occurrence of words in some situations or others is related to each other because they tend to emerge in a similar state. For example, the opposite meanings of ‘boy’ and ‘girl’ are cohesive. However, even though they are not systematically related, ‘laugh’ and ‘joke’, ‘boat’, and ‘row’ are also cohesive because they are typically associated. They believe that collocation is the key to creating cohesion in a connected text. These collocations are not only words but also compounds, phrases, turns of phrases, or any expressions that also involve subordinate units such as morphemes, continuous or discontinuous (Léon, 2007).

Collocations can be dramatic and enticing because it is unpredictable (Sinclair, 1991). Collocations can be an essential part of the lexical structure of the language because of frequent repetition. They are assumed to result from native language expressions chosen by native speakers to match specific situations when talking about particular topics. It is a crucial factor in language proficiency (Abdulameer, 2013).

### 2.2 Collocations and Other Word Combinations

Collocations are not any random word combinations. Nesselhauf (2003) uses the phraseological concept to separate the collocations from other word combinations through the term ‘arbitrary restriction on substitutability’. He believes there should be a distinction between word combinations, rather than a possible limitation on the

substitutability of elements due to their semantic properties (such as free combinations) and the word combinations whose limitation is arbitrary (like collocations). For example, the phrase ‘read a book’ is possible, but one would not say ‘drink a book’ or ‘read water’. This is because the verb ‘drink’ needs a noun with the liquid semantic feature, while the verb ‘read’ needs a noun with written language semantic features. However, the phrase ‘reach a decision’ can be substituted by other nouns such as ‘reach a conclusion/goal/result’ but not with the noun ‘aim’. In this case, the limitations are not the result of the semantic characteristics of the two elements discussed, but of arbitrary conventions of the language which distinguish collocations from free combinations. Therefore, it is vital to distinguish collocations from other kinds of word combinations to make the characteristic of collocations more understandable (Bahns, 1993; Wu, 1996).

### **2.3 Types of Collocations**

Lewis (2000) classifies collocations into four groups: strong, weak, frequent, and infrequent. The difference between strong and weak collocations depends on their fixedness and restriction, while the difference between frequent and infrequent collocations depends on their frequency of co-occurrence in a corpus. Strong collocations such as ‘drug addict’ and ‘drink beer’ are considered to be closely linked phrases that act as a single word. While weak collocations like ‘a nice day’ or a ‘good chance’ are combined with two common words, each word could occur with different words. Collocations could be any combination of strong and infrequent, strong and frequent, weak and frequent or infrequent.

Similarly, Hill (2000) also divides collocations into four. Firstly, unique collocations, where verbs do not match with other nouns such as ‘foot the bill’ and ‘shrug one’s shoulders’. Secondly, strong collocation, one item is incomplete without another item because it only allows a few elements, such as in ‘rancid meat/butter’ or ‘trenchant criticism’. Thirdly, medium-strength collocation, this category of collocation is neither strong nor weak. The items can be collocated with other words, such as ‘have a barbecue’, and ‘make a mistake’. Lastly, weak collocations are predictable because the words emerge with each other in a random sense. For example, the adjective ‘red’ can collocate with many words such as ‘mistake’, ‘girl’, ‘decision’, ‘or car’.

Moreover, Halliday and Hasan (1976, 2014) categorize collocations into three types. The first type is the clearest one, it includes members of lexical items like colors, numbers, months, and days. For example, the action takes place tomorrow. The second type is the activity-related collocation which is nonsystematic but based solely on an association between items (spend – money). The last type is elaborative collocation in which each relation between pairs is impossible to define specifically (education, university, school, teach, institution).

Majeed and Dabbagh (2016) explain that several linguists and researchers (e.g., Cowie & Mackin, 1993; Howarth, 1998; Nesselhauf, 2003) tend to categorize multi-word units into several categories. The first category is free collocations (free word combinations). This category consists of items used in their literal senses and freely substitutable, for example, ‘open the gate’, and ‘a nice car’. This category includes all possible and semantically natural combinations. Another category is restricted collocations (fixed combinations) which usually have one element used in a non-literal

sense (a specialized or figurative sense), such as ‘run a company’, and ‘bitterly contested’. Howarth (1998) clarifies that collocation of this category might allow limited substitution as in ‘make/reach a decision and take on an obligation/a duty’, or in both components as in ‘do/carry out research/a project’. The last category is idioms which are relatively frozen expressions, for example, ‘sweeten the pill’, and ‘kick the bucket’.

Cruse (2006) sets two types of collocation: first, the combination of all grammatically well-formed phrases, such as ‘excellent performance’, second, the combination of words that have a semantic unity or words that refer to the encoding idiom, for example, ‘high wind’, ‘high office’, ‘high opinion’, and ‘high seas’. The word ‘high’ has a distinct meaning in each of these combinations, which is different from its default meaning as in ‘high wall’. Although the types of collocations have been proposed in many different ways, several researchers (e.g., Bahns, 1993; Liu, 1999a, 1999b, 2000; Wang, 2001) agree with Benson et al. (1986) regarding collocations; collocation will be consistently divided into two categories, namely grammatical collocations, and lexical collocations.

### 2.3.1 Grammatical collocations

Baker (2016) points out that grammatical collocation has a unique meaning, although not logically possible. Grammatical collocations consist of a noun, an adjective, or a verb, plus a particle (a preposition, an adverb, or a grammatical structure such as an infinitive, a gerund, or clause) (Bahns, 1993; Schmitt, 2000). Benson et al. (1986, 2010) state that collocations have eight combinations. The first type of collocation is noun + preposition (e.g., ‘blockade against’, ‘apathy towards’). The second combination is noun + to-infinitive (e.g., ‘it was a pleasure to do it’). The third type is noun + that-clause (e.g., ‘an agreement that’). The fourth type is preposition + noun (e.g., ‘in advance’). The fifth type consists of adjective + preposition (e.g., ‘angry at’). The sixth type is adjective + to-infinitive (e.g., ‘necessary to work’). The seventh type is adjective + that-clause (e.g., ‘she was afraid that she would fail the examination’). The last combination is the nineteen collocational verb pattern types which each of which has different grammatical structures (Benson et al., 1986; Benson et al., 2010), as explained below.

The first verb pattern is the ditransitive verbs with two objects (direct and indirect). The position of the direct object can replace the indirect object when the preposition precedes the indirect object. For example, ‘John often teaches Marry new words’ or ‘John often teaches new words to Marry’. The second pattern is the ditransitive verb with two objects (direct and indirect). The direct object can replace the position of an indirect object in which the preposition must precede the indirect object. For example, ‘he always says hello to me’. The third pattern is the ditransitive verbs with two objects (direct and indirect). The direct object can replace the indirect object in which the preposition must be placed before the indirect object. For example, ‘we bought a book for her’ or ‘we bought her a book’. The fourth pattern is the verb with a specific preposition and an object. For example, ‘we adhered to the plan’. However, the free combinations of verb + preposition which denote location means, or instrument are not collocations, such as ‘they came by train’. The fifth is the verb followed by a to-infinitive. For example, ‘they began to speak’. However, verbs + to-

infinitive which means a purpose is not included as a collocational combination as in 'he stopped to chat'.

Furthermore, the sixth pattern is the infinitive verb without *to*. For example, 'they had better go now'. The verbs 'dare', 'help', and 'need' are exceptional, for example, 'they help people around them'. These verbs are called modals. The seventh pattern is the past verb (V2) + progressive verb. For example, 'they kept talking'. The eighth pattern is a transitive verb followed by an object and *to*-infinitive as in 'they asked the students to participate in discussion'. The ninth is the transitive verb with a direct object and an infinitive without the preposition 'to', as in 'we let them use the car'. The tenth is the transitive verb with an object and the progressive verb, as in 'we found the children sleeping on the floor'. The eleventh pattern is the verb with a noun or pronoun and gerund, as in 'please excuse my waking you so early'. However, [Benson et al. \(1986\)](#) explain that possessive construction is often considered awkward. Therefore, more common expressions for similar meanings will be used: 'please excuse me for waking you so early'. The twelfth pattern is the transitive verb with noun clause starting with conjunction 'that', as in 'we hoped that the weather would be nice'. Some verbs such as 'assure' and 'convince' always take an object noun or pronoun before *that*-clause. The thirteenth pattern is the transitive verb with a direct object, an infinitive *to be*, and adjective/past participle/noun/pronoun, as in 'we considered her to be very capable/well-trained/a competent engineer'. The fourteenth is a transitive verb with a direct object and adjective/past participle or noun/pronoun. An example of this pattern is in 'he found them interesting'. The fifteenth is the transitive verb with two objects, as in 'the teacher asked the students questions'.

The sixteenth verb pattern is the intransitive/reflexive/transitive verbs with an adverb/a prepositional phrase/a noun phrase/a clause, as in the sentence 'he carried himself with dignity'. The seventeenth pattern is the verb with an interrogative word, such as 'what', 'when', and 'how', as in 'she knows when to keep quiet'. The eighth is the collocations of dummy *it* with transitive verb/*to*-infinitive/*that*-clause/either. For example, 'it surprised me to learn of her decision'. The last collocational verb pattern is the collocation of some intransitive verbs with predicate noun/predicate adjective. The verb 'make' belongs to this group which is used intransitively, for example, 'she will make a good teacher', and 'she was enthusiastic'. However, most intransitive verbs can be followed only by predicate adjectives, for instance, 'the food tastes awful'.

### *2.3.2 Lexical Collocations*

In contrast to grammatical collocations, lexical collocations do not contain grammatical elements. [Bahns \(1993\)](#) states that lexical collocations do not include infinitives, clauses, and prepositions. He mentions that lexical collocations have various combinations of adjectives, nouns, verbs, and adverbs instead. In lexical collocations, there are fixed and loose combinations. The combinations are fixed when the choice of words that collocate each other is definite, such as 'commit a murder', or 'break the law'. This fixed structure is idiomatic. However, their meanings are still predictable from the combined elements. In comparison, in loose collocations, the collocates are freely combined, such as 'analyze/study/witness a murder' and 'practice/study law'. The meanings of these loose collocations can still be derived from their words.

McCarthy and O'Dell (2005) state that the co-occurrence of two or more words in lexical collocations has two essential features. Firstly, there are constant collocational relationships between the words that collocate even though several words exist between them, for example, 'they collect stamps', 'they collect foreign stamps', and 'they collect many things, but chiefly stamps'. Secondly, lexical collocations do not depend on grammatical types, for instance, collocation 'strong argument' can be expressed as in 'He argued strongly or the strength of his argument or his argument was strengthened'.

Erman (2007) argues that collocations are a heterogeneous type of multiword expressions that can be formed or included in all phrase classes (VP, NP, Adj P, etc.). The combination of verb + noun and adjective + noun collocations is recognized. The first group includes collocations commonly used for lexical functions, including verbal ones, for example, the support verbs 'wreak havoc' and fulfillment verbs 'burn fossil fuels', and adjectival ones such as 'appropriate measures'. The second group includes expressions representing some specific states, conditions, properties, or activities that are typically socioculturally motivated; thus, it is invoked by frames, which may be institutions 'go to seminars', 'write a check', or pertaining to social life 'bright future', 'entertain friends', or be the result of democratic processes 'a free country', 'a parliamentary debate'. Members in these two groups have lexical status whose specific unitary meanings like single words may be stored as a whole or at least are easily retrieved; one member can call through association networks. In fact, they are highly few pauses in these drives.

Benson et al. (1986) and Lewis (2000) state that lexical collocations include neither infinitives nor prepositions. They divide lexical collocations into seven types. The first category is a verb (denoting creation or activation) + noun, for example, 'composing music', and 'making an impression'. The second is a verb (meaning eradication or nullification) + noun, for example, 'revoke a license'. The third is adjective + noun as in 'strong tea'. The fourth category is noun + verb, for instance, 'bomb explodes'. The fifth is noun + noun, for example, 'herd of buffalo'. The sixth is adverb + adjective as in 'hopelessly addicted'. The last type is verb + adverb, for example, 'argue heartedly', and 'anchor firmly'.

### 3. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach to investigate a phenomenon of the North Aceh dialect collocation used in the Blang Mee village of Bireuen District of the Aceh Province. Sukmadinata (2010) defines qualitative methods as a tool to understand the social phenomenon from participants' perspectives. In this research, the interview was conducted to investigate the collocations used in Blang Mee village to obtain valid data. It was then presented in descriptive analysis. It is convenient for the researchers to obtain the data since the research area is located in an accessible location close to the primary access.

Furthermore, case studies were used as the research design to give a deep investigation of the village, especially the language used by the villagers. Miles et al. (2014) characterize a case study as a phenomenon occurring in a limited setting since the utterances occur in some context. Thus, having a particular context of the study forms the unit of analysis, which might be an individual, an organization, an



intervention, or a process. According to Gomm et al. (2000), a case study refers to research investigating some cases in significant depth. Thus, besides the language used in Blang Mee village, the researchers also considered the aspects of the language speakers, including age, origin, education, and experience. Those aspects provide necessary information that can assist the researchers in choosing the subjects of the study.

Six Acehnese speakers from Blang Mee were taken as language informants. The speakers selected were fifty years and above, never traveled and lived outside of Blang Mee, and did not complete the lowest level of education. All the informants have always lived there in their entire life. They were interviewed using an interview guide to get the language data, with some additional questions not prescribed in the guide as felt necessary (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The informants were asked to discuss a general topic using Acehnese, their native language (For example, *pu buet ureueng gampong nyoe umum jih?* ‘What do most people in this village generally do?’ After listening to the informants’ responses, the writers asked follow-up questions related to the collocations used in Blang Mee village to obtain more data on collocations. Finally, the recordings of the discussions were used to analyze the collocations.

A written guide adapted from Savin-Baden and Major (2013) was used as the interview protocol. It is a relatively easy-to-follow guide consisting of four parts: the title, the script, the question set, and the closing. The informants were facilitated during the interviews so that they could talk about the topics targeted so that they had the opportunity to use the targeted collocations. It was done so that the facilitation did not affect what they said.

The data analysis technique for this research was presented descriptively by using the framework proposed by Miles et al. (2014). The framework is suitable for this qualitative research. According to Miles et al. (2014), there are three stages in analyzing the qualitative research data: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

Firstly, in data condensation, the writers read the notes taken during the interview while listening to each audio-recording. At the same time, the new notes were written on the paper to refine the data relevant to the research questions. Secondly, it is a data display, presenting the result of data condensation. The data were shown in tables by classifying the data considered as collocations into collocation categories proposed by Benson et al. (1986, 2010). The meanings are provided in a way suggested by Popescu (2019), i.e., the meanings of the examples (narrow meanings) and other possible combinations using elements of the collocation under discussion (broad meanings). In cases where no other combination is possible, it was indicated. The examples (data) were also glossed in English. Lastly, the final step is the conclusion drawing and verification in which the data were concluded and verified based on the results of data condensation and data display. The conclusion becomes the answer to the research questions of this investigation.

#### 4. RESULTS

The analysis of the extracted data from the interviews shows seven lexical collocations and seven grammatical collocations used by speakers of the North Aceh

dialect. The following sections present these collocations and their contextual meanings.

#### 4.1 Lexical Collocations

All seven lexical collocations defined by Benson et al. (1986) are found in the North Aceh dialect. These collocations are presented in the tables below. Table 1 presents verbs meaning creation (causative) or action in combination with nouns.

**Table 1.** Verb meaning creation or action + noun.

No.	Lexical collocations	Part of speech category	Contextual meaning
1.	<i>peuèm ija</i> leave unattended-clothes	<i>peuèm</i> = verb <i>ija</i> = noun	leave the clothes unattended
2.	<i>sinteue ija</i> put onto drying line-clothes	<i>sinteue</i> = verb <i>ija</i> = noun	put the clothes onto the drying line
3.	<i>bôh jeuleubab</i> put on the scarf (women's headcover)	<i>bôh</i> = verb <i>jeuleubab</i> = noun	wear a scarf

From Table 1, the verb *peuèm* 'leave' in Example 1 derives from two morphemes, the causative *peu* (dependent morpheme, prefix, meaning 'make') and the adjective *èm* (meaning 'left unattended'). Together, these form a verb that means 'to leave unattended'. It is used to express the act of neglecting something after using it, and its use is confined to clothes or dresses.

The verb *sinteue* 'dry' in Example 2 is used to express the act of putting the clothes or laundry onto drying lines, but not necessarily under the sun. The only nouns that can be combined with *sinteue* are those belonging to clothes or clothing articles. Another possibility is to combine the verb *sinteue* with prepositional phrases as presented in Example 3 in Table 1. The verb *adèe* is used when the clothes or laundry is dried under the sun. In Example 3, instead of using the verb *sôk* 'wear', the verb *bôh* 'put' is used. The former is used for a more general act of putting on a scarf, while the latter is used to refer to the careful act of putting on a scarf.

The next category of lexical collocations is a combination of verbs meaning eradication (getting rid of) or nullification and noun as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Verb meaning eradication or nullification + noun.

No.	Lexical collocations	Part of speech category	Contextual meaning
1.	<i>cui duroe</i> pick out-thorn	<i>cui</i> = verb <i>duroe</i> = noun	remove the thorn (splinter) from the skin
2.	<i>teulheup igoe</i> fall out-tooth	<i>lheup</i> = verb <i>igoe</i> = noun	a tooth falls out

From Table 2, the verb *cui* in Example 1 means 'to remove using a sharp object' something that gets into the skin. Its combination is only with *duroe* 'thorn, splinter' or anything that gets into the skin. The noun *duroe* originally refers to a thorn from a plant, but it is also used to refer to anything sharp that can get into the skin or flesh by accident.

Meanwhile, in Example 2, the verb *teulheup* is derived from the prefix *teu* combined with *lheup* 'pluck off, pull out'. Prefix *teu* in Acehnese is similar to Indonesian *ter-* which refers to accidental action, not deliberately performed and thus,

*teulheup* means ‘accidentally pulled out or falls out’. In Acehnese *teulheup* is collocable with a limited number of nouns, including *subang* ‘earring’ and *gukèe* ‘nail’.

In the next category, Acehnese collocation from the North Aceh dialect shows a combination of adjective + noun. An important note should be made that in Acehnese adjective + noun combination is inversely constructed relative to English. Therefore, instead of adjective + noun, the Acehnese construction has a noun + adjective pattern as illustrated in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Adjective + noun collocation.

No.	Lexical collocations	Part of speech category	Contextual meaning
1.	<i>jan laén</i> occasion-another	<i>jan</i> = noun <i>laén</i> = adjective	on another occasion
2.	<i>sinyak meutuwah</i> child-blessed	<i>sinyak</i> = noun <i>meutuwah</i> = adjective	a blessed child
3.	<i>röt tunong</i> direction-south	<i>röt</i> = noun <i>tunong</i> = adjective	southern direction
4.	<i>ureueng tari</i> person-beautiful	<i>ureueng</i> = noun <i>tari</i> = adjective	a beautiful person

From Table 3, the collocation *jan laén* ‘another occasion, next time’ in Example 1 is the Acehnese parallel for ‘a rain check’ to express that one cannot accept an invitation for now but would like to do so at a later time. The collocation consists of the noun *jan* and the adjective *laén* and thus, adjective + noun collocation.

In Example 2, the adjective *meutuwah* ‘blessed’ is commonly used for praising a child. Thus, the adjective is collocable with the noun *sinyak* ‘child’. The noun *sinyak* ‘child’ is a more endearing term than its counterpart *aneuk* ‘child’. Example 3 shows the noun *röt* ‘route, direction’ which collocates with a cardinal direction ‘south’. It can collocate with any other adjectives which show a direction such as *röt timu* ‘from eastern section’, *röt barôh* ‘northern direction’, and *röt barat* ‘western direction’. In Example 4, the noun *ureueng* ‘person’ is collocates with the adjective *tari* ‘good looking’. It can also collocate with any other adjectives describing a person’s characteristics such as *ureueng pungo* ‘a crazy person’ and *ureueng bangai* ‘a stupid person’.

The fourth category of lexical collocation found in the North Aceh dialect is the noun + verb collocation. This is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Noun + verb collocation.

No.	Lexical collocations	Part of speech category	Contextual meaning
1.	<i>kamèng meuröt</i> goat-graze	<i>kamèng</i> = noun <i>meuröt</i> = verb	goat grazes
2.	<i>tikôh kap</i> mouse-bite	<i>tikôh</i> = noun <i>kap</i> = verb	mouse bites
3.	<i>manok coh</i> chicken-peck	<i>manok</i> = noun <i>coh</i> = verb	chicken pecks

From Table 4, the verb *meuröt* ‘graze’ for example is also collocable with other nouns like *leumo* ‘cow’. The verb *meuröt* is specifically used to express the process of eating performed by grass-eating animals, such as *leumoe* and *kameng* ‘goat’ and ‘cow’. The verb *kap* ‘bite’ in Example 2 is an act performed by *tikôh* ‘mouse’ with its

teeth, whether it is the activity of eating food or the activity of damaging something. Meanwhile, in Example 3, the noun *manok* ‘chicken’ performs the act of pecking *coh* ‘peck’. The verb *coh* ‘peck’ can also collocate with any other nouns like *cicém coh* ‘bird pecks’ and *iték coh* ‘duck pecks.’

Another category of lexical collocation in Acehese is noun + noun collocation, as presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Noun + noun collocation.

No.	Lexical collocations	Part of speech category	Contextual meaning
1.	<i>minyruk gah</i> oil-gas	<i>minyruk</i> = noun <i>gah</i> = noun	kerosene
2.	<i>eungkôt sie</i> fish-meat	<i>eungkôt</i> = noun <i>sie</i> = noun	meat
3.	<i>ôn ue</i> leaf-coconut	<i>ôn</i> = noun <i>ue</i> = noun	coconut leaf
4.	<i>peureudèe trieng</i> clump-bamboo	<i>peureudèe</i> = noun <i>trieng</i> = noun	clump of bamboo

From Table 5, the collocation of *minyruk gah* ‘kerosene’ is so attractive that the writers were eager to find information on the reason why most North Aceh people tend to use the collocation. Based on the interview result, the informants explained that the North Aceh people used the oil that used to be explored by a gas (Acehnese: *gah*) company, LNG PT. Arun. Therefore, the people of North Aceh believed that the oil they used for lamps or other energy power came from the sources of the company. Thus, the people of North Aceh called it *minyruk gah*. The collocation of *eungkôt sie* ‘meat’ is also intriguing to be discussed. The two elements are *eungkôt* ‘fish’ and *sie* ‘meat’. The informants explained that the noun *eungkôt* can be used together with a fish name, such as *eungkôt surèe* ‘tuna fish’. They also said that as *eungkôt* ‘fish’ is a standard side dish, the noun is used for any non-vegetable side dish eaten with rice including the meat of a land animal, thus *eungkôt sie*, to refer to meat eaten as a side dish with rice. The noun *ôn* ‘leaf’ can also collocate with other nouns like *ôn geurusông* ‘dry banana leaf’, and *ôn geulinyueng* literally ‘ear leaf’, the part of an ear which stands out from the head. The noun *peureudèe* ‘clump’ is specifically used for the trees which grow together in a clump, such as bananas and bamboo.

Table 6 presents another category of lexical collocation in Acehese, i.e. category 6 or adverb + adjective collocation.

**Table 6.** Adverb + adjective collocation.

No.	Lexical collocations	Part of speech category	Contextual meaning
1.	<i>kureueng jeulah</i> lack+clear	<i>kureueng</i> = adverb <i>jeulah</i> = adjective	rather unclear
2.	<i>beureutôh jai</i> exploding+numerous	<i>beureutôh</i> = adverb <i>jai</i> = adjective	extraordinarily numerous
3.	<i>kôp digèe</i> extremely+annoyed	<i>kôp</i> = adverb <i>digèe</i> = adjective	extremely annoyed

From Table 6, the adverb *kureueng* can collocate with adjectives, such as *kureueng mampu* ‘underprivileged’ which is a direct adoption of the Indonesian’s *kurang mampu* ‘not able (financially)’ and *kureueng trang* ‘less bright’. The informants described that the adverb *beureutôh* is basically derived from the verb

*beureutoh* ‘explode’ which is usually collocated only with the adjective expressing a quantity. It is used to describe a significant quantity of something like *beureutôh jai* ‘largely many, extraordinarily many’. The adverb *kôp* ‘very, extremely’ can also collocate with other adjectives, such as *kôp jai* ‘very much’ and *kôp gawat* ‘terrible’.

Finally, the other category of lexical collocation is s verb + adverb collocation, as presented in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Verb + adverb collocation.

No.	Lexical collocations	Part of speech category	Contextual meaning
1.	<i>mumat beuköng</i>	<i>mumat</i> = verb <i>beuköng</i> = adverb	grip tightly
2.	<i>mat beurangkaho</i>	<i>mat</i> = verb <i>beurangkaho</i> = adverb	hold carelessly
3.	<i>kalön beurap</i>	<i>kalön</i> = verb <i>beurap</i> = adverb	look closely

From Table 7, the adverb *beuköng* ‘tightly’ is also collocable with other verbs like *ikat beuköng* ‘bind tightly’. Meanwhile, the adverb *beurangkaho* literally means ‘anywhere’ and has two meanings, depending on the purpose of speaking. For example, *bek mat pingan beurangkaho* means ‘do not hold the plate carelessly’, but *bek jak beurangkaho beuh!* means ‘do not go anywhere, okay’. The adverb *beurangkaho* ‘anywhere’ in the first example is to tell the interlocutor to be careful of doing something carelessly. The interviewees stated that the adverb *beurap* ‘closely’ is collocable with any other verbs, such as *tôp beurap* ‘close tightly’ and *döng beurap* ‘stand closely’.

An important note to make is that *beuköng* is actually *beu-köng*. This can also be perceived as a small complement clause on its own, rather than an adverb. It means ‘hold it so that it is tight.’ This is also the case for *kalön beu-rap*. The adverb *beurangkaho* is different. So, the *mumat beu-köng* and *kalön beu-rap* phrases are collocations of three lexical components, two of which are joined together (M. Durie, personal communication, March 6, 2022).

## 4.2 Grammatical Collocations of North Aceh Dialect

Seven combinations were found to be used by the North Aceh speakers who were interviewed in this study. The first combination is provided in Table 8.

**Table 8.** Noun + preposition combinations.

No.	Grammatical collocations	Part of speech category	Contextual meaning
1.	<i>ureueng i rumoh</i> people/person-at-home	<i>ureueng</i> = noun <i>i</i> = preposition	the person at home
2.	<i>ureueng lam gampong</i> people/person-in-village	<i>ureueng</i> = noun <i>lam</i> = preposition	people in the village

The combination of noun + preposition has been found in this study and shown in Table 8. It was found that the noun *ureueng* ‘people’ is collocable with different prepositions, as in *ureueng i rumoh* ‘people at home’ and *ureueng lam gampong* ‘people in the village’. From the example, it shows that the preposition *i* (spoken version of *di* meaning ‘at’) is used to explain the existence of someone in a smaller place like *rumoh* ‘home’ while the preposition *lam* ‘in’ is used to explain the existence

of someone in a more prominent place like *gampong* ‘village’. Another explanation is that there is a difference between something which is thought of as one place (a house) and something which is thought of as a region or container of more than one place. You can also be *lam rumoh* ‘in the house’ but the meaning is different from *di rumoh* ‘at home’ (M. Durie, personal communication, March 6, 2022).

**Table 9.** Preposition + noun combinations.

No.	Grammatical collocations	Part of speech category	Contextual meaning
1.	<i>keu bijèh</i> for-seeds	<i>keu</i> = preposition <i>bijèh</i> = noun	for the seeds
2.	<i>bak panteue</i> at-bench	<i>bak</i> = preposition <i>panteue</i> = noun	on the wooden/bamboo bench
3.	<i>i cōng bak</i> at-top-tree	<i>i</i> = preposition <i>cōng bak</i> = noun	on top of the tree
4.	<i>bak phôn</i> at-first/beginning	<i>bak</i> = preposition <i>phôn</i> = noun	at the beginning

From Table 9, the preposition *keu* ‘for’ is used to describe the goal of something while the preposition *bak* ‘at’ is generally used to describe the source or the location of things. The preposition *i* ‘on’ is also collocable with other several nouns such as *i cōng rangkang* ‘on top of wooden hut’, *i cōng bubông* ‘on top of a roof’, and *i cōng panteue* ‘on top of a wooden bench. The interviewees articulated that the noun *cōng* ‘top’ is only used to describe the position of something in a higher place. Thus, if a thing is in the lower place easily reached by hands, the word *cōng* is not needed.

**Table 10.** Adjective + preposition combinations.

No.	Grammatical collocations	Part of speech category	Contextual meaning
1.	<i>hek bak jak</i> tired-at-go/walk	<i>hek</i> = adjective <i>bak</i> = preposition	tired of walking
2.	<i>meumada ngön nyan</i> enough-with-that	<i>meumada</i> = adjective <i>ngön</i> = preposition	enough with that
3.	<i>digèe keu gop</i> annoyed-to-someone	<i>digèe</i> = adjective <i>keu</i> = preposition	angry with someone

The preposition *bak* ‘of’ can collocate with the adjective *teuga* as in *that teuga bak peugah haba* ‘too much talk’. The preposition *keu* is also collocable with other adjectives such as *palak keu jih* ‘mad at him’ and *malèe keu jih* ‘shy with her’. The adjective *meumada* ‘enough’ frequently comes with the preposition *ngön* as shown in Table 10.

**Table 11.** Intransitive verb + adverbial combinations.

No.	Grammatical collocations	Part of speech category	Contextual meaning
1.	<i>seuk keudéh lom</i> move about-to there-more	<i>seuk</i> = verb <i>keudéh lom</i> = adverb	move over further
2.	<i>döm teuman</i> stay overnight-next time	<i>döm</i> = verb <i>teuman</i> = adverb	stay overnight next time
3.	<i>galak raya</i> like-huge	<i>galak</i> = verb <i>raya</i> = adverb	like so much

In Table 11, the first collocation is *seuk keudéh lom* ‘move over further. The second collocation found is that the collocations are formed in the sentence. For

example, *singoh tadöm bak lôm teuman* ‘please stay overnight at my home next time’. The last collocation is *kapiké galak-ku raya* ‘do you think I really like him that much’ which usually represents a sarcastic remark. The last is verb *galak* ‘like’ which is collocable with the adverbial *that* ‘very’ as in *hana galak-ku that pih* ‘not that I like it that much’.

**Table 12.** Intransitive verb + preposition or prepositional phrase.

No.	Grammatical collocations	Part of speech category	Contextual meaning
1.	<i>piyôh bak reului</i> stop-at-shade	<i>piyôh</i> = verb <i>bak reului</i> = prepositional phrase	make a stop in a shade
2.	<i>teubit lam</i> exit-in	<i>teubit</i> = verb <i>lam</i> = preposition	come out from
3.	<i>woe i</i> return-at	<i>woe</i> = verb <i>i</i> = preposition	return from
4.	<i>jak u</i> go-to	<i>jak</i> = verb <i>u</i> = preposition	go to
5.	<i>phop bak aleue</i> sit abruptly-at-floor	<i>phop</i> = verb <i>bak aleue</i> = prepositional phrase	sit on the floor

From Table 12, collocations of this combination are generally used in the sentence, as in *jiteubit lam eumpueng* ‘it comes out from the nest’. The next collocation is *ayah ka geuwoe i glé* ‘ayah has returned from the mountain’. The last collocation is *kakak ka geujak u keudè* ‘sister has gone to market’. The researchers found that the word *phop* is used only for a particular activity such as sitting directly on the floor without any underlay. The verb *phop* ‘sit’ can also be collocable with other prepositional phrases; *bak seumen* ‘on the cement floor’, *bak tanoh* ‘on the ground’. In addition, *phop* might be the ‘onomatopoeia’ in which the word comes from the sound of the carelessly sitting activity.

**Table 13.** Transitive verb + (specific) preposition and (an) object.

No.	Grammatical collocations	Part of speech category	Contextual meaning
1.	<i>adèe lam uroe</i> dry-in-day	<i>adèe</i> = verb <i>lam</i> = preposition <i>uroe</i> = object	dry under the sunlight
2.	<i>lhat bak labang</i> hang-at-nail	<i>lhat</i> = verb <i>bak</i> = preposition <i>labang</i> = object	hang on the nail hanger
3.	<i>sinteue u luwa</i> dry-to-outside	<i>sinteue</i> = verb <i>u</i> = preposition <i>luwa</i> = object	dry (it) outside

There is a difference in meaning and usage between the verbs *adèe* and *sinteue* in Table 13. The verb *sinteue* is used to describe the activity of drying clothes indirectly under the sun; the temporary drying activity is because of some reasons like nighttime or raining, while *adèe* is the activity of drying things under the sun.

**Table 14.** Transitive verb + pronoun.

No.	Grammatical collocations	Part of speech category	Contextual meaning
1.	<i>pakoe jih</i> pay attention-him	<i>pakoe</i> = verb <i>jih</i> = pronoun	pay attention to him

Table 14 continued...

2.	<i>peugah beurangkapu</i> say-any random thing	<i>peugah</i> = verb <i>beurangkapu</i> = pronoun	say any random thing
3.	<i>patéh beurangkasoe</i> trust-any random person	<i>patéh</i> = verb <i>beurangkasoe</i> = pronoun	trust anyone

The meaning of *pakoe* is also commonly expressed by another word which has a similar meaning as in *peureumeun jih* ‘pay attention to him’. The verb *patéh* ‘believe’ can collocate with the pronoun *sapu* ‘anything’ as in *hana patéh sapu* ‘not trust anything’.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This section discusses the result of the study. The discussion takes into consideration theories and findings from past studies and uses them as contexts for the findings of the present study. The discussion looks closely at lexical and grammatical collocation combinations as proposed by [Benson et al. \(1986, 2010\)](#).

### 5.1 Lexical Collocations of the North Aceh Dialect

The interview results showed that the North Aceh dialect has lexical collocation combinations as proposed by [Benson et al. \(1986, 2010\)](#). However, Acehnese and English are two different languages. Although both languages have similar grammatical categories, in specific, they are different. [Durie \(1985\)](#) mentions that Acehnese has no inflectional morphology as many languages do, including English.

Among seven lexical collocations proposed by [Benson et al. \(1986, 2010\)](#), verb (denoting creation or action) + noun category of the North Aceh dialect was found more relatively frequent. The second collocations found in the interview are noun + noun combinations which consist of several similar nouns that collocate with a different noun. For example, *trieng* ‘bamboo tree’ and *peureudèe* ‘clump’ collocate with *pisang* ‘banana’. The interviewees explained that the word ‘*peureudèe*’ is only used for a clumping plant with no branches.

The word order of the third lexical collocations Adjective + Noun is different from English collocations which consist of Noun + Adjective. This is because the language structure between English and Acehnese is not similar in that they are derived from different language roots. [Durie \(1985\)](#) argues that due to its origins in the Southeast Asian Mainland, Acehnese is considered a phonological type characteristic of Austroasiatic languages. Further, [Durie \(1985\)](#) states that there are no adjectives in Acehnese as he identified morphological, semantic, and syntactic characteristics of adjectives. Meanwhile, [Asyik \(1987, p. 107\)](#) argues that even though several Acehnese verbs can be used in comparative degrees, such as *galak* ‘like’, and *banci* ‘hate’, they are different from the adjectives; the verbs have to be used with an object and no such requirements for the adjectives.

The fourth collocations are verb + adverb combination. The data showed that North Acehnese has several similar adverbs collocable with different verbs. The adverb *beurap* is collocable with the verbs *kalon*, and *döng*, which means these combinations are generally used in daily communication among societies of North Aceh. Then, the fifth lexical collocation category is the combination of adverb +



adjective. It shows that the word *kôp* indicates the meaning ‘very’. It might come with another word, but it is collocable only with some adjectives like *kôp brat seupôt* ‘very dark’.

The sixth is the noun + verb combination, in which only three collocation examples were identified. The last is verb + noun combination, which is the least lexical collocation found in the interview. However, not all verbs can be included in this collocation category because the verbs used have particular categories. [Benson et al. \(1986, 2010\)](#) categorize the verbs used in this combination are only the verbs that denote creation or activation.

## **5.2 Grammatical Collocations of the North Aceh Dialect**

Grammatical collocations consist of a dominant word, such as a verb, an adjective, or a noun, and a preposition or grammatical structure like an infinitive or a clause ([Farrokh et al., 2012](#)). The grammatical collocations that refer to [Benson et al. \(1986, 2010\)](#) are classified into eight types. Four of those are noun + to-infinitive, noun + that-clause, adjective + to infinitive, and adjective + to-infinitive which are not found in the North Aceh language structure.

Meanwhile, the other four types were found in the interview. The first is the preposition combination with the least data obtained: two noun + preposition combinations and four adjective + preposition combinations. The findings show that the prepositions used in the North Aceh dialect are simpler than those in English. The North Aceh dialect prepositions are small closed word classes that are much simpler and more straightforward than in English even when it is used to encode verbal arguments ([Durie, 1985](#)).

The third is the combination of preposition + noun. It revealed that prepositions which appear in the initial position are more frequent than prepositions used as the second word. Eight collocations were found, and most of them consist of a similar preposition that collocates with several nouns.

The last is the verb patterns type which indicates the uniqueness of the formation of the North Aceh dialect. The verbs of Acehnese are not specifically formed, unlike the verbs in English, which are easily detected. The Acehnese verbs do not have a particular marking, such as moods, aspects, tenses, and derivative participial constructions to indicate that they are verbs ([Durie, 1985](#)).

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The North Aceh dialect has the collocations as other languages in general. It has both grammatical and lexical collocations, grouped from some parts of speech including a verb, adverb, noun, pronoun, preposition, and adjective. However, the North Aceh dialect does not have ‘that-clause’ and ‘to-infinitive’ in its language structure. Thus, the four combinations of grammatical collocations as proposed by [Benson et al. \(1986\)](#) in the North Aceh grammatical collocations were not found, such as noun + to-infinitive, noun + that-clause, adjective + to-infinitive, and adjective + that-clause.

In the process of conducting this study, the scarcity of literature, particularly related to the Acehnese collocations, was found. This condition becomes an obstacle

in the development and completion of this study. Thus, it is suggested that other researchers researching the relevant studies focus on a similar topic to provide comprehensive research findings related to the Acehnese collocations. It can also be an approach to documenting and preserving the Acehnese language.

In this study, several types of collocations were found in the North Aceh dialect. As previously mentioned in the introduction that Acehnese has several dialects, it is recommended that further studies conduct parallel research and discover more types of collocations in the dialects from different regions of Aceh. Furthermore, this research was sourced from interview data which is a good entry point to conduct further research based on corpus data. Therefore, future investigation on collocations in Acehnese, using the framework from the present study, will benefit more from larger sets of data in order to provide more comprehensive insight into collocations in Acehnese.

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## The Perception of Acehese Parents on Heritage Language Maintenance: A Quantitative Approach

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### Abstract

*Family is the ideal platform to maintain the indigenous language, and parents are the core feature in promoting it to the children. Many previous studies have concentrated on the Acehese younger generations' declination use of Acehese. Their perception of the language is initially linked to the parents' attitude towards it since the parents' attitude determines the children's perception of it. Hence, the present research aims to fill in the gap by assessing the language attitude of the Acehese parents living in the urban areas on Acehese and searching for their efforts in passing the language to their descendants. Fifty-five respondents from three different districts in Banda Aceh were purposely selected by considering some criteria to fulfill the need of this research. The data were collected by distributing questionnaires and analyzed using a descriptive quantitative model; a five-point Likert Scale, a weighted mean score, a mean combined score, and a score interval to put the results based on their criteria. The result shows that the language attitude of the Acehese parents is in good criterion (4.2); they honor, respect, and are proud of speaking the language as their identity. Moreover, they also put some genuine efforts into maintaining and inheriting the language by speaking the language while interacting with the spouse, children, and other Acehese community members; and promoting the language to their children in several ways despite living in urban areas.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Language overwhelmingly corresponds to ethnicity and nationality; thus, it can be magnified to trace one's origin. As a symbol of ethnic recognition, language represents an identity of culture that contributes to marking different regions and nations. In Indonesia, there are numerous vernacular languages spoken across the nation to show the people's identity, and one of them is Acehnese, an indigenous language spoken natively among Acehnese speakers and communities, which reflects its cultural heritage and value as a part of its uniqueness.

Regional languages should be preserved as a part of national wealth and self-identity. Many researchers believe that preserving heritage languages is important. For instance, [Bodnitski \(2007\)](#) did a study to search for the first language maintenance among the Ukrainian immigrant families living in the USA. Similarly, [Jeon \(2008\)](#) researched the topic of the Korean language maintenance of an immigrated Korean family settling in the USA. Then, [Sevinç \(2016\)](#) conducted a study on Turkish language maintenance among Turkish families in the Netherlands. Those studies have revealed that protecting heritage language is a crucial thing to do as an attempt to save the self-identity or ethnic identity of the speakers while residing in another country where the heritage language is not natively spoken.

The majority of previous studies have also revealed that parents within the family are the right people to promote heritage language to younger generations, as many language interactions and language acquisition occur within the family ([Bodnitski, 2007](#)). Furthermore, parents are noted to be the ideal people to teach, transfer, maintain, and inherit the heritage language to their descendants because what the parents expose and habituate over the language will shape the children's proficiency and attitude towards it ([Tannenbaum & Hawie, 2002](#)).

Moreover, several studies have illustrated positive results in the relationship between the role and attitude among parents and the language continuity, especially those parents who reside in multicultural areas or countries. [Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe \(2009\)](#) conducted their research amongst Chinese immigrant parents living in the U.S. The result reveals that parents who have a positive attitude towards the heritage language tend to value the language and take action to pass it to children. [Liang \(2018\)](#), moreover, states that the immigrant parents in the United States and Canada take the responsibility to make an effort in heritage language maintenance, such as creating a language environment; thus, the children can benefit from it. Similarly, [Gupta \(2020\)](#), who carried out a study on Indian parents' perspective of maintaining heritage language in the metropolitan Jakarta, mentions that most the Indian parents show their agreement that it matters to protect and maintain the heritage language for children, and they take responsibility to do the duty.

On the contrary, there are also reports that there is no absolute correlation between parents' ideologies to parents' language choices at home ([Wilson, 2021](#)). Parents' attitude toward a language is not always congruent to language continuity since what they believe is not actually implemented during family interaction or repertoire ([Schwartz, 2008](#)). In addition, the existence of opposite principles among

family members about which language they should prioritize, minority or majority language, brings about conflicts within the same family which, in the end, remark that parents or family is not the only paramount element in language preservation (Curdt-Christiansen, 2016). Therefore, supports from the wider society also matters in heritage language development among children (Redemann, 2018).

Language maintenance cannot be done if speakers negatively perceive the language. This attitude will lead them to hesitantly speak their regional language in the society as they consider the language inferior. A similar condition is found among the Acehese adolescents. Some previous studies such as those by Fakhurrrazi (2016), Al-Auwal (2017), and Rahmatillah et al. (2021) have reported that home language becomes the reason why most of the Acehese younger generations nowadays are reluctant to speak Acehese. The majority of the Acehese parents consider Indonesian to be more prestigious and important; hence they resolutely teach the language to the children. Consequently, this habit shapes the children's perception of the use of Acehese in daily life. The parents do not realize that the continuity of the regional language lies in their hands, therefore, they have to take responsibility for preserving, teaching, and inheriting the language to their descendants. The most recent qualitative study by Yusuf et al. (2022) also revealed that despite the fact that all 12 couples interviewed in the research considered the Acehese language as vital for expressing their Acehese identity and were aware of its values, they did not teach their children the language. Only one family out of the twelve was successful in passing on and maintaining Acehese to their children.

Furthermore, migration should be considered as another factor of regional language regression. Moving to areas where Acehese is not natively spoken is remarked as a big struggle to keep using it daily. Thus, language shift occurs eventually. Chairuddin (2018), who carried his research under the umbrella of the Acehese language maintenance among the Acehese speakers settling in Kampai Island, North Sumatera, found out that the Acehese people tend to shift their language in communication; they speak Acehese predominantly and Indonesian dominantly with other Acehese members in the area. It is done because they belong to the minority speech community where they should adapt and adjust to the new environment by shifting the language; they absorb new vocabulary and then use it in speaking. Hidayati et al. (2020) also postulated that most Acehese people residing in Delitua District, North Sumatera, favored shifting their language from Acehese to Indonesian since it can show their success and social status in the community.

On the contrary, according to Amna et al. (2018), the Acehese speakers living in Medan, North Sumatera, progressively protect the language by showing their positive attitude towards it; they use Acehese when communicating with the other Acehese community members. This attitude is influenced by the parents who encourage them to protect the language as part of their identity. A language can be preserved as long as the speech community still has a genuine willingness to use it in daily communication despite living abroad. Yusuf et al. (2013) and Pillai et al. (2015) successfully present the phenomenon where the Acehese community residing in Kampung Aceh, Malaysia keeps using the Acehese though residing in another country. They mark the language positively since they perceive that speaking Acehese can show their true identity, and it is a part of cultural heritage which must be maintained for the language continuity.

Unfortunately, according to Rohullah (2017), parents who have been living in big cities nowadays believe Indonesian or foreign languages as more prestigious to be taught to their descendants, leaving behind the vernacular language. Indeed, many studies have shown that family, especially parents, truly plays an essential role in heritage language mastery amongst youngsters (Al-Auwal, 2017; Bodnitski, 2007; Li, 2006; Muhammad, 2013; Tannenbaum & Hawie, 2002; Yusuf et al, 2022). A language will surely stay alive, be known, and spoken if it is inherited from the elders to the youngsters, so the speakers of the language can exist from time to time. Still, the pinpoint of the situation is that the parents' attitude towards their heritage language should be spotted at very first since what they perceive toward it will determine the language continuity; the positive attitude will immediately lead to consciously inheriting the language, whilst the negative one will walk in the path of reluctance (Djamareng & Jufriadi, 2016; Ikram & Paeni, 2009). Therefore, the parents should have positive language attitudes to show their consciousness of using the Acehnese in any circumstances, teaching and exposing it to their children, speaking it with the other Acehnese fellows, and prefer to communicate using it despite living in an urban area.

However, not much research focuses on parents' attitudes and efforts in inheriting the Acehnese to their descendants. Most of the studies were devoted to youngsters' attitudes towards the Acehnese, such as those by Alamsyah et al. (2011), Muhammad (2013), Fakhurrrazi (2016), and Al-Auwal (2017). The most relevant works related to the present study are those conducted by Muhammad (2013), Aziz et al. (2021), and Yusuf et al. (2022). However, those studies are concentrated on the parents' perspective on children's bilingualism in Banda Aceh, the issue of language shift among parents in Lhokseumawe City, the language attitude among three generations of women living in Bireuen Regency, and a quantitative study approach towards the attitudes of Acehnese young families and how their values influence the preservation of the indigenous language to their children. Therefore, this quantitative study matters to conduct as an attempt to fill in the gap since parents come as the first handy factor in promoting and inheriting the language. The parents' positive attitude toward the language results in a positive attitude among the children (Al-Auwal, 2017; Aziz et al., 2021). The researchers then formulated the following research questions:

- What are the perceptions of the Acehnese-speaking parents residing in urban areas toward heritage language maintenance?
- What are the parents' efforts toward the Acehnese language maintenance?

Accordingly, it can be noted that this research aims at investigating the Acehnese parents' perceptions of the use of the Acehnese in urban areas. It also seeks to find out their efforts to pass on the language to their children. Finally, the results of this research are meant to add some useful references for Acehnese, and other ethnicities in Indonesia to be aware of their heritage language maintenance.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Language Maintenance**

The spread of English as the international language and the wider use of Indonesian as the national language have gradually changed the place of the Acehnese among the Acehnese speakers. Some previous studies have revealed that more and



more Acehnese youngsters nowadays feel reluctant to use Acehnese in communication (Alamsyah et al., 2011; Muhammad, 2013) they prefer to speak Indonesian rather than Acehnese. They perceive the Acehnese language as not prestigious, old fashion, and not well-communicative (Al-Auwal, 2017; Aziz et al., 2021).

Precisely, language itself is strongly associated with a shared cultural identity of a community; it is a true symbol of identifying social groups (Brown, 2009; Fakhrurrazi, 2016; Holmes, 2001; Llamas et al., 2006; Sapir, 2003). A language shall disappear one day if it is no longer being taught to many children in a community. Language loss happens when the language loses its last native speakers or the fluent speakers die (Aziz & Amery, 2016). Therefore, language preservation is greatly required to prevent the language from becoming unknown.

In line with the discourse of language endangerment, certain notions emerge to be discussed in a row, such as a language shift, language maintenance, language loss, and language death. The term ‘language shift’ was first introduced by Fishman (1964). He defines language shift as a situation where a community leaves their heritage language behind and changes their vernacular into new. Kandler and Steele (2017) claimed that when a bilingual speech community begins to favor one language over another, it certainly reflects that a language shift is taking place. Language shift has been rising recently in which one language is replaced or assimilated to another language due to native speakers’ preferences, and the transformation of political, economic, and social settings in a speech community (Heinrich, 2015).

In addition, Ostler (2011) and Pauwels (2016) claimed that language loss constitutes a process of diminishing the linguistic abilities of a speech community to speak, understand, and use the language, including its dialects, and in the end, no native speaker remained (Huss, 2017). Language loss must be seriously considered since it indicates language endangerment and language death. Dastgoshadeh and Jalilzadeh (2011) outlined that language is a vital feature of a human to identify his social group, the value of culture, and ethnicity, so losing language means losing the carrier of identity. Therefore, language must be inherited by the young generation to survive.

Surprisingly, Acehnese youngsters nowadays are not frequently promoted and exposed to the Acehnese by their parents; hence they neither acquire nor absorb the heritage language (Muhammad, 2013; Yusuf, et al., 2022). Recently, more and more Acehnese-speaking parents prefer teaching their children Indonesian or even a foreign language such as English as their first language and leave the existence of Acehnese behind (Alamsyah et al., 2011; Yusuf, et al., 2022). Those children then acquire their regional language from their neighborhood or school. Indeed, parents within a family play a vital role in terms of exposing, transferring, inheriting, and preserving regional language since children learn their first language from their parents (Redemann, 2018). In other words, parents are the ideal persons to inherit the language. On the contrary, if they are reluctant to do so, it can be assumed that someday, the Acehnese might walk on the path of extinction (Harun, 2003).

Furthermore, the national language policy emphasizing Indonesian as the national language across the Indonesian archipelago has greatly impacted language shifts of regional languages (Musgrave, 2014). *Hari Sumpah Pemuda* (literally translated as the youth pledge day) honors the Youth Pledge (*Sumpah Pemuda*) made on October 28, 1928, at the Youth Congress, proclaiming “one motherland, one nation, one language”. This declaration was then adopted to strive for independence, and it became the fundamental idea to unite Indonesia through the Indonesian language.

Since then, the language has been massively used as the national language, specifically in formal settings such as educational services, government offices, politics, economics, and other formal events. Due to the condition, a great wave of the language shift has occurred in which regional languages become a minority, and the Indonesian is labeled the majority (Aziz & Amery, 2016). The language is used in almost all aspects of life, including the instructional language used when children start going to school. Hence, this perception makes more and more parents nowadays prefer to transfer the Indonesian rather than the regional languages to their children due to the demand (Aziz, et al., 2021; Muhammad, 2013; Yusuf et al, 2022).

However, the constitution clearly states that the Indonesian government promises to protect regional languages as the national wealth and cultural heritage (The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015). The languages are allowed to be used as a complement or supporting element towards the implication of Indonesian in educational contexts. In conclusion, both languages are to enhance the Indonesian culture and to show Indonesian identity; hence both should be used interchangeably.

## **2.2 Language Attitudes and Efforts**

It is undeniable that “the sustainability of a language is largely determined by the language itself without any exception whether the language belongs to a national language or as a vernacular language” (Ginting, 2018, p. 125). This fact is overwhelmingly connected to language attitude, which plays an essential role in language maintenance. Similarly, language attitude is massively linked to self-identity and ethnicity where a speech community lives, so they try to maintain their heritage language (Holmes, 2001). Each speech community must maintain a positive attitude towards a language, especially parents, as they are the core feature responsible for language preservation. In short, those who have a good attitude toward their language will always show a group identity (Aziz et al., 2021; Fakhurrrazi, 2016).

Attitude, then, depicts the feeling of tenderness, compassion, devotion, and discernment over something, and it is often noted as the perception of people over one’s language and other people’s language (Ajzen, 2005). Attitude could be positive and negative perception, belief, state of mind, reaction, response, or judgment of a language. A positive attitude adheres to the desire to maintain or preserve the language, and it shows up in several aspects, namely in language endeavors which can be monitored from language pride and language loyalty, whilst a negative attitude is reflected through lack of language pride and language disloyalty (Ginting, 2018).

Language pride is defined as an awareness of a person or a speech community to eagerly show the language as a symbol of their personal or group identity. The speakers also have a desire to respect the language wherever they live as a trait of a sense of belonging and a sense of honor towards the language (Arifin, 2017). Next, an attitude considering the impacts of a foreign language that can harm the existence of one’s language is called language loyalty. It is generally evidenced by a desire to retain the language that is articulated through its use; hence it will lead its speakers to maintain the language under adverse circumstances (Chaer & Agustina, 2004).

On the other hand, the negative language attitude tends not to use the language and preserve it in communication. The first type of negative attitude is a lack of pride towards the language; the attitude of speakers of a language that shows their reluctance

or hesitation to use, spread, and value the language as one's symbol of identity and ethnicity (Ginting, 2018). This trait generally reflects on one's feeling of discrimination towards the language that they perceive has less pride and prestige. In addition, language disloyalty is the unwillingness or denial to maintain a language that is assumed as the minor one due to the loss of loyalty (Kamasuriya & Pereira, 2021). The attitude leads speakers of the language to show their disinclination to make the language sustainable in a community. According to Chaer and Agustina (2004), there are some traits of speakers of a language that show their negative emotional response towards the language; perceiving the language as an unnecessary symbol, preferring to use a second or foreign language due to the prerequisite of society and hesitating to actively participate in language maintenance.

### **3. METHODS**

#### **3.1 Respondents**

The specific characteristics of respondents of this research were purposely selected based on some criteria; they are Acehnese native speakers, live in Banda Aceh, and have children. Since the participation in this study is voluntary, the researchers randomly chose 55 respondents from different districts in Banda Aceh; 15 respondents from Ulee Kareng District, 25 respondents from Meuraxa District, and 15 respondents from Kuta Alam District.

#### **3.2 Design and Data Collection**

This research was conducted using the descriptive quantitative method by which the researchers attempted to investigate, examine, describe, and represent the data of the phenomenon by using numbers, percentages, charts, or graphs and describing them in words. For data collection, the researchers used a set of questionnaires adapted and modified from several previous related pieces of research (i.e., Delijar et al., 2019; Ginting, 2020; Muhammad, 2013) and to suit the need of the present research.

There were 10 (ten) statements within the questionnaire that were utilized to answer the two research questions. The statements, later, were split up into two sections. Section A, covering items number 1 to 4, was meant to assess the parents' language attitude towards the Acehnese by offering some statements linked to language pride and loyalty, known as the elements in assessing language attitude. Section B, involving statements number 5 to 10, was meant to seek out the parents' effort to promote, maintain, and transfer the Acehnese to their children. The questionnaire was made in closed-ended statements presented in Indonesian to make it more effective and efficient for the respondents to understand and respond.

#### **3.3 Data Analysis**

Data gathered from the questionnaire for parts A and B were evaluated by employing the following formula: Likert Scale, weighted mean score, combined mean score, and score interval. A five-point Likert Scale was used to score each option of

the statements within the questionnaire, ranging from (5) Strongly Agree (4) Agree, (3) Neutral, (2) Disagree, and (1) Strongly Disagree.

Next, after summing all of the respondents' combined scores, the researchers calculated the weighted mean score by magnifying the formula proposed by Sugiyono (2013):

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

where

$\bar{X}$  = mean score

$\sum X$  = total score of the respondents

$N$  = number of the respondents

Later, the combined mean score ( $\bar{X}_c$ ) was operated to calculate the final result scores from the total of the four weighted mean scores. The combined mean score can be calculated using the following formula:

$$\bar{X}_c = \frac{\sum X_1 + \sum X_2 + \sum X_3 + \sum X_4}{n}$$

where

$\sum X_1$  = mean score of statement 1

$\sum X_2$  = mean score of statement 2

$\sum X_3$  = mean score of statement 3

$\sum X_4$  = mean score of statement 4

$n$  = total data

To describe the frequency of each item of the scale, a score interval was used to put the means score into the interpretation score. The formula of the score interval is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Interval} &= \frac{\text{the highest score} - \text{the lowest score}}{\text{total category of the scale}} \\ &= \frac{5 - 1}{5} \\ &= 0.8 \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the interpretation of the mean scores based on the score interval, as suggested by Sugiyono (2013), is presented as follows:

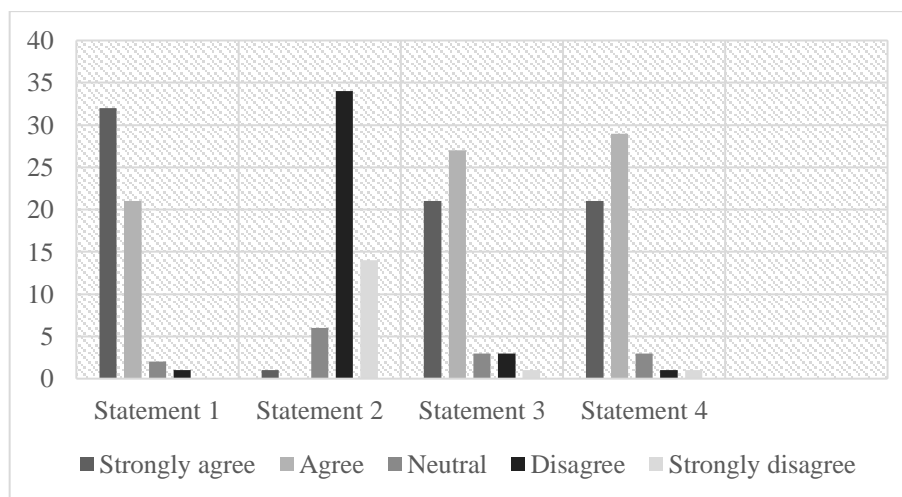
**Table 1.** Interpretation of mean score.

Criteria	Scale
Very Bad	1.0 – 1.8
Bad	1.9 – 2.6
Neutral	2.7 – 3.4
Good	3.5 – 4.2
Very Good	4.3 – 5.0

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 The Parents' Attitude towards Acehnese

Language attitude, in addition, is the key notion in language maintenance. This notion can be mirrored in its speaker's positive attitude, valuing of the language, and feeling of ownership. Figure 1 presents the detailed responses of the Acehnese-speaking parents' attitudes towards their heritage language.



**Figure 1.** Frequency results of the respondents' language attitude.

Figure 1 highlights the Acehnese-speaking parents' perspective on using the Acehnese while settling in the urban area surrounded by a multilingual society. From Figure 1, it can be learned that parents have a positive attitude towards Acehnese even though they live in Banda Aceh, the capital city of Aceh province. A positive attitude can be learned from their responses to the questionnaire's statements. For example, more than half of the respondents (32 out of 55 respondents) show strong agreement that they are proud of being able to speak Acehnese despite living in an urban area. It portrays that occupying the urban area for such a long time, in which heterogeneous language and people are assimilated, does not stop them from loving their inherited language. Yusuf et al. (2022) also revealed that Acehnese parents, despite passing on or not passing on the heritage language to their children, have strong positive attitudes towards this language. Nevertheless, the attitude is largely useful in maintaining the language in the massive presence of heterogeneity of community or bilingual community in forms of language varieties (Holmes, 2001).

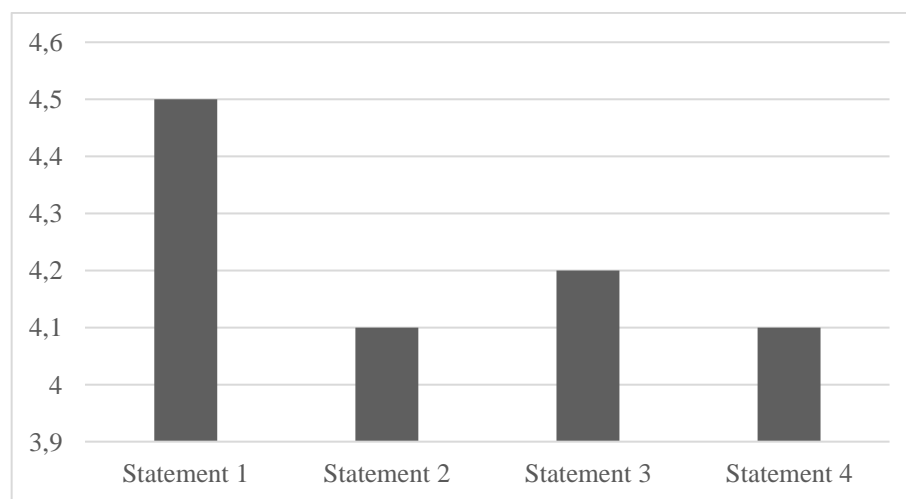
In maintaining the regional language, the speakers must promote the language to their children as they will play an important role in continuing the language in the future (Yusuf et al., 2013). Based on this claim, the result shows that the Acehnese-speaking parents still have this kind of attitude. The majority of respondents (34 or 61.8%) do not consider Acehnese as a conservative, old-fashioned language to speak to their children. This positive vibe is captivating since a good language attitude could be manifested in respecting the language as self-identity (Brown, 2009; Sapir, 2003). If the speaker of a language stigmatizes that a regional language is not modern, somewhat conservative, and left behind, they will surely find themselves reluctant to

use the language and purposely will not pass it to their descendants. Consequently, the language continuity is unsafe.

Linearly, Garvin and Mathiot (1968) claim that a sense of pride towards a language can be reflected in its speaker's willingness to speak and spread the language under any circumstances and environment. Since the sense of pride is one of the key elements in assessing language attitude, as previously mentioned, one of the efforts to maintain the sustainability of a language is by frequent and continuous use of the language under any circumstances (Pillai, et al., 2015). The frequent use of the language inside and outside the home will shape the familiarity and pride over the language among the children. Later on, they will benefit from the good habit that can create their genuine perception of the language. Moreover, what can be noticed from the research result is that many respondents (27 respondents or 49.1%) agreed with the opinions. They do not feel ashamed of speaking the Acehnese with children outside the house and in public places because they have pride when using it.

According to Llamas et al. (2006), Brown (2009), and Fakhurrrazi (2016), language is noted as a shared-identity community, hence losing a language means losing identity and culture. To maintain a language also means preserving the identity of its speech community (Yusuf, et al., 2013). Further, children who are exposed to and passed a language by their parents will certainly and easily acquire it. Therefore, parents need to know that transferring Acehnese to their descendants maintains language longevity. This statement is correlated to the respondents' answers in which they perceived that it is important to promote Acehnese to their children as a part of their identity wherever they live.

After calculating all of the scores from the questionnaire responses, the weighted mean scores are displayed in their group based on their interpretation.



**Figure 2.** The weighted mean scores of the parents' language attitude.

To reach the final score of the four mean scores of the statements and to put the scores based on their criteria, the combined mean score was applied as follows:

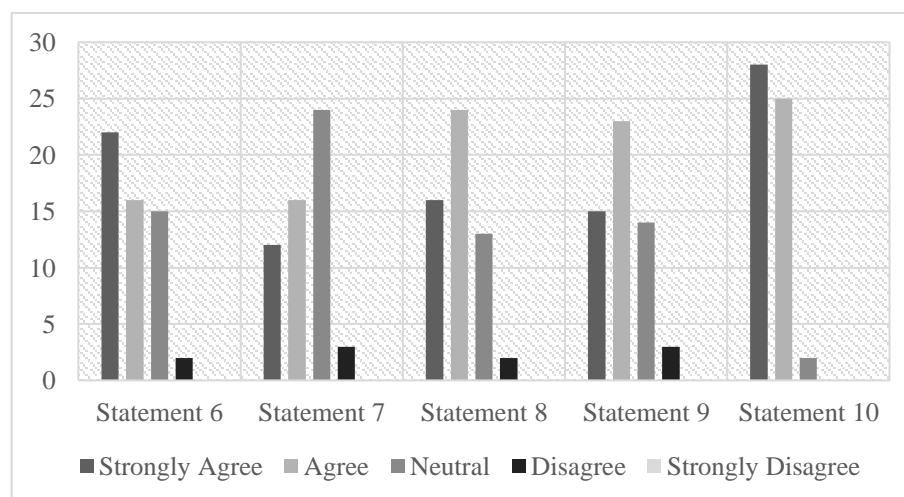
$$\begin{aligned} \overline{Xc} &= \frac{\sum X1 + \sum X2 + \sum X3 + \sum X4}{n} \\ &= \frac{4.5 + 4.1 + 4.2 + 4.1}{4} \\ &= 4.2 \end{aligned}$$

It can be noted from the calculation of the combined mean score that the Acehese-speaking parents have a good perspective on the use of the Acehese (4.2 points). It indicates that they still honor the heritage language and show their true color of identity within their society, as also reported by [Aziz et al \(2021\)](#) and [Yusuf et al. \(2022\)](#). The positive attitude was mirrored by their pride and loyalty towards the language ([Yusuf, et al., 2013](#)); being proud of using the language, being keen on using it, perceiving that it is a mark of ethnic identity, and being confident in using it. According to [Corson \(2001\)](#), a positive language attitude towards the heritage language is crucial to reflect the speakers' self-identity and self-esteem. Similarly, the parents are still giving a high pride over the language to make it live longer in the society. This also suggests that the language speakers remain abundant in the present time.

#### 4.2 The Parents' Effort toward the Acehese Language Maintenance

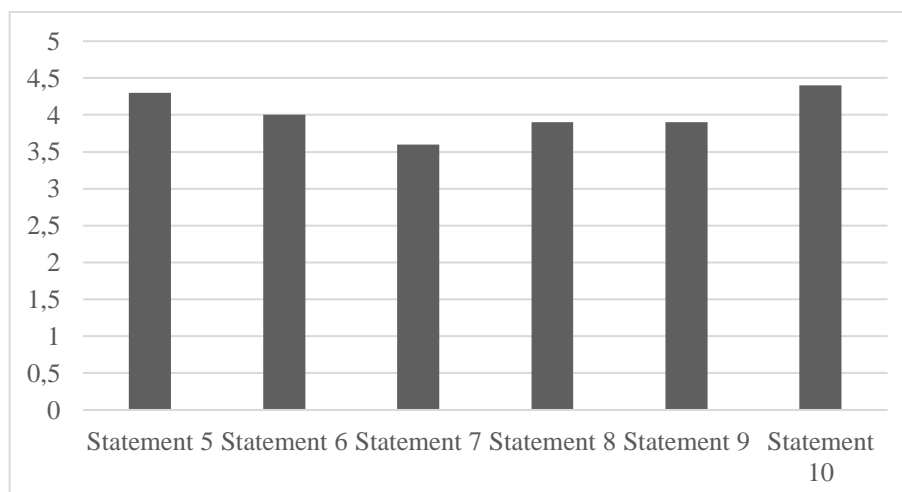
In terms of preserving the indigenous language while settling in a multilingual and multicultural society, a positive perspective toward the language is not the only pivotal core to possess; a persistent endeavor is also strongly counted in. Hence, this section answers the second research question. In terms of protecting a heritage language, the persevering efforts are immensely required to maintain the language, and they are plausible to do in many ways: the internal context, such as mutual conversation with spouse or children and other people, and the external context, such as reciprocal communication with other Acehese people.

The frequency result of the statements related to efforts in the questionnaire is presented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** The frequency result of the respondents' language maintenance endeavor.

The assessment of the parents' efforts in maintaining Acehese can be observed in Figure 4 of the weighted mean scores.



**Figure 4.** The weighted mean scores of the respondents' language maintenance efforts.

The research result has revealed that most parents (27 respondents) are willing to speak Acehnese with other Acehnese fellows despite living in Banda Aceh, where the Indonesian is more favored and widely used. [Djamareng and Jufriadi \(2016\)](#) state that whenever speakers of a language prefer to speak their indigenous language with people from the same speech community, it indicates that they have a positive attitude toward language maintenance. The data reflects that speaking Acehnese with other Acehnese fellows is a sign of loyalty to the language though they live in an urban area. Language protection also seems prone to do through family communication. An Acehnese wife can speak the language while conversing with her husband and vice versa. This home language habituation will affect the children's perspective toward the language. [Al Zoubi \(2018\)](#) claims that progressive use of language around children will unconsciously create proficiency in the language. Therefore, the more a spouse speaks a certain language around their children, the more familiar they will be with the language. In agreement with this argument, 28 respondents agreed to this effort, while the rest mixed Acehnese and Indonesian while speaking with their spouses. The latter result indicates a relatively not-so-threat situation because the Acehnese is still used in their conversation.

Furthermore, the core feature of language maintenance is inheriting or passing the language to children through casual conversation to keep the language known and spoken by the younger generation. There are enjoyable ways to promote the language to children. For example, when the children talk to their parents, they can respond in Acehnese. [Luo and Wiseman \(2000\)](#) and [Mills \(2001\)](#) mention that the visible effort, of using the heritage language to talk with children at home, can bring a good effect on the children's positive attitude towards the language. Thus, they will use the language to socialize with others even after being exposed to another language. Consequently, it will preserve the heritage language in the future ([Pillai, et al., 2015](#); [Yusuf, et al., 2013](#)). The research result indicated that 24 respondents showed their effort in promoting the language to their children in the mentioned way. Meanwhile, some others did not feel so assured about speaking the Acehnese language to their children as most of them speak Indonesian most of the time. The result reveals that although the parents have a good perspective on the language, they remain reluctant to speak Acehnese dominantly to their children. This finding is in line with the discovery



by Aziz et al. (2020), Aziz et al. (2021), and Yusuf et al. (2022), It is understandable since when it comes to literacy, the parents prefer to teach Indonesian to their descendants as the Indonesian is more formal and is required in the educational domain and the work-life later on (Aziz & Amery, 2016; Muhammad, 2013).

Next, the other exciting effort to promote the language to younger generations is by teaching and familiarizing the language through entertainment, such as songs and films. As many as 24 respondents responded positively to this idea. Nowadays, many of the Acehese songs and films can be easily reached by them as media to learn their indigenous language. Al Zoubi (2018) says that the more input parents exposed to the children, the more they can acquire and become proficient in the language. It means that the frequent exposure to the language in many ways could shape the good fundamental acquisition in the language, directly impacting their proficiency and attitude towards the use of the language.

The home language or language chosen by those parents to be passed to their children as their mother tongue is another factor in language maintenance. The first language acquisition is essential to define one's identity; to which ethnic or speech community they belong. Ginting (2018) mentions that if parents in mixed communities still prefer to teach the regional language to their children, it indicates that the parents have good language loyalty. Some parents possess a good willingness to teach Acehese as their mother tongue despite living in a city where the Indonesian and foreign languages are most preferred. It reflects their pure ownership over the language; thus, half of the respondents agreed with this opinion.

Finally, parents should be aware that they take full responsibility for passing the language to their children (Aziz et al., 2020; Yusuf et al., 2022); they are the key feature in transferring the language. Their duty to promote and pass the language to their children is to preserve the language from language loss. The parents' awareness, willingness, and consciousness to do it will certainly benefit the language sustainability. A good awareness of parents to maintain the existence of regional language will be evidenced through their willingness to transmit the language to their children under any circumstances (Chaer & Agustina, 2004). Half of the respondents reacted positively to this statement in which they are conscious of what they should do to preserve the language.

In terms of the level of effort, the combined mean score is calculated to reach the final score of the six mean scores and then is placed into their criteria as in the interpretation score.

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{X}_C &= \frac{\sum X_5 + \sum X_6 + \sum X_7 + \sum X_8 + \sum X_9 + \sum X_{10}}{n} \\ &= \frac{4.3 + 4 + 3.6 + 3.9 + 3.9 + 4.4}{6} \\ &= 4\end{aligned}$$

The aspect of language maintenance efforts also indicates a good level. One attempt that the parents show at the language maintenance is the emphasis on the necessity to speak the language frequently with and around the children to foster their proficiency in the language and shape their positive attitude towards it (Li, 2006). It indicates that their commitment to use, teach, and transfer the language to the younger generations can help preserve the language.

In a linear fashion, it is in line with the research result conducted by [Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia \(2020\)](#) or Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, which states that Acehnese is one of the safe regional languages in Indonesia because many people use it in communication and many youngsters still understand it. Similarly, [Wahidi and Putra \(2019\)](#) conclude that the majority of the Acehnese native speakers still possess a positive perception of the language, and thus, it is good to pass the language to the younger generation as an attempt to keep the language safe in the future. Those who have a positive attitude towards their language will always use it daily, transfer it to younger generations, and maintain it as their true color of identity in the compound speech community ([Aziz et al., 2021](#); [Fakhrurrazi, 2016](#)).

However, similar to [Yusuf et al. \(2022\)](#), the most apparent result of the statement is that the majority of the parents do not overwhelmingly speak the Acehnese to their children. Indeed, they tend to speak Indonesian, the official language among the Indonesian inhabitants, and it is widely used in formal contexts. In this modern era, national and foreign languages are much more preferred as the former serves as the formal language in many aspects of life, and the latter is used to engage and explore the world. It is inevitable that when the children enter school life, they will be heavily exposed to Indonesian rather than the Acehnese or other regional languages. It is crucial to note that though the regional language is perceived to play little function daily, it must be preserved to show one's true identity; reflecting the ethnicity and nationality to which the speaker belongs to. Therefore, it would be better for the parents to teach and pass both languages to their children since they matter in different aspects of life.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Language attitude and efforts considerably matter in language maintenance. A positive language attitude towards the regional language will benefit the language continuity from the present to the future. Parents, then, are the rightest people to promote, transfer, and pass Acehnese to the younger generations. Therefore, the first thing to be examined in the domain of regional language usage, perception, and attitude are the parents since they are the agents of language preservation in the era of globalization.

The Acehnese parents in this study have shown a good language attitude toward the Acehnese, and they also showed positive and actual actions in preserving the language. Based on the above elaboration, they made some efforts to transfer the language to their descendants. Hence, it indicates that language sustainability is still in the safe category based on the assessment of the language maintenance aspects. This genuine endeavor should be maintained progressively to preserve the true community identity and avoid language loss.

This research has revealed its result based on the scientific procedure of quantitative data analysis. However, there are limitations, such as the small number of respondents and the use of only one kind of instrument. Therefore, it is suggested that further research add more respondents and more instruments to collect more data from respondents.

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## Eliciting Metaphors from Narratives of Collaboration Experiences with Teachers in Writing a Textbook

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### Abstract

*Collaboration of teacher educators with school teachers in developing lesson materials is paramount for professional development. A burgeoning of research on educator-teacher collaboration in writing a textbook, for instance, has existed; however, there is little attention to the narratives on the collaborators' experiences through the metaphorical lens. Telling stories about collaborative experiences through the metaphorical lens can help understand the complexity of phenomena because thoughts are implicit and difficult to express. This study attempted to fill the void by analyzing the experiences of partnering with English teachers in developing the textbook of classroom action research (CAR). It involved stories of the researchers upon their collaborative writing experiences working with twelve primary school teachers in Aceh, Indonesia. In analyzing the collaborators' experiences, this study drew upon Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). Analyses of the collaborators' stories upon their experiences generated four primary implicit metaphors that represent acquisition metaphors rather than participation metaphors, such as 'collaborative writing is listening to the trainers', 'collaborating teachers as the trainees', 'university collaborators as the experts', and 'product is more important than the process'. The findings offer insights into the importance of reflecting on*

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*the experiences and generating metaphors to make sense of roles played by collaborating teachers and lecturers involved in a collaborative project.*

**Keywords:** Collaborative writing, metaphor, self-reflection, teacher educator-teacher partnership.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The collaborative working of university lecturers with teachers in developing lesson materials is to some extent school work-integrated learning, which has been strongly encouraged in the education sector as it is part of professional development. Teachers can potentially use the books in their daily professional jobs by collaboratively developing them. In this study, the university English lecturers and primary school teachers in Aceh, Indonesia, collaboratively developed a textbook on classroom action research (CAR), during which several primary school teachers participated. They have meaningful experiences developing a textbook from the beginning to the end or the A-to-Z writing process through participation. Participating in action research is crucial for the teachers because teachers are the core stakeholders (Voogt et al., 2019). Teachers are not only the object of research, but they also must research their own work (Morales, 2016). The teachers also know what really happens in their classrooms. More importantly, engaging in the CAR textbook development can support them to easily understand the contents and their utilization in the teaching and learning process. CAR is a strategy for sustainable teacher professional development (Meesuk et al., 2020).

Many studies on collaboration among teachers in developing a textbook or lesson materials, for instance, demonstrate several important benefits. This positively recognizes the professional and pedagogical expertise of many teachers and teacher educators recruited for the textbook authoring team (Moate, 2021). Besides, subject textbooks are also of high quality and written collaboratively by experienced subject teachers and teacher educators to improve the connection between the theoretical expertise (i.e., such as university professors) and the practical context of the classroom (Tainio, 2012). In addition, it can improve the textbook's practicality as it allows negotiation and collaboration of the parties involved in the design and development of a learning book (Widodo, 2015).

Despite studies concerning the efficacy of teachers' collaboration in developing a textbook, attention to the implicit metaphors from the educator-researchers' experiences or images of their collaborative work with the teachers in the Indonesian context is rare. Understanding their experiences from a metaphorical lens, for instance, is essential because thoughts about teaching and learning are implicit and not easy to express, which needs a linguistic tool like a metaphor to accommodate unfamiliar or abstract concepts into a knowledge base (Chan et al., 2018). Teaching is a complex phenomenon that must start from the premise that there is no single metaphor (Saban, 2006). Metaphors can be used as a tool for reflection and awareness-raising among teachers (De Guerrero & Villamil, 2002). In teaching, metaphors can help express implicit beliefs about concepts such as teaching and learning (Wegner et al., 2020). Besides, theoretical accounts and empirical evidence of the role of metaphors as crucial cognitive and communicative tools (Semino, 2021).

This study focuses on the researchers' narratives of their experiences of collaborating with school teachers for developing a textbook through a metaphorical lens. Metaphor is pervasive in thought and everyday language (Kövecses, 2002). Lakoff and Johnson (1980, as cited by de Leon-Carillo, 2007) emphasized that metaphors are essential in expressing phenomenological realities, stressing how personal concepts and views are commonly framed based on similarities or disparities. Metaphor analysis is beneficial in researching the context of the collaboration process in the search for insights into their conceptions of the collaboration. Metaphors operate as a "guide for future action" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 156) or "blueprint of thinking" (Martinez et al., 2001, p. 966) that bring together experiences within personal and professional knowledge landscapes: our past experiences as language learners, present experiences like stories of teaching for the first time, and future goals as teachers. Thinking through metaphors bridges the gap between the complexities of a phenomenon, event, or idea and a more familiar symbol, consequently facilitating a better grasp of meanings through a set of more understandable and familiar features or tools (Oxford et al., 1998, cited in de Leon-Carillo, 2007, p. 199).

Many related studies on the use of experiences through the metaphorical lens have existed (e.g., Blau et al., 2018; Chan et al., 2018; de Leon-Carillo, 2007; Duru, 2015; Neuman & Guterman, 2020). Chan et al. (2018) examined the partnership of the teacher-student relationship to generate metaphors. It demonstrated that collecting and analyzing metaphors is a valuable strategy in seeking data that are difficult to collect via verbal interviews, or statistics cannot represent that. The research revealed several metaphors for the teacher-student relationship, such as nurturing, guiding, insufficient connection, and promoting development. Another researcher, de Leon-Carillo (2007), explored Filipino pre-service teachers' preconceptions of the roles of teachers through the lens of metaphors. The results showed that their preconceptions fall into five categories: knowledge source, direction-setter, character formatter, change agent, and learner. However, their roles mostly reflect what they call instructivist rather than constructivist learning.

Duru (2015) analyzed the metaphors from the beliefs of elementary student teachers and conceptions about teaching in the contexts of student- and teacher-centered educational perspectives. It revealed several metaphors such as teachers as gardeners, knowledge givers, and social controllers. Descriptively, 227 (85.7%) of 267 future teachers had teacher-centered beliefs, 11 (4.1%) had student-centered beliefs, and 29 (10.1%) had mixed beliefs. Other researchers such as Neuman and Guterman (2020) studied teenagers' attitudes toward learning, homeschooling, and school education and uses metaphors to do so. They asked fifteen homeschooled children to describe metaphors regarding three things: learning, homeschooling, and school. The results show several meta-categories of metaphors, such as food, nature, movement, sports, and more. Categorically, they fall into positive, neutral, and negative metaphors. Among the examples, the positive metaphor for learning is: 'key door going to a cave' and 'flying an airplane' (Neuman & Guterman, 2020, p. 6). Blau et al. (2018) analyzed bottom-up and top-down metaphors for teaching and learning and digital learning. Results show several metaphors of general learning: acquisition, participation, and knowledge creation. Meanwhile, the metaphors of digital learning include toolbox, active player, creative mind, shared desktop, and inter-connected world.

However, to the best of our knowledge, there is scant research on the metaphors emerging from researchers' reflections. This paper argues that understanding the ways the teachers participate in the collaborative project of developing the textbook through the metaphorical lens is advantageous because it can provide insights on how to see what really happens and how to do better collaboration in the future. This study, therefore, endeavors to fill in the void by exploring the conceptual metaphors from the researcher-trainers' reflections on the training of English teachers in CAR (Usman et al., 2021). The research question to be answered is:

- What are the metaphorical representations from the linguistic expressions of the university English educators-collaborators after having collaborated with the English teachers in the CAR textbook writing project?

Generating and understanding metaphors using the researcher-collaborators' reflections on the training process of classroom action research is essential because it supports understanding the abstract things about what happened there in more concrete concepts. It can bring the participants' attitudes to the surface (Neuman & Guterman, 2020), such as their participation, seriousness, and enthusiasm obtained through the trainers' observations. This research, then, attempted to elicit metaphorical representations from the linguistic expressions of the university English educators-collaborators after having collaborated with the English teachers in the CAR textbook writing project.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 The Nature of Metaphor and its Types**

Metaphors are pervasive in all domains of our lives, even though some people are not aware of their existence. This is so because talking and thinking metaphorically are often unconscious characteristics of human beings (Semino, 2021). According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 2003), metaphor referred to "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another thing" (p. 5). In the same vein, Kövecses (2017, p. 1) defined a conceptual metaphor as "understanding one domain of experience (that is typically abstract) in terms of another (that is typically concrete)". Neuman and Guterman (2020, p. 3) equalized a metaphor to "an analogy that enables one to map a certain experience using terminology from a different experience". Nevertheless, Duru (2015) argued that metaphors are more than analogies, as they are directly connected to the cognitive structure and reflect a thought structure, a mental model, stemming from experience. In understanding a metaphor, it needs "a mapping across conceptual domains, from the familiar source domain to the less familiar target domain" (Clarke & Holt, 2017, p. 477). Therefore, a preexisting understanding of the compared domains and the metaphor's context is necessary (Cornelissen, 2006). In this way, metaphors can facilitate understanding of complex ideas, communicating efficiently, and persuading others (Thibodeau et al., 2019).

Scholars have distinguished metaphors into many types. Some scholars have distinguished metaphors into (1) stock and novel metaphors, and (2) ascribed and emergent metaphors (Craig, 2018). Novel metaphors have image quality and possess generative power, whereas stock metaphors are commonly used in a society that risks overuse accordingly. An example of a stock metaphor is 'classroom as home'. In this

example, classroom and home are two common concepts and the metaphor has overtly been used in many societies. The metaphor ‘classroom as home’ implicitly means a classroom that is comfortable and elegant for all students in the learning process, and teachers mitigate their authority in the learning environment. Emergent metaphors are the metaphors the educators intuitively hold and express naturally to express a concept. Differently, ascribed metaphors are “novel or stock metaphors that researchers intentionally adopt to describe a phenomenon they personally have identified or what they view as teachers’ perceived teaching experiences” (Craig, 2018, p. 302). For instance, a teacher uses a commonly used concept (e.g., gardening) to describe the concept of teaching practice, as in: ‘In what ways does your teaching practice resemble gardening?’ (Connelly & Xu, 2008). In this example, gardening is a stock metaphor used to represent teaching practice.

## 2.2 Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

There are many theories of metaphors that scholars have developed. Among the most popular cognitive linguistics perspective is Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), developed by Lakoff and Johnson in 1980 (Pérez, 2019), and has been refined and expanded by Kövecses (2002, 2010, 2017). Kövecses (2002) defined a conceptual metaphor as a systematic set of correspondences between two domains of experience. This theory proposes that metaphor is not just an aspect of language but also a fundamental part of human thought. That is why this kind of metaphor is also called thought metaphor and conceptual metaphor (Gibbs Jr., 2011). In this theory, there is a strong relationship between the conceptual metaphors and the metaphorical linguistic expressions as “the linguistic expressions (i.e., ways of talking) make explicit, or are manifestations of, the conceptual metaphors (i.e., ways of thinking)” (Kövecses, 2017, p. 6).

Furthermore, Kövecses (2002) explained the CMT with several examples. In generating the metaphor of ‘love is a journey’, he provided several linguistic expressions as the following:

Look how far we’ve come.  
 We’re at a crossroads.  
 We’ll just have to go our separate ways.  
 We can’t turn back now.  
 I don’t think this relationship is going anywhere.  
Where are we?  
 We’re stuck.  
 It’s been a long, bumpy road.  
 This relationship is a dead-end street.  
 We’re just spinning our wheels.  
 Our marriage is on the rocks.  
 We’ve gotten off the track.  
 This relationship is foundering.  
 (Kövecses, 2002, p. 5)

It is clear from the example above that all expressions use phrases in italics from the domain of a journey. ‘How far we’ve come and at a crossroads,’ for instance,

indicates a journey. The rest of the phrases in the linguistic expressions also indicate a journey, such as ‘turn back’, ‘a long, bumpy road’, ‘going anywhere’, ‘a dead-end street’, ‘spinning our wheels’, ‘on the rocks’, ‘off the track’, and ‘foundering’. The linguistic expressions are manifestations of the conceptual metaphor ‘love is a journey’.

In the same vein, [Gibbs Jr. \(2014\)](#) exemplified a conceptual metaphor ‘life is a journey’. Life is a journey is a way of thinking extracted from ways of talking, as in the following:

His life took an unexpected turn after he met her.  
John is struggling to get someplace in his career.  
Sally is off to a slow start working on her thesis.  
Their relationship was moving along in a good direction.  
Jack was spinning his wheels trying to solve math the problem.  
([Gibbs Jr., 2014, p. 19](#))

All the expressions exemplified above reflect a particular way of thinking about life; they demonstrate the metaphorical concept of life from the journey domain ([Gibbs Jr., 2014](#)). The metaphor helps in understanding the concept of life through the concept of a journey.

### **2.3 Collaboration within Indonesian Learning Cultures**

Collaboration is a notion and a learning metaphor that necessitates participation in the process of knowledge co-construction. When doing a collaborative project, for instance, developing lesson materials needs to involve agency, voice, and identity in the process ([Widodo, 2017](#)). By agency, [Mercer \(2011, cited in Widodo, 2017, p. 324\)](#) means “the latent potential for self-initiated engagement. It is one’s capacity to make a personal choice and to act on this choice in a way that makes a difference in one’s life”. Agency means individuals engaging in making decisions, taking initiatives, and acting proactively ([Goller & Paloniemi, 2017](#)). In the professional learning approach, they need to be active participants, who are responsible for creating change ([Vähäsantanen et al., 2017](#)). ‘Agency’, which is strongly linked to individuals’ identities, goals, interests, and beliefs, is a driver and a precondition of work-related learning; it is an activity and a learning outcome that is shaped throughout their personal life history ([Goller, 2017](#)). Besides, the ‘voice’ of collaborators is crucial in a collaborative working project ([Widodo, 2017](#)). By voice, [Faux et al. \(2006\)](#) referred it to as a process leading to empowerment through active engagement with those in positions of power in order to express views, intent, beliefs, motivation, and motives regarding their language learning experiences as teachers’ co-collaborators. The teachers, as collaborators, should give their voices ([Stewart, 2010](#)) by engaging in making decisions on what, why, and how to write the textbook. In addition, as [Mercer \(2011\)](#) suggested, the process of collaboration involves ‘identity’. Identity is about “our understanding of who we are and who we think other people are” ([Danielewicz, 2001, p. 10](#)). By understanding their status as a collaborator, they will participate actively in collaborative writing.

However, people’s participation in a collaborative project is inseparable from their culture. Regarding this, [Schultz \(2008\)](#), for instance, introduced learner-centered

pedagogy to the teachers in Aceh, Indonesia, during the post-earthquake and tsunami disasters in Aceh in 2004. She trained a group of Acehnese teachers about how to teach writing using the inquiry method. During the training process, she observed that the teachers positioned her as the authority or ‘expert’ that should provide the best knowledge rather than construct it together, as suggested in the learner-centered pedagogy. A similar thing was observed by [Robertson et al. \(2018\)](#) when conducting a collaborative professional development program in Papua, Indonesia. They found that participants expected that program delivery would be transmissive and directive in nature. They believed that the Australian academics possessed the knowledge to be transferred and implemented without questioning. For the many reasons outlined previously, this belief had to be explicitly and implicitly countered for the program to be effective.

#### 2.4 Stories of Experiences from Metaphorical Lens

According to [Kövecses \(2017\)](#), metaphors emanate from various sources, ranging from televisions, radio broadcasts, magazines, and classroom processes to reflections. This study focuses on the metaphors from the stories of experiences. According to [Connelly and Clandinin \(2005\)](#), as cited in [Craig \(2018\)](#), a story is “a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made meaningful” (p. 477). [Craig \(2018\)](#) stated that a story is useful for capturing and communicating raw experience and it conveys narrative knowing. Literature indicates that stories during the teaching and learning process interactions are instrumental in exploring experiences through a metaphorical lens. [Harré and van Langenhove \(1999\)](#), as cited by [Erickson & Pinnegar, \(2016\)](#) argued that the interactants position themselves and are positioned in interactions. This study explores how the identities of the lecturer-collaborators and teacher-collaborators are constructed and disclosed in the collaborative project.

Their interactions in a social context, such as a collaborative project, can be understood through the metaphorical lens. In this regard, [Craig \(2018\)](#) stated that people have utilized “metaphors to story and make sense of their lived experiences for themselves and to carry across their meaning interactively to others” (p. 301). As [Lakoff and Johnson \(1980\)](#), as cited in [Zhu et al., 2019, p. 5](#) stated, “metaphor...not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature”. In the same vein, [Kövecses \(2002\)](#) stated that metaphors are used both to speak about particular aspects of the world and to think about them. [Saban \(2006\)](#) reviewed previous studies on the variety of functions of metaphors in teaching and learning. It functions as a tool for reflecting the teacher’s teaching experience and developing an awareness of the demands and pressures of the work, a method for students to describe their learning experiences and evaluate the program, a medium to enhance understanding of teachers’ under-cover perceptions, and an opportunity for teachers to demonstrate how they perceive themselves and their professional identity ([Chan et al., 2018](#)). [Chan et al. \(2018\)](#) used experiences to generate metaphors from essays on the training experiences.

In the context of learning, several metaphors have been popular over the last three decades. [Sfard \(1998\)](#), as cited in [Wegner & Nückles, 2015](#) summarized learning in two main metaphors, including the acquisition metaphor versus the participation

metaphor. [Elmholdt \(2003\)](#) uses cognitive ‘acquisition’ and ‘social participation’. According to [Wegner and Nückles \(2015\)](#), the difference is because of different epistemological orientations. Proponents of the acquisition metaphor conceptualize knowledge as entities, and learners receive knowledge, whereas proponents of the participation metaphor understand knowing as an activity. Knowledge is not something one has within this metaphor, but something one does. Knowing is a situated, culturally embedded, and socially mediated practice. Learners actively construct knowledge. Consequently, the teacher aids students in constructing knowledge; unlike in the acquisition metaphor, the teacher serves as the provider of knowledge. Expressions like ‘knowledge transfer’ are commonly known in acquiring knowledge ([Wegner & Nückles, 2015](#)). However, both metaphors are entangled rather than separated, sometimes folded, coexisting peacefully and loudly, contested and negotiated ([Elmholdt, 2003](#)).

### **3. METHODS**

This study used a qualitative approach because of its relevance to understanding the phenomenon during collaborative working with the primary school teachers teaching English in a district in Aceh province, Indonesia.

#### **3.1 Participant**

Fifteen primary school teachers teaching English at their schools took part as the teacher-collaborators in the project of developing a CAR textbook in collaboration with two lecturer-collaborators. The experienced teachers, averagely aged over fifty years, were selected based on their consent to participate throughout the project. Most of them have heard of and used CAR during their careers as school teachers. However, the data for this study were stories by the two collaborator-researchers at the end of the collaborative project with the English teachers.

#### **3.2 Instruments**

This study used stories or narratives ([Clandinin & Connelly, 2000](#)) of the university English collaborator-researchers during the collaborative writing project of the CAR textbook with the English teachers as the instrument. [Clandinin and Connelly \(2000, as cited in Usman, 2020, p. 24\)](#), narrative inquiry refers to “a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives”. The university English collaborator-researchers were invited to narrate the process of the collaborative writing project and made sense of what happened during the collaborative work, such as how the English trainee-teachers participated in the teachers’ collaborative training development of the textbooks.

#### **3.3 Data Collection**

In this study, the collaborator-researchers were invited to narrate their experiences on the training and collaborative writing at the end of the collaborative

project and write their expressions or linguistic expressions. They narrated their experiences with the English teachers-collaborators' participation, seriousness, and ability to use CAR. Their linguistic expressions were then recorded and translated into English.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis of the metaphorical linguistic expressions as the two collaborating lecturers narrated their experiences from the five-day collaborative writing project. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) stated that metaphors are grounded on the people's experiences and depend on their personal interpretation of the phenomena. In analyzing the data in this study, the researchers closely read the linguistic expressions of the lecturer-collaborators, especially their respective roles, in the CAR textbook writing project and then analyzed them through the lens of metaphors. In analyzing the linguistic expressions that were sought to generate the metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) approach was used by which the conceptual domains were sought (Kövecses, 2010). In analyzing the metaphors, this study identified the metaphors from several linguistic expressions from the respondents' narratives. Then the metaphors were categorized into meta-categories. In this research, the meta-categories of the metaphors are two, including the acquisition metaphor versus the participation metaphor (Sfard, 1998, as cited in Elmholdt, 2003; Wegner & Nückles, 2015).

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study has attempted to analyze the narratives of the lecturer-collaborators' experiences of collaborative projects with the English teachers from a metaphorical lens. As Saban (2006, p. 299) stated, "metaphors structure our perception, thought, and action". This study has collected the lecturer-collaborators' expressions on the collaboration process in which they worked together with the English teacher-collaborators to develop the textbook. In this stage, the concepts behind the expressions are crucial to the findings (Kövecses, 2002). Through their linguistic expressions, the researchers extracted four main metaphors that reflect the process of the collaborative project. They include 'collaborative writing is listening to the university collaborators', 'collaborating teachers as the trainees', 'a collaborator is an expert', and 'product is more important than process'. These metaphors generated representations of their roles, researcher-facilitators' roles, and their identities during days of the collaborative writing of the textbook.

### 4.1 Lecturer-Collaborator as an Expert

The conceptual metaphor 'lecturer-collaborator as an expert' is implicit in the linguistic expressions that the respondents expressed after collaborating with the teachers. The comments or linguistic expressions are the responses to the roles of the lecturer-collaborators in that collaborative project:

- (1) I remember when several teacher-collaborators asked questions only to the lecturer-collaborators.
- (2) All the questions were only answered by the teacher educator--collaborators.



- (3) Only the teacher educator-collaborators who talked and wrote every single part of the CAR textbook.

Examples (1), (2), and (3) show that each uses the phrases from the domain of learning as an acquisition. The ‘teacher-collaborators’ played passive roles during the project. This indicates that in those interactions, the university lecturer-collaborators were regarded as the experts rather than as collaborators. If the teachers positioned themselves as collaborators, they would have worked collaboratively with the university lecturers as the collaborators, and relied much on them as the experts during the collaborative working for the textbook development. Their agency, which is an important factor in collaborative working (Goller, 2017; Mercer, 2011; Widodo, 2017), was not enacted as expected. They just followed what the collaborator-lecturers said. From the teachers’ roles, the “facilitator as an expert” metaphor is implied in the experiences reflected in the collaborative writing of the textbook.

Reflecting upon their own experiences in the collaborative writing project through the metaphorical lens, the ‘collaborator as an expert’ metaphor has several entities. The entities include trainers as the instructor, trainees, trained, and training. In this way of learning, the lecturer-collaborators served as the transmitters of knowledge and knowledge source, which reflects the instructivist learning (de Leon-Carillo, 2007) of the top-down learning paradigm. In the Indonesian learning culture, the teacher or facilitator is highly respected (Zulfikar, 2009), which creates collaboration like an instruction. This finding corroborates Schultz’s (2008) and Robertson et al.’s (2018) research findings that Indonesian teachers tend to rely much on the facilitators in training.

## **4.2 Collaborative Writing as Listening to the Lecturer-Facilitator**

The metaphor ‘collaborative writing experiences is listening to the lecturer-collaborators’ emerges due to the positions the teachers took during the collaborative project. The linguistic expressions in (4) and (5) convey the conceptual domain of the teacher collaborators as the recipients of knowledge rather than as active collaborators. Even though the training emphasizes ‘collaboration with all participants’, what happens, in reality, did not reflect that way. The reality was that the teachers as the participants in the collaborative writing just listened to what the trainer-researchers said. They just followed what the lecturer-collaborators said.

- (4) The teacher-collaborators just join the project to listen attentively to what the teacher educators said.
- (5) The teachers sat quietly while teacher educator-collaborators talked.

Accordingly, their poor participation violates the common rules of collaboration that requires every participant to work together in doing a project. Essentially, collaborative writing requires the active participation of everyone (Vähäsantanen et al., 2017), which in this research were the school teachers and the university lecturers. They should willingly share their opinions, agreement, and disagreement in a democratic atmosphere. In other words, the finding reflects bottom-up metaphors,

which is contrasted with Blau et al.'s (2018) research findings, which reveal such metaphors of general learning as acquisition, participation, and knowledge creation.

### 4.3 Collaborating Teachers as the Trainees

The metaphor, 'collaborating teachers as the trainees' is reflected in the linguistic expressions by the educator-collaborators as in (6) and (7). The teachers were reluctant to actively participate in developing every chapter of the textbook even though they were invited to do so. It seemed that they were walking in an unknown world. They did not do anything related to the textbook writing, except wait for the educator-collaborators to do it wholly. In this way, dialogic learning, co-construction of knowledge, or negotiation (Widodo, 2015) in developing the textbook was absent. Accordingly, their identities as the writing collaborators in the collaborative project become trainees.

- (6) The collaborative project was no more than training because the teacher-collaborators only followed what the teacher educators said.
- (7) We cannot expect much from the teacher-collaborators to collaborate because they passively received what we said and did.

In this way, the facilitators had no choice except to implant everything during the collaborative writing. The change of the way of learning, as Schultz (2008) did, was done to align with the teachers' participation ways. This finding is more or less aligned with de Leon-Carillo's (2007) research finding on Filipino pre-service teachers' preconceptions of the roles of teachers through the lens of metaphors, which generated such metaphors as a teacher as a knowledge source and teacher as direction-setter.

### 4.4 Product is More Important than the Process

The metaphor 'product is more important than the process' is generated by reflecting upon many images during the collaborative project. Among them were during the training, the teachers' attendance was very fluctuating; some attended the first day but missed the second day. This suggests that some of the teachers regarded the process as less important than the product.

- (8) Most of the participating teachers did not attend the process of textbook development every day.
- (9) Most of the teacher-collaborators did not actively engage in the CAR textbook writing process.
- (10) One teacher kept talking with her friend about other things than the action research things during the collaborative project.

Essentially, collaboration to produce a product, like the textbook, needs to involve much in the process. All participants need to show their agency or self-initiated engagement to contribute to the writing process and product. Involved in the process, they will not only know the product but also learn theories underpinning the collaborative project (Widodo, 2017). In a collaborative project, the participants ideally work actively during the whole project through which every participant

experiences every part of the process. Hence, the joint work metaphor is vivid in the process, such as through massive interactions ranging from analysis, design, and development to evaluation.

Nevertheless, it needs to understand that the construction of the teachers' identity is inseparable from their contextual contexts in the Indonesia's context. They have a high workload at school which makes them have little time to improve their professionalism. It makes them unfocused on such a collaborative project. Dealing with the impediments, some teachers often 'outsource' their tasks to a third party to provide their daily job needs, such as lesson plans, syllabi, and CAR reports. Vendors have provided everything they need to do their daily job. Moreover, in evaluating the teachers' CAR reports for the requirements for job promotion, the local governments rely only on the teachers' written reports, without involving an external independent party to continuously observe the development of the teachers' competencies in carrying out their classroom action research. Therefore, it is relevant to accommodate [Cirocki and Farrell's \(2019\)](#) recommendations to systematically evaluate the impact of the teachers' continuing professional development because it "contributes to a deeper understanding of activities and benefits, as well as their effect in the form of improved pedagogical practices or more successful learning experiences" (p. 2). Otherwise, this may seriously reduce their motivation to participate in the collaborative project, which negatively impacts their professionalism.

Moreover, a collaborative project involving school teachers must collaborate with the ministry that employs the teachers. In this way, teachers can get a permission letter to attend the training and focus on the collaborative process, and assign other teachers to replace their teaching work. In addition, teachers' basic understanding of CAR, for instance, needs to be continually supported through regular mentoring.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This research has analyzed the linguistic expressions of the university English lecturer-collaborators when they narrated their experiences of collaborative working with the primary school teachers who taught English in developing the textbook of classroom action research. The linguistic expressions have been conceptually thought of as the tool to generate metaphorical images. Four primary metaphorical images were generated on the trainer-trainees' interaction during the training and trainees' attendance. The images are 'collaborative writing is listening to the lecturer-collaborators', 'collaborating teachers are the trainees', 'lecturer-collaborators are experts', and 'product is more important than process'. The emerging metaphors represent transmission or top-down, teacher-centered learning processes rather than social constructivist-based learning processes. Hence, it can be said that the metaphors that emerged violate the collaborative learning principles.

Nevertheless, this study is limited to the metaphors produced from the linguistic expressions of the two university English educators' reflections on their experiences of collaborative working with the primary school teachers who taught English in developing the textbook. Despite the limitations, the findings reflect the learning culture in Indonesia in which teachers as the knowledge producers and class controllers, while students as passive recipients of knowledge. Since the reflections emanate from the researchers only, the metaphors generated are not varied and tend to

be one-sided. Therefore, further studies are beneficial to be conducted, involving reflections of all training stakeholders, including participants, trainers, and school principals. In this way, it can produce more and various types of metaphorical views on the collaborative project.

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## Exploring the Literary Element ‘Mood’ in an Award-Winning Malaysian Picturebook: A Multimodal Analysis

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### Abstract

*This article examines how an award-winning Malaysian picturebook for young learners entitled ‘The Magic Buffalo’ by Jainal Amambing utilizes visual and textual semiotic resources to develop the literary element ‘mood’. Knowledge of visual and textual meaning-making systems is necessary as it will enable young learners to achieve a deeper understanding of the literary element ‘mood’ in multimodal texts and also be visually literate. The literary element ‘mood’ is chosen because it helps to create the atmosphere and meaning of a story. In addition, this knowledge will also prepare young learners to deal with emotions in real life. The analysis is based on an adaptation of Painter et al.’s multimodal discourse analysis framework. The results of this study revealed that facial expression is the most prominent visual affect utilized in this picturebook, followed by bodily stance and ambiance respectively. The textual analysis reveals that the main character experiences an ongoing mental state, and un/happiness is the most commonly found emotion. The intermodal cohesion analysis clearly highlights how visual choices enhance the meaning provided by the textual choices. The use of visual symbols, facial expressions, and body posture help to corroborate and escalate the textual description of the characters’ emotional states. The study suggests that knowledge of visual and textual meaning systems will help young learners to critically analyse the literary element ‘mood’ and decode the meaning of multimodal texts.*

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**Keywords:** Literary element, mood, multimodal analysis, picturebooks.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Literature in English is given a major role through the Language Arts module in the Primary Schools Standard-Based English Language Curriculum (or *Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah*, abbreviated as KSSR) in Malaysian ESL classrooms. Literary elements are important concepts of literature, and they are essential to making meaning of stories. Some of the literary elements that are commonly focused on in the primary ESL literature classrooms are character, setting, plot, mood, and theme. Sound knowledge of literary elements will enable readers to better understand the flow of a story and critically examine its underlying meaning. The selection of literary texts is also an important aspect that must be considered when introducing literature to young learners in primary schools. The language and cultural aspects used in these texts must be manageable and appropriate for young learners because only then will they be attracted to reading them (Subramaniam et al., 2003; Koss, 2015).

This study focuses mainly on the literary element ‘mood’ which is the emotional tone or feelings pervading a literary work which fosters the readers’ expectations as to the course of events, whether happy, terrifying, or disastrous (Abrams, 1999). Studies have shown that reading multimodal texts enable young learners to analyse moods as conveyed via visuals and experience a wide range of emotions (Arizpe & Styles, 2016; Ghosn, 2013). Mood aids in making meaning in stories as readers experience a gamut of feelings like happiness, woe, excitement, terror, or joy while reading. This experience may be two-fold in multimodal texts as mood can be conveyed via words, design elements, and visual elements. The visuals or illustrations in multimodal texts help to strengthen young learners’ textual understanding of ‘mood’ while the written words establish mood when the overall emotional impression reaches the readers. A visual image is governed by spatiality and composition, while the written text is governed by temporal sequence (Kress, 2003).

Mood is a challenging literary element for young learners to comprehend and for teachers to teach because it can be subjective. Studies have shown that multimodal texts can provide young learners with better experience and understanding of literary elements as visuals play a major role in them (Martinez & Harmon, 2012; Wooten & Cullinan, 2015). Young learners may relate psychologically to the visual representations of emotions in picturebooks or graphic novels because they may share similar real-life happenings or they may have encountered similar experiences while reading other print-based works of fiction (Dallacqua, 2012; Nikolajeva, 2013). Additionally, young learners may understand or experience the literary element ‘mood’ easily if they are first introduced to picturebooks written and illustrated by Malaysians as this will not only engage them but also provide them with a familiar setting and a pragmatic worldview. Hence, more research that looks at the visual-textual relationship in picturebooks from the perspective of the literary element ‘mood’ using a specific framework is warranted.

Studies focusing specifically on the multimodal analysis of literary elements in Malaysian picturebooks are very limited as most of them focus on readability, gender, or comics (Abdullah, 2015; Rajendra, 2018). The present study has attempted to fill in

the gaps by examining an award-winning Malaysian picturebook. The study is aimed at addressing the following research questions:

1. How is the literary element ‘mood’ represented visually in a Malaysian picturebook?
2. How is the literary element ‘mood’ represented textually in a Malaysian picturebook?
3. How do the visual and textual meaning systems cohere to develop the literary element ‘mood’ in a Malaysian picturebook?

Thus, the objective of this study is to explore the choices used by the writer-illustrator to convey the literary element ‘mood’ in an award-winning Malaysian picturebook via both visual and textual semiotic resources. Another objective of this study is to examine the ways these meanings are created through the interplay between the two semiotic modes. This study adapts [Kress and van Leeuwen’s \(2006\)](#) Grammar of Visual Design for the visual analysis while [Halliday and Matthiessen’s \(2004\)](#) Systemic Functional Linguistics, and [Martin and White’s \(2005\)](#) Appraisal frameworks are adapted for the textual analysis. Finally, [Painter et al.’s \(2013\)](#) Multimodal Discourse Analysis framework is utilized to examine the ways visual and textual meaning systems intertwine and work together in an award-winning Malaysian picturebook to develop the literary element ‘mood’.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The emotional feelings that readers experience while viewing visuals and reading words in literary texts are defined as the literary element ‘mood’. A fairy tale can transport readers to a fantasy land while a thriller can make their hearts race in fear. These emotions that readers face and experience when reading picturebooks can be analysed visually and textually.

### 2.1 Visual Analysis of Mood

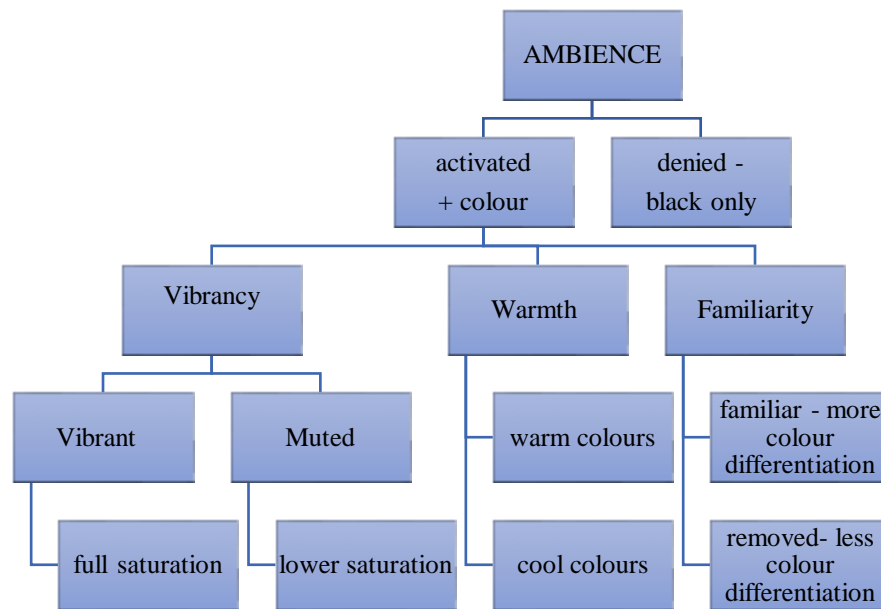
Two semiotic resources that are used to convey mood visually in picturebooks are ambiance (colours) and visual affect. Studies have shown that colours play an important role in conveying and determining the emotional setting or mood of a picturebook story ([Kurt & Osueke, 2014](#); [Painter, 2008](#); [Wooten & Cullinan, 2015](#)). Illustrators often select and use specific colour palettes for each illustration in their picturebook as it helps to invoke different moods ([Wooten & Cullinan, 2015](#)). The intensity of colours used in each illustration also helps to convey the literary element ‘mood’ ([Temple et al., 2011, p. 80](#)). Similarly, young learners and college students associate emotions and personal experiences with colours ([Kurt & Osueke, 2014](#)), and their paintings or drawings often reflect this.

Similarly, aspects of visual affect like facial expressions, bodily stance, and gestures also contribute to the development of the literary element ‘mood’ in picturebooks ([Martinez & Harmon, 2012](#); [Nikolajeva, 2013](#)). Facial expressions, gestures, and postures “have been recognized as an important modality for non-verbal communication and enable us to determine an individual’s mental and emotional state as well as his or her attitude/character traits” ([Tan & Nareyek, 2009, p. 23](#)).

### 2.1.1 Ambience

The ambience of a story is mainly portrayed through colours, a characteristic mode, because it has the ability to combine freely with other semiotic modes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2002). However, colours can only coexist in a multimodal setting. Although most visuals in picturebooks are multi-coloured, a few picturebooks illustrators prefer to use only black and white in their work. The different choices in colour which are commonly deployed by picturebook illustrators are exemplified in Figure 1. Activated ambience indicates the presence of colour and constitutes three components mainly vibrancy, warmth, and familiarity which are active concurrently in visuals.

Vibrancy or saturation is denoted by two aspects: vibrant and muted. Vibrant colours are highly saturated and often help to create an ambience of joy or excitement. Muted colours, on the other hand, help to create gentle or calm feelings. Warmth is represented by warm and cool colours, and these colours help to signal the emotion of the characters and also the temperature of the environment. Familiarity has two components: familiar and removed. A familiar ambience often depicts a range of familiar colours while removed colours have fewer variations.

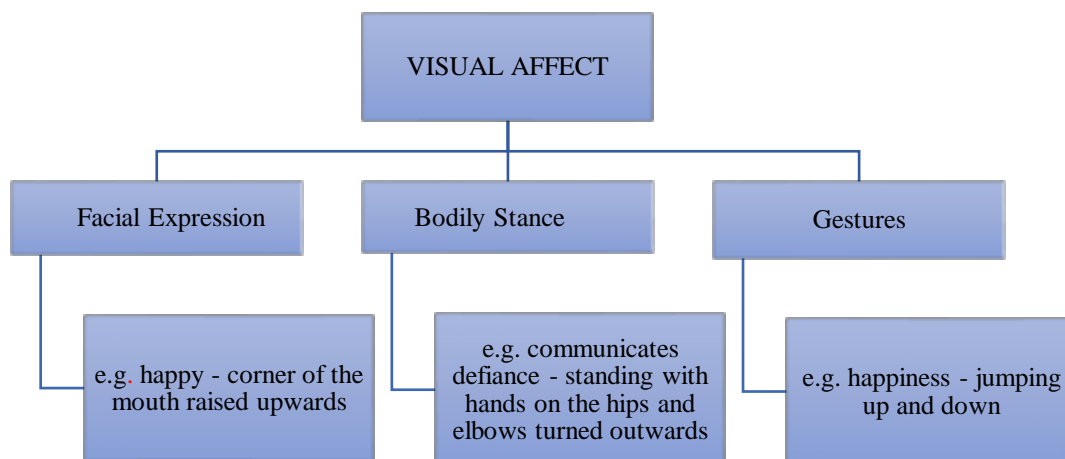


**Figure 1.** Choices in ambience (adapted from Painter et al. (2013)).

### 2.1.2 Visual affect

The visuals in most picturebooks focus on fundamental emotions like anger, fear, and joy because these emotions are general and independent of verbal language. These basic emotions are manifested physically through aspects of visual affect like body language, facial expressions, gestures, and postures (Nikolajeva, 2013; Painter et al., 2013; Tan & Nareyek, 2009), and they are often combined to portray the range of emotions experienced by the characters. Aspects of visual affect are important modality elements for non-verbal communication as they not only display a person's attitude or traits but also their mental and emotional states. Nevertheless, certain nuances of emotions like anguish, distress, and agony cannot be conveyed

convincingly through visuals. Figure 2 illustrates a summary of the variable in the visual affect analysis of images within the literary element mood.



**Figure 2.** Visual affect in picturebooks (adapted from Painter et al. (2013)).

Facial expressions, bodily stance, and gestures are three aspects of visual affect that work together to convey the literary element ‘mood’. Facial expressions are expressed through body parts from the head region. The combination of eyebrows, nose, cheek, mouth, and lips helps to convey the different moods of an individual. Alternatively, the bodily stance is related to the whole body and is usually associated with a person’s manner of sitting and standing. An individual’s posture or bodily stance can help to convey his or her emotional state of mind. Alternatively, gestures are movements made with body parts, such as hands, arms, legs, and head.

## 2.2 Textual Analysis of Mood

The literary element ‘mood’ is created by tone and emotions found in a written text. Literary text writers employ emotive language, which can be implicitly or explicitly conveyed, to create a certain mood in their readers’ minds. The analysis of emotional language from the totality of the written text helps to identify the overall mood of a story.

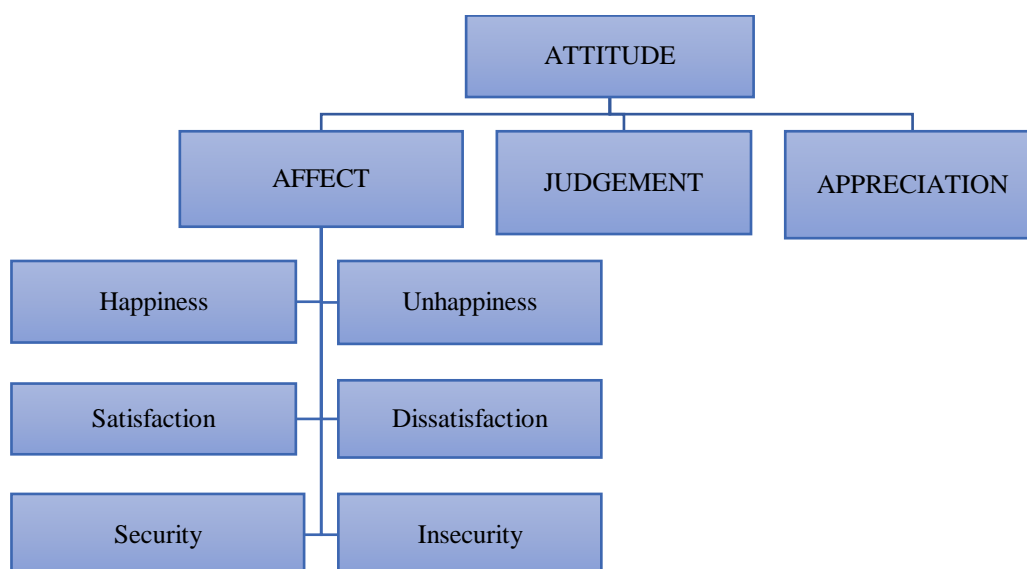
The representation of the literary element ‘mood’ in written texts is analysed using Attitude, a system of meaning that looks at the mapping of the feelings. Attitude is one of the three categories of the Appraisal framework (Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005; Ngo & Unsworth, 2015). Attitude provides a systematic account of language resources for expressing emotions. The other two categories of the Appraisal framework are Engagement and Graduation. Engagement looks at the sources of evaluation and the play of voices within and across texts while Graduation looks at the development of both Attitude and the degree of Engagement (Ngo & Unsworth, 2015, p. 3).

There are three aspects of Attitude: Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation (Martin & White, 2005). Judgment consists of language resources for evaluating people’s behaviours, while Appreciation deals with the evaluation of ‘things’. This study only focuses on the third aspect of Attitude which is Affect as it looks at the emotional evaluation of an entity, process, or stage of affairs (refer to Figure 3). The textual meaning potentials of (verbal) affect are realized through the emotional language used

(Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005; Painter et al., 2013). Affect can be expressed implicitly (invoked) or explicitly (inscribed) as positive or negative.

### 2.2.1 Verbal affect

Verbal affect deals with language resources for expressing emotions (Martin & White, 2005). Figure 3 illustrates the three major sets of emotions in the Affect system that help to convey a character's positive and negative feelings like un/happiness, in/security, and dis/satisfaction. Affect can be realized as 'qualities' (happy), 'processes' (pleased), or 'comments' (happily) and it can be implicitly or explicitly stated using emotional language which is relayed through the choice of words that can either elicit or influence one's feelings.



**Figure 3.** Types of verbal affect to describe the literary element 'mood' (adapted from Martin & White (2005)).

## 3. METHODS

This study employed an analytical approach which is qualitative in nature as this would allow descriptive examples and new perspectives in the discussion.

### 3.1 Data

The data used in this study comes from two sources, the picturebook and an interview with the writer and illustrator of the book. The primary data is a Malaysian picturebook "The Magic Buffalo" (Amambing, 2011) which won the Encouragement Prize in the Noma Concours for Picture Book Illustrations (ACCU) organized by the Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO in Tokyo. ACCU competition was the only platform where upcoming illustrators from Asia, the Pacific, Africa, Arab States, the Caribbean and Latin America were given international awards and acclaim.

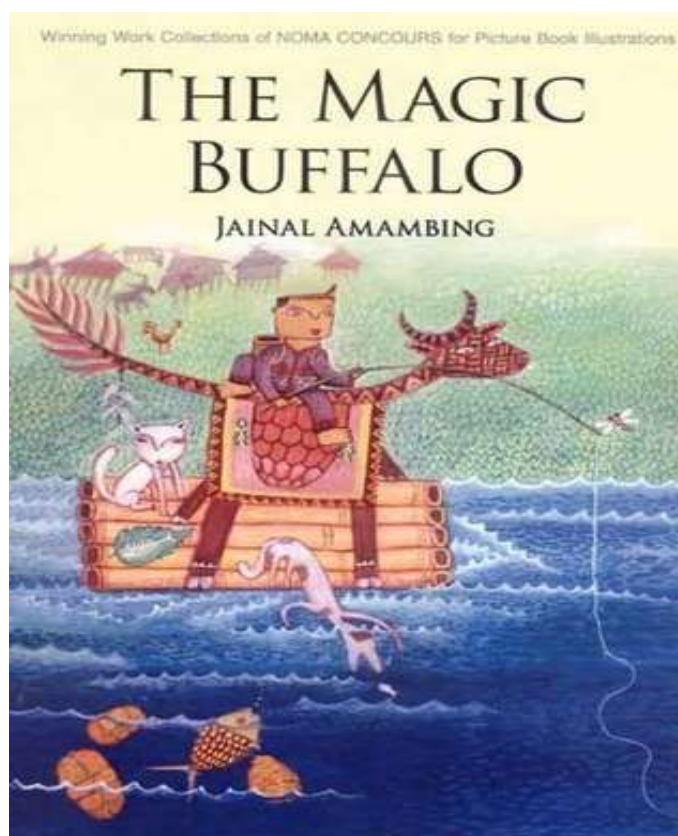
#### 3.1.1 *The Magic Buffalo*

The picturebook titled ‘The Magic Buffalo’ (hereafter MB), written and illustrated by Jainal Amambing was published in 2011 by Picturebook Arts. This picturebook was chosen because it won an international award and has also been translated into German. The illustrator uses gouache on paper for the visuals. This picturebook has eight openings. The word ‘opening’ refers to the double-page spread and opening 1 begins when the text starts (Sipe & Brightman, 2009).

The story is mainly about Sansarinaga, a poor lonely boy who does not have a buffalo like the other boys in his village. To overcome this, he creates a beautiful toy buffalo from parts of a coconut tree. This toy buffalo has some magical powers as it can float, slide and fly. The children in the village are attracted to this toy buffalo and slowly become friends with Sansarinaga.

### 3.1.2 Interview with Jainal Amambing

To triangulate the findings of the study, a second set of data was information obtained from a one-on-one interview with Jainal Amambing, the writer-illustrator of ‘The Magic Buffalo’ picturebook. Jainal Amambing, a Rungus native from Sabah, was born in 1968. He has won many art competitions at the state, national and international levels. These two sets of data were to ensure the credibility and validity of the study as well as provide a broader description of the findings.



**Figure 4.** The book cover of ‘The Magic Buffalo’ (Amambing, 2011).

## 3.2 Data Collection

The first method of data collection involved an analysis of the visual, textual, and cohesion content of the Malaysian picturebook in order to identify how the literary element ‘mood’ is represented in it. The second method of data collection was the information gathered from the one-on-one interview with the writer-illustrator.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

All visuals in this picturebook were analysed for the two aspects of the literary element ‘mood’, which are ambience and visual affect (Painter et al., 2013). The visuals in this picturebook were first labelled and presented systematically. The code MB is used to represent ‘The Magic Buffalo’. The first visual opening in this picturebook is labelled as MB, followed by the word OP (refers to picturebook opening) and a number that signals the order it appears in the picturebook (i.e.: MB/OP/1). Similarly, all textual data were analysed for the subsection of the literary element ‘mood’ which is emotive language (verbal affect). For textual analysis, the text from this picturebook was typed into a word document and arranged according to the sequence of the opening. Each opening had a different number of sentences and they were labelled numerically according to the order. For example, the second sentence in the third opening of this picturebook is denoted as MB/OP3/L2.

The intermodal cohesion between the visual and textual representation of the literary element ‘mood’ in the two picturebooks was analysed using an adapted version of Painter et al.’s (2013) Multimodal Discourse Analysis framework and judged in terms of convergence or divergence. The visual and textual meaning systems that were used to analyse the literary element ‘mood’ are clearly outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Mood Meaning Systems of visual and textual data (adapted from Painter et al. (2013) and Martin and Rose (2003)).

Visual		Textual	
Ambience: Colour choices in relation to vibrancy warmth familiarity	Vibrancy: full saturation or low saturation	Verbal affect Emotional language	happiness: cheer happiness: affection unhappiness: misery unhappiness: antipathy
	Warmth: warm shades like red, yellow and orange hues Cool: cool shades like blue, green, aqua hues		satisfaction: interest satisfaction: admiration dissatisfaction: ennui dissatisfaction: displeasure
	Familiarity: more colour differentiation or less colour differentiation		
Visual Affect Emotion depicted in facial features and bodily stance	Facial expressions - Agonised face may show the character is upset		security: confidence security: trust insecurity: disquiet insecurity: surprise
	Bodily stance		
	Gestures		

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following four subsections discuss the findings of the three research questions. Sections 4.1 and 4.2 discuss the findings of the first research question which looks at how the visual meaning-making systems represent the literary element ‘Mood’, Section 4.3 discusses the findings of the second research question which is the textual analysis of the literary element ‘Mood’, while Section 4.4 focuses on the third research question which looks at how the visual and textual meaning systems cohere to develop the literary element ‘Mood’.

#### 4.1 Ambience in ‘The Magic Buffalo’

The emotional mood in ‘The Magic Buffalo’ is conveyed visually by colours. The first opening which depicts a lively village scene is illustrated mainly using greenish-yellow hues and brightened with splashes of vibrant red and orange. The choice of colours creates a muted light ambience which produces a subdued effect. The second opening is mainly filled with less saturated colours or muted light shades of orangish-yellow; while the warmer hues are used to depict the rising sun, the skyline and the children riding their buffalos around the village. The enveloping orange ambience creates positive vibes as orange is often considered a life-affirming colour in Asia (de Bortoli & Maroto, 2001). The ambience changes in opening 3 because the surroundings in this visual is created mainly using cool shades of green and blue. These shades help to invoke a cool and calm atmosphere which is matched by the main character’s serene disposition (Madden et al., 2000, p. 97).



**Figure 5.** Ambience in ‘The Magic Buffalo’ (opening 3).

In opening 4 and 5, the illustrator uses magenta and violet colours to depict the night scene, and this is combined with splashes of bright colours from the moon and the houses on the foreground (refer to Figure 6). The reduced palette in openings 4 and 5 and the choice of dark colours transmit the feelings of being removed from reality and indirectly indicate dream scenes (Painter, 2008, p. 101; Painter et al., 2013). In addition, the dream scenes in these two-opening contrast with the familiar more differentiated palette of the waking or day environment in the previous opening.





**Figure 6.** Ambience in ‘The Magic Buffalo’ (opening 4).

The ambience changes once again in opening 6 as the use of muted light yellow and splashes of brown and red shades create an energetic and jovial mood that contrasts with the sleepy dazed look on Sansarinaga’s face. This positive mood is maintained in opening 7, when the setting changes to an outdoor scene. The entire outdoor scene is dominated by shades of light yellow and green with some splashed of warm red and brown. The surrounding cool green ambience contrasts with the warm splashes provided by the village homes and children indirectly creates a happy and exultant mood. In the final opening, the brightness is reduced and the enveloping ambience is mainly depicted using muted green shades that are relaxing (Kurt & Osueke, 2014, p. 11) while the warm splashes used for boy’s attire, homes, trees and moon help to extend the palette and establish a sense of familiarity (Painter, 2008). In general, the choice of colours in this picturebook help to create a calm and comforting mood.

#### **4.2 Visual Affect in ‘The Magic Buffalo’**

In the introductory opening, the writer-illustrator portrays Sansarinaga as a lonely boy who is standing astride a toy buffalo made from parts of a coconut tree. He stands alone in a corner watching the other boys in his village riding a real buffalo. The ‘simple smile’ on his face as he looks yearningly at the other boys clearly shows his lack of involvement in the activity (Lewis, 2012). The limited expression is still seen on his face in the next opening although he is now riding a decorated toy buffalo.

In opening 3, Sansarinaga is shown to be sitting astride his toy buffalo and fishing. His face is relaxed, and he looks composed. In opening 4, Sansarinaga is shown riding his toy buffalo in the sky. Although his facial expression remains neutral, his forward-leaning upper body indicates excitement. His posture indicates a tense and exciting mood. Alternatively, the village children have shocked expressions on their faces. In the subsequent opening, Sansarinaga’s facial expressions shifts from calm to shock when he falls off from his toy buffalo. His eyes are wide open, and his rounded mouth is curving downwards as if he is shouting (Nikolajeva, 2013; Tan & Nareyek, 2009). His postural stance also shifts from being confident to awkward in this opening as can be seen in Figure 7. His arms are flailing as he falls from the sky (Lhommet & Marsella, 2015; Tan & Nareyek, 2009). Sansarinaga’s facial expression changes again

in opening 6. His half-closed eyes show that he is in a half-awake state and this is reinforced in his sitting position as he is depicted sitting on the floor with his legs splayed open (Kuhnke, 2012, p. 115). Probably, he fell from his hammock.



**Figure 7.** Visual Affect in ‘The Magic Buffalo’ (opening 5).

In the final two opening, Sansarinaga’s face is lit with happiness and joy. He is with his toy buffalo and surrounded by his friends. Similar looks of contentment are reflected in the faces of the other young children in the two visuals. The final opening also shows Sansarinaga’s friends jumping with joy. In short, the visual affect meaning systems, particularly the facial expressions and bodily stances of Sansarinaga and his friends, clearly reflect the change of mood in this story (Lhommet & Marsella, 2015; Tan & Nareyek, 2009).

### 4.3 Verbal Affect in ‘The Magic Buffalo’

The literary element ‘mood’ is mainly conveyed textually through a writer’s choice of ‘emotional language’ words or resources of verbal affect. Mood can be conveyed implicitly or explicitly using these emotional language words as depicted in Table 2. The ‘emotional language’ used in ‘The Magic Buffalo’ reflects the type of effect the writer-illustrator of this picturebook wants to create. The first two examples in Table 2 highlight Sansarinaga’s emotional state in the beginning of the story. His unhappy feelings are mainly experienced as emotional dispositions. He is sad and lonely because he does not own a buffalo. As a result, he has no friends. The mood of the story changes in opening 4 as the other children sees him flying in the sky with his toy buffalo. Indirectly, this lifts Sansarinaga’s morale and decreases the other children’s confidence. The final two opening clearly highlight Sansarinaga’s feelings of happiness and security as detailed in Table 2. In short, the story which begins with a sad mode, ends in a happy note and manner as Sansarinaga is no longer lonesome. He is popular and has many friends now thanks to his toy buffalo. The textual analysis also shows that happiness/unhappiness (Martin & Rose, 2003) is the most commonly found emotion in this picturebook. In general, the writer-illustrator choose not to intensify affect textually as the chosen epithet or attribute like ‘astonished’, ‘frightened’ and ‘delighted’ only convey a median degree of intensity (Martin & Rose,

2003). Perhaps, the writer-illustrator wants to prevent a close identification with the protagonist (Painter et al., 2013).

**Table 2.** Emotional language in ‘The Magic Buffalo’.

Opening/ Line No	Verbiage	Inscribed	Invoked	Appraised	Source
MB OP 1/L1	had no friends		-ve happiness	Sansarinaga	Narrator
MB/OP 4/L2	sad	-ve happiness		Sansarinaga	Narrator
MB/OP 4/L3	laughed at him	+ve happiness	-ve happiness	village children/ Sansarinaga	Narrator
MB/OP 4/L6	astonished	-ve security		Everyone	Narrator
MB/OP 5/L1	had a wonderful time		+ve happiness	Sansarinaga and friends	Narrator
MB/OP 5/L4	frightened	-ve security		Sansarinaga	Narrator
MB/OP 7/L2	delighted to see the toy buffalo	+ve happiness		children	Narrator
MB/OP 8/L1	made many friends		+ve happiness	Sansarinaga	Narrator
MB/OP 8/L2	not alone any more		+ve security	Sansarinaga	Narrator

#### 4.4 Intermodal Cohesion in ‘The Magic Buffalo’

Picturebooks for young readers often convey mood or emotions via visual and textual semiotic modes (Arizpe & Styles, 2016; Ghosn, 2013). Colours, facial expressions, bodily stance, and gestures are used to convey mood effectively in visuals (Martinez & Harmon, 2012; Nikolajeva, 2013), while emotional language, which is a type of attitude in the Appraisal framework, is used to convey the literary element ‘mood’ textually (Martin & White, 2005). In terms of intermodal cohesion, there is convergence in meaning in the introductory opening as both the visual and verbal affect indicate that the main character (Painter et al., 2013). This concurs with Moya’s (2014) postulation that “picture adds specificity to the verbal text as it provides an instantiation of the text and attaches additional meaning” (p. 71). Sansarinaga is a lonely and unconfident boy. He has no friends because he does not own a buffalo. The main character’s forlorn facial expression and the lack of happiness conveyed by the emotional language textually show that he is miserable. These findings however do not cohere with the ambience choices as Table 3 highlights the fact that the ambience in opening 1 is hopeful and positive. In this opening, muted light bright shades that indicate hope and positivity are predominantly used. This divergence is mainly due to the use of pastel colours by the illustrator to attract young learners (Jainal Amambing, personal communication, May 29, 2017).

**Table 3.** Intermodal cohesion in ‘The Magic Buffalo’ for Mood.

Opening	Visual				Textual
	Ambience	Visual Affect (positive)			Verbal Affect
	Vibrancy/ Warmth Familiarity	Facial expression	Bodily stance	Gesture	Emotional language
1	muted: light/warm and cool colours/ familiar colours	forlorn	upright		had no friends (-ve happiness)

Table 3 continued...

2	muted: light/ warm colours/ familiar colours	intense	leaning forward		
3	muted: light/ cool colours/ familiar colours	calm and relaxed	upright		
4	muted: dark/ mainly warm colours/ unfamiliar colours	proud smile/ happy	confident		sad (-ve happiness) laughed at him (-ve happiness)
5	muted: dark/ warm colours/ unfamiliar colours	shock	arms and legs flailing / awkward		had a wonderful time (+ve happiness) Sansarinaga was frightened (-ve security)
6	warm colours/ familiar colours	sad and sleepy	slumped position		
7	vibrant/ cool and warm colours/ familiar colours	smiling face			delighted (+ve happiness)
8	muted: dark/ mainly cool colours/ dark green/ familiar colours	smiling face/ happy			made many friends (+ve happiness) not alone any more (+ve security)

The atmosphere changes in openings 4 and 5 as the setting is now at night. In terms of ambience, the reduced palette in these two opening signals a literal removal from reality as they are vastly different from the palettes used in the other opening. The range of magenta and violet colours contrasts with the more differentiated palette of the waking environment. The choice of colours, the moonlight and the visual depiction of a sleeping woman in opening 4 (refer to Figure 6) not only informs the viewers that the incident takes place at night but also creates “the mystery typically associated with the world of dreams where one is free to express his emotions and behave wildly” (Moya, 2014, p. 164). This view is also shared by the picturebook writer-illustrator who said that the depiction of the moon indicates a dream world and not reality (Jainal Amambing, personal communication, May 29, 2017).

There is a divergence in meaning in opening 4 as the visual mode shows Sansarinaga looking happy and pleased while flying with his toy buffalo, but the emotional language used in the written text highlights his sad mood. There is a similar divergence in opening 5 as the visual shows the character’s shocked and dazed look while the written text conveys both his shock and happiness. In the final two opening, there is convergence in terms of intermodal cohesion as both the visual and verbal affects show that Sansarinaga is happy and contented. This is also reflected in the cool pastel shades used which evoke a gentle happy mood.

In general, the information presented in Table 3 clearly shows that the visual semiotic mode commits more meaning in conveying ‘mood’ in picturebooks. There is no indication of the literary element ‘mood’ textually in opening 2, 3 and 6. Clearly, visual meaning systems play a bigger role in ‘The Magic Buffalo’ as meaning is relayed through visual affect and colours (ambience). The choice of colours in this picturebook is mainly bright and positive and do not convey the unhappiness felt by

the main character in the beginning of the story. This is however compensated by visual affect choices like facial expressions and bodily stance and also ‘visual symbol’ like the depiction of moon in ‘The Magic Buffalo’, which denotes the world of imagination and magical mood (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Moya, 2014). Textual description of characters’ emotional states can be substituted or corroborated by the use of these visual symbols as well as “drawings of bodily postures and facial expressions that readily communicate feelings to readers” (Keen, 2011, p. 146). In summary, facial expressions, bodily stance, and emotional language play a more dominant role in this picturebook as they have the power to create instant alliances with characters through sympathetic responses to their feelings. Accordingly, young learners cannot rely on cognitive strategies used to comprehend written texts to decipher the meanings of visual images (Serafini, 2011). Instead, they should be equipped with a knowledge of visual meaning systems or engage in ‘slow looking’ to decode the meaning of multimodal ensembles (Kachorsky et al., 2017; Pantaleo, 2020).

## 5. CONCLUSION

In terms of visual analysis for the literary element ‘mood’, the findings show that facial expression is the most frequently used visual affect in *The Magic Buffalo* to convey mood, followed by bodily stance and gesture. This is probably because it is easier to convey emotions and draw emotional responses from readers via facial expressions. In this picturebook, the eyes and the mouth are the two main features that reveal Sansarinaga’s emotions. The textual analysis of ‘mood’ is identified by analysing the use of verbal affect and the overall atmosphere surrounding the text. ‘The Magic Buffalo’ is written from a third-person perspective and several emotional languages is used to reveal the changes in the main character’s feelings. The emotions relayed in this picturebook mainly fall into the unhappiness/happiness set, which is common in picturebooks for young learners.

The findings for intermodal cohesion reveal that visuals contribute additional meaning to the representation of literary element ‘mood’ in ‘The Magic Buffalo’. A picturebook reader has to read the text and view the visuals simultaneously to get a clearer understanding of the story and to identify the ‘mood’ of the story. In order to do this, the reader-viewer need to understand the relationship between the visual and textual modes as each mode has its codes and conventions. The spatiality and composition of a visual image are determined by spatiality and composition, while the temporal sequence of a written text is determined by temporal sequence. As a result, young learners cannot employ the same cognitive methods that they use to understand textual texts to decode the meanings of visual images. To decipher the meaning of multimodal ensembles, they should be equipped with the knowledge of visual meaning systems. The implication of this study lies in the relationship between visual and textual modes in picturebooks and how they collaborate to develop the literary element ‘mood’. The visuals in picturebooks will help young learners to understand literary concepts better, increase their vocabulary and comprehension as well as to read visuals critically. In addition, they will be able to ascertain the mood transmitted in the stories based on the visuals in the picturebooks, which they may otherwise miss.

There are several limitations to this study. Firstly, the study only investigated one literary element. Other literary elements like setting, character, and plot were not included in the study. Secondly, the data is limited to only one award-winning Malaysian picturebook. Thirdly, the writer and illustrator of this picturebook is the same person and as such, the results may be different if otherwise. Future studies may look at picturebooks written and illustrated by different persons, or picturebooks from different countries and origins as the way literary element 'mood' is represented may be different in Western countries. In addition, forthcoming studies can also investigate how the literary element 'mood' is represented in postmodern picturebooks which has metafictional features and postmodern literacy devices like multiple narrators and non-linear sequences.

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