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# **ACQUISITION OF INVERTED STRUCTURES IN ENGLISH, A BATTLEGROUND FOR MARKEDNESS AND SALIENCE: THE CASE OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Inverted structures have been a focal point in the literature over the past few decades, attracting considerable scholarly attention. When examining the acquisition of these structures in EFL contexts, researchers often reference two theoretically competing perspectives: the Markedness Differential Hypothesis and the Salience Hypothesis. A review of the local literature in the Iranian context, however, reveals that little attention has been paid to this matter. The present study, thus, was an attempt to investigate the existence of any possible relationship between markedness and salience in the acquisition of inversion among Iranian EFL learners. A total of 102 participants at three proficiency levels at two language centres took part in this study. A grammar test was developed to reallocate the participants to new groups according to their grammar proficiency, and provide evidence on the variable of the study. The Chi-square test shows that the instructed group outperformed the other. Further analysis of the Wilcoxon signed rank test showed that the acquisition of such constructions, despite their relative salience, is largely explained by the markedness differential hypothesis.

**Keywords:** markedness differential hypothesis; interlanguage; learnability; inverted structure; salience

## **Introduction**

The study of how inverted structures are acquired seems to have received ample attention in the related literature throughout the past several decades (De Wit, 2016; Estigarribia, 2010; Hamlaoui & Makasso, 2015; Laleko, 2022). Two theoretically competing positions in the field of second language acquisition, namely, the Markedness Differential Hypothesis (MDH) and the Salience Hypothesis (SH) are frequently invoked to account for how such structures are acquired (Ayouun & Salaberry, 2008; Bardovi-Harlig, 1987; Blumenthal-Dramé et al., 2017; Kenanidis et al., 2021; Trenkic & Pongpairaj, 2013; Zarcone et al., 2016).

The central thesis of the MDH is that not all the differences between the grammars of any two languages will pose difficulties for the language learners. Thus, the relative degree of typological difference between languages will not be a good predictor of the areas of difficulty faced by the learners. The areas of difficulty are, however, mediated by the extent to which differing structures are more marked in the grammar of the target language than in that of the native one (MacWhinney, 1995).

In the course of the ups and downs in SLA research, the Markedness Hypothesis has been challenged by scholars and researchers (DeKeyser, 2003; Gass & Selinker, 2008; Mackey, 2006). In a seminal work, Bardovi-Harlig (1987) argued that in some cases evidence fails to prescribe a developmental trajectory along the prophecies of DMH. Bardovi-Harlig cites the acquisition of preposition stranding and pied piping in English observed in WH-constructions as a result of WH-movement as an example of this phenomenon. This includes WH-questions and relative clauses with indirect objects or prepositional phrases. The observations derived from the use of such constructions by ESL learners provided evidence contrary to the learnability predictions based solely on markedness which argue that “the marked construction is acquired before the unmarked one” (Bardovi-Harling, 1987, p. 386). Accordingly, Bardovi-Harlig, among many other scholars, held that salience as defined by the availability of input plays a major role in this process. Considering these two opposing views, the present study examines if salience or markedness accounts for the acquisition of tag endings of agreement and initial position negative adverbs of frequency in an EFL context.

## **Literature Review**

Markedness and the role it plays in acquiring a new language is by no means a new topic in SLA. In the recent literature as well, many studies investigated how markedness can justify the difficulties EFL learners come across in acquiring different aspects of a language (Alhammad, 2023; Ali, 2023; De Carvalho, 2023; Hayes-Harb & Barrios, 2021; Jiang & Shao, 2006; Mehrdad & Ahghar, 2015). Pan et al. (2022), for instance, investigated the negative transfer of Chinese syntactic structures to English writing. Such errors were less found among the advanced-level group rather than the basic-level group. Pan et al. maintained that by applying markedness theory, it is possible to provide appropriate

methods to overcome the obstacles and improve the writing skills of Chinese learners of English.

Bardovi-Harlig (1987) challenged the predictions of markedness position. The acquisition of preposition stranding and pied piping in English occurring in constructions derived by the *wh*-movement, such as *wh*-questions and relative clauses with indirect objects or prepositional phrases poses an interesting problem for theories which make learnability predictions based solely on markedness. According to Bardovi-Harlig, salience is defined as the availability of input and justifies why stranding (as in *Who did John give the book to?*) is acquired before the unmarked one, that is, pied piping (as in *The man who Cathy gave the book to was Kevin*); it is because there is more input for sentences such as 1-1 than 1-2 to which learners are exposed that the acquisition patterns are what they are.

(1-1) Who did John give the book to?

(1-2) To whom did John give the book?

Following a markedness position, 1-2 is predicted to be acquired before 1-1. Nevertheless, as Bardovi-Harlig (1987) argues, 1-1 is learned earlier because of its salience. DeKeyser (2000), along the same line, suggested that inversion behaves differently with different structures. For example, subject-verb inversion in yes-no questions is more salient and thus is easily learned explicitly in comparison with subject-verb inversion in *wh*-questions. In his attempt to objectify difficulty, DeKeyser (2003) argues that salience, the extent to which a linguistic element is easy to notice, along with rule scope and reliability, abstractness, and distance is a mediating factor determining the effectiveness of explicit/implicit learning. From a cognitive perspective, Schmidt (1990) argues that salience, together with frequency and varying task conditions affects the extent to which input is noticed by different learners. Likewise, Gass and Selinker (2008) interpret salience in terms of input frequency and form-focused instruction.

Recent researchers have also tried to investigate the role salience might play in acquiring a foreign language (Cintrón-Valentín & Ellis, 2016; Gass et al., 2017; Xia & Wolf, 2010). Zarcón et al. (2016), for example, explores how salience can play a role in various levels of linguistic processing, from low-level perceptual features to higher-level discourse and situational factors.

When it comes to the acquisition of inversion, one of the earliest studies was conducted by Bolander (1989), and the primary objective was to understand the role of chunks in the acquisition of inversion in Swedish by immigrants of Polish, Finnish, and Spanish backgrounds. It is an obligatory rule in Swedish to invert the order of subject-verb after a sentence-initial non-subject. Bolander noticed that in most cases, the occurrence of inversion in the data was of a chunk-like nature consisting of such stereotypical constructions as “*det kan man säga* (that can one say) and *det tycker jag* (so think I).” Bolander argued that such patterns are integrated into the interlanguage of the learners and maintained that creative language was developing out of familiar formulae.



More recent studies have also attempted to shed further light on how inverted structures are acquired (Assaiqeli et al., 2021; Boyadzhieva, 2018; Chou, 2020; Cichosz, 2017; Cuza, 2016; De Wit, 2016; Duffley, 2018; Fitz & Chang, 2017; Grinstead et al., 2018; Park-Johnson, 2017; Teixeira, 2020). In one study, Cuza (2016) explored the use of Spanish interrogative subject-verb inversion among Spanish-English bilingual children residing in the US. The findings revealed that the participants manifested lower levels of inversion mastery than their monolingual counterparts, particularly for embedded structures. Cuza concluded that such a phenomenon stems from syntactic transfer from English, language dominance, and structural complexity.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Notwithstanding the ongoing debate at the international level, a review of the local literature in the Iranian context reveals that little attention has been paid to the acquisition of inverted structures and the possible ways DMH and SH might provide a sensible account of such a phenomenon. Given this context, the present study seeks to determine whether, within the Iranian educational setting, where grammar instruction is prioritised and natural language use is comparatively rare, markedness and salience can account for the acquisition of tag agreement endings and the initial placement of negative adverbs of frequency. Accordingly, the research questions for this study are as follows:

1. Does receiving explicit grammar instruction improve Iranian EFL learners' use of tag endings of agreement and initial position negative adverbs of frequency?
2. Do Iranian EFL learners acquire tag endings of agreement and initial position negative adverbs of frequency before structures not requiring inversion?

### **Methodology**

#### **Participants**

The participants comprised 102 EFL students from two language centres in Zanjan, northwest Iran. At the First Language Centre (FLC), students were grouped into three proficiency levels, ranging from basic to advanced. Proficiency was determined by the institute's structured placement system, which included interviews and proficiency tests conducted during the registration process. For each proficiency level, learners studied a sequence of three locally developed course books before advancing to the next level. The elementary group consisted of 13 learners who were completing the third course book in the series for this level. The intermediate group included 17 learners completing the second course book for their level. The advanced group comprised 21 learners who were using the third course book designed for advanced students. All participants were males aged between 16 and 32, either attending high school or enrolled at a university. They reported attending language courses for at least three consecutive years. This language centre, which has many branches throughout the country, is known for its explicit

grammar instruction policy. The local course books devote considerable space to grammar, and teachers are required to focus specifically on the teaching of grammatical structures at each proficiency level (Gorgi, 2016).

The Second Language Centre (SLC), similar to many other private language centres in Iran, placed a stronger emphasis on communication, giving almost no explicit attention to grammar instruction. This institute developed its own course books in which grammar, according to the teachers' manuals, was embedded within dialogues. Teachers were expected to use their intuition to determine which grammar points were most relevant for the learning of dialogues and other activities. As a result, there was a lower degree of instructional focus on grammar, leading to reduced salience of grammatical features for learners. The SLC's placement system relied on large-scale selection tests administered at the start of the evening English courses. The institute offered English classes at various proficiency levels, from basic to advanced. For the purposes of this study, three proficiency groups were selected to roughly correspond to the levels used in the First Language Centre. The first group included 11 learners being taught with the second course book specified for elementary students. The second group consisted of 18 learners who were in the midst of the third course book designed for intermediate learners. Finally, the third group comprised 17 learners who were completing the second course book intended for the advanced level.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrument employed in the present study was an elicitation task requiring the learners to reformulate sentences based on the given trigger words. It included 27 items that served an additional purpose of regrouping the participants into new proficiency groups based on their grammar knowledge measured by the test. The questions were mainly adopted from Swan (2005) and Hughes (2023). They tested a wide range of grammatical structures including the use of subjunctives, tenses in constructions expressing wish, the use of bare infinitives, and so on (see Appendix A). As part of the grammar proficiency test, the constructions testing preposition stranding and pied piping utilised in the similar study conducted by Bardovi-Harlig (1987) that inspired the present project were included as well.

As to the evidence on the object of enquiry of the study, namely, inverted structures, two types of constructions either with tag endings of agreement including constructions with *so* and *neither* or initial-position negative adverbs such as *seldom*, *never*, etc. were employed. They were randomly distributed among the other questions so as not to let the subjects guess the point under investigation. The developed test was sent to six experts who were PhD holders in TEFL and had already conducted SLA-related research. They were asked to comment on the clarity and relevance of the items. The items were modified and to ensure the reliability of the composite grammar test (CGT), it was piloted with a group of 30 students, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88, which is considered to indicate a high level of internal consistency (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

## Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The investigation of the patterns in learners' acquisition of inverted structures focused on two types: the constructions made by initial-position negative adverbs such as *never* and *seldom*, and the forms used to express agreement or disagreement in tag constructions using *so* and *neither* on the other. This study is best conceived of as an example of cross-sectional research in which relevant data is collected from a relatively large number of learners at a given point or across several points in time.

To provide evidence on the variables of the study, namely, tag endings of agreement and initial position negative adverbs such as *seldom* and *never*, a Composite Grammar Test (CGT) (see Appendix A) was developed by the researchers. It included 26 items that served double functions. Firstly, they function as a measure of general grammar proficiency to further assign learners into actual proficiency groups irrespective of the placement procedure adopted by the institute to determine learners' proficiency level. However, it is worth mentioning that the analysis of the learners' performance on the CGT did not yield much difference in terms of their grammar proficiency and their corresponding labelled level of proficiency determined by the institute's placement test.

Secondly, the CGT was administered to collect data for the study. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were calculated to compare the learners' actual level of grammar proficiency. Following this stage, the analyses of the data were embarked on at two levels, within proficiency groups and across proficiency groups. Within proficiency group analysis yielded nearly similar performance patterns for the learners. This was informed by the results of the Chi-square test and Wilcoxon signed rank test obtained for each proficiency group to address the null hypotheses of the study. Finally, across proficiency groups analysis was carried out to identify interlanguage trajectories.

## Results

Table 1 summarises the descriptive statistics of the CGT for each language centre, FLC and SLC, for each proficiency level.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of the CGT for Both Language Centres*

Proficiency Level	Min.		Max.		Mean		SD	
	FLC	SLC	FLC	SLC	FLC	SLC	FLC	SLC
Elementary	3	2	6	5	3.9	3.4	1.03	1.03
Intermediate	6	5	21	15	12.9	10.8	4.73	2.83
Advanced	12	8	27	27	17.7	14.3	4.13	3.47

Table 1 shows that the means and standard deviations for the proficiency groups at both language centres did not vary considerably. The mean scores for each pair of proficiency groups of elementary, intermediate, and advanced were 4.9 versus 4.3, 12.9

versus 10.8, and 17.7 versus 14.3, respectively. As we move along Table 1 vertically, it can be seen that the means and standard deviations vary across proficiency levels substantially. This contributes to the assumption that the CGT is a good measure of distinguishing between different proficiency groups confirming that placement systems of both language centres are valid.

**Figure 1**

*Correct Responses to Items Measuring Inversion across Three Proficiency Levels for Both Language Centres*

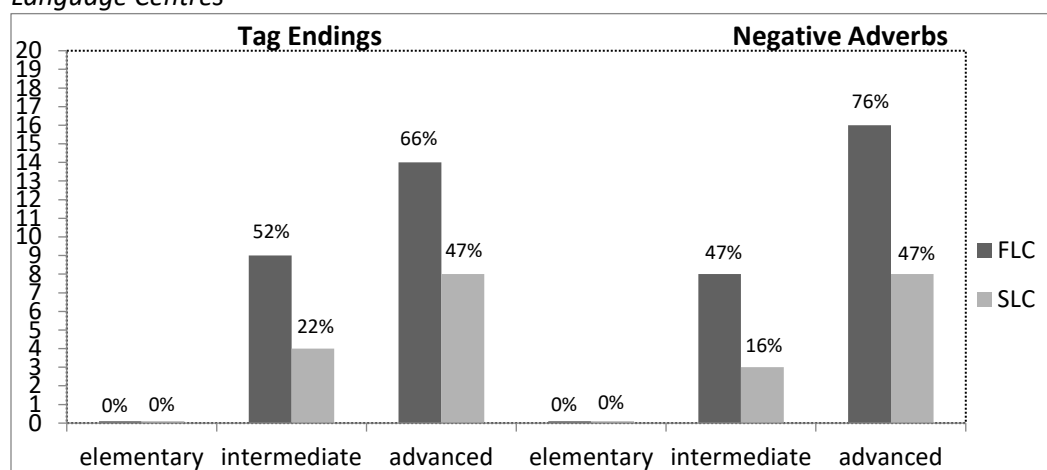


Figure 1 shows the responses of the participants at different proficiency levels to the questions eliciting information as to the inversion required in tag endings of agreement and initial position negative adverbs of frequency respectively (the first set of three pairs of columns show the response patterns for tag endings and the second set displays the response patterns for initial position negative adverbs of frequency). As predicted by the markedness differential hypothesis, all the learners at the elementary level at both language centres failed to produce the correct response. Hence, no further statistical test was run for this group of learners, and the general conclusion was drawn that knowledge of grammar, especially of complex structures of the types investigated in the present study, is too advanced to be acquired at the elementary level.

The responses of the learners at the intermediate level indicates that among all, only nine learners at FLC and four at SLC gave the correct responses to tag ending questions. In addition, only eight learners at FLC and three at SLC could get the items measuring the knowledge of inversion in negative adverbs of frequency right. Again, this confirms the expectation that complex grammar instruction is left to the higher levels of language teaching.

The corresponding value of continuity correction for this level from Table 2 (representing the results of the Chi-square test) was 1.82 at  $p$  obtained of .177. There were no significant differences in the performance of the two groups indicating that the

salience position is on par with the markedness argument. However, the markedness argument gains grounds as the results obtained from the third proficiency group were analysed. The responses of the learners at the advanced level suggest that 14 learners at FLC and eight at SLC provided the correct response to tag ending questions but 15 learners at FLC and nine at SLC got the items measuring the knowledge of inversion in negative adverbs of frequency right.

**Table 2**

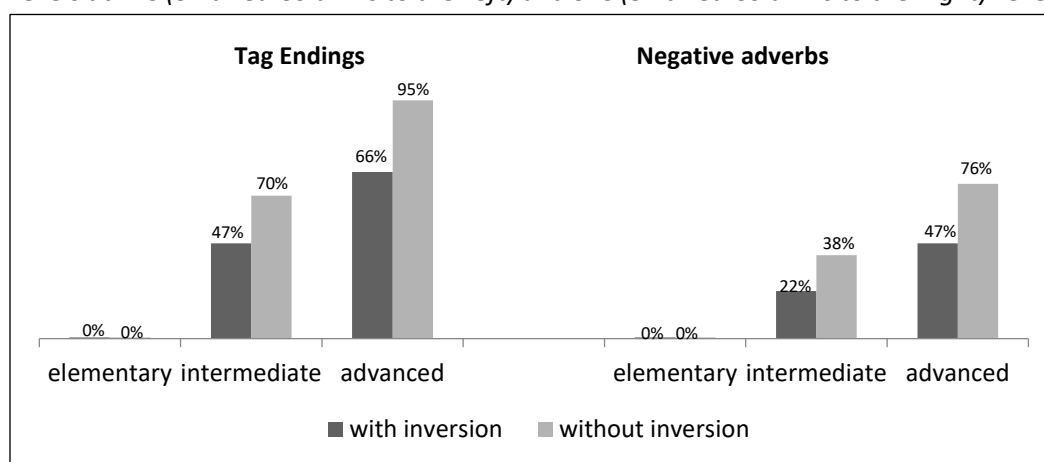
*Chi-square Test for the Total Number of Correct Responses across Corresponding Proficiency Levels in Both Language Centres*

Proficiency Level	Continuity Correction	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Intermediate	1.82	1	.177
Advanced	3.68	1	.055

The corresponding value of continuity correction standing at 3.68 with p observed of 0.55 (Table 2). The Chi-square test results highlight the role of direct instruction and, therefore, the argument put forward by the markedness camp is undermined. This reinforces the hypothesis that explicit teaching of complex grammatical structures is beneficial, and such structures are hardly learned heuristically. This observation is readily indicated by the margin of the correct responses to the items not requiring inversion and to those requiring inversion as can be seen in Figure 2, the proportion of the correct responses to the items without inversion is almost twice that of the items with inversion regardless of the level of proficiency of the students at both language centres.

**Figure 2**

*Correct Responses to Pairs of Items with (out) Inversion across Corresponding Proficiency Levels at FLC (3 Paired Columns to the Left) and SLC (3 Paired Columns to the Right) Levels*



To answer the second research question, the Wilcoxon signed rank test was run, allowing the researchers to investigate how consistently the same participants gave

correct responses to pairs of questions that did (not) necessitate inversion. As it can be inferred from Table 3, except for the intermediate learners at FLC, statistically significant differences were observed for the other groups at both language centres. The corresponding z value for the intermediate group at SLC is -2.00 which is significant at p observed of .046. For the advanced learners at FLC, z stands at -2.44 at p observed of .014. This indicates that these learners differ significantly in terms of their ability to respond correctly to the pairs of questions that did (not) require inversion. Finally, the observed z value of -2.00 for the advanced learners at SLC is significant at p obtained of .046.

**Table 3**

*Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Correct Responses to Pairs of Questions (not) Requiring Inversion across Corresponding Proficiency Levels*

Proficiency Level	Z		Sig (2-tailed)	
	FLC	SLC	FLC	SLC
Intermediate	-1.73	-2.00	.083	.046
Advanced	-2.44	-2.00	.014	.046

Following this step, in-depth interlanguage analyses of the data gathered from each proficiency group were conducted, producing mixed results. It seems that, as the results of the present study suggest, the acquisition of inverted structures initiates with chunk-like expressions following universal typological rules mediated by the structure of the first language. In other words, as the learners improve their knowledge of English, the markedness hypothesis enters the scene. The performance of the elementary and low intermediate proficiency groups validates the hypothesis that during the early stages of second language acquisition, markedness is not a good predictor of acquisition order. Formulaic expressions best account for learners' attempts to compensate for their lack of L2 knowledge. Inverted structures as was observed in the present study were lacking in the performance of the low-proficiency learners altogether.

With reference to the tag endings of agreement, two trends were detected. Firstly, the participants completely employed a chunk-like expression employing the trigger word (so, too, either, or neither). This was particularly the case with the elementary proficiency group. The expressions like I too, his wife neither, and my uncle too were frequent in their responses. It did come as a surprise that these students couldn't classify so as a member of the same group of conjunctions as either, neither, and too. They even failed to make a distinction between neither and either, too and so, and so and neither. Second, the more proficient learners in the low intermediate group tended to respond frequently with such expressions as I skate so, my uncle speaks too, and his wife speaks neither. This helps to draw the conclusion that modal auxiliaries are almost totally missing in their production. An interesting finding was that a few learners tended to employ such expressions as I do hope so or my uncle does speak too. This represents the emphatic auxiliary confusion.

As to the elementary and lower intermediate students' behaviour regarding the initial position negative adverbs, the general trend observed is one of double negation and lack of inversion altogether for the adverb *never*. Again, surprisingly enough, a few learners differentiated between *never*, and other negative adverbs such as *not* only. The expressions such as *Never I haven't seen such courage* and *Never we cannot cash these cheques* frequently took place in their production.

Figure 3 represents the pattern observed in the data. It can be seen that the path followed by the learners in the acquisition of tag endings of agreement is as follows:

**Figure 3**

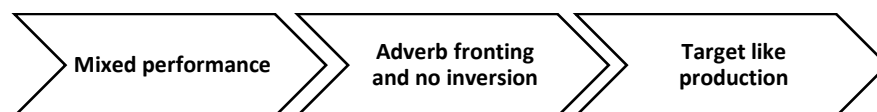
*The Pattern Observed in the Acquisition of Tag Endings of Agreement*



The point at which the above constructions are acquired seems to be at an upper intermediate level of English mastery and above. However, as instructional content at these levels emphasises grammar, the data obtained from the learners are likely to open up controversial interpretations in the light of the fact that instructional encounter predicts acquisition. Still, some learners persist to fail to produce these structures correctly even at higher levels of language proficiency. This presents further evidence to support the processability hierarchy. Inverted structures, despite the wealth of instructional data available to the learners and, hence, their instructional as well as naturalistic cross-linguistic and intra-lingual salience, remain among the most complex structures for EFL language learners.

The pattern extracted from the interlanguage analysis of the data associated with the production of initial position negative adverbs is presented in Figure 4. The same argument is forwarded for the initial position negative adverbs. The hypothesis formulated above predicts instructional salience to represent a high rate of acquisition. Again, the data obtained direct us to go with the idea that linguistic complexity overrides instructional salience, leading us to contend that no matter how frequently these structures form an essential part of the grammar instruction, acquisition remains to follow from typological universals heavily affected by the structure of the mother tongue given the internal complexity of target structures.

As to the use of constructions containing the alternation between preposition stranding and pied piping, the data revealed that at lower levels of language proficiency, the learners tended to employ a no-preposition strategy although they failed to use theses constructions correctly. It seems that they make their ways from no-preposition constructions through the ones with preposition stranding and finally to those containing pied piping.

**Figure 4***The Pattern from the Interlanguage Analysis***Discussion**

The findings of the current study should be interpreted cautiously. The first research question served a two-fold purpose; firstly, it investigated whether the acquisition of inverted structures in tag endings of agreement and initial position adverbs of frequency could be explained by the MDH or the rich instructional data available for the learners to make the inverted structures salient. Secondly, it addressed the inherent salience of these structures that makes them easier to notice compared to their relatively more neutral counterparts that follow a more canonical word order. In line with the existing literature (e.g., Wu & Lonin, 2023), the findings revealed that explicit teaching of such structures is needed, and they are too complex to be learned only on the basis of positive evidence. This is also consonant with what is called conservatism in inversion, the argument that postulates that language learners are not inclined towards inverting verbs that they are not already exposed to in inverted positions (Chen, 2003).

However, given the grammatical orientation of the first language centre in the present study, it seems that the learners at this language centre were more responsive to grammar instruction than those at the other language centre. From another perspective, it can be argued that although inverted structures can serve communicative functions like focus and attention concentration (Assaiqeli et al., 2021), their avoidance would do little, if no harm, to the flow of speech and thus would not lead to communication failure. In addition, the relative processing load these structures pose on the learners' minds could be another explanation for why teachers at the second language centre opted out of their otherwise communicative instruction (Alisoy, 2023). Finally, because of their formal complexity, learners might be unwilling to apply the obligatory inversion unless their awareness is improved through direct instruction as was not the case with the learners at SLC (Wu & Lonin, 2023).

The comparability of the corresponding proficiency groups at both language centres is not well justified. It seemed more warranted if a more valid measure of language proficiency would be used. Furthermore, although the results of the Chi-square and the Wilcoxon Ranked tests were significant, the magnitude of their values was relatively small indicating that they should be interpreted with care in drawing acquisition-related conclusions. Such conclusions are unwarranted based on the results of a cross-sectional research because of individual characteristics and chance differences. For example, it can be argued that teachers might find working with learners at higher levels of language proficiency worth their while and therefore invested more effort and energy than those teaching learners at lower levels of proficiency. All this vetoes the claim that they represent the characteristics of the same population. This point was taken up



by Ary et al. (2018) who argued that chance differences between samples distort the findings as one might draw a sample of first graders, for example, which is below average and a sample of fourth graders above average. A potential consequence is that the difference found between the groups might seem to be much tinier than it is. Furthermore, although the type of input and instruction to which the learners at each language centre were exposed to was assumed to differ significantly (based on teacher's comments obtained during informal interviews with them), they might have been similar. A possible solution might have been a direct observation of an instructional session at each language centre.

The last point to make concerns the developmental trajectories of the structures studied. The fact that learners initiated with chunk-like expressions might tempt us to underscore interlanguage conclusions and generalise toward the Structural Conformity Hypothesis that universal tendencies applying to primary languages are true for interlanguages (Le & Boonmoh, 2020). Given the scarcity of data, this finding might simply reflect the communicative bias that overemphasises strategic competence and the role of ready-made formulae in avoiding communication failures (the legacy of the lexical approach) than a universal feature of interlanguage. Such instances cannot be treated as interlanguage features.

### **Conclusion**

The present study investigated the interaction between MDH and SH in the acquisition of inversion in tag endings of agreement and initial position negative adverbs of frequency. As the findings indicate, salience cannot be a good causal explanation in the acquisition of these structures and for the most part, the acquisition of these constructions remains to follow from the predictions of the MDH. In addition, a between group comparison of the performance of the learners at corresponding proficiency levels at the two language centres revealed that complex structures like the ones studied here require direct instruction and cannot be left to be discovered by the learners in a communicative instruction setting.

Concerning the developmental trajectory of tag endings of agreement, the present study provided evidence supporting the use of unanalysed chunks at earlier stages of language development. This finding supports the contention that such constructions represent interlanguage source of knowledge that provides learners with further input for their own developing system (Lozano & Díaz-Negrillo, 2019; Taguchi, 2008). Finally, for the negative adverbs of frequency, it was observed that learners started with double negatives, and the occurrence of inversion was not observed until at an advanced level of language proficiency. This may indicate that current use of these adverbs (with single negative) is the product of historical conditions and is not an inherent feature of interlanguage. The findings should be interpreted cautiously due to limited data.

In order to put forward solid recommendations for instructed interlanguage development in the Iranian context, future researchers might replicate this study with

larger sample sizes in various parts of the country. Furthermore, more local and international research is needed to develop a better understanding of how grammar-based and communicative approaches toward foreign language teaching might affect the acquisition of inverted structures in English.

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## Appendix A

### 26-item Composite Grammar Test

Rewrite the following sentences using the given words.

1. She should get a job in a bank. He suggests that she ..... (get) a job in a bank
2. Mary doesn't like opera; also, I don't like opera. Mary doesn't like opera and ..... (neither)
3. I occasionally think that I'd like to live somewhere else. Occasionally .....
4. The person was Sara. I lent Sara the money. The person..... (whom)
5. I want tomorrow to be Sunday, but it is not possible. I wish tomorrow ..... (be) Sunday.
6. The man was Kevin. Cathy gave the man the book. The man..... (whom)
7. She didn't allow me to see what she was doing. She didn't let me ..... (see) what she was doing.
8. Ann skates beautifully; I also skate beautifully. Ann skates beautifully and ..... (so)
9. We can never cash these cheques. Never .....
10. She will get here; I'll wait until then. I'll wait until she ..... (get) here.
11. Peter isn't here today; also, John isn't here. Peter isn't here today and ..... (either)
12. The man was his uncle. Bob sent his uncle a post card. The man..... (whom)
13. The meeting must start at eight. It is essential that the meeting ..... (start) at eight.
14. I have rarely seen such a remarkable creature. Seldom .....
15. He doesn't smoke; also, his wife does not smoke. He does not smoke and..... (neither)
16. He hopes the postman comes soon. Also, I hope the postman comes soon. He hopes the postman comes soon and ..... (so)

17. I wanted to study medicine, but I didn't go to university. If I had gone to university, I ..... (study) medicine.
18. I have not seen such courage in my life. Never .....  
.....
19. Mary paid \$15 for the book; also, I paid \$15 for the book. Mary paid \$15 for the book and ..... (too)
20. My father can't swim; also, my uncle can't swim. My father can't swim ..... (nor)
21. I get up early. Usually, .....
22. I had not arrived when the trouble started. Hardly .....  
.....
23. She has been late; she has also done no work. Not only ..... but also .....
24. I speak French; also, my uncle speaks French. I speak French and ..... (too)
25. He didn't understand her feelings Until he received her letter. Not until .....
26. She is interested in making toys for her children. She prefers ..... (make) toys for her children.

# **ONLINE COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION VIA DIGITAL DISCUSSION FORUMS: IMPACTS ON 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The use of Digital Discussion Forums (DDFs) has not been researched sufficiently in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses to enhance communication and collaboration skills. Therefore, this paper explores the impact of DDFs usage on these skills through digital discussions among undergraduates. DDF was incorporated into an ESP language classroom and involves a group project outside of classroom time, namely, Company Profile (CP). The qualitative study involved 26 students enrolled in English for Business Professional Communication. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and reflective journals. Thematic analysis was conducted and themes on critical components of 21st Century skills development were analysed. Inter-rater reliability analysis utilising Cohen Kappa analysis showed nearly perfect scores, indicating data reliability. The findings revealed a positive impact of online engagement on students' overall communication and collaboration skills alongside their English language skill. The findings suggest the usefulness of DDF in developing communicative and collaborative skills.



**Keywords:** online communication and collaboration skills; digital discussion forum (DDF); English for Specific Purposes (ESP); higher education

## **Introduction**

Learning English can be difficult for some learners who study English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Sadeghi & Richards, 2021). To help learners, one increasingly popular approach involves integrating Digital Discussion Forums (DDFs), also referred to as Online Discussion Forums (ODFs). The use of DDFs as a digital platform can increase students' language learning quality. This platform allows students to engage in discussions, developing communication and collaboration skills.

Moreover, DDF platforms have the potential to improve students' collaboration and communication skills as well as creativity (Mangubat & Ramirez, 2023). The conversational aspect of speaking in the form of writing via online network channels such as DDF influences students in such a way that they begin to construct automatic structures and routinise certain sentences. These developmental and practice processes support the development of communicative skills.

Similarly, Azmuddin et al. (2023) discovered that using DDF accelerates collaborative learning among participants. However, many students of English language tend to lack confidence to engage in group discussions (Jamali & Krish, 2021; Wikle & West, 2019). DDFs enables shy learners to become more engaged. The online component creates a more unrestricted and more comfortable environment in which participants have more equal possibilities to voice their ideas and are less affected or subjugated by others (Glazer, 2023). This encourages timid students to participate more actively (Griffin & Roy, 2022). Therefore, DDF can help learners suffering from language deficiencies.

While the benefits of DDFs in promoting language learning and classroom discourse are well-documented (Azmuddin et al., 2023; Jamali & Krish, 2021; Mtshali et al., 2020), research on how DDFs impact the development of 21st-century skills, particularly communication and collaboration, is limited especially in the context of ESP (Jamali & Krish, 2021). Most present studies concentrate on large-scale quantitative research in general language acquisition environments (Buragohain et al., 2023; Robillos, 2023; Shahid et al., 2024).

Despite the increasing adoption of DDFs in ESP courses, there is a gap in research concerning their impact within smaller ESP classes, particularly those tailored to business communication. As digital platforms continue to proliferate across higher education, the need to better understand how DDFs facilitate communication and collaboration in specialised language learning settings becomes ever more important (Idaryani & Fidyati, 2021). The literature highlights the critical roles of social skills, such as communication and collaboration, in determining online learning success (Angelova & Zhao, 2016; Gasmi, 2022; Ononiwu, 2021). The study examined how a university-developed Learning

Management System (LMS) is used in DDF in ESP courses to develop communication and collaboration skills.

The research questions are as follows:

1. In what ways do DDF assist ESL learners in ESP courses?
2. How does enhancement of communication and collaboration skills impact learning through DDF?

## **Literature Review**

### **DDF as a Technological Tool**

The literature on higher education increasingly recognises DDFs as pivotal tools for cultivating 21st-century skills and enhancing student learning outcomes. Studies indicate students' ability to improve linguistic competency, critical thinking, leadership, and digital skills (Jamali & Krish, 2021). They also foster engagement in a non-threatening environment as it encourages active involvement and builds confidence. The asynchronous nature of DDFs allows participants to engage with academic discourse at their own pace, reading posts, sharing resources, and contributing thoughtfully to collaborative discussions. This structure not only mirrors but often extends classroom learning, as students engage in meaningful exchanges that drive both communication and collaboration (Abdullateef, 2021).

Responding to one another's posts lead to more engagements, group debates, or revisions, which have an impact on the composition of knowledge or ideas collaboratively (Azmuiddin et al., 2023; Woo et al., 2013). Individuals can construct knowledge by building on prior knowledge in a virtual environment through social negotiation and collaboration. Aside from the benefit of co-construction of knowledge, Goggins and Xing (2016) found that students' performance improved as the quantity of posts increased, as did students' reading of their peers' contributions. An ESP course can help to foster 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning since communication skill is an essential language learning element. Such skills can be developed if the contents are also appropriate to cater for those skills. Clearly, new knowledge and educational changes necessitate new educational modifications.

The literature has also shown a strong link between social skills such as communication and collaboration and their roles in online learning success (Gasmi, 2022; Ononiwu, 2021). According to Magfira et al. (2024), DDFs can effectively increase collaboration while also improving interpersonal and group dynamics. Learners also benefit immensely from online learning groups, where they seek guidance from their peers while improving their knowledge through exchanges (Hai-Jew, 2020). Interactions among students in group discussions and case studies can be beneficial for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and language acquisition. It is also a way for students to achieve better learning outcomes through student-content interaction (Wikle & West, 2019). Working in a group through the DDF platform develops a sense of belonging among

students who trust one another, share critical information, construct knowledge by understanding one another to establish mutual learning goals.

DDFs also create an online learning community among students working on similar tasks. Students in DDFs rely on one another to learn through exchanging information, views, and ideas that promotes engagement, social skills, and higher order thinking skills (Gasmi, 2022). Collaboration skills are in high demand in online learning communities. For example, in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), online discussions have emerged as a crucial element of social learning and communication, emphasising participation behaviour and the relationship between forum activity and learning outcomes (Almatrafi & Johri, 2019). The asynchronous structure of online forums enables learners to gather their thoughts and deliberate on their responses in the discussion facilitated metacognitive awareness among them. This also encouraged peer-to-peer interaction, facilitating active collaboration and knowledge dissemination among learners (Ononiwu, 2021). Hence, it can enhance collaborative learning, critical thinking, and simultaneously enable learners to develop communication skills.

### **Theoretical Foundations**

The design and implementation of this study were guided by Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivism. Language acquisition, according to social constructivism, is a social process in which language proficiency develops by active participation in social interactions (Aprianto & Zaini, 2019). Social constructivism is a learning theory emphasising communication and collaboration. Recent ESP studies show the value of using technology to encourage communicative relationships in learning environments (Jaleniauskienė et al., 2019; Mulyadi et al., 2019) such as those in ESP courses.

When humans interact with other people and their surroundings, they engage in both individual and social interactions. It focuses on the cognitive growth and interpersonal ties of individuals. It also promotes group learning, meaning formation, and collaboration. Another justification for employing this theory is its acknowledgement of the significance of 21st-century skills, which necessitates the creation of a responsive learning environment that supports the use of methods and techniques that are productive in the students' learning of English (Azman et al., 2013). This could be accomplished by employment of unconventional and progressive DDFs to meet contemporary learner preferences and global demand.

### **Methodology**

This study was based on a group project task that required the students to construct a business document known as a Company Profile (CP). This group project allows students to demonstrate their understanding in an authentic learning environment that reflects the actual world to improve their understanding of business fields. Each group consisting of six members had to create their own companies as part of the course assessment

requirement. They could create a company of their choosing, either a merchandise or service provider. They were guided to construct CP components consisting of items such as name of the company, nature of business (service-oriented or product-oriented), slogan, motto, mission and vision, logo, letterhead, organizational chart and brochure.

The primary goal of this CP task was to raise levels of interaction and to provide students with time to reflect and generate higher-quality work based on collaborative effort among team members. The content created was assessed. Another objective was to foster a collaborative and communicative learning environment in which learners were expected to demonstrate mastery of the fundamental concepts involved in developing a CP, deliver information about their company while pitching, promote their service or product, and build mutual knowledge to achieve a deeper understanding.

### **Research Design**

This study utilised a qualitative method particularly, the techniques of a single case study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). The case study method allows for reporting an authentic online communicative and collaborative usage alongside English language learning experience. Although all students were in a face-to-face ESP class, the CP group project was done digitally utilising DDFs from a university's learning management system, where the DDF sessions occurred within a six-week period.

### **Participants**

A total of 26 homogeneous undergraduate students that were in semester four onwards participated in this study. These students had undergone their compulsory English language courses in their first year and are now enrolled in an ESP course that focuses on the concepts of corporate communication styles in a workplace. The participants were purposively selected from 20 classes of 569 students enrolled in English for Business Communication at the university. Purposive sampling, which is commonly required in case studies (Cohen & Manion, 1989), was used. The researchers employed purposive sampling to "discover, comprehend, and acquire insight from a sample from which the most could be learnt" (Merriam, 2009, p. 79). The students were chosen based on their active participation in DDF sessions with basic knowledge of computer skills and possess intermediate level of English language proficiency. Accounting, Economics, Business Administration, and Management majors were among those enrolled in the class. These criteria were obtained in the demographic profile that the participants had completed at the beginning of the semester.

The data for the study were 26 students' reflective journals, 11 students' interview transcriptions, and 359 entries or posting threads from students in five groups.

## **Data Collection Procedures**

In accordance with the university's data collection policies, participants were briefed on the study's data gathering procedures. Participants also agreed to participate in the data collection. To verify and triangulate data, interviews were conducted, and students were asked to write reflection journals. Creswell (2013) considers obtaining data from numerous sources to be the goal of qualitative approaches. The reflective journals allowed participants to express themselves while also learning more about how the DDF effects students' English language learning, communication, and collaboration skills.

## **Data Analysis**

The data for this investigation were analysed in several stages using Creswell's (2013) systematic approach, ensuring credibility and reliability through a rigorous and transparent process. Data from interviews and reflective journal entries were organised using Microsoft Word processor. The interview audio files were transcribed verbatim. Appendix 1 shows the coding procedures.

Researchers familiarised themselves with the data through meticulous review, identifying preliminary ideas. An inductive coding approach was utilised, involving multiple rounds of analysis by reading several times to identify common themes and recurring ideas to highlight meaningful text elements. Open coding marked relevant phrases, which were subsequently grouped into categories during axial coding to reveal relationships among codes.

In the axial coding phase, related codes were combined into broader categories based on shared meanings. For example, codes linked to knowledge sharing and collaboration were grouped under Communication and Collaboration Development. During selective coding, these categories were refined into principal themes by recognising core patterns and eliminating irrelevant or infrequent codes. Themes were developed based on frequency and relevance, accurately reflecting the dataset's core aspects.

The coding process continued until data saturation was achieved, ensuring no new codes or categories emerged. Triangulation was employed to validate the themes by cross-checking findings from interviews and journals, ensuring coherence and consistency. Researchers iteratively reviewed the themes to confirm alignment with research objectives. Finally, the themes were contextualised through comparisons with prior studies and researchers' observations, grounding the findings both empirically and theoretically.

## Findings and Discussion

A thematic analysis of learner's reflective journals and interview excerpts identified three key themes concerning the learners' experiences with DDFs. Under the framework of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, the themes were: (1) communication and collaboration, (2) practising the target language, and (3) innovative learning approach.

### Communication and Collaboration Development

#### *Sharing and Constructing Knowledge*

In this first theme, there were several interesting findings that reflect the ability of learners to develop communication and collaboration. One of the most important ones is the ability of learners to share their ideas and transfer their knowledge with other members of the group. The interview excerpts and journal entries in Table 1 demonstrate this point.

**Table 1**

*Interview Excerpts and Journal Entries Related to Knowledge Sharing*

Student	Interview (IV)	Reflective Journal (RJ)
NI		This online learning makes me communicate with others and can <b>share my ideas</b> easily
		Online learning can develop my communication skills in terms of <b>delivering my idea</b>
NJ	I learnt to act more friendly and accepted...and <b>gave more ideas</b> ...talk with strangers, because we did not face them. I was <b>brave enough to start sharing my ideas</b> with them	

The excerpts in Table 1 are students' claims that the use of DDF enhanced collaboration and knowledge sharing through sharing of ideas. One student felt group interaction via DDF made her become communicative, amicable, and considerate of her team members' views. Apart from that, NJ said that her courage was developed as she led the group to share ideas.

The most prominent outcome that the participants appreciated was the important nature of teamwork when it comes to communication and knowledge sharing. DDF acts as a medium for group discussion to develop collaboration skills through communication skills. Students emphasised the importance of being supportive to

respect others to share information among themselves. Students can connect with other group members when working together, which enhances their skill of collaboration and communication. This can be seen in the excerpts in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Interview Excerpts and Journal Entries Related to Collaboration*

Student	Interview(IV)	Reflective Journal(RJ)
SO		helped me in developing communication skills because as a team, we need to <b>engage with each other</b> in order to <b>work well together</b> . For instance, one can appear to be rude if certain words used are unsuitable such as not using the word please thank you and others
LC	...help me to increase my <b>communication skill with group members</b> . I used words as communication to <b>exchange and share my ideas</b> when responding, give explanation and also feedback... <b>teamwork</b> in forum among all members is very important	
SN		The online discussion <b>develops more on teamwork</b> because we need to understand what each other needs to <b>express their idea</b>
SS	Through online discussion, we will feel free to deliver our ideas and <b>give attention to ideas shared</b> by understanding the ideas in order to respond. This can help every person to improve their communication skill and <b>collaboration skill</b>	
SO		For me, the biggest impact is definitely the <b>collaboration skill</b> as we are <b>working as a team</b> and it is not a one man's job. So, not a single team

FS

member should be left out in the discussion  
valuable thing that I learned from this learning experience is **teamwork...we can work together in a team** to finish the task

As seen in Table 2, the collaborative nature of DDF has an important function in cultivating collaboration skills among participants. For example, student SO believed that through the DDF, everyone in her group cooperated to finish the task. Similarly, FS said that her spirit of solidarity with her group members developed during the completion of the group project. Thenceforth she elaborated this collaboration aided them in performing more effectively as group members, and she believed that by discussing the issues surrounding idea construction, they would be able to resolve them and produce their group project fruitfully.

DDFs encouraged collaboration and communication skills among students. Most of the students demonstrated their communicative capability via DDFs in writing their posts and reading others' posts. While exchanging their dialogues and commenting on the posts of others, students were competent in planning the execution; searching, sharing, analysing, evaluating, constructing all relevant ideas for contents; as well as negotiating to reach a mutual agreement in decision making for the best ideas to be included in their CP task. The students appeared to be pushing the boundaries of their levels of proficiency to communicate, convey their ideas and messages, and express themselves to one another. This notion was shared by students when they were asked how DDF has affected their communication and collaboration skills (Table 3).

**Table 3***Interview Excerpts and Journal Entries Related to Communication*

Student	Interview (IV)	Reflective Journal (RJ)
AZ	forum <b>can affect the development of my... collaboration and communication skills through my involvement...helped me to communicate well, to work as a strong team</b> , with other members	
NF	online forum helps me <b>improve myself in the communication skill, and collaboration</b> . It helps me <b>accept idea of people, and cooperate with others</b> in terms of teamwork and also <b>critical thinking which I force myself to do...</b> to come up with a good idea	



Clearly, students naturally display communicative and collaborative behaviours that support knowledge co-construction when they participate actively in discussions. This was indeed the case; through content analysis of online postings, few markers of collaborative/dialogue communication were discovered such as asking clarifying questions, adding to peers' comments, and respectfully criticising opinions to increase comprehension.

All in all, the students felt that their communication and collaboration skills improved based on their ability to connect, deliver, and share their knowledge with team members. This concurs with the findings of Kirschner et al. (2018) and Budiyo and Haerullah (2024), that is, in asynchronous threaded discussions, students collaborate to solve problems, thereby distributing cognitive load among group members and developing abilities through the group's distributed expertise. Exchanging knowledge and information is critical while learning in a group setting, as knowledge is socially produced through collaborative efforts toward common goals. Thus, from a socio constructivism view, as learners participate in DDFs activities, they embraced what they had constructed and reconstructed because of their collaboration (Vygotsky, 1978). In this study, the students felt that DDFs have improved their communication and collaboration in executing their English language course group course project.

### Practising the Target Language

Through DDFs, they tended to practise the target language more by being actively involved in the discussion using English language only. Student LK shared that group discussion via DDFs allowed them to practise at the optimal level in the target language and the language is improved eventually. Practising, rehearsing, and redoing what they target to accomplish through the process allowed for more opportunities to use the language while perfecting their Company Profile.

On another note, a Chinese student said that using English via DDFs helped him and his group members to ultimately improve and practise their English language competence. Additionally, he stated that their group did not completely utilise the English language during in-class discussions, since it was only used on occasion. Table 4 reflects this notion.

**Table 4**

*Interview Excerpts and Journal Entries Related to Target Language Practice*

Student	Interview (IV)	Reflective Journal (RJ)
SO	forum <b>can</b> <b>affect</b> <b>the</b> <b>development</b> <b>of</b> <b>my...</b> <b>collaboration and communication</b> <b>skills</b> <b>through</b> <b>my</b> <b>involvement...helped</b> <b>me</b> <b>to</b>	online forum has helped my group members and me in <b>practising the English</b> language as what we have discussed are 100 percent in English

	<b>communicate well, to work as a strong team</b> , with other members	
LK		We seldom using English to communicate with friends in class. But we <b>have to use English to communicate in online discussion forums</b> . Indirectly, it <b>helps us to practice and improve our English</b>
NS	forum made me more <b>engaged in learning English</b> because in daily life I use Malay...rarely use English.	

As seen in Table 4, NS asserted that her commitment to learning English has increased because of the online discussion forum. This is because this platform enables her to practise English, a language she utilises sparingly daily. She further admitted to utilising her mother tongue language in regular life and hardly used English.

The data presented demonstrates that DDF is an avenue for learners to practise communication and collaboration. Choi and Nunan (2018) assert that when language learners are compelled to communicate outside of the language classroom in real-life circumstances, their communication resources are activated. Students had to communicate in English outside of the classroom in the DDFs environment as part of this study in the virtual realm with group members from various backgrounds and races, and English was the only language they were allowed to use for discussion. As a result, using DDFs required them to learn and practise not only computer skills, but also electronic literacy, or the capacity to communicate with others using electronic tools (Kadijevich et al., 2023; Melo-Pfeifer, 2021).

Since the students were multiracial and most were Malays, Malay ended up as the main language of communication. Furthermore, when attempting to communicate in English, code-switching between the native language and English is common among speakers in Malaysia (Maros et al., 2016). Malay is widely spoken on university campuses and in classes because of the local environment where Malay is the primary mode of communication, where most Malaysians do not have many opportunities to communicate in English daily. Even though English is Malaysia's official second language, people's native tongues are frequently utilised in daily conversation (Ting et al., 2018). However, using DDF as a pedagogical tool, students were able to practise their English language skills in a group setting where they were extremely active in their discussions. For instance, when students debated the content of the CP via DDFs, they became active users of the English language because of their involvement in knowledge construction via the platform. Social learning occurs when active interactions motivate learners to use and acquire the target language indirectly. In other words, students acquire language considerably more quickly if they are provided with an environment in which they can

speak freely and confidently (Jumaah, 2024). Thus, DDF is capable to increase students' confidence and competency levels by having them practise the language on a regular basis.

### Innovative Learning Approach

Several students used DDF to compare their enthusiastic and dynamic learning experience to earlier, which was more conventional learning experiences, as shown in Table 5. They discussed the ability to acquire the modern style of learning to execute and complete the task within the virtual realm compared with the conventional way of performing it.

**Table 5**

*Interview Excerpts and Journal Entries Related to Innovative Language Approach*

Student	Interview (IV)	Reflective Journal (RJ)
FS		opportunity <b>to try something new. I never use online discussion</b> to discuss our assignment, this is a big opportunity for me to experiencing a new way of learning
MH		I feel so excited because I <b>rarely discuss any task online</b> . I also feel that I will <b>learn something new</b> which is how to use online discussion and I will make my learning up to date
NQ	The <b>effect of this new approach</b> is developing my...communication skill and collaboration skill among my group. In my opinion, sometimes it <b>makes us more interesting to learn English</b>	

As seen in Table 5, MH felt he had developed into a progressive and sophisticated learner, and it was for this reason that he was drawn to the revolutionary learning process. This paper asserts that a distinction exists between student interest and active participation. Several students were interested in learning as they were motivated by the unconventional method. As mentioned by NQ, the new method of using DDFs inspired her language learning and had good impact on her skills development. According to MF, DDF also gives space for introverted ones to actively speak up confidently as they are not confronted with each other physically. This is also another factor that influences students to perceive DDF positively.

The findings show that students' language acquisition is maximised, and their confidence level raised through collaborative learning with students from diverse backgrounds. In addition, the strategy precludes participants from using their native language or even code-switching, leaving them with no alternative except to learn to communicate fully in English. This is feasible in an ESP classroom as an option to improve communicative competence, student motivation, and target language production (Mulyadi et al., 2020). Students have better opportunities to engage in more online language learning activities to improve their communication and collaboration skills apart from practising their target language for enhancement.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to investigate how class dynamicity was produced through DDFs, which has an advantage over conventional instruction in developing students' communication and collaboration skills while improving their English language. Based on the findings, DDFs have the potential to shift a conventional literacy classroom from a teacher-centred to a student-centred approach to establish a good framework and environment conducive to learning; transform learning from a solitary activity to a social one, communicative and collaborative work and demonstrating learning from passive to active practices. The use of DDFs to improve skills increases learner motivation, allowing students to embrace a new 21st-century learning paradigm that fosters active rather than passive learning (Jamali & Krish, 2023). Furthermore, the DDFs interaction's structure contributed to the achievement of favourable learning outcomes. Participants were able to adapt, refine, appropriate, and expand their own and each other's learning, skills, knowledge, and attitudes by utilising technology as a social, dynamic environment. Hence, the findings suggest that DDFs can be an effective technique in language instruction, creating a learner-centred and socially engaging learning environment.

There were several major implications identified for language educators and practitioners, particularly in online learning. Participation within DDFs yet on a voluntary basis enforced the students so that they take ownership of their learning of the English language, making it clear to accomplish the given CP project task successfully and which skills needed reinforcement and review. The DDFs provided a platform to the students letting them get insights into their own developments and progress and learning for better writing and reading. Student active engagement with content construction for their CP project task completion was successful when this learning activity was discussed within the virtual platform collaboratively, communicatively and using critical thoughts represented all of the 21st-century skills (The Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2011). It can be concluded that DDFs improve students' communication, collaboration, and English language skills, as shown by the examination of participations' individual interviews and reflective journals. In online learning, these elements are essential for student success.

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**Appendix 1**  
**Table of Coding Procedure**

Steps	Procedure	Example
Raw Data	Transcription of interviews and reflective journals into textual format.	"I learnt to act more friendly and accepted...and gave more ideas...talk with strangers, because we did not face them. I was brave enough to start sharing my ideas with them."
Open Coding	Identification and labelling of meaningful text parts.	Code: "Sharing and Constructing Ideas"
Axial Coding	Classifying related codes into categories according to similar characteristics and identifying relationships.	Category: "Communication and Collaboration features" (codes: feelings confident, producing ideas, sharing opinions).
Selective Coding	Classification of categories into themes through the identification of essential patterns.	Theme: "Role of Digital Discussion Forums in developing Communication Collaboration" (combines three related categories).
Theme Validation	Cross-checking thematic consistency between datasets and ensuring alignment with research objectives and theories.	Reflective journals confirm "Sharing and Constructing Knowledge" in group projects in collaborative settings via DDFs.
Final Themes	Incorporation of validated themes into a cohesive narrative for reporting.	Themes: "Sharing and Constructing Knowledge," "Practicing Target Language," etc.

# **SPEAK UP! HOW ATTITUDES, MOTIVATION, AND BELIEFS SHAPE EFL LEARNERS' WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the influence of learners' attitudes, motivation, and beliefs on their Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. The cross-sectional study involved 85 students in a state senior high school in Purbalingga, Indonesia. The analysis indicates that attitudes, motivation, and beliefs collectively account for 34.3% of the variance in WTC ( $R^2 = 0.343$ ). Attitude emerges as the strongest predictor ( $\beta = 0.570$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), while motivation and beliefs show negligible effects. The significance of the model ( $p < 0.05$ ) confirms the combined influence of these variables on communication behaviours. These findings suggest that fostering positive attitudes toward language learning is essential for enhancing students' willingness to engage in communication. Based on these results, the study highlights the need for pedagogical strategies that promote confidence, reduce communication anxiety, and create a supportive classroom environment.

**Keywords:** willingness to communicate; attitude; motivation; beliefs; English as a foreign language; language learning

## **Introduction**

Effective communication in a second language is a fundamental objective in language education, particularly within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. A pivotal element influencing this objective is learners' Willingness to Communicate (WTC), defined as the readiness to engage in communication when given the opportunity (MacIntyre et al., 1998). In classroom settings, WTC manifests as students' readiness and eagerness to participate in communicative activities such as raising hands, engaging in discussions, or interacting with peers. This disposition is shaped by a dynamic interplay of individual, social, and situational factors (Antoku, 2025; Shaffer, 2021). Such readiness can fluctuate depending on the classroom environment, activity type, and the support provided by teachers, ultimately serving as a predictor of actual participatory behaviour in language learning contexts (Antoku, 2025; Shaffer, 2021). WTC is not merely a product of linguistic competence but is linked to various psychological and contextual factors, including learners' attitudes, motivation, and beliefs. Understanding these interrelations is essential for fostering effective communicative environments in EFL classrooms (Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Yashima et al., 2004).

Attitude involves learners' feelings, beliefs, and predispositions toward the target language, its speakers, and the learning process. Positive attitudes tend to promote engagement and success, while negative attitudes can hinder participation (MacIntyre et al., 2003). Factors shaping attitudes include cultural perceptions, past experiences, and perceived relevance of the language.

Closely connected to attitude is motivation, which refers to the internal drive that sustains effort and persistence in language learning. According to Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000), motivation includes three components: the Ideal L2 Self (aspirations for proficiency), the Ought-to L2 Self (sense of obligation), and the L2 Learning Experience (situational factors). Strong motivation enhances confidence and reduces anxiety, which leads to higher WTC (Alemi et al., 2011; Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000).

Underlying both attitude and motivation are learners' beliefs about language learning. Beliefs encompass learners' perceptions about their abilities, the nature of language learning, and the value of the language. Constructive beliefs encourage active participation, while misconceptions or negative beliefs can cause hesitation and avoidance (Kang, 2005; Öz, 2016). For example, believing in one's competence and the usefulness of English is closely linked to WTC.

These three elements (attitudes, motivation, and beliefs) are interconnected. Positive attitudes can boost motivation, which in turn reinforces positive beliefs about language learning. This synergy suggests that interventions targeting one factor may positively influence the others, collectively enhancing WTC. For instance, creating a supportive classroom environment can improve attitudes, thereby increasing motivation and fostering constructive beliefs, which ultimately lead to greater WTC (Yashima et al., 2004; Zarrinabadi, 2014).

Despite extensive research on individual factors affecting WTC, there is a need for studies examining the combined effect of learners' attitudes, motivation, and beliefs on their WTC in EFL classrooms. Understanding the synergy of attitudes,

motivation, and beliefs enables educators to design targeted interventions that address both psychological and contextual barriers. This is vital for fostering communicative competence in EFL settings, where classroom interactions are often the sole platform for language practice.

This study aims to investigate the combined effect of learners' attitudes, motivation, and beliefs on their willingness to communicate in the EFL classroom. Specifically, this study tests the following hypothesis:

H<sub>a</sub>: Learners' attitudes, motivation, and beliefs each significantly predict their WTC in the EFL classroom.

## **Literature Review**

### **WTC in EFL Contexts**

WTC is a multifaceted construct that encapsulates an individual's propensity to initiate communication when given the opportunity (Adnan & Nadeem, 2023). Learners' attitudes, motivations, and beliefs are critical determinants that exert a substantial influence on their WTC within the EFL classroom, intricately shaping their language learning trajectory and the progressive development of their communicative competence (Basoz & Erten, 2018).

It is imperative to acknowledge that WTC is not solely determined by linguistic proficiency but is also significantly influenced by learners' attitudes toward the target language and culture, their intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for language learning, and their deeply ingrained beliefs about their language learning capabilities (Young, 2013). When educators understand how affective variables shape WTC, they can create learning environments that encourage EFL learners to participate actively and communicate with confidence.

### **Learners' Attitudes Toward Language Learning**

Attitudes play a significant role in shaping language learners' behaviours and engagement in communication. Attitudes toward language learning encompass learners' feelings about the language itself, its speakers, and the learning process. Attitudes often stem from cultural appreciation or perceived utility of the language for academic or career advancement (Liu & Jackson, 2008). Cultural perceptions, past learning experiences, and self-efficacy beliefs shape attitudes (Hashimoto, 2002; Öz, 2016).

Positive attitudes towards English and its speakers have been linked to greater engagement in communicative tasks and increased WTC. Research indicates that learners with favourable attitudes are more likely to seek opportunities to communicate in the target language, even in anxiety-inducing situations (Lee & Lee, 2020). Teachers who foster respect and inclusivity can positively shape students' attitudes by creating a supportive environment that values every contribution (Lombardi et al., 2019).

Negative attitudes may hinder participation (MacIntyre et al., 2003; Yashima et al., 2004). Negative experiences, such as fear of judgment or past failures, can lead to reluctance in communication. Classroom climate plays a critical role in reshaping such attitudes (Zhang et al., 2020).

### **Motivation as a Driving Force for WTC**

Motivation influences language learning success. According to Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System, motivation consists of the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self, and the Learning Experience (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). Learners with a strong Ideal L2 Self as in those who envision themselves as proficient speakers, tend to exhibit higher WTC (Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015). Additionally, integrative motivation, or the desire to connect with the target language community, has been found to positively correlate with WTC (Alemi et al., 2011; Khajavy & Ghonsooly, 2017). Classroom-based motivation, including teacher support and peer interactions, also plays a role in fostering WTC (Cao, 2011; MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011).

Motivation includes intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation, both of which influence learners' persistence and engagement. Learners driven by intrinsic factors such as enjoyment or curiosity tend to exhibit higher levels of engagement and WTC (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Zarrinabadi, 2014). External rewards like grades or job prospects also enhance motivation but may not sustain long-term engagement unless paired with intrinsic interest (Deci et al., 1999). Recent studies highlight the role of emotioncy—emotional connection to learning materials—in fostering motivation and academic achievement (Fathi et al., 2024).

### **Learners' Beliefs and Their Impact on WTC**

Beliefs about language learning influence learners' confidence and engagement in communication (Horwitz, 2010). Some learners perceive language learning as a linear process requiring perfect grammar and vocabulary before communication, which can lead to communication anxiety and reluctance to speak (Kang, 2005). On the other hand, learners with growth-oriented beliefs, who view errors as a natural part of learning, demonstrate higher WTC (Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Zarrinabadi, 2014). Research also highlights the role of self-perceived competence, with students who believe in their linguistic abilities exhibiting greater willingness to engage in conversations (Dewaele & Pavelescu, 2021).

Beliefs about language learning are deeply rooted in learners' past experiences, cultural norms, and educational contexts. These beliefs influence how learners perceive their capabilities and the value of communication in language acquisition. Learners with strong self-efficacy or confidence in their ability to perform specific tasks are more likely to engage in communication tasks because they believe they can succeed (Bandura et al., 1999; MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010). Learners with a growth mindset are more willing to take risks in communication, viewing mistakes as opportunities for improvement. Conversely, those with a fixed mindset may avoid communication due to fear of failure (Dweck, 2015). Unrealistic expectations about fluency such as the belief that one must speak perfectly before attempting

communication, can hinder WTC by creating anxiety and self-doubt (Liu & Jackson, 2008).

Positive beliefs about language learning foster motivation, reduce anxiety, and encourage risk-taking behaviours necessary for effective communication. Learners who view communication as integral to language acquisition are more likely to seek opportunities for interaction (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Positive beliefs about the joy of learning English or its utility in achieving personal goals enhance intrinsic motivation and WTC (Khajavy & Ghonsooly, 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Studies have shown that informal digital learning environments, such as social media platforms used in flipped classrooms, can positively shape learners' beliefs about their ability to communicate effectively (Zarrinabadi et al., 2021).

Negative beliefs often stem from past failures or cultural norms that discourage risk-taking in communication. Learners who believe they lack the necessary skills often experience heightened anxiety, which negatively impacts their WTC both online and offline (MacIntyre et al., 2003). Negative experiences with teachers or peers can lead to demotivation and a reduced belief in the value of communication tasks (Fathi & Mohammaddokht, 2021; Khajavy & Ghonsooly, 2017). In collectivist cultures where group harmony is prioritised over individual expression, learners may believe that speaking up disrupts social norms or risks embarrassment (Brewer & Chen, 2007).

Teachers play a pivotal role in influencing learners' beliefs through their instructional strategies and interpersonal behaviours. Teachers who exhibit immediacy behaviours, such as showing empathy or using humour, help reduce anxiety and foster positive beliefs about communication (Frymier, 1993). Constructive feedback that focuses on effort rather than outcomes can reshape negative beliefs into positive ones by reinforcing a growth mindset. Teachers can encourage perseverance by integrating long-term goals into classroom activities and helping students view challenges as opportunities for growth (Duckworth et al., 2007).

Learners' emotional states often mediate the relationship between their beliefs about language learning and their WTC. Constructs such as foreign language enjoyment enhance learners' belief in their ability to succeed at communication tasks while reducing anxiety (Khajavy et al., 2018). Anxiety and boredom arising from unengaging classroom environments can reinforce negative beliefs about communication abilities (Fathi & Mohammaddokht, 2021).

### **The Interplay of Attitudes, Motivation, and Beliefs in EFL Classrooms**

The relationship between attitudes, motivation, and beliefs is complex, as these factors influence and reinforce each other. A positive attitude can enhance motivation, while strong motivation can cultivate positive beliefs about language learning (Thohir, 2017; Yashima et al., 2004). For instance, students with high motivation are more likely to develop favourable beliefs about their language abilities, which in turn increases their WTC (Lee & Lee, 2020; MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011). Classroom environments that support autonomy and confidence-building activities have been shown to foster these positive interrelations, leading to greater participation in

communication tasks (Cao & Philp, 2006; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). Students feel safe to express themselves without fear of judgment (Dorman, 2002).

Achievement goal orientations mediate the relationship between classroom climate and student engagement by encouraging mastery-focused approaches that align with growth mindsets (Tao et al., 2024). Educators create environments where all learners thrive both linguistically and emotionally when they address these interconnected elements holistically, whether through teacher training programmes that emphasise empathy-building strategies or curriculum designs that prioritise mastery goals. Based on prior research indicating the importance of attitudes, motivation, and beliefs in language learning (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Gardner, 1985), the present study hypothesises that each of these factors will serve as significant predictors of WTC in EFL settings.

### **Method**

The cross-sectional survey involved the selection of 85 students from a population of 566 students in a state senior high school in Purbalingga city, Indonesia. Using Slovin's formula, a sample size of 85 students was determined. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure a diverse representation of students with varying levels of motivation, attitudes, and beliefs toward language learning. This approach was chosen to capture a broad spectrum of learner characteristics relevant to the study's objectives.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure four constructs: attitude, motivation, learners' beliefs, and WTC (Appendix). The instrument was grounded in established theoretical frameworks, including Gardner's (2005) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) for attitude, Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2009) Second Language Motivational Self System for motivation, and validated scales for beliefs and WTC (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). The questionnaire consisted of 40 items with 34 positively worded and six negatively worded to minimise response bias. All items were rated on a four-point Likert scale, with scoring reversed for negative statements.

A pilot study was conducted to assess validity and reliability. All items were found valid, and reliability coefficients for each construct were satisfactory: attitude (0.879), motivation (0.799), beliefs (0.715), and WTC (0.758).

Data collection involved administering the questionnaire to the selected participants. Responses were coded and entered into SPSS version 26.0 for analysis. The following steps were undertaken:

- (1) Screening and cleaning data for completeness and accuracy.
- (2) Testing regression assumptions (normality, linearity, and multicollinearity) to ensure the appropriateness of the analysis.
- (3) Conducting multiple linear regression to examine the predictive relationships between attitudes, motivation, beliefs, and WTC.
- (4) Hypothesis testing included:
  - a. t-tests for the significance of individual predictors,
  - b. F-test for overall model fit,

- c.  $R^2$  to determine the proportion of variance in WTC explained by the predictors.

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, assured of confidentiality, and provided informed consent prior to participation. Data were anonymised and securely stored to protect participants' privacy.

## Results

This study seeks to examine how learners' attitudes, motivation, and beliefs collectively influence their WTC in an EFL classroom setting.

To determine whether attitude, motivation, and beliefs collectively influence WTC, an F-test was performed, and Table 1 shows the results.

**Table 1**

*The Results of F-test*

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	460.931	3	153.644	14.098	0.000
Residual	882.764	81	10.898		
Total	1343.694	84			

The F-test results indicate that the independent variables (attitude, motivation, and beliefs) collectively have a significant effect on WTC ( $F = 14.098$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), confirming the overall model's significance. This suggests that although motivation and beliefs individually may not be statistically significant, their combined impact with attitude contributes significantly to WTC.

To determine the extent to which the independent variables explain the variance in WTC, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was examined. Table 2 shows the results of coefficient of determination.

**Table 2**

*The Results of Coefficient of Determination*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.586	0.343	0.319	3.301

The  $R^2$  value of 0.343 indicates that 34.3% of the variance in WTC is explained by the independent variables, while the remaining 65.7% is influenced by factors not included in this study. This suggests that learners' attitudes, motivation, and beliefs play an important role in WTC, but additional variables, such as self-confidence, cultural background, peer influence, and speaking anxiety, may also contribute significantly to students' WTC in an EFL classroom.

To determine the individual impact of each independent variable on WTC, multiple linear regression was conducted, and the results are shown in Table 3.



**Table 3***The Results of Multilinear Regression*

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	t-value	Sig.
(Constant)	5.968	3.015	-	1.979	0.051
Attitude	0.375	0.087	0.570	4.333	0.000
Motivation	0.006	0.094	0.009	0.065	0.948
Learners' Beliefs	0.186	0.104	0.162	1.780	0.079

The multiple linear regression analysis tested the combined and individual effects of learners' attitudes, motivation, and beliefs on their WTC in the EFL classroom. The overall model was significant ( $F = 14.098$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), explaining 34.3% of the variance in WTC ( $R^2 = 0.343$ ), confirming that these factors collectively influence WTC. Individually, attitude was the strongest and only significant predictor ( $\beta = 0.570$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that more positive attitudes lead to greater willingness to communicate. Motivation ( $\beta = 0.009$ ,  $p = 0.948$ ) and learners' beliefs ( $\beta = 0.162$ ,  $p = 0.079$ ) showed positive but non-significant effects, suggesting their influence may be indirect or context-dependent.

These results highlight the critical role of attitude in fostering communication readiness, while motivation and beliefs may interact with other psychological or environmental factors such as anxiety or self-confidence. On the other hand, the negligible effect of motivation on WTC is an unexpected finding. While motivation is often regarded as a fundamental factor in second language acquisition, its weak influence in this study may be attributed to contextual factors such as the type of motivation students have. For instance, students may be extrinsically motivated by grades or external rewards rather than intrinsically motivated by a personal desire to learn the language. This could explain why motivation alone does not significantly enhance WTC in the given context.

Similarly, while learners' beliefs about language learning show a positive effect on WTC, the lack of statistical significance suggests that beliefs alone may not be strong enough to directly influence students' willingness to communicate. However, beliefs could interact with other psychological and environmental factors, such as self-efficacy, language anxiety, and peer encouragement, to shape students' WTC more holistically.

The overall significance of the regression model ( $F = 14.098$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) supports the idea that attitude, motivation, and beliefs collectively influence WTC. The relatively modest  $R^2$  value (0.343) indicates that while these three variables are important, there are many other factors affecting students' willingness to communicate in English.

### Discussion

The present study investigated the impact of learners' attitudes, motivation, and beliefs on their WTC in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. The findings revealed that these three variables collectively explain 34.3% of the variance in WTC,

with attitude emerging as the most significant predictor. In contrast, motivation and beliefs, while positively correlated with WTC, did not show statistically significant individual effects. This discussion contextualizes these findings within existing literature and explores potential reasons for these outcomes.

### **The Predominant Role of Attitude in WTC**

The study's results on the critical influence of learners' attitudes on their WTC concurs with previous research indicating that positive attitudes towards language learning enhance communication willingness. For instance, MacIntyre et al. (1998) proposed that a favourable attitude reduces anxiety and increases self-confidence, thereby promoting WTC. Similarly, Dewaele and Pavelescu (2021) found that learners with positive emotions towards language learning are more inclined to communicate. These findings suggest that attitude functions as a catalyst, enabling learners to engage more readily in communicative practices.

The significance of attitude can be further understood through the lens of the socio-educational model, which posits that attitudes towards the learning situation and the language community influence motivation and, subsequently, WTC (Gardner, 2005). Positive attitudes likely lead to increased engagement, reduced apprehension, and a higher propensity to participate in communicative activities.

### **The Unexpected Insignificance of Motivation**

Contrary to widely held assumptions in second language acquisition research, motivation did not emerge as a significant individual predictor of WTC in this study. This finding challenges the traditional view that motivation is a primary driver of language learning behaviours (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). It is plausible that the type of motivation prevalent among the participants influenced the outcome. The insignificant role of motivation in this study suggests that the effect of motivation on WTC may be indirect, mediated by factors like anxiety and self-confidence (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Hence, without considering these mediators, its direct impact can appear weak.

### **Learners' Beliefs and Their Limited Direct Impact**

The study found that learners' beliefs about language learning had a positive but statistically insignificant effect on WTC. This finding suggests that while beliefs are important, they may not directly translate into a WTC. Previous research has shown that learners' beliefs about language learning can influence their strategy use, anxiety levels, and overall engagement (Horwitz, 2010). However, these beliefs might exert their influence on WTC indirectly.

For example, learners who believe that making mistakes is a natural part of language learning may experience lower anxiety, leading to higher WTC (Yan & Horwitz, 2008). Conversely, learners with perfectionist beliefs may fear negative evaluation, resulting in reduced WTC (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). Therefore, the

direct effect of beliefs on WTC may be overshadowed by their interaction with other affective factors.

Moreover, the cultural context of the learners could play a role in shaping their beliefs and, consequently, their WTC. In collectivist cultures, where group harmony and face-saving are emphasised, learners may be more apprehensive about speaking up, regardless of their personal beliefs about language learning (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). This cultural dimension might mitigate the direct impact of individual beliefs on WTC.

### **The Collective Influence of Attitude, Motivation, and Beliefs**

Despite the individual insignificance of motivation and beliefs, the collective influence of attitude, motivation, and beliefs on WTC was statistically significant, explaining 34.3% of the variance. This finding aligns with the heuristic model proposed by (MacIntyre et al., 1998), which posits that multiple interrelated factors contribute to WTC. The model suggests that while individual variables may have limited effects, their combined influence can substantially impact WTC.

The modest  $R^2$  value indicates that a considerable portion of the variance in WTC remains unexplained by the three variables studied. This underscores the complexity of WTC as a construct influenced by a myriad of factors, including but not limited to communication apprehension, perceived competence, personality traits, and situational variables (MacIntyre et al., 1998). For instance, Yashima (2009) introduced the concept of international posture, referring to one's interest in foreign affairs and openness to different cultures, as a significant predictor of WTC in the Japanese EFL context. Similarly, Cao and Philp (2006) highlighted the role of situational factors, such as topic familiarity and group size, in influencing learners' WTC.

### **Pedagogical Implications for Enhancing WTC in EFL Classrooms**

The findings of this study provide important insights for EFL educators seeking to enhance learners' WTC. Given the significant role of attitude, the limited direct effect of motivation and beliefs, and the collective influence of these variables on WTC, several pedagogical strategies can be implemented to foster a more communicative learning environment.

#### ***Creating a Positive Attitudinal Environment***

Since attitude is the most significant predictor of WTC, teachers should prioritise fostering positive attitudes toward English learning. This can be achieved through several strategies. First, incorporating meaningful and enjoyable language activities can help students associate English learning with positive experiences, ultimately improving their attitude toward using the language in class (Dewaele & Pavelescu, 2021). Second, reducing anxiety and promoting a supportive classroom environment can boost students' confidence and willingness to communicate in English (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Lastly, connecting language learning with students' personal interests

such as using authentic materials like music, movies, and real-world texts, can make English more relevant and engaging. By implementing these strategies, teachers can create a more conducive learning environment that encourages students to actively use English.

### ***Rethinking Motivation-Based Approaches***

Although motivation has a negligible direct impact on WTC, its indirect influence via other affective elements emphasises the need of a careful strategy for encouraging motivation. First, teachers should focus on the personal and cultural advantages of English learning instead of concentrating just on grades or test performance; this will help them to change from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation. Second, including self-determination techniques, that is giving students options in classroom activities and supporting autonomy in learning, can boost intrinsic drive and inspire more participation in communication (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013). By means of task-based and communicative language teaching approaches such as debates, role-plays, and problem-solving assignments, final motivation for learners can come from participatory, goal-oriented communication activities, therefore promoting both engagement and real language use. Teachers can build a more inspiring classroom by using these techniques, so indirectly supporting students' inclination to express themselves.

### ***Addressing Learners' Beliefs About Language Learning***

Although learners' beliefs did not have a substantial direct effect on WTC, they may still influence it indirectly through self-perception and fear. To remedy this, teachers might adopt many techniques. First, confronting negative or unrealistic ideas is vital, as many learners wrongly believe they must speak English properly before engaging, which raises anxiety (Horwitz, 2010). Teachers should emphasise that making mistakes is a natural and vital component of language development. Second, promoting a growth mindset can enable children to consider language competency as a skill that grows over time rather than an innate talent, letting them take greater chances in communication (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). Lastly, including reflective methods, such as self-assessment and personal reflection on language learning experiences, can help students alter their perceptions about their capacity to communicate effectively. By applying these tactics, teachers can support learners in building more positive and realistic ideas about their language ability, thus generating increased willingness to speak.

### ***Promoting WTC Through Classroom Activities***

Since WTC is influenced by several connected elements, teachers should establish interactive and contextually meaningful chances for communication. One useful technique is including pair and group talks, which provide a low-risk environment where students can practise using the language without fear of judgment. Additionally, individualised speaking assignments that allow students to discuss

familiar and personally relevant themes might boost interest and minimise fear (Cao & Philp, 2006). Furthermore, combining technology and digital platforms such as online discussions, video presentations, and interactive simulations can extend communication opportunities outside the classroom and generate more realistic language experiences (Yashima, 2009). Through these strategies, teachers can build a supportive and dynamic learning atmosphere that enables students to communicate more confidently in English.

### ***Recognising the Cultural and Contextual Influences on WTC***

In collectivist countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines, learners may be reluctant to speak up due to worries about maintaining community cohesion and saving face (Peng & Woodrow, 2010). To address this, teachers should advocate a change from teacher-centred to learner-centred approaches, allowing students to take a more active part in expressing their views in a supportive setting. Additionally, using peer support practices, such as collaborative learning, can assist lessen communication fear and develop a stronger readiness to communicate. By developing a classroom culture that emphasises participation and mutual support, teachers can help students feel more confident and comfortable engaging in spoken communication.

### **Conclusion**

The research highlights that positive attitudes, strong motivation, and constructive beliefs foster greater WTC in EFL classrooms, which directly impacts language development and classroom engagement. This study underscores the importance of fostering positive attitudes toward language learning to enhance students' WTC. While motivation and beliefs contribute to some extent, they may not be sufficient on their own to significantly impact WTC. For educators, understanding these factors offers practical pathways to improve outcomes: by cultivating a supportive and interactive environment, employing engaging instructional strategies, and addressing learners' emotional and psychological needs, teachers can significantly boost students' confidence and participation. Implementing activities that promote positive attitudes, reinforce motivation, and challenge negative beliefs can lead to more dynamic and communicative classrooms. Ultimately, a deeper understanding of WTC enables educators to design targeted interventions that not only enhance communicative competence but also create more inclusive, culturally responsive learning spaces.

Future research exploring additional factors like self-confidence and classroom climate will further equip teachers to foster sustained learner engagement across diverse contexts. Future research should also explore additional psychological and contextual variables, such as self-perceived competence, anxiety levels, classroom interaction, and the role of instructors in fostering a communicative environment.

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## Appendix

### The Framework of Questionnaire

Variable	Aspects	Items	No. items
EFL Students' Attitude (adapted from Gardner, 2005)	Cognitive	Studying English helps me communicate in English effectively.	1,2,3,4
		I wish I could speak English fluently.	
	Affective	In my opinion, English language is easy to learn.	5,6,7,8,9,10,11
		I am confident when with my performance in the English subject.	
		I enjoy to speak English at class.	
		I like pleasure in doing assignments for English speaking subject.	
	Behavior	I like to give opinions during English lessons.	12,13
		I enjoy the activities of our spoken using English in the class more than those of my other classes.	
		I have a strong desire to speak English.	
		I feel confident when to deliver my opinion in using English.	
Students' Motivation (adapted from Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009)	Ideal L2 Self	I feel enthusiastic to come to class when the English is being thought.	14,15,16,17
		I pay much attention when my English teacher is explaining the lesson.	
		I active speak English in English subject.	
		I can imagine myself speaking English as if I were a native speaker of English.	
	Ought-to L2 Self	I can imagine myself speaking English with international friends.	18,19,20,21
		Whenever I think of my future career, I imagine myself using English.	
		I can imagine myself participating in a debate in English	
		Speaking English is important to me in order to gain the approval of my peers/teachers/family.	
		I study English because close friends of mine think it is important.	
		I would like to feel easy in speaking	

Learners' Beliefs (adapted from Peng & Woodrow, 2010)	Learners' beliefs about classroom communication	English. Speaking English is important to me because other people will respect me more if I have the knowledge of English.	
		Learning Experience I really enjoy speaking English. I like the atmosphere of my English classes. I nervous when my teacher asked me a 22,23,24,25 question. My Classmates in my English class help me speak English better.	
		The student who always speaks up in class will be loathed by other classmates. The student who always speaks up in class is showing off his/her English proficiency. Students should speak up without being invited by the teacher. I learn by participating in communication activities in class.	26,27,28,29
		Learner beliefs about English Learning To understand English, it must be translated into Indonesian. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning grammar rules. In English classes, I prefer to have my teacher provide explanations in Indonesian.	30,31,32
WTC (adapted from Peng & Woodrow, 2010)	In Meaning-focused activities	I am willing to do a role-play standing in front of the class in English (e.g., ordering food in a restaurant). I am willing to give a short self-introduction without notes in English to the class. I am willing to translate a spoken utterance from Indonesian into English in my group.	33,34,35,36, 37
		I am willing to ask the teacher in English to repeat what he/she just said in English because I didn't understand. I am willing to do a role-play in English at my desk, with my peer (e.g., ordering food in a restaurant).	
		In form-focused I am willing to ask my peer sitting next to me in English the meaning of an	38,39,40

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activities      English word.

I am willing to ask my group mates in English how to pronounce a word in English.

I am willing to ask my peer sitting next to me in English how to say an English phrase to express the thoughts in my mind.

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# TEACHING INDONESIAN FOR FOREIGN SPEAKERS: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

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## ABSTRACT

The rising demand for *Bahasa Indonesia untuk Penutur Asing* (BIPA, Indonesian for Foreign Speakers) programmes reflects the global interest in mastering Indonesian for various purposes. This study explores trends, challenges, and opportunities in research related to teaching Indonesian to Foreign Speakers. This research uses bibliometric analysis by using data from the Scopus and Dimension databases. The number of articles used in the analysis is 92 from the Scopus database and 716 from Dimension. The keywords include “BIPA” OR “Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers” OR “Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers” OR “Indonesian for Foreign Speakers”. The analysis and visualisation were conducted using bibliometric tools (VOSviewer, Biblioshiny). The main findings include BIPA research trends by annual production and country, analysis of keywords and relevant articles, and examination of significant sources, authors, and affiliations in this field. This research analysis indicates an increasing interest in Indonesian language education among foreign speakers, as evidenced by the increasing annual production and international participation in BIPA research. However, challenges such as the gap between research output and impact highlight the importance of strategies to increase visibility and engagement within the academic community.

**Keywords:** Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA); bibliometric analysis; research trends; language education

## Introduction

In recent times, the importance of language education has grown exponentially, crossing geographical and cultural boundaries. This phenomenon relates to the interconnectedness of societies, economies, and communication platforms (Mettewie & Mensel, 2023; Porto & Houghton, 2021; Xue & Pan, 2012) that have increased the need for individuals to be proficient in multiple languages. As a result, language education is essential in promoting intercultural competence, fostering interaction, and bridging linguistic barriers in various contexts, from academia and business to diplomacy and tourism (Basilio et al., 2019; Wibowo et al., 2021; Zhang, 2020). Language education facilitates cross-cultural understanding, international collaboration, and global mobility. Besides, language education is crucial for effective communication in various contexts and opening doors to global opportunities, showing the value of teaching languages such as Indonesian (*Bahasa Indonesia*). The importance of Indonesian extends beyond national borders, as it has received official recognition as the language of the UNESCO General Conference during the plenary session convened on 20 November 2023.

In this case, Bahasa Indonesia holds an essential position as a language of immense cultural and economic significance, both within the context of its home country and on the international stage (Ediwarman, 2022). In cultural terms, Bahasa Indonesia serves as a medium for expressing Indonesia's rich heritage, traditions, and social values and fostering a sense of identity and belonging among its speakers (Muslim & Brown, 2016). Economically, Bahasa Indonesia is essential as the language of commerce, diplomacy, and tourism, facilitating business transactions, international relations, and cultural exchange across borders (Saddhono et al., 2024; Wibowo et al., 2021). Its status as an official language in Indonesia, a densely populated and economically dynamic country, further emphasises the importance of the Indonesian language in various fields, from education, media, and government to industry.

Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (*Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing [BIPA]*) was set up to address the needs of foreign speakers in using the Indonesian language. As it not only enriches language diversity but also increases opportunities for cultural exchange and mutual understanding on a global scale. *BIPA* programme is presently under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, and it assists teachers in expanding their skills in teaching Indonesian to foreign speakers (Rahmanu et al., 2023). According to Muliastuti et al. (2023), approximately 45 nations have integrated Indonesian language instruction into their educational systems for both students and university-level learners. This information is subject to fluctuations over time. Solikhah & Budiharso (2020) stated that 219 universities across 78 countries incorporate Bahasa Indonesia into their curriculum for non-native speakers.

The rising demand for BIPA programmes reflects the global interest in mastering languages for various purposes. For example, students, especially those with academic or research interests in Indonesia or Southeast Asia, seek BIPA programmes to improve their language skills and cultural understanding (Saddhono et al., 2024; Solikhah & Budiharso,

2020). Then, professionals, including business executives, diplomats, and government officials, recognise the strategic advantages of Indonesian language proficiency for effective communication and collaboration in the Indonesian market or diplomatic engagements (Amani & Yuly, 2019; Ediwarman, 2022; Muslim & Brown, 2016). Additionally, tourists and cultural enthusiasts are attracted to BIPA programmes to enrich their travel experiences, interact with local communities, and deepen their appreciation of Indonesia's diverse cultural heritage (Wibowo et al., 2021).

Nonetheless, there are several challenges in teaching BIPA for teachers (Ningsih et al., 2018; Rahmat et al., 2024; Tiawati et al., 2023). The linguistic complexities arise from complicated grammar, diverse vocabulary, and pronunciation nuances, which require teachers to design comprehensive language programmes that can address these complexities. In addition, BIPA learners must understand the cultural norms, etiquette, and social context embedded in language use. Adapting pedagogical strategies to accommodate the needs of learners with various proficiency levels, learning styles, and cultural backgrounds poses significant challenges. The effective teaching of BIPA involves developing inclusive and engaging teaching methods that encourage language acquisition while promoting cultural understanding and communicative competence among learners.

Introducing bibliometric analysis in the context of BIPA research literature is crucial to understanding trends and areas that require further exploration. Bibliometric analysis involves quantitative methods to analyse publications, citations, authors, and keywords in a specific research domain, which provides information about research trends, influential works, and gaps in the existing literature. Therefore, this study aims to explore trends, challenges, and opportunities in BIPA using bibliometric analysis.

## **Methodology**

Due to the relatively limited number of articles on BIPA published in Scopus, this study used data from the Scopus and Dimension databases. The Dimension database, which includes nationally indexed articles, was included to find the national trend.

Search limitations were made on specific keywords. Within the Scopus database, the keywords applied include *"BIPA" OR "Bahasa Indonesia Bagi Penutur Asing" OR "Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers" OR "Indonesian for Foreign Speakers"*. The subject area of this research was also focused on *"Social Sciences"* and *"Arts and Humanities"*. The source type was limited to English-language journal articles. The exact keywords are also used to search the data. However, there are differences in the field of research; this search is limited to journal articles in the fields of *"Language, communication, and culture"*, *"Language studies"*, *"Linguistics"*, *"curriculum and pedagogy"*, and *"education"*. It is conducted due to differences in file sorting based on subject area in Scopus and dimension. Table 1 shows the main information of data sources from Scopus and dimension database.

**Table 1**

*The Main Information of Data Sources from Scopus and Dimension Database (Through Biblioshiny)*

Description	Scopus	Dimension
<b>MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT DATA</b>		
Timespan	2013-2024	2013:2024
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	60	433
Documents	92	716
Annual Growth Rate %	4.74	39.52
Document Average Age	4.23	3.07
Average citations per doc	3.685	1.485
References	2924	5123
<b>DOCUMENT CONTENTS</b>		
Keywords Plus (ID)	199	1
Author's Keywords (DE)	286	1
<b>AUTHORS</b>		
Authors	260	1476
Authors of single-authored docs	14	188
<b>AUTHORS COLLABORATION</b>		
Single-authored docs	15	198
Co-Authors per Doc	3.14	2.48
International co-authorships %	25	4.19
<b>DOCUMENT TYPES</b>		
article	66	716
book chapter	2	
conference paper	19	
conference review	3	
Review	2	

Table 1 shows a considerable difference between the articles in the Scopus and Dimension databases. After screening with these criteria, the number of articles used in the analysis from the Scopus database is 92. At the same time, the number of articles used after limiting the criteria from Dimension is 716.

Next, analysis and visualisation were conducted using bibliometric tools (VOSviewer, Biblioshiny) (Logatti & Nazareth, 2022) and Microsoft Excel to provide an overview of the research landscape and facilitate insights into BIPA education.

## Results and Discussion

The results and discussion section addresses the trends of BIPA research based on annual production and countries, the most relevant keywords and articles, and the most relevant source, authors, and affiliations.

### The Trends of BIPA Research Based on Annual Production and Countries

This study examines the quantitative aspect of BIPA research by looking at the annual output of scientific articles related to BIPA. The analysis revealed an emerging pattern of the growing importance and attention paid to Indonesian teaching and learning among non-native speakers. The data of annual production trends are shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Annual Publication Output on BIPA Research: (a) Dimension Database, (b) Scopus Database*

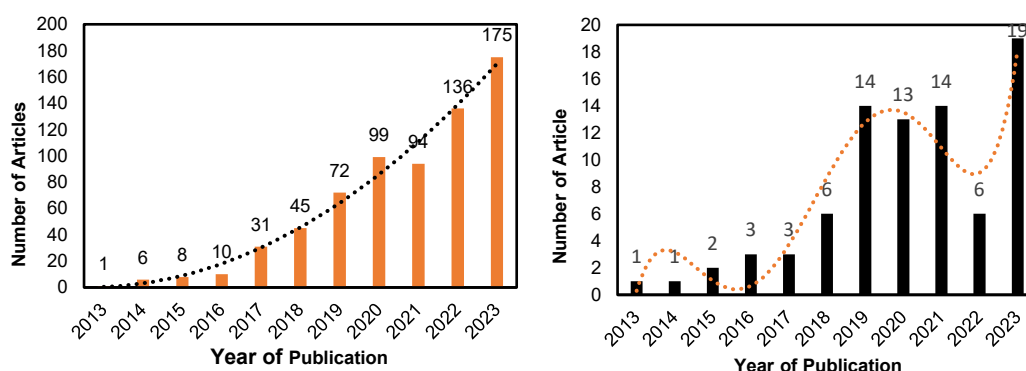


Figure 1 shows the annual publication results BIPA research from Dimension and Scopus databases. In the Dimension data, the number of publications shows a consistent upward trend, from one article in 2013 to 175 articles in 2023, with noticeable growth from 2017 onwards despite a slight decline in 2021. In contrast, Scopus data shows a slower initial growth, with six articles in 2018 and a gradual increase to 19 articles in 2023, indicating fluctuations in the number of publications. This finding shows that the Dimension database has an increasing and consistent growth in BIPA research publications compared to Scopus.

Based on the trends in Figure 2, it is recommended to consider Dimension as the central database to access the latest BIPA research publications. Moreover, it is suggested that future researchers focus on publishing more research related to BIPA in Scopus to enrich the knowledge and discourse in the field.

Next, the geographical distribution of publications to identify the top contributing countries in this field is examined to determine the origins of these scholarly contributions

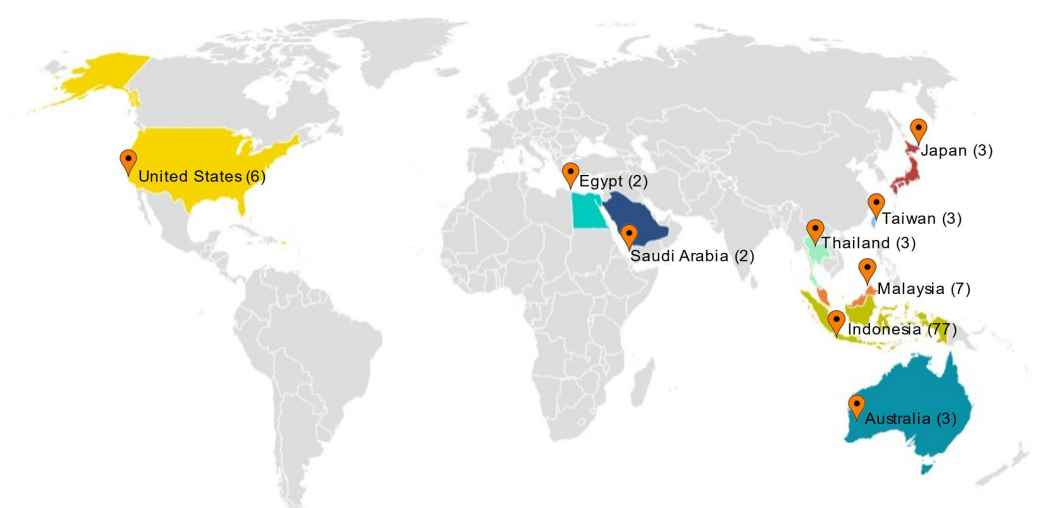


to understand the global landscape of BIPA studies and the varying levels of interest and engagement in different regions. The findings are helpful to understand the international impact and reach of BIPA research. Figure 2 shows that most BIPA research contributions come from the Asian continent. Indonesia leads significantly with 77 documents, followed by Malaysia with seven documents. The United States published six documents showing global involvement in BIPA research. In addition, Asian countries also contribute to BIPA research publications, indicating the position of BIPA research across the region.

**Figure 2**

*Geographic Distribution of BIPA Research Publications: Top Countries*

*Source: Scopus Database*



In addition to geographical contributions, the impact of BIPA research is described based on the number of citations and total link strength per country. Table 2 shows the impact of BIPA research by citation rate and link strength across countries. The United States stands out with 574 citations and 16 total links. It shows that the United States has a strong influence and involvement in BIPA-related research. In contrast, countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Australia have lower citations and link strength, and have a minor impact or visibility of BIPA research efforts.

Even worse, despite being the country with the highest number of documents in BIPA research, Indonesia was found to show a relatively lower impact in terms of citations and total link strength, with 399 documents but only five citations and no total links. This finding suggests that a large quantity of research output does not necessarily lead to high impact or visibility within the academic community. Further research on factors that influence citation and linkage rates are needed to improve the dissemination and recognition of Indonesian BIPA research on a global scale.

**Table 2***The impact of BIPA Research: Citations and Link Strength*

Country	Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
United States	9	574	16
Thailand	4	69	0
Spain	4	1	5
South Korea	3	19	5
Malaysia	6	12	0
Japan	4	7	2
Indonesia	399	5	0
Germany	3	2	3
China	7	1	1
Bangladesh	3	27	1
Australia	4	0	1

**The Trends of BIPA Research Based on The Most Relevant Keywords and Articles**

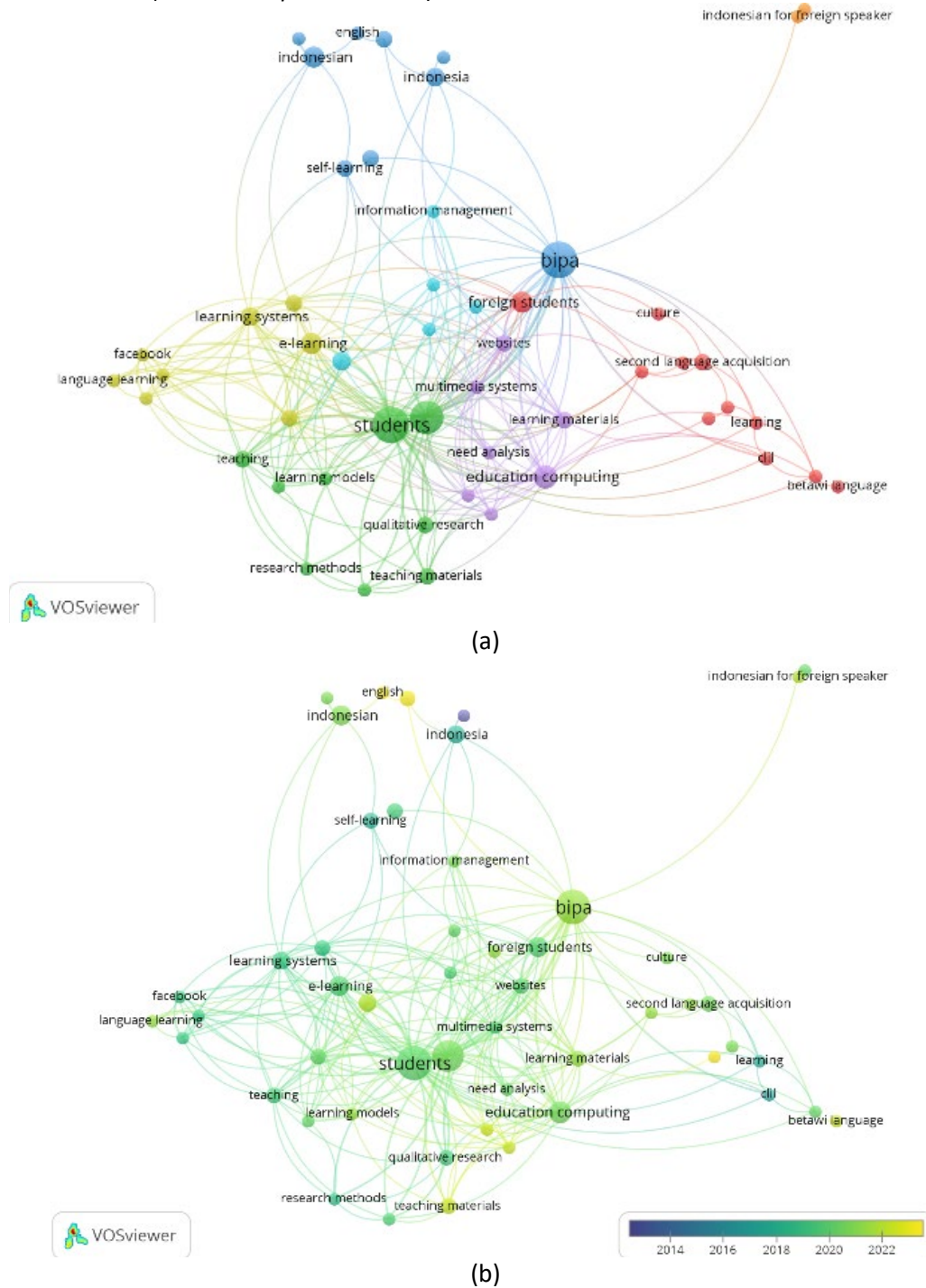
BIPA research was also reviewed based on the most relevant keywords and articles. This aims to uncover key themes, challenges, and advancements in BIPA research. In addition, it identifies future directions and areas that can be further explored in BIPA education. The keyword visualisation in Figure 3(a) reflects the diversity and complexity of research in BIPA, which includes linguistic aspects such as interlanguage, interference, and language acquisition, and the use of technology such as e-learning, computer-aided instruction, and multimedia systems in language learning. All of these show the variety of approaches and methods used in understanding, teaching, and learning Indonesian.

In addition, social and cultural issues such as interculturality, Indonesian folklore, and social media are also of concern in language learning. There is a need for more research on developing more effective and adaptive methods, strategies, and curricula for learning Indonesian so that foreign speakers can meet the needs of the times. Some topics that can be investigated are language learning for specific purposes, the effectiveness of project-based learning methods, learning strategies in multicultural contexts, and analysis of language education needs for foreign speakers in Indonesia.

The overlay visualisation analysis also shows that learning materials and e-learning-related topics are also significant areas of BIPA research. The development of e-learning has become an increasingly important aspect in modern educational contexts, especially with the shift towards more widespread online learning. In the context of BIPA, e-learning offers the potential to increase the accessibility of learning, widen the reach of students, and provide a more interactive and up-to-date learning experience. This is particularly relevant given the changing global learning trends and the demand for technological adaptation in the educational process. Therefore, more in-depth studies should be conducted on using e-learning in BIPA.

**Figure 3**

*The Visualisation of Keywords Related to BIPA Research (a) Network, (b) Overlay Visualisation (Source: Scopus Database)*

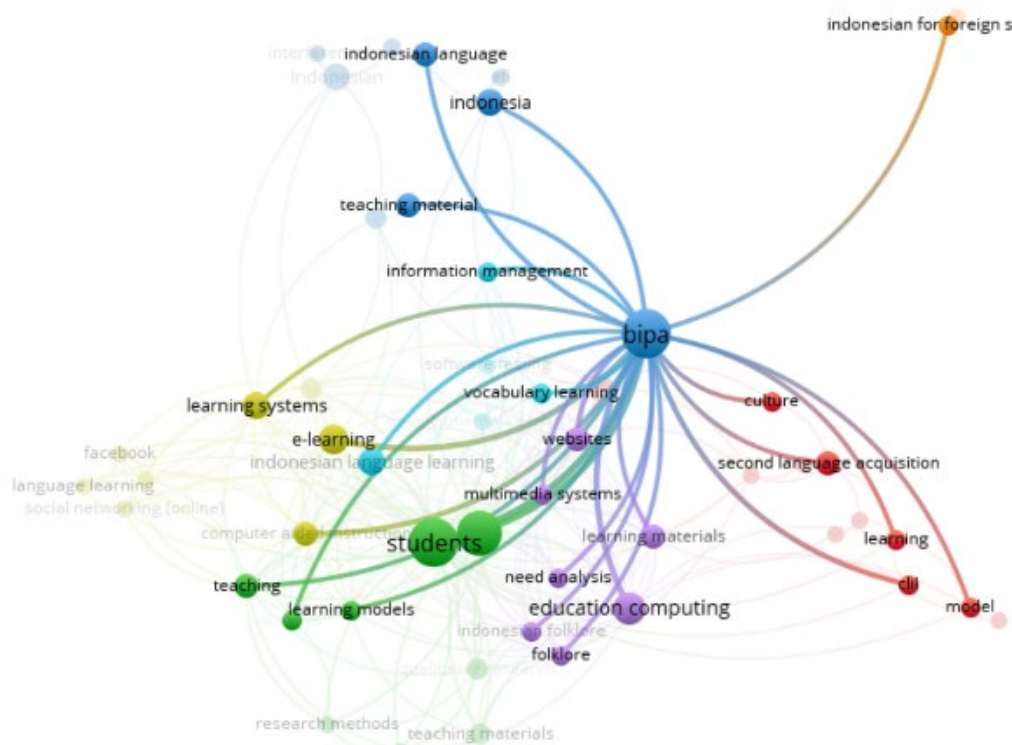


Furthermore, focusing on BIPA keywords in keyword visualisation is beneficial in identifying research gaps that have yet to be extensively explored. Figure 4 shows a visual analysis of BIPA research through (a) thematic mapping and (b) temporal mapping. In Figure 4(a), although the keyword “BIPA” has a strong relationship with terms such as “foreign students” and “second language acquisition”, it is not directly linked to “teaching materials” and “social networks”, indicating that these areas are still under-explored in the context of BIPA. These are good opportunities for future research.

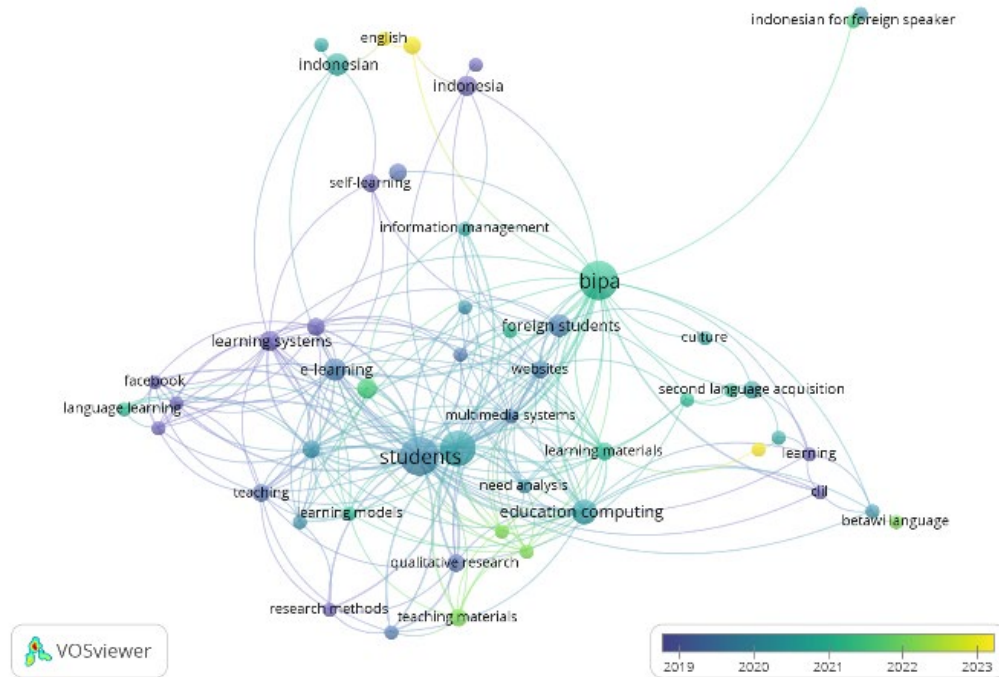
Additionally, Figure 4(b) shows the trend of research topics over the past five years. Darker colours in the overlay visualisation show older research, while brighter colours show newer research. “Teaching materials” has received increasing research attention in recent years, as indicated by the yellow colour, and this area will continue to grow in importance.

### Figure 4

**Keywords** Gap Analysis (a) and The Latest Trends Topics in BIPA Research (b) (Source: Scopus Database)



(a)



(b)

This study also analysed the 10 most relevant articles related to BIPA based on author, title, year of publication, and source title. This review aims to pinpoint significant contributions and key themes in BIPA research. Table 3 shows the most relevant articles to BIPA research in the Scopus database. These articles cover a wide range of topics, including the development of web-based language proficiency tests, analysis of phonetic errors and patterns in BIPA pronunciation by foreign speakers, information literacy of international students studying BIPA, design of web-based BIPA placement test instruments, use of Kaskus applications as alternative learning media, development of FonBi applications for phonetic transcription, implementation of virtual reality technology in learning materials, web design for distance learning, development of mobile applications in BIPA learning, and use of corpus linguistics in vocabulary teaching. These articles showcase trends and innovations in learning and teaching Indonesian to non-native speakers.

Based on these findings, it is recommended for future research to explore the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) technology in BIPA learning, further exploration of the potential of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) in language learning experiences, multicultural-based curriculum development, hybrid learning evaluation (online and offline), analysis of social media usage, research on game-based learning methods, and specialised learning strategies for specific professions and purposes in the BIPA context.

**Table 3***The Most Relevant Article Related to BIPA (Source: Scopus Database)*

Authors	Title	Year	Source title
(Oktriono, 2019)	UKBI: Experimental development of web-based Indonesian language proficiency test for foreign speakers	2019	Journal of Physics: Conference Series
(Salamah & Setiawati, 2024)	Articulatory phonetic errors and patterns in Thai BIPA speakers: A study at SWM School Thailand	2024	Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics
(Oktaviani & Rachman, 2018)	Information literacy of international student, Indonesian as Foreign Language (IFL), in Indonesia	2018	Library Philosophy and Practice
(Boeriswati et al., 2023)	Web-Based Design of BIPA Placement Test Instrument for Foreign Speakers	2023	International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research
Arvianto F.	Kaskus Smilies Application as an Alternative Instructional Media in BIPA (Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers) Teaching	2020	Journal of Physics: Conference Series
(Nursaid et al., 2024)	Development of FonBi Application: A Phonetic Transcription Tool Assisted by Artificial Intelligence for Indonesian Language	2024	International Journal of Information and Education Technology
(Rahmanu et al., 2023)	Investigating the Implementation of Multimodality and Spherical Video-Based Immersive Virtual Reality in the Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers' Learning Materials	2023	Theory and Practice in Language Studies
(Maulana et al., 2020)	Web design for distance learning Indonesian language BIPA	2020	Proceedings of 2020 International Conference on Information Management and Technology, ICIMTech 2020
(Seri & Sutrisno, 2021)	Design and Development of Mobile Application in Indonesian Language Learning for Foreign Speakers Level A1	2021	Journal of Physics: Conference Series

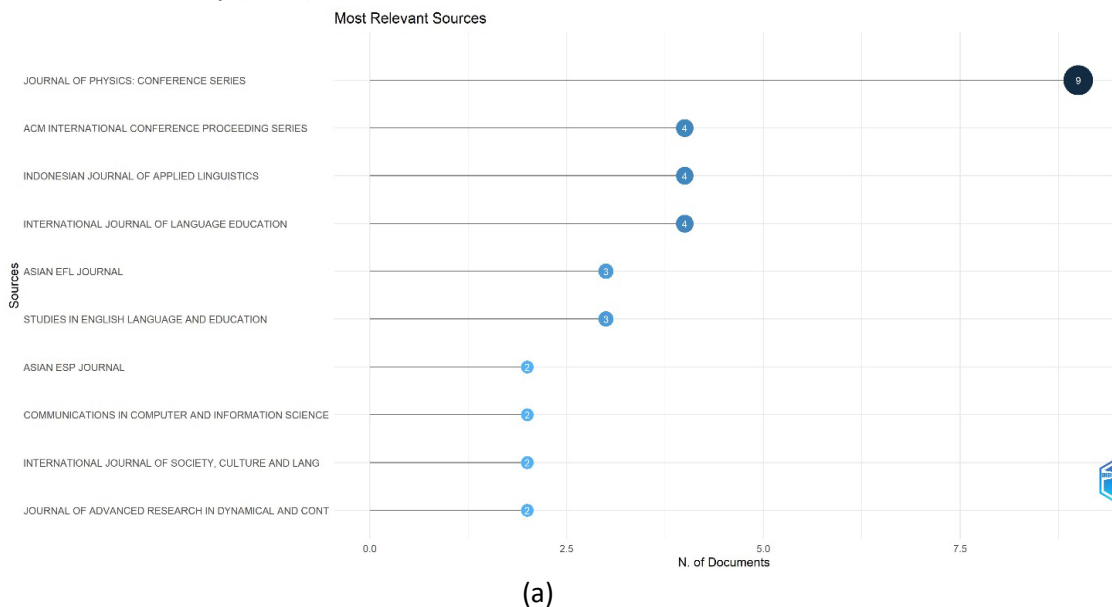
(Saddhono et al., 2023)	Corpus Linguistics Use in Vocabulary Teaching Principle and Technique Application: A Study of Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers	2023	International Journal of Society, Culture and Language
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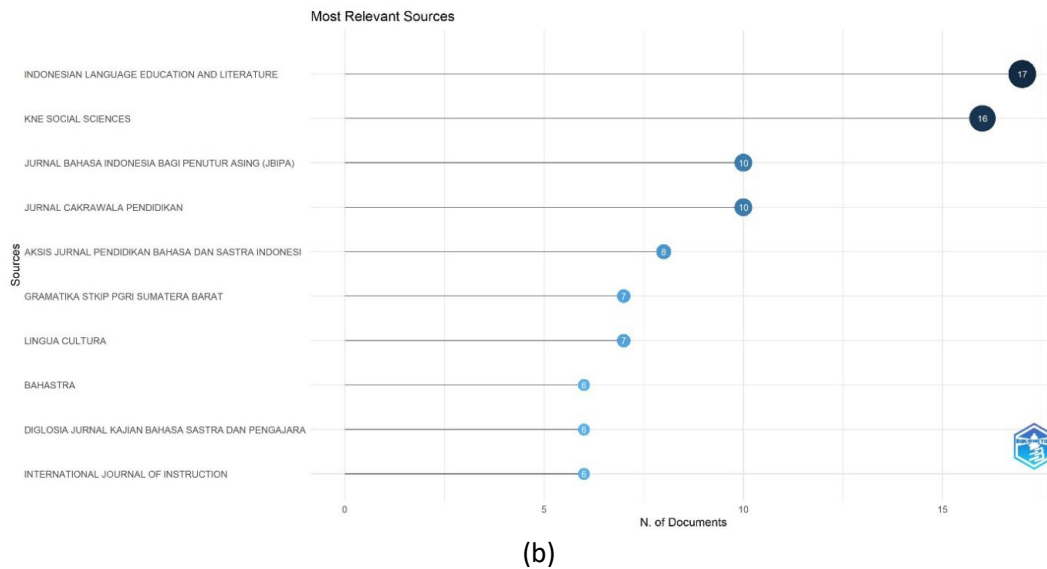
### Trends of BIPA Research Based on The Most Relevant Source, Authors and affiliations

Trends in BIPA research were also assessed based on the most relevant sources and authors. It aims to show the variation between data from Scopus and Dimension. Figure 5(a) shows that the sources and authors of BIPA research published in Scopus. “The Journal of Physics: Conference Series” and “The ACM International Conference Proceeding Series” are the main sources with the highest contribution of articles. This finding shows a focus on international conferences and events. Figure 5(b) shows that the sources and authors of BIPA research published in Dimension. In the national database, there is a diversity of relevant sources, including journals such as “Indonesian Language Education and Literature” and “KNE Social Sciences”, with a publication focus on language education and social sciences. These differences suggest a variety of research interests and methodological approaches in understanding and developing the field of BIPA.

**Figure 5**

*Trends in BIPA Research Based on Relevant Source, (a) Scopus, (b) Dimension*  
Source: Biblioshiny (2024)





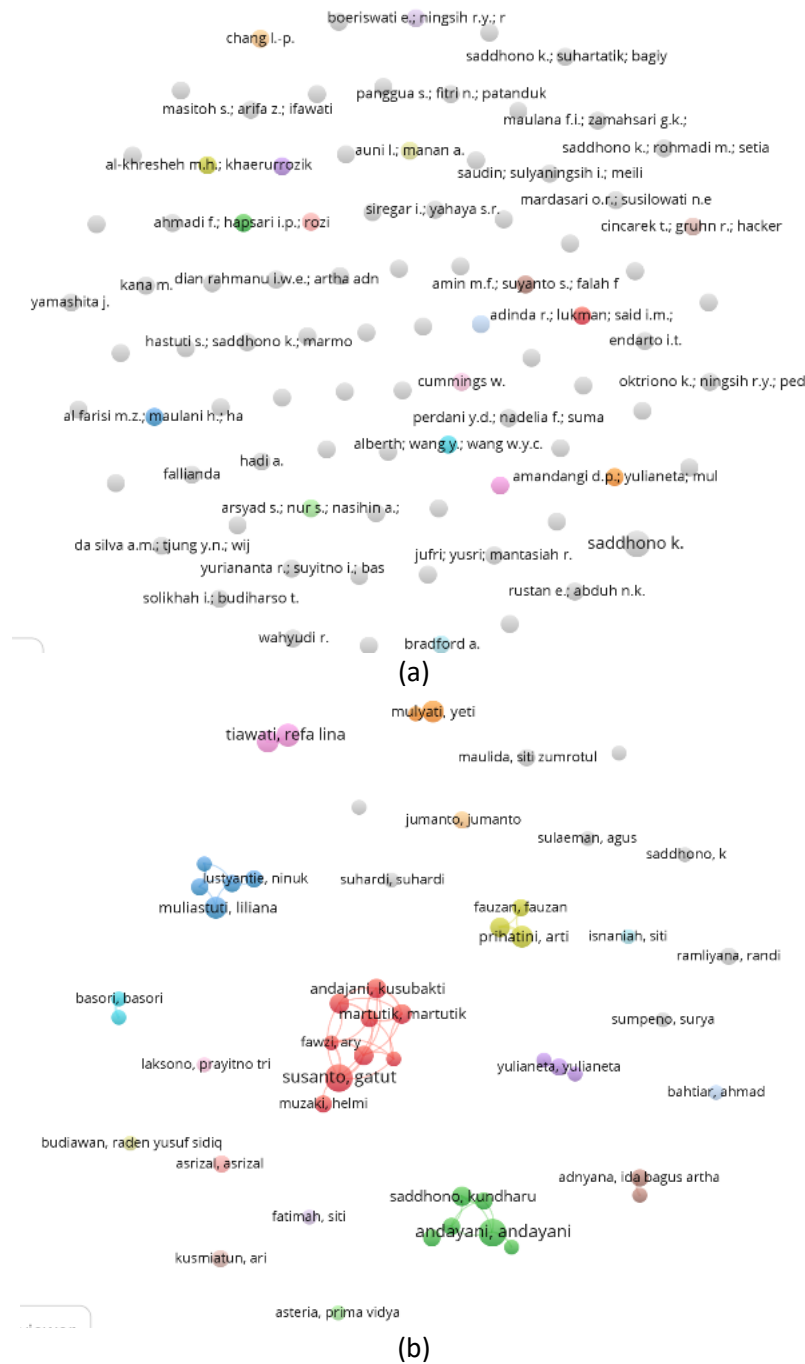
In addition, BIPA Research Trends Based on Relevant Authors was examined using data from the Scopus and Dimension databases. The results show that both databases do not show a significant number of authors who contribute substantially to BIPA research (see Figure 6). These findings suggest that there is still much room for exploration and contribution from authors in the field of BIPA. The limited number of prominent authors suggests that there is a need for more comprehensive and diverse research efforts to further advance the understanding and development of BIPA education.

The trends in BIPA research were also assessed based on the most relevant sources and authors, aiming to demonstrate the variation between data from Scopus and Dimension. The Scopus data reveals that 'The Journal of Physics: Conference Series' and 'The ACM International Conference Proceeding Series' are the main sources, contributing significantly to the field. This finding indicates a focus on international conferences and events. In contrast, the data from Dimension highlights a diverse range of relevant sources, including journals such as "Indonesian Language Education and Literature" and "KNE Social Sciences", with a publication focus on language education and social sciences. These differences suggest a variety of research interests and underline the breadth of the field of BIPA, encompassing diverse areas of study.



**Figure 6**

*Trends in BIPA Research Based on Relevant Authors, (a) Scopus, (b) Dimension*  
 Source: Vosviewer (2024)



**Table 4**

*Trends in BIPA Research Based on Co-authorship Organization from Scopus (Source: Vosviewer)*

Organization	Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia	4	20	2
Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia	4	8	9
Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia	3	2	12
Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia	3	5	14
Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia	2	3	4
Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia	2	2	2
Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia	2	3	5
Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia	2	0	5
Yale University, United States	2	1	8
Akademi Komunitas Negeri Aceh Barat, Indonesia	1	0	2

**Table 5**

*Trends in BIPA Research Based on Co-authorship Organization from Dimension*

Organization	Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
Yogyakarta State University	26	52	4
Indonesia University of Education	25	49	6
Sebelas Maret University	24	48	0
State University of Jakarta	22	28	4
State University of Malang	21	28	9
Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang	12	9	0
State University of Padang	11	48	1
State University of Surabaya	10	6	0
State University of Semarang	9	17	1
Udayana University	9	4	0

Based on the findings of the BIPA research trends, there are still challenges and opportunities in BIPA research. The geographical distribution of BIPA research publications emphasises the critical role of Indonesia as the leader of research publications in this field, with a considerable number of research documents. However, the discrepancy between the high production of research documents and the relatively lower citation rates, even within Indonesia, suggests a potential gap between research output and impact. This disparity underscores the pressing need for strategies to amplify the visibility and influence of BIPA research on a global scale.

Keyword analysis of research gaps revealed important thematic areas requiring further BIPA research exploration. The variety of keywords reflects the diverse nature of

BIPA education, which includes linguistic, technological, social, and cultural dimensions. There is limited research on teaching materials and research methods on social networking in BIPA. This indicates opportunities for future research to address emerging challenges and improve pedagogical practices in teaching Indonesian to non-native speakers.

Then, from the analysis of BIPA research trends by source, author, and organization, it can be concluded that Indonesian institutions dominate in producing BIPA research documents geographically. However, the disparity between high production rates and relatively low citation rates in some regions, including Indonesia, hints at the need for strategies to increase the visibility and impact of BIPA research globally. This could involve inter-institutional collaboration, promoting multilingual publications, and knowledge dissemination activities to bridge the gap between research output and impact.

### **Conclusion**

This research demonstrates the critical need for bibliometric exploration in BIPA research, as it highlights key trends and areas of development. The main findings of this study include BIPA research trends by annual production and country, analysis of keywords and relevant articles, and examination of significant sources, authors, and affiliations in this field. This research analysis indicates an increasing interest in Indonesian language education among foreign speakers, as evidenced by the increasing annual production and international participation in BIPA research.

However, challenges such as the gap between research output and impact highlight the importance of strategies to increase visibility and engagement within the academic community. Although this study contributes to identifying trends in BIPA research, one of its limitations lies in its reliance on bibliometric analysis, which primarily focuses on the co-occurrence of keywords and publication metadata and does not delve into the full content of the articles used in this study. Only a few of the most relevant articles were analysed in depth. As a result, this study has not analysed theoretical frameworks, pedagogical models, or context-specific challenges presented in the research articles. Future research could complement bibliometric findings with content analysis or qualitative reviews to provide a more comprehensive understanding of developments in BIPA education.

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# **THE INTERNATIONALITY IMAGE OF THE MALAY LANGUAGE THROUGH THE EXISTENCE OF ARABO, SINO-TIBETAN AND DRAVIDIAN PERIPHERAL LEXIS IN THE MALAY LANGUAGE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Arabo, Sino-Tibetan, and Dravidian peripheral lexis can demonstrate the internationality of the Malay language, establishing it as one of the world's most critical languages. One can research it through the history of the inclusion of non-Austronesian languages, such as the assimilation of Arabic from the Semitic language family, the assimilation of Chinese lexis, which is in the branch of the Sino-Tibetan family and Tamil language in the Dravidian language family, which is used as Malay lexis. The approach used in this study involves conducting a literature review and performing content analysis that is described in the basic descriptive. In this analysis, the researchers verified a lot of assimilated lexis, especially from non-Austronesian languages such as Arabic, Sino-Tibetan and Dravidian, used in spoken and written Malay adapted according to the Malay language. Accordingly, it verified that the non-Austronesian lexicons have been assimilated and adapted as Malay lexicons. Hence, this assimilation of Arabo, Sino-Tibetan and Dravidian lexis authenticated the internationality image of the Malay language, in which, through the assimilation of the foreign lexis, it recognised Malay to be the dominant language, the language of diplomacy, and global knowledge.

**Keywords:** lexis; language flexibility; assimilation; internationality; the Malay language

## **Introduction**

Peripheral lexis is an additional vocabulary that comes from different language families. According to Abdullah (2013), peripheral, in linguistic terms, is an auxiliary lexicon that enriches the primary language's vocabulary. Generally, peripheral lexis results from a clash of languages between societies of different races or civilisations. Socio-economic and socio-political needs and the survival of a civilisation cause the clash. These needs encourage a civilisation to migrate by establishing economic and political relations with other regions. Thus, a clash of languages occurs that ends with the result of peripheral lexis or additional vocabulary. Through communication, language clashes occur between different language families, causing a language to be quickly assimilated into another language (Rahman, 2007).

The Malay language has many assimilated lexis, especially from the Arabo (Arabic), Sino-Tibetan (Chinese), and Dravidian (Tamil) language families. This is related to the history of Malaya, where this region has established economic and political relations with the empires of China and India and Islamic traders from the Arab land since the beginning and even before the Malacca Sultanate empire. This makes the use of the languages clash, and the borrowing of languages occurs extensively. Furthermore, when the Straits of Malacca became the focus of trade stopovers in the eyes of the world, Malay was used as a lingua franca or tongue language, which is the spoken language for trading in the Straits of Malacca (Abdullah & Abdullah, 2018; Mulyani & Noor, 2018).

How can the loanwords of Arabo (Arabic), Sino-Tibetan (Chinese), and Dravidian (Tamil) be explained, as well as further expand the vocabulary of the Malay language as one of the main languages in the world? This study proved to the world that the assimilation of foreign lexis into the Malay language verified the flexibility of the Malay language, which could assimilate not only with the Indo-European, Sino-Tibetan, Dravidian language family but also with the Semitic language family even though the family of these languages is starkly different from in terms of lexical structure and sentence structure as well as grammar with the Malay group (Dahaman, 1990).

This research examines the phenomenon of cultural interactions particularly those involving the Arab, Chinese, and Indian communities and the Malay community that have contributed to the assimilation of Arabic, Sino-Tibetan, and Dravidian lexis into the Malay language. The study specifically focuses on the integration and characteristics of peripheral lexis from these language families, aiming to enhance understanding of how Arabo, Sino-Tibetan, and Dravidian elements have been incorporated at the margins of the Malay lexicon. The study further clarifies the concept of peripheral lexis as it has evolved in the Malaynesia archipelago since, or prior to, the Malacca Malay Sultanate. It systematically catalogues the assimilated lexical elements present in Malay, highlighting changes in spelling, pronunciation, and phonemic structure. Through this analysis, the research highlights the shifts in assimilated lexis and their linguistic implications within spoken Malay.



## Literature Review

In this analysis, the researchers referred to multiple relevant sources to produce findings on the Internationality Image of the Malay Language Through the Assimilation of Arabo, Sino-Tibetan and Dravidian Peripheral Lexis. The researchers completed the research by listing the lexicons assimilated from Arabo (Arabic), Sino-Tibetan (Chinese) and Dravidian (Tamil) in which the researchers only listed the lexicon when it was available in the *Kamus Dewan* (2007).

In Jones' book *Loan-Words In Indonesian and Malay*, published in 2008, there is a study on the list of loanwords from Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Hindi, Tamil, Chinese, European languages, and Japanese languages assimilated into Malay and Indonesian. Instead of categorising the loaned lexicons of the languages according to their source language, Jones lists them alphabetically. Furthermore, readers may need clarification due to the loan lexis intermingled between Malay and Indonesian.

There are still differences in Malay and Indonesian vocabulary usage despite coming from the same language family. As per Eswary and Aman's (2014) findings, the Malay language employs metaphors to depict reality and lexical terms with analogies to represent the essence of a word that cannot be explained concretely. Conversely, when referring to a concept or object in question, Indonesians tend to demonstrate and adopt lexical meaning through adaptation, depending on assimilation from the source language (Eswary & Aman, 2014). Consequently, it is essential to cite *Kamus Dewan* (2007) to persuade readers that those assimilated lexis exist in the Malay language.

A book by Mohamed and Subramaniam (2015) titled *Kata Pinjaman Bahasa Tamil dalam Bahasa Melayu* reviews, identifies, and prepares a list of Tamil loanwords in Malay. The discussion in this book aims to unravel and analyse the integration process of the loaned vocabulary from phonology, morphology, and semantic aspects. However, Mohamed and Subramaniam (2015) examined a variety of vocabulary terms that the Malay community no longer uses in speech or writing. Some lexis are listed as loaned lexis from Tamil that are not found in *Kamus Dewan* (2007). For example, in the Tamil language, some of the lexis listed from the reading source as assimilated lexis into the Malay language, such as *appaḷam* (appalam), *attan* (atan), *karaṭu* (keratu), *koolaṭṭam* (karupilai), and *koolaṭṭam* (kolattam), were not available in the *Kamus Dewan* (2007). In this study, the selection of specific lexis is emphasised in terms of the status of their use in speech and writing in Malay. This is to avoid confusion and ambiguity in the meaning of the loan lexis. In an attempt to make Malay a language of knowledge through peripheral lexis, it is necessary to highlight lexis that are common or still actively used in speech and writing.

The researchers also referenced the book *Chinese Loan-Words in Malay and Indonesian: A Background Study*, written by Jones (2009). This book highlighted various variants of the Chinese language that have been assimilated into Malay. In addition, Jones also explained clearly and in detail the history of the origin of lexis according to the Chinese variants but does not highlight the linguistic changes in the lexicon when assimilated into the Malay language. It is essential to highlight the changes in linguistic elements in the lexis that are assimilated into a language. Such discussions are critical to making language-borrowing research more straightforward

to understand. Meanwhile, Phong's (2015) investigation, in his article titled *Perubahan Leksis Kata Pinjaman Cina Dalam Bahasa Melayu*, underscores the analysis of Chinese lexis used in Malay. Phong (2015) focuses on changes in lexis from the perspective of morphology (form) and semantics (meaning). He examined the changes in lexis by identifying how much the Chinese language has evolved in Malay speech. In other words, Phong examines the expansion and narrowing of the meaning of some Chinese lexis that have been assimilated into Malay. In the present study, the researchers did not emphasise the morphology and semantic lexis assimilated from the Chinese language. The researchers have chosen a simpler approach: to examine the changes in the phonemes and sounds of the Chinese lexis when assimilated into the Malay lexis.

Next, the researchers also referred to a book written by Hadi (2015) entitled *Kata-Kata Arab Dalam Bahasa Indonesia*. Hadi studied phonology, morphology, semantics, synonyms, antonyms, polysemes and homography on the lexis of the Arabic language assimilated into the Indonesian language. Hadi studied the structure of sounds, forms, and spelling of Malay and Indonesian language. Therefore, researchers have used this book as a guide to analyse linguistic changes, especially Arabic lexicons. However, the list of loanwords from Arabic in this book has been filtered because not all of the vocabulary used in Indonesian can be used in Malay.

In this manuscript, the researchers also referred to the related studies, particularly those on the adaptation of various terms, such as loanwords and assimilated words to illustrate the phenomenon of language clash, especially between Malay and other languages. For example, reference was made to studies such as *Indo-European, Semitic, Sino-Tibetan and Dravidian Vocabulary in the Internationalisation of Malay as the Main World Language in Malaynesia* (Abdullah & Abdullah, 2018), and *Indo Peripheral Lexis -Arabo-Euro in the Internationalisation of the Malay Language in the Archipelago* (Abdullah & Damit, 2018). These investigations examine the internationality of the Malay language by reviewing the history of including non-Austronesian lexis, such as the assimilation of Arabic, Chinese and Tamil lexis that are used as Malay lexis. Abdullah and Damit (2018) reported that the Malay language is flexible as it assimilates foreign lexis, which is an image of the internationality of the Malay language itself.

Therefore, this study seeks to address existing gaps in the literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of peripheral lexis, particularly from Arabic, Sino-Tibetan, and Dravidian languages, within the context of the Malay language.

This study aims to list selected loan lexis from Arabo, Sino-Tibetan, and Dravidian languages that are assimilated into the Malay language and analyse the changes in the linguistic elements. Specifically, the research questions are as follows:

1. What lexis are borrowed from Arabic (Arabic), Sino-Tibetan (Chinese), and Dravidian (Tamil) languages that were assimilated into Malay?
2. What are the linguistic elements that have changed against the lexis of Arabo (Arabic), Sino-Tibetan (Chinese), and Dravidian (Tamil) when it is assimilated into the Malay language?

## Methodology

This research was a qualitative analysis. The approach used in this study involves conducting a literature review and performing content analysis.

Researchers have consulted various language books to obtain the data needed for this study. Nevertheless, dictionaries are the primary source of samples that are always used because the dictionary entries cover various aspects and areas of knowledge. In this study, *Kamus Dewan* (2007) is used as the key reference source in gathering the Arabic, Chinese, and Tamil loanwords, especially in ensuring the existence and applicability of those loanwords in Malay.

The data for the study was obtained from Jones' (2009) book entitled *Chinese Loan-Words in Malay and Indonesian*, Mohamed and Subramaniam's (2015) book entitled *Kata Pinjaman Bahasa Tamil dalam Bahasa Melayu*, and Hadi's (2015) book entitled *Kata-Kata Arab Dalam Bahasa Indonesia* and Jones' book (2008) entitled *Loan-Words In Indonesian And Malay*.

The loan lexical data listed in the books were filtered by referring to *Kamus Dewan* (2007) to ensure the existence and applicability of the lexis in the Malay language. In this analysis, the researchers verified a lot of assimilated lexis, that is, 1175 known Arabic lexis, 292 known Chinese lexis, and 614 known Tamil lexis existed in the Malay language.

Collins' (2003) idea regarding the etymology of words is suitable for this study. This is because this study examines the origin of loanwords and emphasises the equivalence of the meaning of these words with the Malay lexis based on the source of the *Kamus Dewan* (2007). The guidelines devised by Collins in studying the etymology of words used in this study are:

- (1) before researching an etymology, make sure when the word appears for the first time;
- (2) history and geography must be considered: words can only be borrowed through a clash of languages;
- (3) the known sound equivalence must be based on etymological efforts; and
- (4) emphasis should be placed on the spoken word: the designation can explain the contradictions of the text and highlight the correct etymology.

The first guideline means that the study of etymology should track the existence and use of loanwords in Malay. Therefore, the appearance of lexis in the Malay language can be traced to the latest Malay dictionary, *Kamus Dewan* (2007). The second guideline means that a study must consider historical and geographical aspects. Collins (2003) discussed the phenomenon of language clashes, which in turn lead to the borrowing of words. In examining borrowed words, researchers need to look at how the words enter other languages and the origin of the borrowed words. Once the existence and use of the word are identified, a historical examination is made through the relationships between different linguistic communities. For example, the inclusion of the word "wangsa" or "bangsa" into the Malay language transpires through the borrowing of words resulting from the clash between the Indian and Malay communities (Norhashim & Abd Ghani, 2022). The same goes for

including the words “dharurat” or “darurat” into the Malay language through borrowing words resulting from the clash between the Arab and Malay communities (Yusoff & Mohamed Adnan, 2009). The inclusion of the Chinese word “sin kong” or “singkong” is the result of the clash between the Chinese and Malay communities (Jones, 2009). In addition, according to Nor Hashim et al. (2023), the repetition or frequency of a word studied is evidence of whether its use is widespread among speakers or vice versa.

The third guideline emphasises the equivalence of sounds, which is the primary guide when researching loanwords. This study focuses on loanwords, where each loanword is evaluated based on the similarity of word forms and fonts (i.e. sounds) without changing its original meaning, especially lexis or words from Arabic, Chinese, and Tamil that are assimilated into the Malay language. Therefore, this guideline should be applied in this study, especially in analysing the changes in the linguistic elements of lexis or borrowed words when adopted into Malay lexis. The researchers also agree with Nor Hashim et al. (2023) that the fourth guideline has almost the same focus as the third guideline because the word form studied has provided information related to the sound of a word. The third and fourth guidelines are pertinent when examined more closely because the sounds studied are based on local community pronunciations. This link gives the guidelines the same emphasis. In this study, the morphophonological approach was used to analyse the changes in Arabic, Chinese, and Tamil lexis assimilated into Malay. According to Abdullah (2022), morphophonology is closely related to the field of grammar, namely, morphology and phonology, which involves the overlap of word production with sound study. Examples of mofems are *gagah* and *gajah*. /g/ on the second syllable *gah* replaced by phonemes /j/ will change the mofem {gagah} to {gajah} and thus change the meaning of the lexis from the definition of {gagah} strong or energetic to {gajah} i.e., large mammals from Elephantide (Abdullah, 2022). Although most lexis that are assimilated from Arabic (Arabic), Sino-Tibetan (Chinese) and Dravidian (Tamil) into Malay have undergone changes in phonemes and phonetics (which are sounds), this does not change the original meaning of the lexis. According to Nor Hashim and Ghani (2022), the examination of the form alone cannot be used as proof that the word is a loanword because the similarity and resemblance of language only occur by chance. Therefore, the meaning of lexis or words was also emphasised in this study but differed from the focus or objective the researchers wanted to discuss.

## **Findings**

### **List of Arabic, Sino-Tibetan and Dravidian Lexis Assimilated into the Malay Language**

The list of Arabo (Arabic), Sino-Tibetan (Chinese) and Dravidian (Tamil) peripheral lexis that were assimilated into the Malay language proved that the existence of these lexicons was put into Malay context. The researchers conducted a synchronic or diachronic study of the non-Austronesian lexicon, taking into account whether the original arrangement of foreign lexical phonemes was the same, whether there were some phoneme changes or whether it had the same lexical meaning as the non-Austronesian lexicon after being assimilated into the Malay lexicon. In listing

assimilated lexicons from Arabo (Arabic), Sino-Tibetan (Chinese) and Dravidian (Tamil) languages into the Malay language, the researchers completed data filtering that the assimilated lexicons should be available in the *Kamus Dewan*, especially the *Kamus Dewan* (2007) which is a reference for researchers. The lexis was listed in the list of Arabo (Arabic), Sino-Tibetan (Chinese), and Dravidian (Tamil) assimilated lexis into the Malay language. The list in Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3 are some examples of Arabo, Sino-Tibetan and Dravidian lexis that have been assimilated into the Malay language.

**Table 1**

*List of Arabo (Arabic) Lexis Absorbed into the Malay Language*

	Arabic Lexicon in Roman Writing	Reference Source	Lexical Meaning	Arabic Assimilation Lexicon in Malay	Dictionary Source	Lexical Meaning of Arabic Assimilation in Malay
1	<i>ḥadīth</i>	LIIM <sup>101</sup>	1. tradition about the prophet	hadis <sup>Ar</sup>	KD <sup>498</sup>	1. abda (deeds or behaviour) of Nabi Muhammad PBUH narrated by his companions (to explain or determine an Islamic ruling)
2	<i>`aqd</i>	LIIM <sup>8</sup>	1. agreement, contract	akad <sup>Ar</sup>	KD <sup>22</sup>	1. deal, agreement
3	<i>`aqrab</i>	LIIM <sup>9</sup>	1. near	akrab I <sup>x</sup>	KD <sup>26</sup>	1. closer, intimate
4	<i>shahih</i>	LIIM <sup>272</sup>	1.genuine, legitimate	sahih <sup>x</sup>	KD <sup>1366</sup>	1. confirmed, true, valid, can be recognised (accepted)
5	<i>bathal</i>	LIIM <sup>34</sup>	1. decide or announce that (something planned) will not be carried out.	batal <sup>x</sup>	KD <sup>134</sup>	1. invalid, no longer valid, void.

**Note:**

Reference source

- LIIM – Loanwords In Indonesian and Malay (Jones, 2008)
- KD – *Kamus Dewan* (2007)

*Superscript* in letter form (<sup>abc</sup>) refers to the original language recorded in the relevant lexis according to *Kamus Dewan* (2007).

- Ar – (Arab) lexis recorded in the *Kamus Dewan* (2007) is assimilated from the Arabic language.
- X – (Unspecified), lexis not specifically recorded as originating from a particular language.

In number (<sup>123</sup>), the superscript refers to the lexis page in the referred reference source.

**Table 2**

*List of Sino-Tibetan (Chinese) Lexicon Assimilated into the Malay Language*

	Chinese Lexicon in Rumi Script	Original Source	Lexical Meaning of Chinese in Malay	Chinese Assimilation Lexicon in Malay	Dictionary Source	Lexical Meaning of Chinese Assimilation in Malay
1	<i>á chí</i>	CLMI <sup>95</sup> LIIM <sup>4</sup>	1. sister	aci III	KD <sup>5</sup>	1. sister
2	<i>á peh</i>	CLMI <sup>97</sup> LIIM <sup>21</sup>	1. old man 2. uncle 3. father's younger or elder brother	apek	KD <sup>71</sup>	1. call to (older) Chinese men.
3	<i>chamcha</i>	LIIM <sup>46</sup>	1. spoon	camca	KD <sup>240</sup>	1. spoon
4	<i>sam seng II</i>	CLMI <sup>153</sup> LIIM <sup>275</sup>	1. villain	samseng	KD <sup>1383</sup>	1. villain
5	<i>sin kong</i>	CLMI <sup>157</sup> LIIM <sup>290</sup>	1. tapioca	singkong	KD <sup>1501</sup>	1. tapioca

**Note:**

Reference source

- LIIM – Loanwords In Indonesian and Malay (Jones, 2008)
- CLMI – Chinese Loanwords in Malay and Indonesian (Jones, 2009)
- KD – *Kamus Dewan* (2007)

In number (<sup>123</sup>), the superscript refers to the lexis page in the referred reference source.

**Table 3**

*List of Dravidian (Tamil) Lexis Assimilated into the Malay Language*

	Tamil Lexicon in Rumi Script	Reference source	Lexical Meaning	Tamil Assimilation Lexicon in Malay	Dictionary Source	Lexical Meaning of Tamil Assimilation in Malay
1	<i>manṭirām</i>	KPTM <sup>71</sup>	1. Words spoken to evoke supernatural power	mantera	KD <sup>2667</sup>	1. Words spoken to evoke supernatural

			2. Advice 3. Words in the Vedas			powers, spells
2	<i>muttirai</i>	KPTM <sup>74</sup> LIIM <sup>201</sup>	1. the official symbol of an organisation	meterai	KD <sup>2755</sup>	1. official symbol of an organisation, stamp, seal, impression 1. small balls (made up of stones), gundu, jaka, marbles
3	<i>kooli</i>	KPTM <sup>57</sup> LIIM <sup>99</sup>	1. small balls made up of glass	guli	KD <sup>1287</sup>	
4	<i>kooni</i>	KPTM <sup>57</sup> LIIM <sup>99</sup>	1. a kind of sack 2. fiber from trees to make sarong	guni	KD <sup>1293</sup>	1. fiber sacks
5	<i>čamuṭṭiram</i>	KPTM <sup>33</sup> LIIM <sup>275</sup>	1. oceans 2. many	samudera	KD <sup>3696</sup>	1. ocean

**Note:**

Reference source

- LIIM – Loanwords In Indonesian and Malay (Jones, 2008)
- KPTM – Kata Pinjaman Bahasa Tamil Dalam Bahasa Melayu (Mohamed & Subramuniam, 2015)
- KD – *Kamus Dewan* (2007)

In number (<sup>123</sup>), the superscript refers to the lexis page in the referred reference source.

The findings of the study in Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3 show the existence of various lexis from various non-Austronesian language groups, especially Arabo (Arabic), Sino-Tibetan (Chinese) and Dravidian (Tamil) languages that are spoken.

### **Analysis of Changes in Linguistic Elements of Phonology and Morphology of Arabo, Sino-Tibetan and Dravidian Lexis, which are Assimilated into the Malay Language**

The following are the Arabo, Sino-Tibetan and Dravidian lexis assimilated into Malay. The language of the lexicons has undergone a process of changing linguistic elements that make the lexicon change in terms of sound and form. Adapting the original phonological structure or the pronunciation of the Malay language itself induces a change in lexical phonemes. Therefore, when translated, the following were some phonological and morphological linguistic analyses of assimilated lexicons from Arabo, Sino-Tibetan and Dravidian languages.

**Figure 1**

*Analysis of Phonological and Morphological Linguistic Elements of Arabo (Arabic) Lexis Assimilated into the Malay Language*

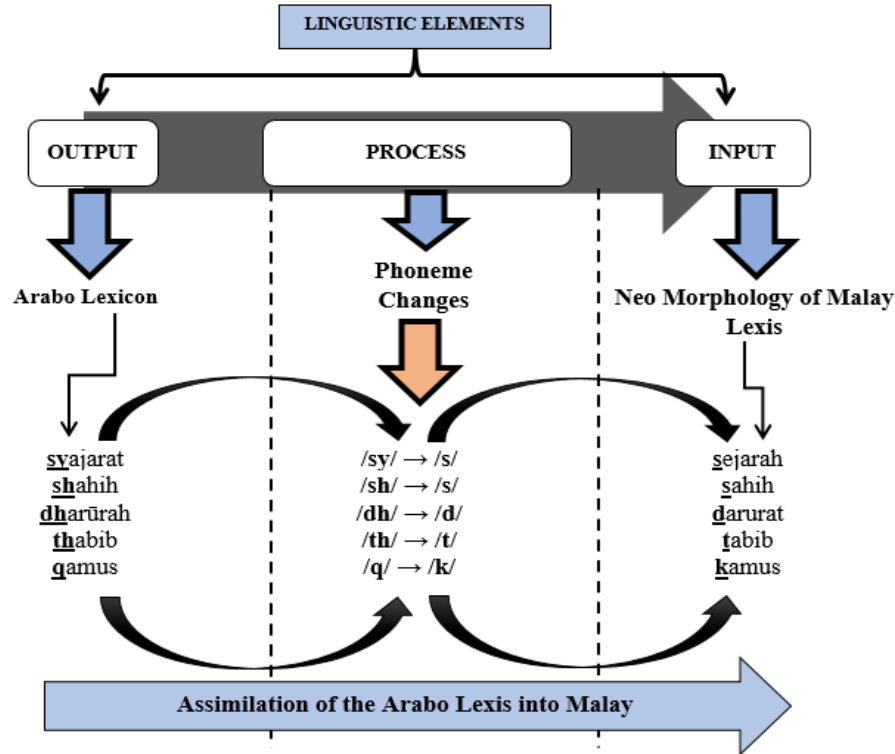


Figure 2 shows the assimilation of Arabo lexis into the Malay language, which includes some changes in linguistic elements (phoneme changes) to Arabo lexis when assimilated into the Malay lexis. In Figure 2, one can see some phoneme changes when the assimilation of the language from the Arabic language into the Malay language occurs, such as the phoneme /sy/ changes to the phoneme /s/, the phoneme /sh/ changes to the phoneme /s/, the phoneme /dh/ changes to the phoneme /d/, phoneme /th/ changes to phoneme /t/ and phoneme /q/ changes to phoneme /k/. Since these lexis are initially from the Arabic language, phoneme changes often occur when an Arabo lexis is assimilated into a lexis with a Malay pronunciation (Hadi, 2015; Maris, 1980). For example, when assimilated into the Malay language, Arabo lexis such as *syajarat* (لشجرة) becomes *sejarah*, lexis *shahih* (صحيح) becomes *sahih*, lexis *dharurah* (ضرورة) becomes *darurat*, lexis *thabib* (طبيب) becomes *tabib*, lexis *qamus* (قاموس) becomes *kamus* (Hadi, 2015; Jones, 2008).

Next, the researchers presented an analysis of the linguistic elements of the Sino-Tibetan lexis, which is the Chinese language assimilated into the Malay language. The researchers used pinyin writing, which represents the original Chinese lexis, to make it easier for the reader to understand the data analysis done. The analysis of the Sino-Tibetan (Chinese) linguistic elements in the Malay language is more focused on the study of phonology. Ahmad (2004) remarked that phonology is a field of linguistics that explores the system and function of sounds in a language. Therefore, the researchers highlighted several aspects of Sino-Tibetan (Chinese) phonology that have



been assimilated into the Malay language, such as phoneme inventory, phoneme structure in syllable formation and the spread of phonemes as well as the constraints of their presence in certain positions in the word. Figure 3 analyses the phonological aspect of the Sino-Tibetan (Chinese) lexis assimilated into the Malay language.

**Figure 2**

*Phonological Aspects of Sino-Tibetan (Chinese) Lexis Assimilated into Malay*

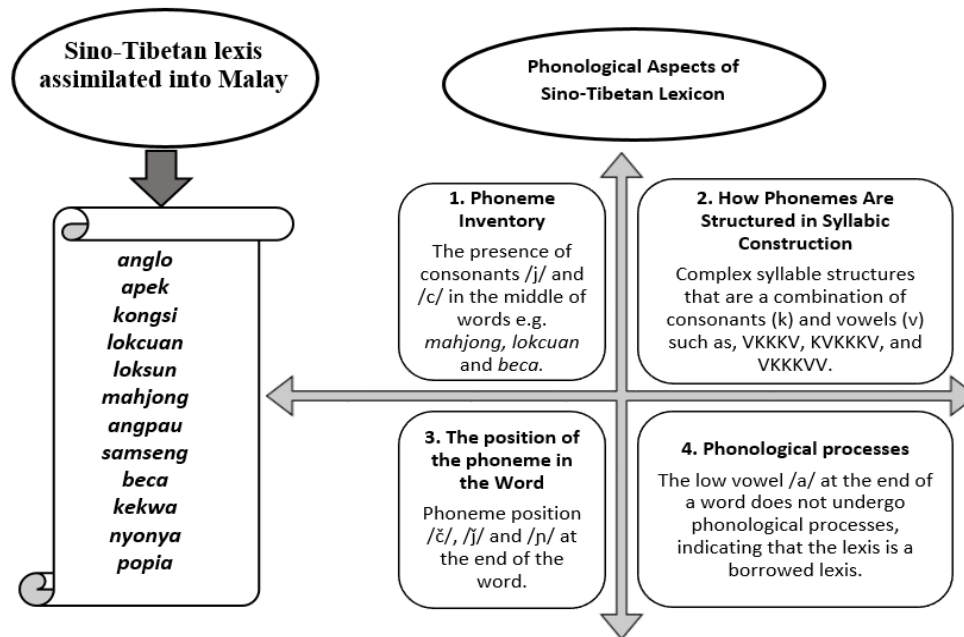


Figure 3 shows the lexicons assimilated from the Sino-Tibetan (Chinese) language into the Malay language that were checked through four main aspects: the phoneme inventory, the way phonemes are structured in syllable formation, the position of phonemes in words, and phonological processes. Ahmad (2004) reported that the presence of consonants /j/ and /c/ in the middle of a word ensures that the lexis is an assimilated lexis from a foreign language. This is because the existence of the consonants /j/ and /c/ in the middle of a word violates phonological rules in Malay (Ahmad, 2004). Among the assimilated lexis in the Sino-Tibetan language with the consonants /j/ and /c/ in the middle of the word are *mahjong*, *lokcuau*, and *beca*.

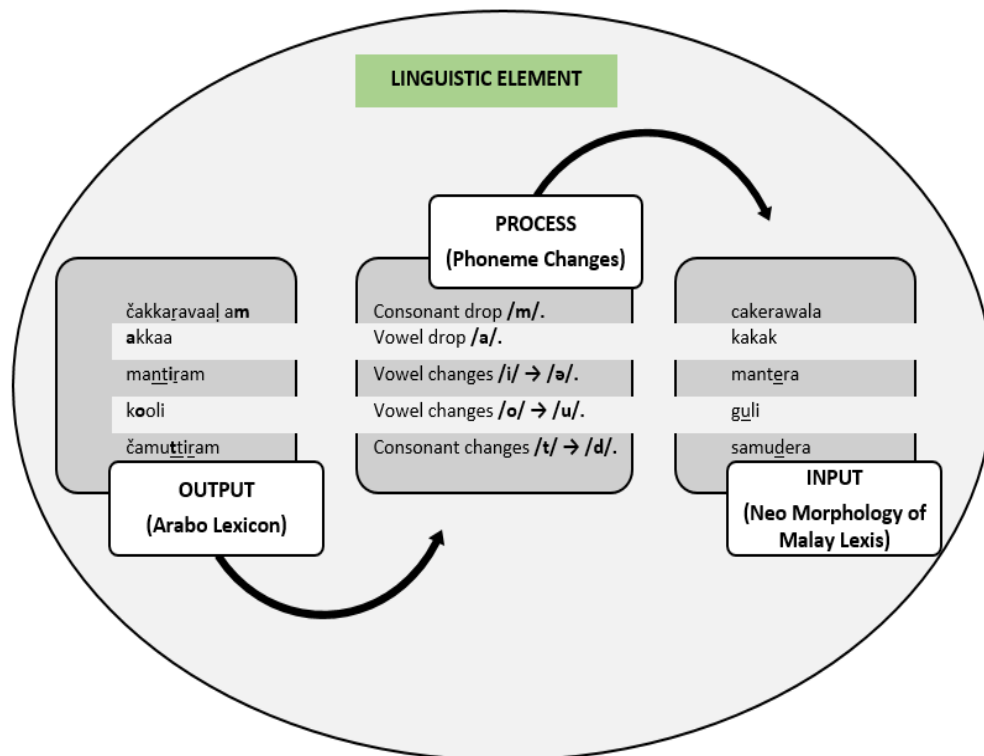
The next aspect of the study of phonology is how phonemes are structured in syllable formation. By examining and identifying how phonemes are structured in the formation of syllables, one can easily predict that lexis is an assimilated lexis from a foreign language. Maris (1980) noted that the phonological system of the Malay language has a simple syllable structure consisting of V, VK, KV, and KVK. This means that if a lexis has a complex syllabic structure in the Malay language, one can establish that the lexis is an assimilated lexis from a foreign language. In the phonological study of the Sino-Tibetan language assimilated lexis that was introduced into Malay, the researchers discovered many assimilated lexis from Sino-Tibetan languages had a complex syllabic structure. These lexis include *anglo*, *kongsi*, *angpau*, and *bangpak*.

In the context of assimilated lexicons from the Sino-Tibetan (Chinese) language, many lexicons contain the phonemes /č/, /j/, and /ɲ/ either in the middle of the word or at the end of the word. The researchers examined whether the phonemes /č/, /j/, and /ɲ/ align with the nasal-obstruent couplet in Malay words, ensuring homophony or similar articulation areas. Nasal-obstruent pairs that exist in Malay are /mp/, /mb/, /nt/, /nd/, /ŋk/, /ŋg/, /ɲč/, and /ɲj/. Therefore, if the lexicon has the phonemes /č/, /j/, and /ɲ/ in a word or Malay lexicon that does not comply with the Malay nasal-obstruent couplet, then the lexicon is an assimilated lexicon from another language. In the phonological study of assimilated lexicon from the Sino-Tibetan language, the researchers concluded that many lexicon from that language did not fulfil the nasal-homorganic couplet condition in Malay—for example, *camca*, *lokcu*, *capcai*, *capjiki*, and *ongji*.

Next, the analysis of the linguistic elements in Figure 3 is a study of the phonological and morphological linguistic aspects of the Dravidian (Tamil) language lexicon that was assimilated into Malay.

**Figure 3**

*Analysis of Phonological and Morphological Linguistic Elements of the Dravidian (Tamil) Lexicon Assimilated into the Malay Language*



Mohamed and Subramuniam (2015) pointed out that the phonemes /č/, /k/, /p/, and /t/ each has two pronunciations, namely, /č/ is pronounced with /č/ and /s/, while the phoneme /k/ is pronounced /k/ and /g/, then the phonemes /p/ are called /b/ and /p/, and the phonemes /t/ are called /t̤/ and /t̚/. Therefore, it is apparent

that phonemes in the pronunciation of the Tamil language change within the scope of how they are pronounced when assimilated into the Malay lexicon.

As a result of this research, the researchers established that this study aligns with Mohamed and Subramaniam's (2015) data, which recorded that dropping consonants at the end of words is popular in Tamil-assimilated lexicons when assimilated into the Malay lexicon. Dropping the consonant at the end of this word involves dropping phonemes such as /m/, /n/, /r/, and /l/. Dropping vowels is also expected to help Tamils assimilate lexis when introduced to Malay. In Tamil lexicons, vowel dropping occurs at the beginning of words, in the middle of words, and at the end when adapted to Malay pronunciation. Based on Figure 3, vowel dropping occurs at the beginning of the word, namely the vowel /a/, when the lexicon of the Dravidian language (Tamil) is assimilated into the Malay language. For example, *akka*, when assimilated into the Malay language, will become *kakak*. That is, the dropping of the vowel /a/ at the beginning of the next word is followed by the insertion of the vowel /a/ between two consonants /k/ and flanked by the consonant /k/ to form a sister that meets the lexical characteristics of the Malay language, namely (KVKVK). [K = consonant; V = vocal]

Next, the Tamil language's lexicon also changed from the front vowel /i/ to the middle vowel /ə/. Based on the data found, 16 assimilated lexicons of the Tamil language into the Malay language experienced the change of the front vowel /i/ to a middle vowel /ə/. As shown in Figure 3, it is clear that the narrow vowel changes /i/ to be a middle vowel /ə/, which is *mantiram* becomes *menteri*. Among other examples of lexis are *puttiran*, *puttiri*, *paatiri*, and *panṭitan* when used, will become lexis *putera*, *puteri*, *paderi*, and *pendeta*.

Thus, this analysis demonstrated that most of the assimilated lexis from Arabo (Arabic), Sino-Tibetan (Chinese), and Dravidian (Tamil) change when assimilated into lexis in Malay. Furthermore, many loan lexis have undergone more than one change, and some are challenging to identify as loan lexis, whether they come from Arabic, Chinese, or Tamil, because they have been integrated into the Malay language. According to Mohamed and Subramuniam (2015), certain parties also carry out the process of borrowing lexis at will, which has caused problems of inconsistency in the assimilated lexis.

## Discussion

Global attention to the Malay language as an international language has existed in education since the seventh century, when I Cing, a Buddhist, came from China to learn the ancient Malay language and study Buddhism (Sariyan, 2019). Since the establishment of relations between the Government of China and Malacca, approximately 500 input words have been compiled and recorded in the form of a dictionary in Chinese entitled *Man La Jia Guo Yi Yu*, or List of Words of the State of Melaka (Liji, 1996). The arrival of Islam in Malaya around the 13th century (Acheh sources quoted that Islam arrived in Malaya earlier, since the eighth century) empowered the interaction of the Malay language with one of the world's major languages, Arabic (Rahman, 2007). The entry of Islam into Malaya led to translating texts from Arabic to Malay, such as the measures taken by *Aqa'id al-Nasafi*, a Malay

scholar who translated the foundational book of the Islamic faith (Al-Attas, 1988). In those days, learning a language meant understanding other nations' languages through religious groups, especially Buddhism and Islam. It was needed so that religious knowledge would be more practical to convey. According to Sariyan (2019), knowledge is more effectively conveyed in the mother tongue. From the current point of view, the Malay language has also been offered in foreign study centres, and Malay language courses have also been established in several countries, including Europe and Asia. In Europe, there are courses in Malay Studies, such as at Leiden University and Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, and in Asia, such as Malay Studies at Beijing Foreign Studies University, China.

Malay is a vocabulary-rich language because it accepts and assimilates languages from the Dravidian family (Tamil), Sino-Tibetan (Chinese), or the Semitic family, such as Arabic. Abdullah and Abdullah (2018). Malay is a flexible language that assimilates foreign lexicons into Malay lexicons. As a result, its use encompasses all aspects of life, including science and technology. Occasionally, the assimilated lexicons retain the original pronunciation, and some are adapted to the rules of the phonological system in Malay. Despite changes in form and pronunciation, the original meaning of the lexis assimilation from foreign languages, particularly Arabic, Chinese, and Tamil, has remained the same. *Kamus Dewan* dictionary is used as a reference, especially in Malay language classes in overseas study centres such as the Chair of Malay Studies in Europe, Leiden University at the University of Victoria, Wellington, New Zealand, and the Chair of Malay Studies at Beijing Foreign Studies University, China. The quality of *Kamus Dewan* production will improve with a comprehensive examination of the foreign lexicon integrated into the Malay lexicon. Chong and Subramaniam (2015) argued that the effectiveness of creating a high-quality Malay dictionary depends on how the language is presented. By examining the peripheral lexicons of Arabo, Sino-Tibetan, and Dravidian languages and analysing their assimilated vocabulary, dictionary compilers can use this as a reference to further enhance the labelling of borrowed words found in *Kamus Dewan*. Additionally, this research can raise public awareness about the presence of foreign words in Malay.

Ergo, assimilating foreign lexis into Malay lexis verifies that Malay is a flexible and dynamic language (Phong, 2015). Due to its flexible and dynamic qualities, the Malay language readily accepts the influence of foreign languages and can adapt the inclusion of lexis or vocabulary from those foreign languages into the Malay language. Abdullah and Damit (2018) suggested that many lexis from all language families in the world that are assimilated into the Malay language through assimilation adapted to the pronunciation of Nusantara show the international image of the Malay language. Besides, studying the Malay language abroad has further substantiated the essence of the Malay language in the world and the realm of Malaynesia. The government's move to make Malay language courses compulsory for international students who continue their studies in Malaysian universities is a measure that can place Malay as the language of science and as the language of science and technology (Abdullah & Damit, 2018; Hassan, 1989). The assimilation of foreign lexis in the Malay language further enriches the Malay vocabulary, which facilitates the learning and understanding of the Malay language and makes it simple for all levels of society to

understand and learn. The assimilation of foreign languages into Malay also verifies that the language has the strength to adapt to the development and needs of modern times, like today. The assimilation of foreign languages into the Malay language can further preserve the vocabulary and make the Malay language a "sustainable" tongue that lives eternally (Collins, 1999; Sariyan, 2011).

### Conclusion

The Malay language contains all the major languages of the world from various language families, assimilated into the Malay language. The study shows that the assimilation of Arabo, Sino-Tibetan, and Dravidian peripheral lexis reflects the Malay language's international characteristics. The Malay language has become stronger not only through the establishment of the Faculty of Malay Studies abroad, such as at the University of London in England, the University of Leiden in the Netherlands, Ohio University in the United States, and Beijing Foreign Studies University in China, but also through a large number of non-Austronesian lexis loans aspired at making Malay a language of science and technology as well as a language of progress. This research is part of a more extensive etymology study. Hence, examining borrowed lexis or loanwords by highlighting the analysis of changes in linguistic elements of a word that is assimilated into the Malay language is one of the essential ingredients in deepening the knowledge of etymology. Understanding the meaning also allows the identification of the origin of words based on the form of the word that has been identified as having similarities. The history and semantics of words need to be traced throughout time until they reach the root or language of the source of the loan if the word studied is a loan word. The study of loan words and the analysis of changes in the linguistic elements of these words can deliver answers and information about the changes that occur to a loan word in the Malay language. This study only concentrates on listing Arabic, Chinese and Tamil loanwords and analysing the changes in the linguistic elements of these loanwords when assimilated into the Malay language. The researchers hope that more in-depth deconstructions will be performed, especially on the influence of Malay grammar rules on the morphology of Arabic, Chinese, and Tamil loanwords in the Malay language.

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# **USING COMPETENCY-BASED DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION TO DEVELOP ENGLISH ORAL COMMUNICATION ABILITY IN RESPONSE TO THE NEEDS OF EFL SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The modern classroom in the twenty-first century consists of a diverse group of learners, each with distinct learning needs and modes. This study aims to investigate the problems and needs of English as a foreign language students, develops curriculum principles based on competency-based and differentiated instruction, and explore the effects of the instruction on oral communication ability development. The study was a single group design using quantitative and qualitative methods collected by an interview, a questionnaire, and oral communication tests. The findings revealed the needs of the secondary school students on towards oral communication ability: a lack of English-speaking opportunities, a misalignment between textbooks and teaching focus, a need for engaging practices, and a demand for differentiated approaches, to develop three principles of a new curriculum. The result shows a significant of improvement of the participants' oral communication ability after receiving competency-based differentiated instruction at .05. The developed instruction has the potential to guide curriculum development in terms of objectives, content, instruction, and assessment strategies.



However, the successful implementation necessitates a comprehensive curriculum and instruction considering cultural contexts and different students' needs.

**Keywords:** competency-based language instruction; differentiated instruction; English oral communication ability; need analysis

## **Introduction**

The adoption of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in Thai schools aims to enhance English proficiency among students and improve the overall quality of education. The Ministry of Education's guidelines from 2014 outline the implementation of the six-level CEFR system, with various programmes like the English Programme (EP), Mini English Programme (MEP), and International Programme (IP) established to cater to different learner needs and promote effective communication skills in English.

Besides four macro skills, oral communication ability allows speakers to express all knowledge they have learnt to others (Harmer, 2015). Hence, oral communication ability has been considered an important part of English curriculum and instruction at every level.

However, despite having several years Thai students spent on English learning in formal education, Thai students have faced problems mastering oral communication skills. With the Thai language as a medium of English instruction, unnatural English language use, and failure to explore genuine interactions might be the main obstacles preventing them from developing students' oral communication skills in use along with large class size and mixed-ability classroom and tests familiarity (Rattanaeng, 2019).

In the diverse landscape of current EFL classrooms with heterogeneous students, differentiation becomes crucial to accommodate varied interests, backgrounds, learning styles, and preferences (Rattanaeng, 2019; Tomlinson, 2017). Implementing differentiated instruction tailored to individual needs, coupled with a needs analysis (Nation & Macalister, 2019; Saint, 2021), is emphasised for effective English communicative competency development in mixed-ability classrooms. The study underscores the importance of educators' decisions in utilising competency-based and differentiated instruction, encompassing innovative teaching sequences, instructional materials, tiered activities, and competency-based assessments to enhance English oral communication abilities among EFL secondary school students.

This study addresses several gaps in past research by exploring the integration of competency-based language instruction with differentiated instruction, particularly in the context of basic education in Thailand. Previous studies primarily focused on tertiary education (Generoso & Arbon, 2020; Rahmatillah, 2019; Waluyo, 2020), this research aims to examine the development of oral communication skills within competency-based education for EFL high school students. There has been no research that has examined

the integration of competency-based language instruction with differentiated instruction in that competency tasks and activities are tiered and taught in an interactional way, and used them later on either in the demanding daily life or in the workplace to integrate and mobilize a set of various capacities and competencies. The anticipated outcomes include identifying specific needs, uncovering unique requirements in the Thai context, proposing curriculum principles, and contributing to the enhancement of English oral communication abilities using competency-based language instruction and differentiated instruction principles in secondary education. This study aimed to address three research questions:

1. What are the problems and needs of EFL secondary school students towards oral communication ability for global communication course?
2. How can new curriculum principles be developed to correspond to the needs for enhancing English oral communication ability of EFL secondary school students?
3. To what extent does competency-based differentiated instruction affect English oral communication ability development of EFL secondary school students?

### **Literature Review**

#### **A New Challenge of Teaching English in Thailand: An Eclectic Approach**

As the desired outcome of English language use in Thailand is to communicate in various situations, seeking knowledge, engaging in a livelihood and pursuing further education at higher levels (OEC, 2020), a language instructional approach should be designed to meet the needs of individual student's competency rather than expect the students to associate themselves with competency-based instruction described by differentiated instruction. It can enhance students' overall achievement and specified competencies in curriculum design, activities, and assessment as an individual student could learn English with selective instruction, adaptive materials and tasks from his/her proficiency level, not the one designing for all (Magableh & Abdullah, 2020). For example, Azatova (2021) researched the impact of self-regulation of language learning process in enhancing students' learning outcomes by integrating self-check descriptors (metacognitive skills) for individual current competency level as a self-assessment tool and preparing learning strategies of macro skills including goal setting (using a post-it notes) at the beginning of the primary English class. So, this can encourage the significance of explicit instruction applying learning strategies for own learning pathways and guiding differentiated working plan students are moving on via self-assessment tools rooted in the Language Need Analysis (Generoso & Arbon, 2020). Besides teaching English based on the students' needs and competency, the students who study in differentiated classroom have the opportunity to study through their topics of interest and learn according to their own pace as well as select the way to demonstrate what they had learnt.

### **The Needs of English Oral Communication Ability**

Speaking is defined as an oral communication including pronunciation and listening concerning the use of words to enable the speakers to define, classify, and express beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, and feelings to create and convey meaning (Murphy, 1991). According to Harmer (2015), and Richards and Rodgers (2001), there are at least three factors which are accuracy, fluency and language complexity impact on effective oral communication during speech.

From the exploratory investigation of global communication course, Arunsirot (2019) and Khiadthong (2022) found English speaking problems are the lack of enough opportunities and the mismatch of pedagogical approach in oral communication instruction to communicate English and teaching sequences to help the students use English in class—oral communication cannot be ignored from other skills in the use of appropriate communication. English oral communication has long been a powerful tool for understanding others' ideas and expressing political views, making it an essential daily skill (Paulino, 2022). Similarly, Songpitak and Ekkayokkaya (2022) proposed that oral communication is a key focus in second language learning, as it serves as the primary medium for expressing knowledge.

In pursuit of effective oral communication, researchers have shifted from the traditional four-skill model to focus on macro functions, specifically oral production and oral interaction, aligning with communicative language competency. Key strategies for enhancing oral communication ability include linguistic, sociolinguistic, and interactional competences, with learning outcomes, communicative tasks, and assessments tailored to each competency (Council of Europe, 2018). Besides, Harmer (2015) suggests a teaching sequence, called ESA emphasising engagement, study, and active learning to develop oral language forms through exposure, motivation, and practical usage in various contexts and topics.

### **Competency-based Language Instruction**

Richards and Rodgers (2001) proposed the principle of competency-based language instruction such as authentic or real-life language usage, task-based classroom, modularised instruction, outcome-based and mastery learning, ongoing assessment, and individualised (child-oriented) learning. Competency-based language instruction refers to an instructional approach in which the following detail, desirable competencies are demonstrated and developed in order to succeed in critical work functions or tasks in the workplace as well as measurement criteria for assessing competency-based assessment (Council of Europe, 2020; OEC, 2020).

For example, in Thailand, Thipatdee (2021) conducted a study implementing a competency-like curriculum in language instruction focusing on high school students' and teachers' needs in a competency-based curriculum integrated with the local community. The results revealed higher-rated needs, improved learning achievement, and enhanced

language skills through student-centred activities, emphasising the importance of active engagement in competency-based courses. In addition, Waluyo (2020) provides a detailed exploration of competency-based education through the use of active learning and smart classrooms, integrating ICT in a general English course. The strength of the study lies in its large sample of 983 students, and its comprehensive focus on linguistic knowledge and macro-skills, namely, communication skills. However, Waluyo (2020) did not analyse how different proficiency levels affect learning outcomes.

### **Differentiated Instruction**

Differentiated instruction is an instructional practice that individualises teaching and learning by employing varied materials and strategies to engage all students, taking into account their diverse characteristics, learning styles, and interests (Tomlinson, 2017). Contemporary EFL classrooms are inherently heterogeneous, with students differing in interests, backgrounds, preferences, and multiple intelligences (Rattanasang, 2019; Tomlinson, 2017). Implementing differentiated instruction within a work-related context can positively influence students' English learning, addressing their specific needs and motivation in line with the competency-based approach. Furthermore, differentiated instruction promotes explicit instruction in learning strategies and supports the development of personalised learning pathways, facilitated by self-assessment tools derived from language needs analysis (Generoso & Arbon, 2020). Consequently, integrating differentiated instruction into mixed-ability EFL classrooms may enhance students' oral communication skills.

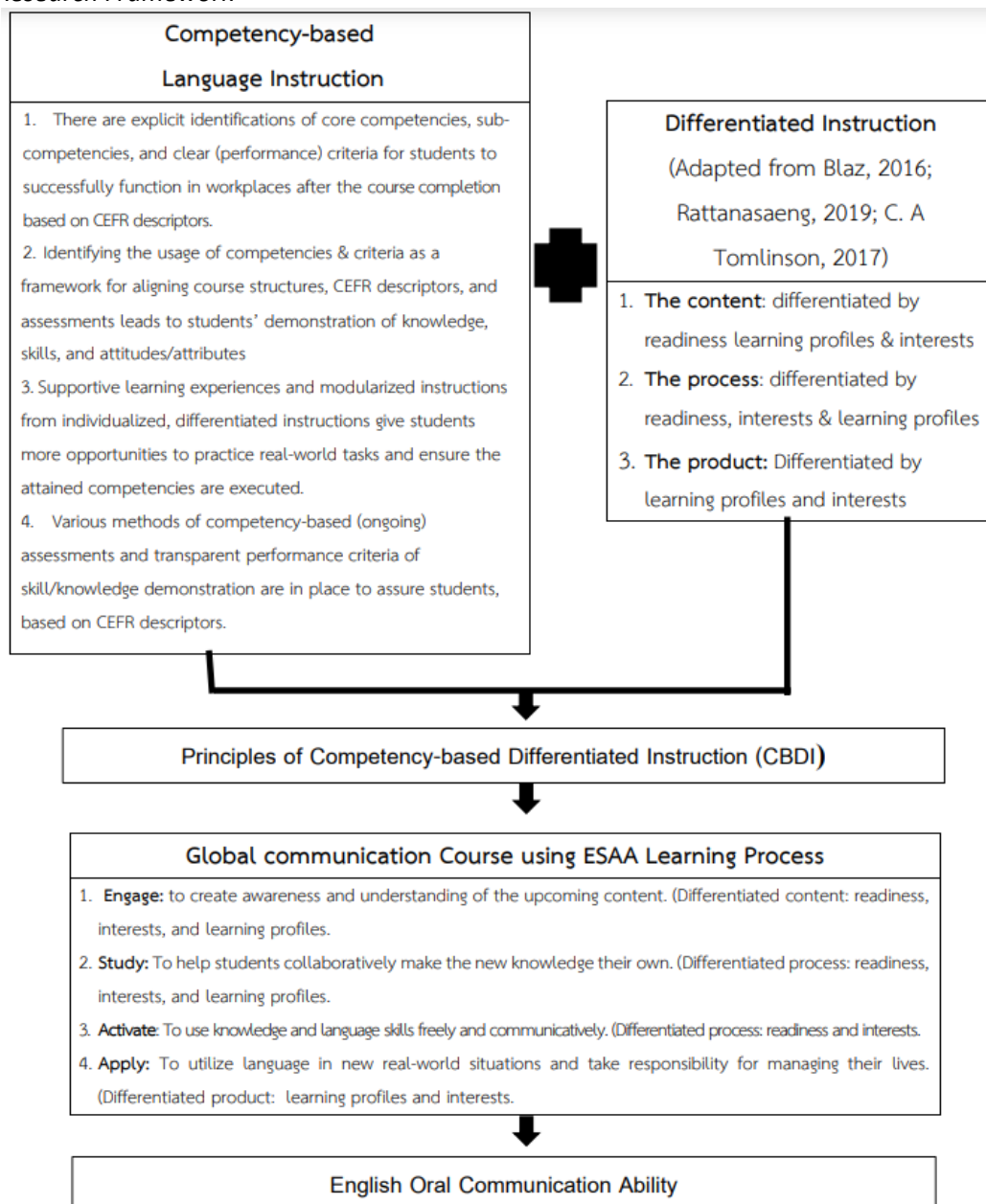
Rattanasang (2019) found that the application of a differentiated-flipped learning approach in the Thai context brought improvements in students' speaking abilities and an increased willingness to communicate. Magableh and Abdullah (2020), on the other hand, studied differentiated instruction to enhance students' overall achievement in the experimental group as an individual student could learn English with selective instruction, adaptive materials and assignment from his/her own proficiency level. In addition, Paulino (2022) examined the experiences of language instructors using differentiated instruction in oral communication classes, highlighting four key strategies: motivating, modelling, mentoring, and moulding. These found strategies align with the core aspects of differentiated instruction: content, process, and product. The findings suggest that teachers must understand students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles to effectively apply differentiated instruction. Explicably, the studies collectively contribute to the understanding of effective differentiated instruction for enhancing English oral communication skills in diverse educational settings.

### **Methodology**

A design employing an explanatory sequential mixed method (Creswell & Poth, 2018) was utilised to gather primary data. This involved reviewing pertinent documents like the

Council of Europe (2020) guidelines for developing learners' competency at the Basic Education level, the Competency-based Curriculum Development (OEC, 2022). By reviewing relevant literature, the researchers developed a conceptual framework based on principles of competency-based and differentiated instruction. See Figure 1.

**Figure 1**  
*Research Framework*



In the study, a one-group post-test only design was used to investigate the oral communication ability after intervention (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). The findings from oral communication test sets of three units were compared and used to determine whether the students had made progress or change during and after experiencing the competency-based differentiated instruction.

### **Participants**

The study involved 30 students, 11 males and 19 females aged 13-15. The participants were eight-grade students from Mini-English programme in the first academic year 2023. A purposive sampling technique was used to select a target group with mixed-ability eight-grade students in one public school in Bangkok. The participants were purposively chosen based on these criteria: 1) they were required to pass Listening and Speaking 1-2 courses for communication skill familiarity, 2) they must come from different ability level to represent novice, graded, and advanced levels, and 3) they were required to study an additional subject (Global Communication) with regular attendance for data collection easily and completely due to numerous oral tasks and tests.

### **Instrument**

First and foremost, a set of questions for structured interview and questionnaires were developed to collect primary data. The instruments were adapted from a Cambridge-University questionnaire of Huhta et al. (2013) and Rattanaseng (2019). The seven questions for the interviews investigated students' problems of English oral communication in depth before studying the course.

The needs analysis questionnaire, adapted from Huhta et al. (2013), consists of five parts to elicit students' topic/theme interest, learning styles, instructional materials, and types of learning activities in the area of oral communication, competency-based education and individualized learning in the workplace and daily-life heavily influenced by the content they encounter on websites and in several ELT textbooks. The trendy topic/themes identified through these sources play a significant role in capturing students' attention. Additionally, understanding students' learning styles is crucial for effective instruction questioned in the questionnaire. The item received ratings within a 5-point range, with 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 denoting not needed, slightly needed, somewhat needed, quite needed and highly needed, respectively.

Later, oral communication tests which consisted of interpersonal and transactional tasks were conducted to assess the student's oral communication ability unit within seven weeks for responding to the third research question.

The three instruments (structured interview, needs analysis questionnaire, oral communication tests) were verified and validated by five experts in the field to ensure quality before conducting a pilot study. The validation, IOC values, of the interview, need analysis questionnaire and tests were 0.89, 0.86 and 0.81 respectively.

### Data Collection Procedure

In phase 1, the researchers investigated oral communication problems via interviews with seven questions, then developed a needs questionnaire validated by three experts. They then reviewed current approaches to suggest guidelines for improving EFL secondary students' English oral communication. After interviews and questionnaires, participants and their parents consented to an experimental classroom study which data collection was anonymous and confidential. The participants selected their learning profiles and indicated their expectations for using English in the workplace. Eventually, the researchers analysed interview and questionnaire data, reviewed relevant documents, and formulated guidelines validated by the same experts.

In phase 2, the participants were required to take an English oral communication placement test to categorise them into novice groups, graded-level group and advanced group. Then, they were required to study three units and take English oral communication tests at the end of each unit of Global communication course using competency-based differentiated instruction.

### Data Analysis Procedure

The two researchers collaboratively coded the interview transcripts using thematic analysis, following the approach outlined by King et al. (2019). Next, the closed-ended questions were interpreted using weighted mean and standard deviation (SD) to convey the findings, while the five-point Likert-scale questions were assessed based on the interval and description methodology outlined by Dörnyei (2007).

For the data from 30 student questionnaires, descriptive statistics were computed: mean scores (M) and standard deviations (SD). The data obtained from the two collections was collectively deliberated to explore how it could address the identified needs. The results are interpreted following Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Likert Scale, Interval, and Description of Five-Point Likert-Scale Questionnaires for the Need Analysis*

Likert scale	$\bar{x}$	Description	Interpretation
5	4.20-5.00	Highly needed	Very high
4	3.40-4.19	Quite needed	High
3	2.60-3.39	Somewhat needed	Average
2	1.80-2.59	Slightly needed	Low
1	1.00-1.79	Not needed	Very low

The students' oral communication scores from three-unit tests were evaluated by inter-raters and analysed using a one-way repeated measures ANOVA with Greenhouse-Geisser correction. Post hoc Bonferroni tests were used to examine changes

in their communication ability after competency-based differentiated instruction, identifying where differences occurred between tests.

## Results

### Perceived Problems for Global Communication Course from the Interviewing

The study on EFL secondary students' English oral communication courses revealed three main issues. First, students expressed dissatisfaction with insufficient chances to speak in class and desired a more supportive, interactive environment with native speakers; for example, the fifth key informant said:

*I really enjoy practicing English, especially expressing my opinions with native speakers. Unfortunately, our English classes don't provide enough chances to actually speak. I wish there were more interactive activities to enhance our speaking skills.*

The nineteenth key informant said:

*Speaking English outside the classroom is fun, but during class, it's mostly focused on other things. We need more opportunities to practice speaking; it feels crucial for real-life communication.*

The second theme is grammar-heavy textbooks and teachers' focus on fluent speaking left many students confused. The students called for better alignment of materials and teaching. The twenty sixth informant said that "*it's challenging when the textbooks emphasise grammar so much and it would be great if there was a better balance between the two to make our learning experience more coherent.*"

Lastly, the third theme emphasises the positive impact of engaging speaking practices through games and group activities, with all participants (n=30) affirming the motivational and fluency-promoting benefits. Incorporating more interactive methods, as suggested by the respondents, could significantly enhance the overall language learning experience for students.

In short, students advocate for more speaking opportunities, better alignment between teaching materials and methods, and more interactive activities to enhance their language learning experience.

### Perceived Needs for Global Communication Course from the Questionnaire

The finding revealed that the participants rated their needs on the global communication course at a higher level, which encompassed a clear vision and mission to enhance



student oral communication competency, and wishes to have goals, content, and instructional methods focused on practical applications.

**Table 2**

*Students' Preferences and Interests in Various Topics (n=30)*

Students' preferred topic	$\bar{x}$	SD.	Meaning of $\bar{x}$
1. Music and songs	4.17	0.272	Very high
2. YouTube/Influencer	3.90	0.245	High
3. Technology/digital era	3.76	0.236	High
4. E-sports	3.59	0.287	High
5. Networking skills	3.59	0.251	High

As shown in Table 2, the participants' identified preferences and interests in various topics were assessed, revealing the following mean scores: Music and Songs ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.17) ranked at a very high level, while YouTube/Influencer ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.90), Technology/Digital Era ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.76), E-sports ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.59), and Networking Skills ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.59) were rated at a high level.

**Table 3**

*Students' Preferred Communicative Tasks (n=30)*

Communicative task	$\bar{x}$	SD.	Meaning of $\bar{x}$
1. Portfolio	3.79	0.250	High
2. Interpreter	3.40	0.224	High
3. Opinion-exchange	3.40	0.213	High
4. Role-play	3.40	0.269	High
5. Storytelling	3.34	0.286	Average

Table 3 revealed that portfolio, interpreter, and role-play are considered highly important with mean scores of 3.79, 3.40, and 3.40, respectively. Opinion-exchange (mean of 3.213) and storytelling (mean of 3.34) are less preferred.

**Table 4**

*Students' Learning Styles (n=30)*

Learning style	$\bar{x}$	SD.	Meaning of $\bar{x}$
1. If I am taking a test, I can "see" the textbook page and where the answer is located.	3.48	0.190	High
2. Papers with very small print or poor copies are tough on me.	3.41	0.236	High
3. I enjoy drawing and even note/ lots of pictures and arrows	3.40	0.245	High
4. When I hear a song, I like to picture the video that goes along with it.	3.34	0.212	Average

5. The best way to learn about how something works is to listen to someone explain it.	3.34	0.269	Average
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According to Table 4 related to learning styles, students expressed a high preference for visual learning methods (mean scores from  $\bar{x}$  = 3.40 to 3.48). However, when it comes to auditory learning, the mean scores indicate an average level of preference ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.34).

**Table 5**  
*Students' Preferred Instructional Materials (n=30)*

Preferred type of instructional materials	$\bar{x}$	SD.	Meaning of $\bar{x}$
1. I like learning from YouTube.	4.20	0.218	Very high
2. I like using social media to interact with friends.	4.07	0.232	High
3. I like learning from pictures.	3.66	0.250	High
4. I like learning via audio media.	3.52	0.208	High
5. I like learning from infographics (a collection of imagery, charts, and minimal text)	3.03	0.225	Average

Table 5 shows the strongest preference for YouTube ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.20), followed closely by social media for interaction with friends ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.07), learning from pictures ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.66), and learning via audio media ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.52). The rating for infographics is average, with a mean score of 3.03.

**Table 6**  
*Students' Preferred Learning Activities (n=30)*

Learning activity	$\bar{x}$	SD.	Meaning of $\bar{x}$
1. Activities are that most helpful for my English learning is songs.	4.29	0.281	Very high
2. Activities that are most helpful for my English learning are game-based.	4.22	0.213	High
3. I work well when I talk with others and share ideas.	3.48	0.202	High
4. Activities that are most helpful for my English learning is pair work/group work.	3.24	0.246	High
5. Activities are that most helpful for my English learning are making a conversation to others.	3.03	0.260	Average

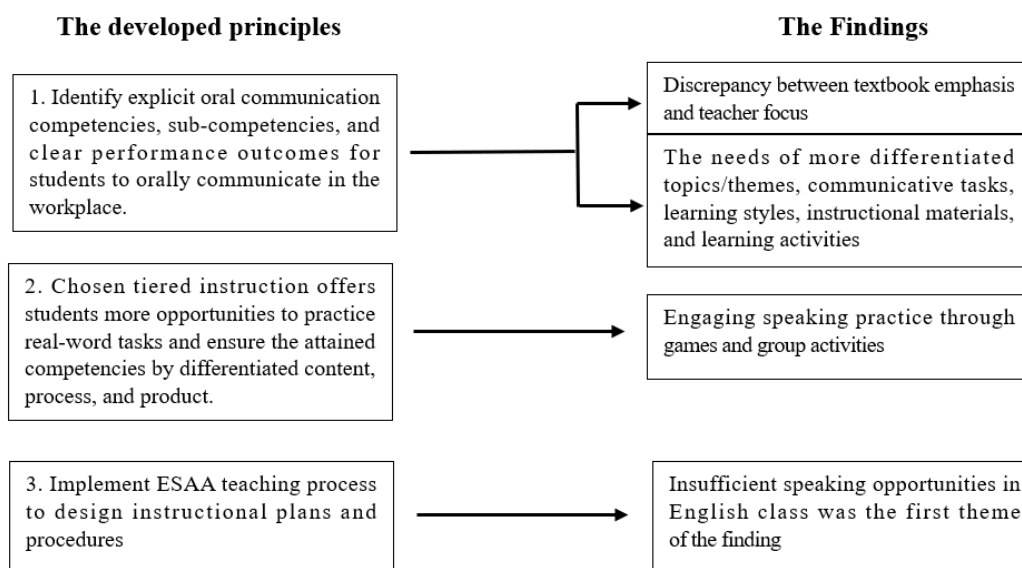
As illustrated in Table 6, the students highly valued song-based activities ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.29) and game-based activities ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.22) for English learning. Additionally, collaborative activities ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.48) and pair work/group work ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.24) are considered helpful, both falling in the high category. Interestingly, making conversation with others is rated at only an average level ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.03).

The researchers developed curriculum principles to enhance the English oral communication ability of EFL secondary school students using a comprehensive framework, mainly the Competency-Based Differentiated Instruction, which integrates Competency-Based Language Instruction with Differentiated Instruction. Competency-Based Differentiated Instruction involves identified competencies, real-world task criteria, ongoing assessments, and tiered competency tasks. The derived principles focus on explicit identification of oral communication competencies, tiered instruction aligned with students' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles, and the incorporation of the "Engage, Study, Activate, and Apply" (ESAA) teaching sequence adapted from Harmer (2015) and Dachakupt et al. (2023) to guide oral communication instruction within the Competency-Based Differentiated Instruction classroom design.

Based on Figure 2, the researchers developed three curriculum principles to address the EFL secondary school students' needs (first objective in this study). The first principle was to identify clear competencies as learning outcomes or performance for lesson objectives and formative assessment in adjunct with tiered instruction as a second one. Also, the third principle was developed to involve instructional process under "Engage, Study, Activate and Application or ESAA" sequence as an oral communication instruction.

**Figure 2**

*The Correspondence Between Developed Principles and Findings of Themes*



## Effectiveness of Competency-Based Differentiated Instruction on English Oral Communication Ability

To explore the effects of oral communication instruction, one-way repeated measures ANOVA with Greenhouse-Geisser correlation and post-hoc tests using the Bonferroni correction were used to analyse the scores from the oral communication tests of three units. The inter-rater reliability of the tests was calculated using the Pearson correlation coefficient with .96, .94, .95 respectively.

### Overall Oral Communication Tests of Novice Group

There were 10 students in the novice group in the present study. Table 7 shows the results of the one-way repeated measures ANOVA with the Greenhouse-Geisser correction.

**Table 7**

*The Results from the One-Way Repeated Measures ANOVA of the Overall Oral Communication Tests of Novice Group*

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	8.12	2	4.06	1.12	0.34	3.35
Within Groups	98.125	27	3.63			
Total	106.24	29				

\*p≤.05      SS = Sum Square; df = degree of freedom; MS = Mean Square

After novice students underwent oral communication instruction using the competency-based differentiated instruction across three units, average scores in English oral communication tests (interpersonal and transactional) significantly differed ( $F=1.12$ ;  $df=2;27$ ;  $p=.34$ ). In addition, Post hoc tests revealed no significant differences between each pair of the tests in this group in the mean difference with a significance level of .05 (Table 8).

**Table 8**

*Post-hoc Results from the Analysis Comparison of the Average Scores of the Oral Communication Tests of Novice Group (n=10)*

Groups	P-value (T test)	Significance
Test 1 v Test 2	0.315	No
Test 2 v Test 3	0.918	No
Test 1 v Test 3	0.027	No

Units	Means scores
Unit 1	16.75
Unit 2	17.80
Unit 3	17.90

\* $p \leq .05$ 

Hence, there was improvement observed in the oral communication ability of novice group students across the tests (interpersonal and presentational) conducted in the three units. Each unit had a total score of 20, and the average scores for Units 1, 2, and 3 were 16.75, 17.80, and 17.90, respectively as presented in Table 8.

### **Overall Oral Communication Tests of Grad-Level Group**

There were 10 students in the grad-level group in the present study. Table 9 shows the results of the one-way repeated measures ANOVA with the Greenhouse-Geisser correction.

**Table 9**

*Results from the One-Way Repeated Measures ANOVA of the Overall Oral Communication Tests of Grad-Level Group*

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	13.55	2	6.775	1.24	0.304	3.354
Within Groups	147.125	27	5.449			
Total	160.675	29				

$p \leq .05$

SS = Sum Square; df = degree of freedom; MS = Mean Square

After grad-level students were treated by oral communication instruction using the competency-based differentiated instruction across three units, average scores in English oral communication tests (interpersonal and transactional) significantly differed ( $F=1.24$ ;  $df=2;27$ ;  $p=.30$ ), accepting the hypothesis. In addition, Post hoc tests with Bonferroni correction revealed no significant differences between each pair of oral communication tests in this group in the mean difference with a significance level of .05 (Table 10).

**Table 10**

*The Post-Hoc Results from the Analysis Comparison of the Average Scores of the Oral Communication Tests of Grad-Level Group (n=10)*

Groups	P-value (T test)	Significant?
Test 1 v Test 2	0.223	NO
Test 2 v Test 3	0.267	NO
Test 1 v Test 3	0.941852	NO

Units	Means scores
Unit 1	15.00
Unit 2	16.40
Unit 3	16.45

\* $p \leq .05$ 

There was improvement observed in the oral communication ability of novice group students across the tests (interpersonal and presentational) conducted in the three units. Each unit had a total score of 20, and the average scores for Units 1, 2, and 3 were 16.75, 17.80, and 17.90, respectively as presented in Table 10.

### **Overall Oral Communication Tests of Advanced Group**

There were 10 students in the advanced group in the present study. Table 11 shows the results of the one-way repeated measures ANOVA with the Greenhouse-Geisser correction.

**Table 11**

*Results from the One-Way Repeated Measures ANOVA of the Overall Oral Communication Tests of Advanced Group*

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	54.47	2	27.23	7.30	0.002	3.35
Within Groups	100.70	27	3.73			
Total	155.167	29				

 $p \leq .05$ 

SS = Sum Square; df = degree of freedom; MS = Mean Square

After advanced students were treated by oral communication instruction using the competency-based differentiated instruction across three units, average scores in English oral communication tests (interpersonal and transactional) significantly differed ( $F=7.30$ ;  $df=2$ ;  $27$ ;  $p=.0029$ ), accepting the hypothesis. In addition, Post hoc tests with Bonferroni correction revealed significant differences between Unit 1 and unit 2; unit 2 and unit 3 of oral communication tests in this group with a significance level of .05. However, there was no significant difference in the mean difference of the significance level of .05 between Unit 1 and Unit 3 (Table 12).

**Table 12**

*Post-Hoc Results from the Analysis Comparison of the Average Scores of the Oral Communication Tests of Advanced Group (n=10)*

Groups	P-value (T test)	Significant?
Test 1 v Test 2	0.002	YES
Test 2 v Test 3	0.015	YES
Test 1 v Test 3	0.315	NO

Units	Means scores
Unit 1	13.00
Unit 2	15.00

Unit 3	17.50
*p≤.05	

Hence, there was improvement observed in the oral communication ability of novice group students across the tests (interpersonal and presentational) conducted in the three units. Each unit had a total score of 20, and the average scores for Units 1, 2, and 3 were 16.75, 17.80, and 17.90, respectively as presented in Table 12.

### Discussion

This discussion aimed to elucidate the convergence of findings across three research queries by collectively examining a conceptual framework integrating Competency-Based Language Instruction and Differentiated Instruction with insights from interviews and questionnaires. Three key themes emerged, that is, insufficient English-speaking opportunities in class, a misalignment between textbook emphasis and teacher focus, the importance of engaging speaking practices through games and group activities, and the necessity for more varied topics, learning styles, instructional materials, and activities.

Firstly, Arunsirot (2019) and Khiadthong (2022) found that students face difficulties due to the lack of chances to practise and sequences that support English communication. To solve this, competency-based language instruction can introduce interactional competences for the successful communication demonstrating job-related or hands-on tasks with various ongoing assessments (Council of Europe, 2018; Waluyo, 2020) and using the ESA sequence to create a conducive opportunity for students to focus on language forms and their practical usage and to incorporate communicative tasks, adaptive materials (Mahalableh & Abdullah, 2020) identified competency, teaching process to organizing learning experiences and assessment.

To lessen the mismatching of textbooks and instruction, Magableh and Abdullah (2020) use differentiated instruction classrooms to outperform on overall English achievement and to provides a theoretical foundation that supports the research's aim of improving English oral communication ability through a competency-based instructional framework (OEC, 2020).

To promote engaging speaking practice through games and group activities, Phueakphud (2019) investigated tiered instruction and gamification improving English oral communication ability by differentiating process. This aligns with the literature on competency-based learning, where the focus is on creating supportive learning experiences, practices of subtasks, and modularised teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). It reinforces the idea that active participation in varied activities enhances oral communication abilities.

To fit the students' needs of more differentiated approaches taking into account various factors such as various learning topics, learning styles, instructional materials, and activities, the English course should underscore the significant appeal of music-related content, as well as a general enthusiasm for topics related to digital platforms, technology, e-sports, communicative tasks, multimedia platforms and interactive

instructional materials in their learning preferences. This is true because students in EFL classrooms are quite diverse, heterogeneous by means of various interests, backgrounds, learning styles, preferences, multiple intelligences in multi-level classes or DI classroom (Rattanasang, 2019; Tomlinson, 2017). Overall, the research encourages curriculum development focusing on objectives, content, instructional design, and assessment based on the identified needs and instructional principles answered the second question, the way to developing curriculum principles to enhance EFL secondary school students' English oral communication.

As for the third research question, the experiment involving a competency-based differentiated instruction produced a significant improvement in students' oral communication abilities in novice, grade-level, and advanced groups through. This approach allowed students to engage with materials matching their interests, providing ample time for activities that catered to their learning preferences interests (Tomlinson, 2017). By incorporating diverse modes of learning, such as text, video clips, and infographics, the approach accommodated various learning profiles, enhancing efficiency and flexibility (Rattanasang, 2019; Tomlinson, 2017). For example, in unit 2, the students collaboratively explored and analysed future events in contexts in three modes of learning including text, infographic, and video clip concerning tense structures and used and did exercises in the activity sheet.

The utilisation of the "ESAA" model and stages like "Activate" and "Application" further facilitated knowledge application through social interactions or in critical work functions, paving the way for effective collaborative activities or active learning (Dachakupt et al., 2023; Harmer, 2015). For instance, in unit 1, students formed groups with similar readiness levels, select a student exchange programme, conduct online research, simulate a student interview through question generation and responses, and create a video clip for social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, or TikTok based on their preferences with one group taking interviewer roles while the other takes interviewee roles. Equally important, the incorporation of materials based on a needs analysis increased engagement, passion, and curiosity, aligning with previous research emphasizing the importance of activities tailored to students' interests for effective language learning (Generoso & Arbon, 2020; Magableh & Abdullah, 2020).

The tailored approach incorporated tiered activities and support tools to align with students' readiness, fostering achievement and ongoing assessment through oral tests at the end of each unit. This method aimed to enhance oral communication skills, through reduced guidance over time in later units. Although improvements were not significant in some units, adjusting activity difficulty and formative assessments is recommended to optimise learning (Thipatdee, 2021; Waluyo, 2020). Similarly, the intermediate and advanced groups in this study were affected by the difficulty level of the tests and the overlap in content. Overall, competency-based language instruction promoted self-paced interaction, a comfortable learning environment, and student cooperation, boosting oral communication skills (Magableh & Abdullah, 2020; Rattanasang, 2019). Affective factors like motivation, anxiety, and personality, especially



among EFL learners, influenced performance, with test anxiety in oral assessments impacting results (Rattanasang, 2019).

### Conclusion

This study on the impact of competency-based differentiated instruction on the oral communication abilities of EFL secondary schools uncovered three core curriculum principles: defining clear competencies as learning outcomes, applying tiered instruction with formative assessments, and following the “ESAA” sequence for oral instruction. Additionally, the curriculum effectively improved students’ oral skills, with significant gains observed across three instructional units. This success suggests that competency-based differentiated instruction can be an effective approach for diverse proficiency levels, especially in contexts where students have limited English-speaking opportunities.

However, limitations included a small sample size, lack of a control group, and a narrow focus on specific oral communication functions. Future research should expand the sample size, introduce a control group, and investigate a broader range of communication skills to increase generalizability. Thus, further studies should examine the application of competency-based differentiated instruction in different educational settings and across various language skills, assessing its impact on oral communication functions beyond transactional and interpersonal skills. For teachers, incorporating competency-based differentiated instruction with real-world, culturally relevant tasks and ongoing feedback can enhance student engagement and oral communication proficiency across all skill levels.

### Ethical Approval Statement

Research ethics approval was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Srinakharinwirot University based on Declaration of Helsinki, Belmont Report, International Conference on Harmonization in Good Clinical Practice (ICH-GCP), International Guidelines for Human Research. Protocol code: SWUEC-662083.

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