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Table 1
Types of Communication Strategies Used Across Age Groups

Figure 1
Frequency of Communication Strategy Used Across Age Groups

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ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING CRISES: AN ASSESSMENT FROM CHINESE STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies in promoting English language learning from the perspective of Chinese university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The study had a sequential explanatory mixed methods design. A questionnaire was used to gather data from 1,601 EFL students. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 34 participants. The results showed that Chinese university EFL students rarely saw their teachers performing AfL strategies in the classroom and that the AfL strategies were slightly important in promoting English language learning. There was a positive relationship between how students perceived their teachers to perform AfL strategies and what these students perceived to be essential in promoting English language learning. This shows that students did not observe these strategies in practice, which may explain why they undervalued their importance.

Keywords: assessment for learning; English as a foreign language students; English language learning; higher education

Introduction

Assessment is crucial in monitoring student progress (Koda & Yamashita, 2018). It is also the framework or foundation for creating and developing instructional materials used to deliver lessons to learners. Additionally, Kane (2018) emphasised that educational assessments are meaningful and useful. An effective and efficient teaching and learning experience is reflected in the result of an assessment. Assessment permits the recognition of accomplishments and assists teachers and students in reflecting on and evaluating their performance and growth (Berry, 2008).

Assessment can be categorised into: Assessment as Learning (AaL), Assessment for Learning (AfL), and Assessment of Learning (AoL) (Schellekens et al., 2021). AaL is a way of student learning from the feedback or result of their assessment. AfL is under formative assessment when it aims to enhance the learning process of the students and improve teaching strategies. AoL is usually under summative assessment because it measures student learning through graded activities. This paper focuses on AfL, particularly how it promotes English language learning in the tertiary level education in China.

The educational policy in China emphasised the importance of AfL integration in Chinese university EFL classrooms (Wu et al., 2021). In China, there is a growing recognition of the necessity of incorporating AfL practices in EFL classrooms to foster students' deeper learning abilities and critical thinking skills (Gan et al., 2017). Amoah and Yeboah (2021) found that the reason Chinese EFL students find English language learning difficult is mainly because of psychological factors like fear of being judged for their mistakes, shyness, low motivation and insufficient vocabulary. The introduction of AfL to EFL classrooms may address these problems because AfL can enhance students' interests, active participation, and responsibilities (Fan et al., 2016). Research on students' perspectives of AfL highlighted the importance of timely feedback, self-assessment, and confidence that emerge from students' active participation in the assessment process (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

While China's educational policy has stressed the importance of AfL integration in Chinese university EFL classrooms, there has been a traditional inclination towards summative assessment, focusing on knowledge assessment and test preparation. In contrast, formative assessment, including AfL, is seen as responsible for assessment-related innovations and is recognised for its potential to foster students' deeper learning abilities and critical thinking skills. Despite the recognised benefits and policy emphasis on AfL, Black and Wiliam (1998) noted the need for more exploration into what happens between teachers and students inside the classroom.

This study examined how teachers implemented AfL strategies from the perspective of Chinese university EFL students. The research questions are:

(1) How often do Chinese university EFL students perceive their teachers to perform AfL strategies such as Communicating Learning and Criteria (CLaC), Questioning and Classroom Discussion (QaCD), Teacher Feedback (TeFe), and Peer-and Self-Assessment (PaSA) in their English classes?

(2) What do these Chinese EFL students perceive to be essential among the different AfL strategies in promoting English language learning?

(3) Is there a relationship between how often Chinese university EFL students perceived their teachers to perform AfL strategies and what these EFL teachers

Literature Review

Assessment of Learning, Assessment for Learning, and Assessment as Learning

Assessment gives students, teachers, parents, and administrators the real picture of how learning takes place inside the classrooms (Dial, 2016). Earl (2003) argues that assessment has many purposes.

AoL is the planned, structured, and systematic collection of data to understand students' comprehension, capabilities, and points for improvement (Berry, 2008). It is the type of assessment that checks student's understanding minute by minute (Britton, 2021). AoL is valuable, and Earl (2003) emphasises the contribution of AfL and AaL as part of a preferred future. As Earl and Katz (2026) said, AaL emphasises the active role of students as a bridge that shows the relationship between learning and assessment It is an avenue for students to assess themselves and gives feedback about their performance to help teachers make adjustments on the lessons (Yan & Boud, 2021). Thus, Lam (2018) considers AaL as a part of AfL through the process of self-reflection. Nonetheless, AaL tends to be more private in the assessment process focusing on the learner's self-realisation, while AfL tends to be public in giving assessment from multiple sources of feedback.

AfL, the focus of this paper, has gained popularity among countries like Canada, Australia, Israel, Ireland, Norway, and the United States because of its positive contribution to their educational system. Volante et al. (2024) state that AfL is not just an assessment method but it can be used as a method of teaching.

Student Assessment in China

According to Brown and Gao (2015), the standardised examinations usually conducted at the end of middle and senior high school are important in China. Because of large classroom population and the pressure to pass the high-stake examinations, China's educational system tends to emphasise strict classroom demonstration, student evaluation, specific curriculum focused on students' need, rote teaching and learning process to ensure accurate knowledge is handed down to students. In a bid to transcend an exclusively exam-based culture, the government of China implemented "*suzhi* education" during the 1990s with a view to promoting students' all-around development. This development resulted in the formulation of the *suzhi* which can be literally translated as a person's holistic quality (Lou & Chan, 2023).

However, the implementation of *suzhi* assessment holistically has not been smooth. This has entailed various challenges, one of which is assessment malpractices. According to Chen (2023), assessment malpractices damage the validity of the grading process. First, self- and peer-assessments can be highly unreliable. Second, educators and schools sometimes inflate grades artificially just to protect their reputations. Though Chinese recent educational policy highlights AfL, there is still a firm tradition for summative AoL, especially for the high-stakes *Gaokao* (national college entrance examination) system (Chen, 2023).

Method of the Study

Research Design

This research endeavour made use of sequential explanatory mixed methods design to address the research questions. Particularly, the researchers started by collecting quantitative data which was followed by qualitative data collection (Subedi, 2016). The results of the quantitative phase served as the springboard in the qualitative phase to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the perceptions of EFL learners in China (Doyle et al., 2016; McKim, 2017).

Study Site and Participants

There were two groups of participants in the study. The questionnaire respondents were 1,601 EFL students (645 males and 956 females) from three universities in China where some of the researchers were working at the time of the study, were selected via convenience sampling.

The interview participants were 34 students divided into five focus groups with six to eight members each, an ideal number of members according to Del Rio-Roberts (2011). Five focus groups are enough to understand complex and conceptual issues and to achieve meaning saturation (Hennink et al., 2019). Following Frechette et al. (2020), the selection criteria for the purposeful sampling of the interview participants were:

(1) participated in the quantitative data collection;
(2) enrolled in general English or English major courses at the time of data gathering; and
(3) must be in the university for at least one semester.

Gender, age and years of study were not exclusion criteria.

Instrumentation

The first tool utilised was a questionnaire adapted from Wu (2020). It comprised a consent form and a 24-item questionnaire on AfL strategies of university teachers in their English language classes. The questionnaire examined the use of four AfL strategies, namely, CLaC (5 items), QaCD (5 items), TeFe (6 items), and PaSA (8 items). The questionnaire used a four-point Likert scale to elicit how frequent (always, often, rarely, and never) and how essential (extremely important, important, slightly important, and unimportant) the strategies in promoting English language learning were. The questionnaire underwent validation from an English language expert with a doctorate degree and was translated into Chinese with the help of two Chinese-English translators to ensure that the respondents would fully comprehend the content of the questionnaire. Afterwards, pilot testing was done with 64 university students in another Chinese university. These students were not included in the actual study. The Cronbach's Alpha of 0.996 showed the high reliability of the questionnaire.

The second instrument was a semi-structured interview guide which was crafted by the researchers based on the highest and lowest results in the quantitative data. The researchers were able to compose 11 questions on the frequency of their teachers performing AfL strategies in their English language classes. There were 11 questions on what strategies the students perceived to be essential in promoting English language learning.

Data Gathering Procedure

The respondents in this study had been asked for their consent before the gathering of data. Furthermore, the researchers assured the respondents that ethical research practices will be observed in the conduct of the study and that the information gathered will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

First, consent letters were sent with the online questionnaire to the respondents using WeChat Form to Chinese universities. After three weeks, 1,601 respondents from three universities were collected. The questionnaire also provided an option where students could send their emails if they were interested in joining Focus Group Discussions to be conducted online. Fortunately, 34 participants responded to the invitations. After the pilot testing with six students as respondents, four other focus groups were created with six to eight members as suggested by Del Rio-Roberts (2011). After data transcription, the researchers sent the transcripts back to the interviewees in the focus group discussions for member validation (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). However, there was no feedback from the students anymore, so the data analysis ensued.

Data Analysis

The researchers utilised descriptive statistics to determine how frequent and how essential the strategies in promoting English language learning were. Some steps from Sundler et al. (2019)'s thematic analysis were adopted to add depth to the quantitative findings. Through descriptive narrative and supporting quotes, the meanings underlying participants' experiences were brought to the surface and expressed in clear and insightful prose.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the frequencies, correlation results and interpretation of CLaC as part of AfL strategies in promoting English language learning. Overall, the results revealed that Chinese university EFL students rarely saw their teachers performing CLaC as part of AfL strategies in promoting English language learning. Specifically, Chinese university EFL students thought that their teacher rarely involved them in setting goals, rarely used examples to help them understand what constitutes great quality. They also rarely helped students understand success criteria by providing detailed descriptions. The students reported that their teachers rarely communicated goals of the lesson to them in easily understood ways. Their teachers are rarely defined the goals of a lesson or a series of lessons based on students' previous learning. Because Chinese university EFL students rarely saw CLaC-AfL as an AfL learning strategy applied in their class, they believe that it is slightly important. When asked why they answered "rarely", interviewee 8 said, "Teachers often skip detailed descriptions of lessons, finding it impractical to involve every student in goal-setting."

Table 1
Communicating Learning and Criteria - AfL Strategies (CLaC-AfL)

CLaC-AfL Strategies	Frequency	SD	Interpretation	Importance	SD	Interpretation	Correlation	Interpretation
1. My teacher uses examples to help me understand what constitutes great quality.	2.11	1.08	Rarely	2.09	1.11	Slightly Important	0.929	Positive
2. My teacher defines the goals of a lesson or a series of lessons based on my previous learning.	2.00	1.10	Rarely	2.06	1.13	Slightly Important	0.917	Positive
3. My teacher helps me understand success criteria by providing detailed descriptions.	2.06	1.08	Rarely	2.06	1.10	Slightly Important	0.929	Positive
4. My teacher involves me in setting goals.	2.25	1.07	Rarely	2.20	1.09	Slightly Important	0.891	Positive
5. My teacher communicates goals of the lesson to me in ways I understand.	2.04	1.09	Rarely	2.04	1.12	Slightly Important	0.932	Positive
Overall mean and correlation	2.09	1.08	Rarely	2.09	1.11	Slightly Important	0.920	Positive

Significant at $p \leq 0.05$

Also, Chinese university EFL students perceived that CLaC, were slightly important in promoting English language learning. The students added that several goal-setting and success-criteria practices were slightly important. These included involving them in setting goals and using examples to help them understand what constitutes high-quality work. They also considered defining the goals of a lesson or a series of lessons based on their previous learning to be slightly important. In addition, students regarded helping them understand success criteria through detailed descriptions as slightly important. Finally, they viewed communicating lesson goals in ways they could understand as slightly important. During the focus group discussions, Interviewees 1, 5, and 27 mentioned that "studying is more important" than communicating lesson goals and understanding success criteria, so they think it is "slightly important." Furthermore, Interviewees 10, 22, and 23 think that "The teacher can directly present the goals in PowerPoint Presentations or verbally express them" without explaining them in detail because communicating learning and criteria is a "waste of time" according to Interviewee 9.

As indicated in Table 1, Chinese university EFL students' perceptions of how frequently instructors perform CLaC as an AfL strategy positively correlated with their perceptions of essential English language learning practices, r = .920. Strong positive correlations were also observed when examining individual CLaC-AfL strategies, specifically Strategy 5 (r = .932), Strategy 3 (r = .929), Strategy 1 (r = .929), Strategy 2 (r = .917), and Strategy 4 (r = .891). This means that EFL students thought that CLaC as part of AfL strategies were slightly important because they rarely saw their teachers perform them.

Students did not see the pedagogical importance of presenting lesson objectives in the classroom because of several factors. First, limited time in the classroom. They wanted to immediately begin with the discussions because they thought that discussions should be the more substantial part of the class. Students shared that there were other ways in which teachers could present lesson objectives. Interviewee 13 stated that the teacher could just send the lesson objectives for the week via WeChat or QQ group to be reiterated briefly in class. But then, goals are important in the classroom because these are the only way a teacher can be convinced that he/she has effectively delivered the lessons in the class through the strategies he/she has chosen (Mattiev, 2022). Interviewee 30 said that goals help students "better understand what they are going to learn." Interviewee 9 believed that goals are like "backbones which serve as a guide for the teachers and students in the classrooms".

Table 2 presents the frequencies, correlation results and interpretation of QaCD as part of AfL strategies in promoting English language learning. The Chinese university EFL students thought that their teachers rarely performed QaCD as part of AfL strategies. To be specific, Chinese university EFL students perceived that their teachers rarely asked open-ended questions, preferring close-ended questions instead during lessons.

Teachers also rarely asked students to explain their answers often accepting simple one-word responses instead. Teachers also rarely encouraged students and their peers to build on each other's answers; they rarely gave waiting time to encourage students to think before responding to questions and/or discussions, lastly they rarely used follow-up questions to further enrich the discussion during lessons.

The researchers have found out several reasons why students chose "rarely" when asked about the application of QaCD strategies. Some interviewees like Interviewees 78, and 9 said, that "Teachers usually ask only yes/no questions". On the other hand, Interviewee 5 said, The teachers rarely ask questions because there are about 130 students in our class".

Table 2
Questioning and Classroom Discussion - AfL Strategies (QaCD- AfL Strategies)

QaCD-AfL Strategies	Frequency	SD	Interpretation	Importance	SD	Interpretation	Correlation	Interpretation
1. My teacher asks me to explain my answer rather than merely give one-word answers.	2.11	1.09	Rarely	2.10	1.11	Slightly Important	.925	Positive
2. My teacher gives waiting time deliberately to encourage me to think before responding to questions and/or discussions.	2.09	1.10	Rarely	2.08	1.13	Slightly Important	0.926	Positive
3. My teacher uses follow-up questions to turn questioning into discussion during lessons.	2.09	1.10	Rarely	2.08	1.12	Slightly Important	0.925	Positive
4. My teacher asks open-ended questions more than close-ended questions during lessons.	2.12	1.08	Rarely	2.12	1.11	Slightly Important	0.918	Positive
5. My teacher encourages me and my peers to build on each other's answers.	2.11	1.09	Rarely	2.10	1.12	Slightly Important	0.921	Positive
Overall Mean and correlation	2.10	1.09	Rarely	2.10	1.12	Slightly Important	0.923	Positive

**Significant at $p \leq 0.05$*

Chinese university EFL students perceived that QaCD was slightly important in promoting English language learning. The students also mentioned several questioning practices as slightly important. These included being asked open-ended questions rather than closed-ended questions during lessons. They also regarded being encouraged to build on their peers' answers as slightly important. In addition, students considered being asked to explain their answers instead of merely giving one-word responses to be slightly important. They likewise viewed the deliberate use of waiting time to encourage thinking before responding to questions or discussions as slightly important. Finally, they regarded the use of follow-up questions to turn questioning into discussion during lessons as slightly important. In spite of students' thinking that these strategies were slightly important, there were some who said that waiting time before answering the teacher's question is "very important". This is because they need time "to organise the language before answering questions. Furthermore, Interviewee 23 said, "I have to analyse the question, think about the way to solve the problem, and organise the language to express it, which requires a certain amount of time."

Table 2 reveals a strong, positive correlation between Chinese university EFL students' perception of their instructors' implementation of QaCD as an AfL strategy and their perception of what is essential for English language learning, $r = .923$, $p < .05$. At the item level, consistently high, positive correlations were observed between perceived frequency and importance across all specific strategies: Strategy 2 ($r = .926$, $p < .05$), Strategy 1 ($r = .925$, $p < .05$), Strategy 3 ($r = .925$, $p < .05$), Strategy 5 ($r = .921$, $p < .05$), and Strategy 4 ($r = .918$, $p < .05$).

Reflecting the positive correlation in the data, because students perceived classroom questioning as "rare", they correspondingly rated its overall value as only "slightly important". Interviewee 4 thought that this is because "there would be no more time for discussions if a teacher asks a question in class and waits for students to answer for more than 3 minutes". This shows that students prefer the teacher to conduct lectures rather than ask questions in between discussion. They prefer a traditional classroom format where teachers do most of the talking while learners passively listen. However, for Shanmugavelu et al. (2020), asking questions in class is the most effective way to involve students. It helps the teacher assess what students already know about the lesson, and it gives students an opportunity to share their thoughts. Thus, a classroom with a proper balance of a teacher doing lecture while asking students questions during the discussion is more ideal.

Table 3 presents the frequencies, correlation results and interpretation of TeFe as part of AfL strategies in promoting English language learning. In general, Chinese university EFL students thought that their teachers rarely performed TeFe as part of AfL strategies in promoting English language learning. In particular, Chinese university EFL students perceived that their teachers rarely gave students opportunities to discuss feedback, rarely guided them how to revise their work according to the teachers' feedback, rarely specified their strengths, rarely specified areas for remediation, rarely specified how to achieve their learning goals, and rarely provided immediate feedback during lessons.

According to Interviewees 1, 2, and 16, they answered "rarely" because they do not consider "good" or "excellent" as immediate feedback. On top of that, Interviewees 2 and 20 said that they wanted to have "specific" comments, while Interviewee 4 said "They wanted the teacher to evaluate the content and offer some constructive suggestions for them to make progress". Most of the time, according to Interviewee 2, students get "collective feedback." Interviewee 5 thought that the reason teachers "rarely" give individual feedback is "Teachers' teaching tasks are very heavy, and students' curriculum arrangements are very tense".

Table 3
Teacher Feedback - AfL Strategies (TeFe- AfL Strategies)

TeFe - AfL Strategies	Frequency	SD	Interpretation	Importance	SD	Interpretation	Correlation	Interpretation
1. The feedback my teacher gives me specifies areas for remediation.	2.11	1.08	Rarely	2.10	1.12	Slightly Important	0.905	Positive
2. The feedback my teacher gives me specifies how to achieve my learning goals.	2.11	1.08	Rarely	2.09	1.11	Slightly Important	0.914	Positive
3. The feedback my teacher gives me specifies my strengths.	2.17	1.06	Rarely	2.10	1.09	Slightly Important	0.888	Positive
4. My teacher gives me opportunities to discuss with him/her about his/her feedback.	2.18	1.07	Rarely	2.14	1.09	Slightly Important	0.891	Positive
5. My teacher guides me how to revise my work according to his/her feedback.	2.18	1.07	Rarely	2.13	1.09	Slightly Important	0.889	Positive
6. My teacher provides immediate feedback to me during lessons.	2.09	1.09	Rarely	2.09	1.11	Slightly Important	0.923	Positive
Overall Mean and correlation	2.14	1.08	Rarely	2.11	1.10	Slightly Important	0.902	Positive

*Significant at $p \leq 0.05$

To Chinese university EFL students, TeFe was slightly important in promoting English language learning. Also, the students pinpointed several practices as slightly important. These included being given opportunities to discuss feedback with teachers. They also considered guidance on revising their work according to teachers' feedback to be slightly important. In addition, students regarded the specification of areas requiring remediation as slightly important. They likewise viewed the identification of their strengths as slightly important. Furthermore, students considered the specification of how to achieve their learning goals to be slightly important. Finally, they regarded the provision of immediate feedback during lessons as slightly important.

The interviews revealed several reasons why respondents consider teacher feedback as slightly important in class. Interviewee 2 believed that feedback must be given in private to the concerned students. According to him, “the teacher needs to consider some people's emotions, and negative feedback should not be given in public like in the classroom.” There is also limited time in the classroom which is why Interviewees 1, 3, and 15 felt like the teachers’ feedback may not be the most important thing to do in class. They explained that teachers would often tell the class that students can just look for their teacher after class or contact them via QQ if they have questions about their performance. On the contrary, students do not usually do so because either students believe that their teachers are busy or that the teachers’ opinions are already correct, that is why they would not like to further discuss their teachers’ feedback. Thus, Interviewee 5 seldom discussed the feedback he received from his teachers because he did not want to interrupt them.

Table 3 shows a significant, positive correlation between Chinese university EFL students’ perception of their instructors' implementation of TeFe as an AfL strategy and their perception of what is essential for English language learning, r = .902, p < .05. At the item level, consistently high, positive correlations were observed between perceived frequency and importance across all strategies: Strategy 6 (r = .923), Strategy 2 (r = .914), Strategy 1 (r = .905), Strategy 4 (r = .891), Strategy 5 (r = .889), and Strategy 3 (r = .888). This strong relationship aligns with the descriptive findings; because instructors rarely provided these Teacher Feedback strategies, students correspondingly perceived them as only “slightly important”. Although if expressed negatively, teachers’ comments may inhibit rather than encourage their language learning (Wang et al., 2018), students benefit most when they process such feedback constructively. Klimova (2015) asserted that feedback remains an essential classroom strategy because it will help improve the teaching and learning process of both the learners and educators.

Table 4 presents the frequencies, correlation results and interpretation of PaSA as part of AfL strategies in promoting English language learning. Overall, Chinese university EFL students felt that their teachers rarely used PaSA strategies (M=2.16). Across the individual items, students reported that their teachers rarely provided guidance to help them give feedback to peers or assess their own work. Students also observed that teachers rarely gave them opportunities to comment on their own work or on one another's. Furthermore, teachers also rarely taught students how to interpret peer feedback and they rarely fostered a safe atmosphere for giving and receiving feedback. Lastly, teachers rarely encouraged pair or group work to exchange feedback, or prompted reflection on what students had learned).

Interviewees 4 and 11 felt PaSA was rarely applied, and Interviewee 3 admitted to never having experienced it. During the focus group discussions, students attributed this mainly to large class sizes and limited contact hours. Interviewee 31 noted that these constraints stood in the way of implementation, while Interviewee 17 explained that teachers spent most of the time lecturing as students listened. Interviewee 4 had experienced PaSA, but only once or twice a semester.

Table 4
Peer- and Self- Assessment - AfL Strategies (PaSA- AfL Strategies)

PaSA - AfL Strategies	Frequency	SD	Interpretation	Importance	SD	Interpretation	Correlation	Interpretation
1. My teacher teaches me how to receive and interpret feedback received from my peers.	2.16	1.08	Rarely	2.15	1.10	Slightly Important	0.920	Positive
2. My teacher provides guidance to help me give feedback to my peers.	2.18	1.08	Rarely	2.15	1.09	Slightly Important	0.907	Positive
3. My teacher provides guidance to help me assess my own work.	2.18	1.07	Rarely	2.17	1.09	Slightly Important	0.894	Positive
4. My teacher gives me opportunities to comment on my own work during lessons.	2.17	1.07	Rarely	2.15	1.09	Slightly Important	0.905	Positive
5. My teacher gives me and my peers opportunities to comment on one another's work.	2.17	1.07	Rarely	2.16	1.10	Slightly Important	0.908	Positive
6. My teacher encourages me to reflect on what I have learned during lessons	2.11	1.08	Rarely	2.10	1.10	Slightly Important	0.917	Positive
7. My teacher encourages me and my peers to work together in pairs or groups to facilitate exchange of peer feedback.	2.13	1.08	Rarely	2.13	1.09	Slightly Important	0.910	Positive
8. My teacher deliberately develops an atmosphere in which I feel safe and comfortable about giving feedback to and receiving feedback from my peers	2.14	1.09	Rarely	2.13	1.10	Slightly Important	0.909	Positive
Overall Mean and correlation	2.16	1.08	Rarely	2.14	1.10	Slightly Important	0.909	Positive

**Significant at $p \leq 0.05$*

Chinese university EFL students perceived that PaSA was slightly important in promoting English language learning. The students noted that several practices were slightly important. These included being provided with guidance to help them assess their own work. They also included opportunities for students and their peers to comment on one another's work. Students considered it slightly important to be taught how to receive and interpret feedback from their peers. They also valued guidance on how to provide feedback to peers. In addition, students regarded opportunities to comment on their own work during lessons as slightly important. They also viewed working together in pairs or groups to facilitate the exchange of peer feedback as slightly important. Furthermore, students considered it slightly important to develop an atmosphere in which they felt safe and comfortable giving and receiving peer feedback. Finally, they regarded being encouraged to reflect on what they had learned during lessons as slightly important.

Students rated peer- and self-assessment as only "slightly important." This low valuation stems from several key challenges. First, “teachers do not give any guidance to help them assess themselves and their peers” according to Interviewee 1. Next, Interviewee 4 preferred the teachers to assess and give comments about their performance directly because they “can better understand what [their] shortcomings [are],” whereas Interviewee 4 saw it as a “difficult task” because “they may be more inclined to take care of themselves than other people’s feelings.” On one hand, Interviewees 22 and 23 expressed their discomfort in giving comments about their performance and that Interviewee G “does not like to judge myself [himself] in front of others”. On the other hand, Interviewee 10 explicated that receiving an evaluation from others “does not play much role in my [their] study’ because assessments among students are not necessarily objective and fair.” Finally, Interviewee 12 believe that “students who are not familiar with others may be shy about giving others honest and direct assessments.”

As shown in Table 4, the results indicate a significant, positive correlation between Chinese university EFL students’ perception of their instructors' implementation of PaSA as an AfL strategy and their perception of what is essential for English language learning, $r = .909$, $p < .05$. At the item level, consistently high, positive correlations were observed between perceived frequency and importance across all specific strategies: Strategy 1 ($r = .920$), Strategy 6 ($r = .920$), Strategy 8 ($r = .920$), Strategy 7 ($r = .920$), Strategy 5 ($r = .908$), Strategy 2 ($r = .907$), Strategy 4 ($r = .905$), and Strategy 3 ($r = .894$). This denotes that students rarely saw their teachers perform PaSA as part of AfL strategies. Interviewees 4 and 11 believed that peer and self-assessment strategies were rarely applied leading them to perceive these strategies as only slightly important in promoting English language learning. Albeit the results, Al-Rashidi et al. (2022) have found out that peer and self-assessment is an effective tool in teaching and learning writing and speaking skills in EFL classes.

The study found that Chinese university EFL students rarely experience AfL strategies in their classrooms and, consequently, perceive these practices as only slightly important for promoting English language learning. A significant positive correlation exists between the frequency with which these strategies are performed and their perceived value, suggesting that students undervalue AfL precisely because they lack exposure to it in practice.

Conclusion

The on AfL strategies in promoting English language learning showed that there are relationships between perceived frequency and perceived importance of AfL strategies from the perspectives of Chinese university EFL students.

The investigation yielded three main findings First, Chinese university EFL students reported that their teachers rarely performed any of the assessed AfL strategies (CLaC, QaCD, TeFe, and PaSA) in their classes. Second, these students perceived the AfL strategies as only slightly important in promoting English language learning. Third, there was a positive relationship between how often students perceived their teachers to perform AfL strategies and what they perceived to be essential.

The combination of low implementation frequency and low perceived importance suggests several crucial implications. Most significantly, the positive correlation implies that students may undervalue the importance of these strategies precisely because they rarely observed them being put into practice. Consequently, students may not be fully benefitting from potentially effective formative assessment practices. This situation is likely rooted in the traditional inclination towards summative assessment in China, which influences both the infrequent use of formative AfL by instructors and the students' lower valuation of these approaches. Ultimately, this indicates a need for interventions to bridge the gap between the potential of AfL and students' current experiences and perceptions to significantly enhance English language learning effectiveness in Chinese universities.

Since the study centred on students’ perceptions of teacher behaviour, one limitation is the lack of direct data from instructors or classroom observations to confirm the reported frequency of AfL use. To address these limitations, future research should incorporate more comprehensive data sources: (1) More surveys should be conducted across Chinese universities that involve both teachers and students to gain a clearer, multi-faceted picture of whether AfL strategies are actually observed in English language classes; and (2) A series of classroom observations could be implemented to provide direct evidence concerning what takes place during English language lessons. Based on the findings that AfL strategies are rarely performed and require pedagogical changes, two key areas for further research are recommended. Exploring institutional support for AfL implementation could be done. Other researchers might explore how university administrators support faculty members in their implementation of AfL strategies.

This research is significant because fostering the necessary pedagogical shift such as moving AfL from an additional strategy to a "primary method of teaching" requires substantial institutional backing, comprehensive professional development, and support mechanisms for instructors. Research could focus on interventions aimed at raising students' awareness of the value and practical application of AfL strategies on their learning. This is significant because students will continue to undervalue AfL if students do not understand how AfL contributes to their learning beyond mere grading. Active education on the benefits of timely feedback, self-assessment, and active participation is necessary to maximise the intended effects of AfL.

AfL strategies being infrequently used by teachers creates a perception deficit among Chinese university EFL students, leading them to undervalue these essential formative practices. Therefore, enhancing English language learning requires a concerted effort to increase the practical implementation of AfL strategies and simultaneously educate students on their pedagogical value.

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INFLUENCE OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND ON USE OF NICKNAMES AMONG UNIVERSITY AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN JORDAN

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the most common reasons Jordanian users adopt nicknames on social media, focusing on the influence of three key factors: psychological, social and privacy. It also explores how nickname use relates to users' educational background, examines whether cultural differences exist between Jordanians and non-Jordanians, and identifies any significant gender differences in this practice. Data were collected through a Google Form questionnaire completed by 150 participants, comprising 100 Jordanians and 50 non-Jordanian social media users. These participants were drawn from two universities and two secondary schools in Jordan using a non-probability purposive sampling procedure. The results showed that privacy and security recorded the highest mean and percentage among Jordanian users, suggesting these concerns are the dominant motivation. School students were more motivated to use nicknames than university students, indicating that age and educational level shape this behaviour. Cultural factors also played a role, with non-Jordanian users scoring higher than Jordanian users. In terms of gender, male users scored higher than female users. The findings suggest that nickname use on social media is a pervasive phenomenon, with several reasons working in tandem.

Keywords: nicknames; psychological reasons; social and cultural reasons; privacy and security reasons; social media

Introduction

Social media platforms typically require users to create accounts holding the names of those users and other personal information relating to age, gender, nationality, date, and place of birth. These platforms allow users to use nicknames instead of their real names to keep their privacy or confidentiality. Nicknames can be used to hide real social identities and portray selected identities. Atanesyan et al. (2025) investigated the reasons behind using nicknames, "Virtual masks". The research employed Erving Goffman's Dramaturgical Theory to discover how users of social media choose nicknames to reveal their identities or change them for a specific purpose. Their study on 400 social media users in Armenia revealed that 35% of women and men favoured anonymity. Moreover, as the users' identities are unknown, they portray their profiles to be charming, cultural trends and express political issues freely.

The social significance of nicknames was examined by Setiawan et al. (2023) who found that they reflect a person's social reputation, ethnicity, or social status. The participants were 30 individuals known by their nicknames instead of their given names. The study also shows that the meanings behind these nicknames are diverse, ranging from physical traits to daily habits, family members, specific events, and unknown sources. Setiawan et al.'s (2023) results revealed that nicknames are mainly used to build strong relationships among social media users and not a source of shaming. Generally, individuals tend to react differently when addressed by their nicknames, which are associated with various feelings.

Motivation to use nicknames on using social media was examined by Zhou et al. (2021) in a study involving 394 Chinese active users of online communities. The results highlighted that virtual exploration, contextual adaptation, and social navigation were the factors behind the individuals' motivation to use nicknames on social media. Social, pragmatic, and emotional reasons for using nicknames were studied by Nikolenko (2023). The results showed a connection between nicknames and emotions such as pride and disgust. Humans experience a range of positive and negative emotions due to their spiritual and biological nature. Although various pragmatic factors influence the emotional meanings of nicknames, they universally reflect basic human feelings. Emotional lexemes convey emotional evaluations, subjective determinations of an object's status, and emotional expressions of approval or disapproval of someone or something.

Gender influences social media users' use of nicknames. The majority of marginalised gendered people try to use nicknames to maintain their identity and challenge traditional gender norms (Fu, 2022). Jadesi (2022) reported that female users may adopt gender-neutral or male-related nicknames to reduce bias and discomfort in interactions. In Jordan, Al-Saidat et al. (2023) found that both men and women tend to use terms with negative connotations more often than those with positive connotations. The study showed that men tend to prefer animal-related nicknames and do not prefer names of celestial bodies but female nicknames often incorporate references to plants, such as Black Iris. Women tend to choose nicknames that convey a sense of superiority but use job titles and famous characters less frequently (Ai-Saidat et al., 2023). Kuranchie’s (2012) study using a questionnaire showed that male high school students use nicknames more than females.

The influence of cultural background is seen in the users’ name, words, and symbols used in social media communication. Madhi's (2025) results indicated that nicknames contribute to the formation of youth social identity among Arab social media users. The discourse analysis showed that users tend to mix words from various Arabic dialects, use formal and colloquial expressions, and include some foreign expressions. Moreover, the data reflected cultural influences, regional norms and emotions. She et al.’s (2022) comparison of Chinese and English internet nicknames indicated that cultural, psychological, and social factors influence the choice of nicknames among internet users.

Nicknames can make online interactions equal by breaking down social hierarchies and prejudices, resulting in fairer conversations as they reduce the influence of factors such as gender, age, and social status. Zhou et al. (2021) argued that expressing different identities through nicknames and online personas can give users the opportunity to represent themselves in creative perspectives. Nicknames can create familiarity and closeness between people.

However, use of nicknames can have negative consequences like bullying, shaming, and humiliation. Lee and Kim (2017) studied the value of using nicknames in social media communication. Their study on 200 participants showed a higher frequency of conflicts and instances where decisions were based on incomplete or inaccurate information. In addition, nicknames might make it confusing for others to know who the actual user of that nickname is (Al-Mubayyidin, 2017; Lee & Kim, 2017). Thus, having expressive online relationships with individuals is challenging since trust and understanding are artificial. When online relationships are built on uncertain identities and superficial trust, users may feel less accountable for their behaviour towards others. This may be why cyberbullying is becoming more common. Examples of social media cyberbullying include verbal abuse, public humiliation, ridicule of physical appearance, and many other aspects. The most common age groups using nicknames on social media are individuals and young adults between 13 and 25 years old (Smith, 2019). Bularca et al. (2024) found that the younger the participants were, the more likely they were to face some kind of harassment but there were no gender differences in likelihood of being harassed.

Thus far, research on use of nicknames on social media show that they are linked to identity expression and relationship building (Setiawan et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2021), as well as emotional and cultural influences (Madhi, 2025; Nikolenko, 2023; She et al., 2022). Use of nicknames is linked to the gender of the social media user (Al-Saidat et al., 2023; Fu, 2022; Jadesi, 2022; Kuranchie, 2012). Use of nicknames may lead to reduced accountability and increased risks of misunderstanding and online harm (Al-Mubayyidin, 2017; Bularca et al., 2024; Lee & Kim, 2017). Hudacs’s (2024) analysis of 1,108 nicknames post of high school students showed that the dominant nickname type was symbols, such as animals, warriors, human figures, and abstract values. However, little is known about how these patterns differ across educational levels, cultural backgrounds, and gender among Jordanian social media users.

The study examined reasons for using nicknames among university and high school students in Jordan, and the influences of educational and cultural backgrounds. The research questions are:

(1) What are the reasons for using nicknames on social media by social media users in Jordan?
(2) Is use of nicknames on social media related to users' educational backgrounds?
(3) Is use of nicknames on social media influenced by the cultural backgrounds of users?
(4) Are there any differences between males and females concerning the use of nicknames on social media?

Theoretical Framework of Study

This study is based on Social Identity Theory, proposed by Henri Tajfel in 1979. He suggests that people typically define themselves in a social group they live in. Over time, individuals classify themselves according to gender, nationality, or online communities where these ideas become part of their self-concept. Consequently, people tend to maintain positive social identity, such as symbols, or language forms and nicknames, reflecting how they want to present themselves to online groups.

Hence, the Social Identity Theory provides a useful lens for understanding how social media users choose their nicknames. By selecting names that reflect prestige, humour, cultural association or belonging to a specific gaming group. Nicknames are not only a linguistic label but an identity marker which function as symbolic resources through which users construct, and display identity.

Methodology

In the descriptive study, non-probability purposive sampling procedures were used to select users with a nickname on social media. The sample consisted of two main groups. First, 50 Jordanian and 50 non-Jordanian students at Amman Arab University and the University of Jordan during the academic year 2023/2024. Second, 50 school students were selected: 25 studying at Madaba Vocational Secondary School for Boys and 25 at Al-Mamounia Secondary School for Girls. Male and female students were selected to investigate gender differences regarding the use of nicknames. Moreover, the sample consists of both high school and university students to investigate the influence of educational background on the use of nicknames.

The questionnaire consisted of 30 items on psychological elements, cultural elements, and security and privacy elements with 10 items each. Five-point Likert scale items were used (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree). Descriptive statistics (percentage, frequency, and mean) are used to report the results.

Results and Discussion

Reasons for Using Nicknames by Social Media Users in Jordan

Table 1 shows that the most common reasons behind using nicknames on social media for university and high school students in Jordan. The top reason is security and privacy reasons (mean = 3.36). People tend to protect their personal lives and personal information to have privacy and avoid cyberbullying. Social and cultural reasons (mean = 2.80), and psychological reasons (mean = 2.80) were less important reasons in the use of nicknames for the students in Jordan.

Table 1

Means and Ranking of Reasons to Use Nicknames

A. Psychological Reasons.

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	95% CI	Rank
1	I use a nickname for memorable and unique handles	3.10	0.81	[2.95, 3.25]	11
2	Nicknames on social media can help me build self-confidence	3.10	0.82	[2.95, 3.25]	22
3	The advantages of using a nickname on social media outweigh the disadvantages	3.00	0.83	[2.84, 3.16]	25
4	Having a nickname on social media allows me to highlight my interests or hobbies	3.00	0.84	[2.84, 3.16]	27
5	Using a nickname on social media helps increase my popularity	2.90	0.87	[2.73, 3.07]	23
6	Using a nickname on social media gives me more freedom	2.80	0.85	[2.63, 2.97]	21
7	Using a nickname on social media makes it easier to interact with others	2.80	0.88	[2.62, 2.98]	28
8	I prefer using a nickname on social media instead of my real name	2.70	0.89	[2.53, 2.87]	29
9	Having a nickname on social media makes me feel proud of myself	2.60	0.90	[2.42, 2.78]	30
10	Using a nickname on social media makes it easier for others to trust me	2.40	0.91	[2.22, 2.58]	26
	Total psychological reasons	2.80	0.71	[2.68, 2.92]	

B. Social and Cultural Reasons.

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	95% CI	Rank
1	Having a nickname on social media allows me to highlight my society	3.10	0.79	[2.95, 3.25]	10
2	I use nicknames to promote my culture	2.96	0.83	[2.80, 3.12]	9
3	Cultural factors influenced my decision to use a nickname on social media	2.90	0.86	[2.73, 3.07]	8
4	My nickname depends on the situation and may change accordingly	2.90	0.84	[2.73, 3.07]	1

5	Traditional or cultural nicknames contribute to unity and identity	2.90	0.80	[2.74, 3.06]	13
6	I am open to sharing cultural nicknames across cultures	2.90	0.81	[2.74, 3.06]	12
	I use nicknames to attract tourists in my society	2.80	0.87	[2.63, 2.97]	14
7	I use nicknames to give a sense of community and belonging	2.80	0.82	[2.64, 2.96]	20
8	I use a nickname to share articles and information about my cultural background	2.80	0.84	[2.64, 2.96]	19
9	I use a nickname to hide my nationality	2.70	0.88	[2.53, 2.87]	5
	Total social and cultural reasons	2.80	0.69	[2.69, 2.91]	

C. Security and Privacy Reasons.

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	95% CI	Rank
1	Using a nickname makes it harder for others to identify me	3.70	0.76	[3.55, 3.85]	17
2	Having a nickname helps protect my online privacy	3.60	0.78	[3.45, 3.75]	18
3	Nicknames allow the creation of multiple accounts for different purposes	3.60	0.77	[3.45, 3.75]	15
4	Using a nickname helps avoid risks associated with social media	3.50	0.79	[3.34, 3.66]	6
5	Using a nickname protects my personal information from cyber-attacks	3.50	0.80	[3.34, 3.66]	16
6	Using a nickname makes me feel more comfortable interacting online	3.40	0.80	[3.24, 3.56]	2
7	I use nicknames to communicate freely away from social control	3.30	0.81	[3.14, 3.46]	3
8	Using a nickname protects me from cyberbullying	3.30	0.83	[3.14, 3.46]	7
9	I feel safer using a nickname instead of my real name	3.30	0.82	[3.14, 3.46]	24
10	I trust people with nicknames on social media more easily	2.40	0.92	[2.22, 2.58]	4
	Total security and privacy reasons	3.36	0.66	[3.24, 3.48]	

Note. Means are based on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). SD = standard deviation; CI = confidence interval. Confidence intervals are reported at the 95% level. Higher mean scores indicate stronger agreement with the statement.

For security and privacy reasons, the top reasons for the participants are using a nickname makes them more comfortable interacting online as they feel they are freed from social control. They also find it easy to trust people with nicknames on social media easily. The priority placed on privacy by Jordanian participants is similar to past studies (Bularca et al., 2024; Lee & Kim, 2017) where the findings indicate nicknames can provide privacy and creative self-expression. As for the Jordanian participants in the study, nicknames may be used due to cultural traditions and a desire to protect personal information, highlighting the importance of privacy and community interaction.

Among the psychological reasons for using nicknames on social media, the results showed a strong desire by the participants to build self-confidence on social media. By using nicknames, their real social identity is hidden. Thus, they can express their authentic identity without being ashamed. Jordan is a conservative society where the position of females is usually lower than males. Thus, users feel more confident and proud of themselves, doing many things that social media users cannot do by using their real names.

As for social and cultural reasons, the results showed that the nickname chosen by the participants depends on the situation and they may change it accordingly. The participants also choose nicknames that hide their nationality. The opposite are choices of nicknames that highlight their society and promote their culture. For these participants, cultural factors influenced their choice of nicknames on social media, whether it is to hide their nationality and culture or to highlight these social identities.

Influence of Educational Background on Use of Nicknames on Social Media

The comparison between university and high school students in Jordan shows differences according to educational background (means of 1.44 and 1.97 respectively), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Mean and Percentage of University and High School Students' Nicknames

	Item	High school students		University students	
		Mean	Percentage	Mean	Percentage
1	Nicknames on social media can help me build self-confidence	3.1	61.6%	2.7	49.8%
2	Using a nickname on social media makes it easier for others to trust me	2.8	55.6%	2.03	38.6%
3	Using a nickname on social media gives me more freedom	3.2	62%	2.5	47%
4	Using a nickname on social media makes it easier to interact with others	3.2	62%	2.5	47.4%
5	Using a nickname on social media helps increase my popularity	3.4	66%	2.6	49.1%
6	Having a nickname on social media makes me feel proud of myself	2.8	55.2%	2.1	40.3%
7	I prefer using a nickname on social media instead of my real name	3.1	60.4%	2.2	42.8%
8	Having a nickname on social media allows me to highlight my interests or hobbies	3.2	63.2%	2.8	53%

9	The advantages of using a nickname on social media outweigh the disadvantages	3.3	65.6%	2.6	49.8%
10	I use a nickname for memorable and unique handles	3.3	65.6%	2.7	51.6%
11	Having a nickname on social media allows me to highlight my society	3.2	64%	2.7	51.2%
12	Cultural factors influenced my decision to use a nickname on social media	3.1	60.8%	2.9	55.8%
13	My nickname depends on the situation and may change accordingly	3.3	64.4%	2.9	54.3%
14	I use nicknames to promote my culture	3.3	65.2%	2.7	51.9%
15	I use a nickname to hide my nationality	3.1	60%	2.3	43.8%
16	I use nicknames to attract tourists in my society	3.0	59.2%	2.5	47.7%
17	I use nicknames to give a sense of community and belonging	3.0	58.4%	2.6	49.5%
18	I use a nickname to share articles and information about my cultural background	3.1	60.4%	2.6	49.1%
19	Traditional or cultural nicknames contribute to unity and identity	3.2	63.6%	2.6	50.5%
20	I am open to sharing cultural nicknames across cultures	3.2	63.6%	2.8	54.1%
21	Having a nickname helps protect my online privacy	3.8	74.8%	3.5	66.3%
22	Using a nickname makes it harder for others to identify me	3.7	72%	2.9	54.4%
23	Using a nickname protects my personal information from cyber-attacks	3.7	71.6%	3.3	62.1%
24	I trust people with nicknames on social media more easily	2.4	46.8%	2.3	43.8%
25	I use nicknames to communicate freely away from social control	3.2	62.8%	3.2	60.7%
26	Nicknames allow the creation of multiple accounts for different purposes	3.6	70.4%	3.6	69.1%
27	Using a nickname protects me from cyberbullying	3.1	61.2%	3.2	61.1%
28	Using a nickname helps avoid risks associated with social media	3.6	70%	3.1	60.3%
29	I feel safer using a nickname instead of my real name	3.4	66.8%	3.0	56.5%
30	Using a nickname makes me feel more comfortable interacting online	3.2	64%	3.1	60.3%
	Total	1.97	39.4%	1.44	28.8%

The high school students reported higher mean scores and percentages than university students for all items, indicating stronger agreement on the benefits of using nicknames on social media. The largest differences between the two groups of students were found in social and self-presentation aspects, particularly "increasing popularity" (high school, 66%; university: 49.1%), "easier interaction" (high school: 62%; university: 47.4%), and "giving more freedom" (high school: 62%; university: 47%). The differences ranged from 13% to 17%.

The high school and university students had similar results for privacy and safety-related items. Both groups showed relatively high agreement, such as protection from cyber-attacks (high school: 71.6%; university: 62.1%) and comfort in online interaction (high school: 64%; university: 60.3%). Two items showed almost no difference between groups: "communicate freely away from social control" (High school: 62.8%; university: 60.7%) and "creation of multiple accounts for different purposes" (high school: 70.4%; university: 69.1%). Overall, high school students viewed nicknames more positively across social and identity functions, while both groups were relatively similar in privacy-related perceptions.

Influence of Cultural Backgrounds on Use of Nicknames on Social Media

The results on the participants are analysed based on their cultural background: Jordanian, and non-Jordanian. Table 3 shows the results of perceptions of Jordanian and non-Jordanian social media users regarding reasons for using nicknames. The levels of agreement with benefits of using nicknames on social media was slightly higher among non-Jordanians (mean of 39.4%) than Jordanians (mean of 38.8%). It is apparent that cultural values and norms may influence the decision to use a nickname on social media.

Table 3

Mean and Percentage of Jordanians and Non-Jordanians' Nicknames

	Item	Jordanian			Non-Jordanian		
		Mean	Percentage	Rank	Mean	Percentage	Rank
1	Nicknames on social media can help me build self-confidence	2.9	57.5%	22	3.8	75.6%	23
2	Using a nickname on social media makes it easier for others to trust me	2.5	57.8%	21	2.5	49.6%	26
3	Using a nickname on social media gives me more freedom	2.9	56.4%	26	3.1	61.2%	28
4	Using a nickname on social media makes it easier to interact with others	2.9	56.6%	23	3.1	62.4%	21
5	Using a nickname on social media helps increase my popularity	3.1	58.7%	28	3.2	64.8%	30
6	Having a nickname on social media makes me feel proud of myself	2.5	52.1%	30	3.1	616%	1

7	I prefer using a nickname on social media instead of my real name	2.7	53.9%	25	3.2	64%	29
8	Having a nickname on social media allows me to highlight my interests or hobbies	3.1	59.8%	29	3.2	64.8%	25
9	The advantages of using a nickname on social media outweigh the disadvantages	3.2	58.7%	27	3.3	66%	22
10	I use a nickname for memorable and unique handles	3.1	60.3%	13	3.3	66.4%	27
11	Having a nickname on social media allows me to highlight my society	3.1	59.2%	20	3.6	71.6%	11
12	Cultural factors influenced my decision to use a nickname on social media	3.1	60.3%	14	2.9	58.8%	10
13	My nickname depends on the situation and may change accordingly	3.1	62.1%	12	2.8	56.8%	9
14	I use nicknames to promote my culture	3.1	61.1%	10	3.0	60.4%	5
15	I use a nickname to hide my nationality	2.7	55.5%	8	2.9	58.4%	8
16	I use nicknames to attract tourists in my society	2.8	56.4%	11	3.1	62.4%	7
17	I use nicknames to give a sense of community and belonging	2.8	56.4%	9	3.0	61.2%	4
18	I use a nickname to share articles and information about my cultural background	2.9	57.1%	5	3.0	59.6%	16
19	Traditional or cultural nicknames contribute to unity and identity	3	57.9%	19	2.9	58.4%	6
20	I am open to sharing cultural nicknames across cultures	3.1	62.1%	1	2.8	55.6%	3
21	Having a nickname helps protect my online privacy	3.7	72.8%	18	3.8	76.8%	17
22	Using a nickname makes it harder for others to identify me	3.9	74.1%	4	3.7	74.4%	14
23	Using a nickname protects my personal information from cyber-attacks	3.5	70.5%	3	3.9	77.6%	18

24	I trust people with nicknames on social media more easily	2.4	47.8%	17	2.6	52.4%	12
25	I use nicknames to communicate freely away from social control	3.3	66.2%	16	3.7	74.8%	15
26	Nicknames allow the creation of multiple accounts for different purposes	3.7	72.7%	15	3.9	77.6%	19
27	Using a nickname protects me from cyberbullying	3.2	65.1%	7	3.6	72.4%	13
28	Using a nickname helps avoid risks associated with social media	3.4	69.2%	6	3.9	77.2%	20
29	I feel safer using a nickname instead of my real name	3.2	66.2%	2	3.9	75.6%	24
30	Using a nickname makes me feel more comfortable interacting online	3.3	67.1%	24	3.8	76.4%	2
	Total	1.64	28.8%		1.97	39.4%	

The largest differences among the Jordanian and non-Jordanian social media users were for items related to privacy, safety, and emotional comfort online. The biggest difference in percentages was for "using a nickname to protect my personal information from cyber-attacks" (Jordanian, 70.5%; non-Jordanian, 77.6%). Similarly, the non-Jordanian were more likely to feel safer using a nickname instead of a real name than Jordanians (Jordanian: 66.2%; non-Jordanian: 75.6%). The non-Jordanian were also more likely to use nicknames to avoid risks associated with social media (Jordanian: 69.2%; non-Jordanian: 77.2%) and to feel more comfortable interacting online through nicknames (Jordanian: 67.1%; non-Jordanian: 76.4%). These results suggest that non-Jordanian users generally perceive nicknames as providing stronger security and psychological comfort online.

However, the differences in percentages were small for items related to trust, identity expression, and cultural use of nicknames on social media. For example, facilitating trust (Jordanian, 47.8%; non-Jordanian, 57.8%), hiding nationality (Jordanian: 55.5%; non-Jordanian: 58.4%), promoting own culture (Jordanian, 61.1%; non-Jordanian, 60.4%). Cultural background has less influence on identity aspects of social and cultural reasons for using nicknames on social media.

Differences Between Males and Females in Use of Nicknames on Social Media

Table 4 shows differences in male and female nicknames used by the participants. Examples of male nicknames in Arabic are AdHen, BamKer77 (77), BuGa55 (55), FaKe, Prince of Darkness, Alexander, Al-Nashmi, and Ahmed com. Examples of female nicknames in Arabic are SoCool, RizaMa, Darck stone, Flower Violet, Tota Ali, Rose Mary, Stranger in a strange world, and Flower October.

Table 4

Examples of Male and Female Nicknames Used by the Participants

	Male Nicknames	Arabic	Female Nicknames	Arabic
1	AdHen	أديت هنسم	SoCool	صوفيا كول
2	BamKer77 (77)	بامبانج كيبرن	RizaMa	ريزال ماشو
3	BuGa55 (55)	بودي جانتيغ	Darck stone	أنيسة
4	FaKe	فهمي كيس	Flower Violet	زهرة البنفسج
5	Prince of Darkness	أمير الظلام	Tota Ali	توتا علي
6	Alexander	أليكساندر	Rose Mary	روزماري
7	Al-Nashmi	النشمي	Stranger in a strange world	غريبة بدنيا غريبة
8	Ahmed com	احمد com	Flower October	زهرة أكتوبر

Table 5 shows a higher mean for male participants (M=1.77) than female participants (M=1.63). The greatest gender differences are for privacy, safety, and evaluation of nickname benefits, but the male and female participants expressed similar views on online interaction comfort and account management.

Table 5

Mean and Percentage of Male and Female Social Media Users

	Item	Male social media users			Female social media users		
		Item	Mean	Percentage	Item	Mean	Percentage
1	Nicknames on social media can help me build self-confidence	1	3	60.4%	1	2.7	53.4%
2	Using a nickname on social media makes it easier for others to trust me	2	2.4	48%	2	2.4	47.7%
3	Using a nickname on social media gives me more freedom	3	3	61.5%	3	2.5	49.6%
4	Using a nickname on social media makes it easier to interact with others	4	2.9	59.6%	4	2.6	51.9%
5	Using a nickname on social media helps increase my popularity	5	3.2	63.8%	5	2.6	53.4%
6	Having a nickname on social media makes me feel proud of myself	6	2.7	53.8%	6	2.1	43.4%
7	I prefer using a nickname on social media instead of my real name	7	2.9	58.8%	7	2.3	46.1%
8	Having a nickname on social media allows me to highlight my interests or hobbies	8	3	61.5%	8	2.8	57.3%

9	The advantages of using a nickname on social media outweigh the disadvantages	9	3.2	64.2%	9	2.7	53.4%
10	I use a nickname for memorable and unique handles	10	3.1	61.9%	10	2.9	57.7%
11	Having a nickname on social media allows me to highlight my society	11	2.9	58.8%	11	2.9	58.8%
12	Cultural factors influenced my decision to use a nickname on social media	12	2.9	58.4%	12	3	61.1%
13	My nickname depends on the situation and may change accordingly	13	3.1	62.3%	13	2.9	59.2%
14	I use nicknames to promote my culture	14	3.1	62.3%	14	2.8	57.3%
15	I use a nickname to hide my nationality	15	2.7	55%	15	2.5	50.7%
16	I use nicknames to attract tourists in my society	16	2.8	56.1%	16	2.6	53.1%
17	I use nicknames to give a sense of community and belonging	17	2.9	57.7%	17	2.6	52.7%
18	I use a nickname to share articles and information about my cultural background	18	2.7	54.2%	18	2.9	57.7%
19	Traditional or cultural nicknames contribute to unity and identity	19	2.8	56.1%	19	3	60.3%
20	I am open to sharing cultural nicknames across cultures	20	3	61.1%	20	2.9	59.2%
21	Having a nickname helps protect my online privacy	21	3.7	73.4%	21	3.5	71.1%
22	Using a nickname makes it harder for others to identify me	22	3.9	78.4%	22	3.7	72.3%
23	Using a nickname protects my personal information from cyber-attacks	23	3.7	73.4%	23	3.2	63.4%
24	I trust people with nicknames on social media more easily	24	2.5	49.6%	24	2.1	43.4%
25	I use nicknames to communicate freely away from social control	25	3.3	66.9%	25	3	60%

26	Nicknames allow the creation of multiple accounts for different purposes	26	3.6	71.9%	26	3.6	71.5%
27	Using a nickname protects me from cyberbullying	27	3.3	66.9%	27	2.9	58.8%
28	Using a nickname helps avoid risks associated with social media	28	3.5	70.7%	28	3.1	62.7%
29	I feel safer using a nickname instead of my real name	29	3.3	66.9%	29	2.9	59.2%
30	Using a nickname makes me feel more comfortable interacting online	30	3.2	64.2%	30	3.2	63.4%
	Total	Total	1.77	35.4%	Total	1.63	32.6%

The largest gender difference concerns using a nickname to protect personal information from cyber-attacks (male, 73.4%; female, 63.4%). Similarly, males were more likely to feel safer using a nickname instead of real name (male, 66.9%; female, 59.2%) as it reduces risks associated with social media (males; 70.7%; female, 62.7%). Males also felt that using nicknames has more advantages than disadvantages, compared to females (male, 64.2%; female, 53.4%).

There were little gender differences with regards to feeling comfortable interacting online (male, 64.2%; female, 63.4%), and ability to create many accounts for different purposes (male, 71.9%; female, 71.5%).

Discussion and Conclusion

The study showed a variety of reasons for using nicknames among university and high school students in Jordan, and the influences of educational and cultural backgrounds on use of nicknames in social media. The main reason for using nicknames is security and privacy reasons, which is considered more important than social and cultural reasons and psychological reasons. The study shows that high school students in Jordan are more likely to believe in the benefits of using nicknames on social media than university students. The non-Jordanians are more inclined to agree with the benefits of using nicknames on social media than Jordanians. Nationality differences are more strongly reflected in security-related perceptions of nicknames but less for cultural and identity-related uses. Gender differences are more obvious in perceived protection and risk reduction, while perceptions of daily use and functionality of nicknames are largely similar. The selection of male and female nicknames is different, with females inclined towards name of flowers. The study shows the influence of educational background, cultural background and gender on using nicknames on social media.

The present study involved high school and university students who belong to the younger generation, and are used to having nicknames in social media. Nicknames are seen as a form of self-expression and identity creation, with older generations gradually adopting different online identities as their digital skills improve (Aggarwal, 2016).

The results concur with researchers who found that use of nicknames are influenced by educational background, cultural background (Bularca et al., 2024) and gender (Al-Saidat et al., 2023; Hudacs, 2024; Jadesi, 2022). Hudacs (2024) clarifies that males often choose animal-related nicknames, while females opt for those that convey a sense of superiority. Societal attitudes towards personal authenticity and formality can impact the choice of a nickname (Al-Saidat et al., 2023).

This study is limited by its use of high school and university students as representative of the younger generation, which restricts the generalisability of the findings to other age groups and older generations. In addition, the reliance on self-reported questionnaire data may introduce response bias, and the results may not reflect their actual use of nicknames online. Future studies using digital ethnography can obtain deeper insight into selecting specific types of nicknames across different cultural and social media contexts.

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MOMENT-TO-MOMENT FLUCTUATIONS IN WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE: AN IDIODYNAMIC STUDY OF MALAYSIAN ESL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the moment-to-moment fluctuations in Willingness to Communicate (WTC) among Malaysian ESL undergraduates during small-group speaking tasks. Six English major students were divided into two groups of three, and each group completed a guided discussion. Afterwards, the participants carried out video-based self-ratings using the Idiodynamic Software, followed by stimulated recall interviews. The findings show that learners' WTC did not progress steadily but shifted sharply within the same interaction as they responded to real-time conversational conditions. WTC increased when learners discussed familiar or personally meaningful topics, received supportive peer responses, or perceived a communicative purpose such as persuading or maintaining conversational flow. In contrast, WTC declined when learners lacked topic knowledge, stepped back to allow others to speak, or experienced brief insecurity or idea exhaustion. These rapid shifts, occurring within seconds, indicate that WTC operates as a real-time state shaped by immediate emotional and situational cues rather than fixed personal traits. The study contributes to Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST)-informed WTC research and demonstrates the value of the idiodynamic method for capturing micro-level communicative behaviour. Pedagogically, the findings highlight the importance of context-sensitive and emotionally attuned classroom practices that can support learners' willingness to participate in L2 communication.

Keywords: willingness to communicate (WTC); idiodynamic method; state-level WTC; dynamic WTC; English as a second language

Introduction

The ability to communicate in English effectively has become a key indicator of global readiness and a valuable asset for academic, professional, and social advancement. In multilingual and multicultural societies such as Malaysia, English holds the status of a second language (L2). The language also plays a crucial role in national development, international engagement, and competitiveness. Consequently, proficiency in English has become a crucial asset for university graduates aiming to obtain jobs in the competitive job market. Nevertheless, possessing linguistic knowledge and structural mastery alone does not guarantee effective language use. The successful application of language skills often depends on learners' willingness to engage in communication, particularly in authentic and spontaneous interactions.

Willingness to communicate (WTC) has long been regarded as a stable personality trait that influences whether an individual is likely to initiate communication in a second language (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Nevertheless, emerging evidence suggests that WTC is a dynamic construct that shifts in response to momentary changes in emotions and situational conditions that arise during real conversational events. In some situations, the learner may have the confidence and motivation to speak. Contrarily, in other situations, the learner may be unsure or reluctant to speak. Thus, it is important to explore WTC by examining it at the specific conversational level due to the rapid and situation-based changes (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011; Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015).

Despite the growing recognition of WTC as a dynamic construct (e.g., Li et. al.,2024; Nematizadeh, 2021; Nematizadeh & Cao, 2023; Peng, 2020; Wood, 2016), research in the Malaysian context has primarily examined WTC through questionnaire-based and cross-sectional approaches. For example, Muhammad and Ismail (2024) investigated factors influencing Form Six students' WTC using a survey design, while Razak et al. (2025) examined the relationships among communicative confidence, motivation, international posture, and WTC among Malaysian undergraduates using PLS-SEM. Although these studies have contributed substantially to understanding the antecedents of WTC, they primarily capture learners' general communication tendencies rather than the moment-to-moment fluctuations that occur during actual communicative events. Consequently, the application of dynamic methodologies such as the idiodynamic method remains limited in Malaysian learners' WTC changes in real time during communication.

Accordingly, this study investigates the dynamic nature of WTC in English among six Malaysian undergraduates majoring in English. Using the idiodynamic method, it captures moment-to-moment changes in learners' communicative readiness during guided communicative tasks, with participants rating their WTC while watching their own video-recorded performance and then taking part in stimulated recall interviews. This approach enabled a micro-level analysis of how and why WTC shifts during conversation, treating WTC as a continuously changing experience rather than a fixed learner trait. By doing so, the study sheds light on the emotional and situational factors that encourage or discourage real-time communication, and its findings carry practical implications for language pedagogy and policy, particularly for developing emotionally responsive and socially supportive classrooms that foster meaningful communication.

Literature Review

Conceptualising Willingness to Communicate: From Trait to State

In second language acquisition (SLA), WTC is a crucial concept. Initially, WTC was first studied in first language (L1) communication research and was originally thought to be a fixed personality characteristic (McCroskey & Richmond, 1991). This personality-based opinion suggests that individuals tend to behave consistently across different situations (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). Early research on L2 learners followed this view by designing instruments based on L1 models to measure individual learners' tendencies to communicate (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

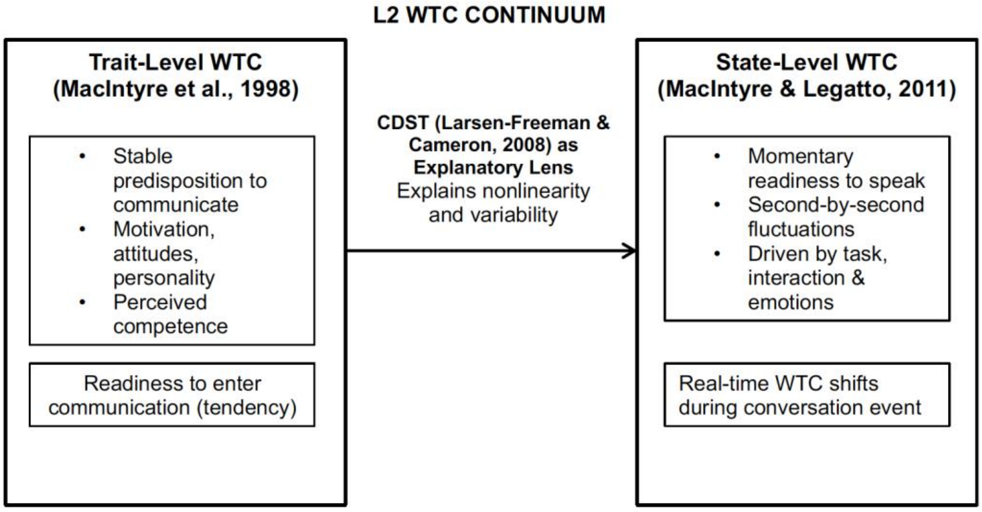
Nevertheless, the communicative behaviours of learners cannot be completely explained through solely fixed characteristics. For example, situational factors, including interlocutor familiarity, perceived linguistic competence, or classroom atmosphere, result in differences in learners' WTC moment to moment (Cao, 2014; MacIntyre, 2020). Besides that, emotional factors such as anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986), boredom (Pawlak et al., 2020), shame (Galmiche, 2017), enjoyment (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016), and love towards the L2 (Pavelescu, 2023) have also shaped learners' willingness to use the language. These findings led the researchers to consider WTC as a factor that changes depending on the situation and emotion, rather than seeing it as a fixed personality trait.

The dynamic view of WTC, which is now widely accepted, is based on Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST). According to Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008), complex dynamic systems are inherently variable and nonlinear, which means their patterns may shift in both gradual and sudden ways. This theoretical view is supported by time-serial WTC studies showing that learners' communication readiness fluctuates across seconds or minutes, influenced by continuously evolving interactional conditions (Henry et al., 2021). Thus, CDST offers a useful lens for understanding why WTC should be studied as a state-level construct. State-level WTC refers to a learner's momentary readiness to initiate or engage in communication in a specific communicative situation. Unlike trait-level WTC, which represents a relatively stable predisposition toward communication, state-level WTC is dynamic and subject to rapid fluctuations in response to changing cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and contextual conditions during interaction (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011).

Figure 1 presents the conceptual evolution of WTC from a trait-based perspective to a state-based perspective. The left side of the continuum represents the traditional conceptualisation proposed by MacIntyre et al. (1998), in which WTC is viewed as a relatively stable predisposition influenced by enduring learner characteristics such as motivation, attitudes, personality, and perceived competence. The centre of the continuum introduces CDST as the theoretical framework that explains why learners' communicative behaviour may vary across situations and within a single interaction (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). From this perspective, WTC emerges through the continuous interaction of cognitive, emotional, linguistic, and contextual factors. The right side of the continuum represents the state-level conceptualisation of WTC proposed by MacIntyre and Legatto (2011), where WTC is understood as a momentary readiness to communicate that may change from second to second during communication. Therefore, the figure illustrates not a replacement of the trait perspective by the state perspective, but rather a conceptual continuum in which stable communication tendencies and dynamic situational fluctuations coexist.

Figure 1

Continuum of Trait-Level and State-Level WTC with CDST as the Connecting Lens



This conceptualisation is particularly relevant to the present study, which adopts the idiodynamic method to examine WTC at the state level. By capturing learners' moment-to-moment fluctuations during communicative tasks, the study seeks to investigate the factors associated with changes in communication readiness as they emerge during real-time interaction. In doing so, the study moves beyond the examination of general communication tendencies by exploring on the dynamic processes underlying learners' willingness to communicate.

Investigating State-Level WTC Through the Idiodynamic Method

To investigate state-level WTC, researchers have increasingly adopted methodologies capable of capturing learners' moment-to-moment communicative experiences (e.g., Henry et al., 2021; Lee & Liu, 2022; Li et al., 2024; Nematizadeh & Cao, 2023). One such methodology is the idiodynamic method introduced by MacIntyre and Legatto (2011), which was specifically designed to examine rapid fluctuations in psychological variables during communication. The method combines video-recorded communicative tasks, self-rating procedures, and stimulated recall interviews, allowing participants to evaluate their experiences while reviewing their own recorded performances. Consequently, the method provides detailed insight into how communicative readiness changes during interaction.

According to MacIntyre and Ducker (2022), the idiodynamic method enables researchers to trace second-by-second changes in psychological states such as confidence, anxiety, motivation, and willingness to communicate as learners respond to evolving interactional conditions. Unlike approaches that examine communication tendencies at a single point in time, the idiodynamic method captures fluctuations as they occur, making it particularly suitable for investigating state-level WTC from a CDST perspective.

The usefulness of the idiodynamic method has been demonstrated in recent studies. For example, Aubrey (2022) employed the idiodynamic method to investigate the relationships among anxiety, enjoyment, and breakdown fluency during L2 speaking tasks performed by university students. The findings revealed considerable variation in the ways anxiety, enjoyment, and fluency interacted within individual learners across the task. Through stimulated recall interviews, the study identified multiple influences on these fluctuations, including task design factors, task implementation factors, cognitive-linguistic challenges, and learners' evaluations of their own performance. Aubrey (2022) argued that examining these processes at the individual level provides insights into dynamic communicative experiences that may be obscured when analyses focus solely on group-level patterns.

Furthermore, He et al. (2021) employed the idiodynamic method to investigate moment-to-moment fluctuations in foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) among Chinese university students during English classroom activities. Using self-ratings linked to video-recorded classroom interactions and stimulated recall interviews, the researchers found that learners' anxiety exhibited substantial intra-individual and inter-individual variation throughout the learning process. The study further identified both external factors, such as task type and teacher feedback, and internal factors, including gender differences and self-efficacy, as contributors to fluctuations in anxiety levels. The findings demonstrate the capacity of the idiodynamic method to capture dynamic affective processes and reveal factors associated with second-by-second changes that may not be readily observable through conventional retrospective measures.

Similarly, Lee and Liu (2022) employed the idiodynamic method to investigate fluctuations in WTC among seven Chinese EFL university students participating in online English classes. Participants rated their WTC while reviewing recordings of their classroom performance and subsequently took part in stimulated recall interviews. The findings revealed that learners' WTC fluctuated throughout the online sessions as a result of the interaction between trait-like factors. The authors concluded that the idiodynamic method provides valuable insights into the dynamic nature of WTC by capturing fluctuations and their contributing factors as they emerge during real-time communication.

Collectively, the findings of Aubrey (2022), He et al. (2021), and Lee and Liu (2022) demonstrate that the idiodynamic method is capable of capturing rapid fluctuations in learners' affective and communicative experiences while simultaneously identifying factors associated with these changes. Despite the growing use of this methodology in international contexts, its application in Malaysian WTC research remains limited. Therefore, the present study employs the idiodynamic method to examine how Malaysian undergraduate learners' willingness to communicate fluctuates during communicative tasks and to explore the situational and emotional factors associated with these moment-to-moment changes.

Method

Research Design

This study adopted an exploratory qualitative design supported by idiodynamic analysis to examine micro-level, moment-to-moment fluctuations in learners' WTC during an actual speaking task (MacIntyre & Ducker, 2022; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2022). While the primary aim was to capture the subjective and dynamic nature of WTC, the design also incorporated quantitative rating data generated through the idiodynamic software for visualising WTC fluctuations in real time.

Participants

The participants in this study were six Malaysian undergraduate students enrolled in an English major programme at a public university. Although the sample size is small, it is appropriate for idiodynamic research, which typically relies on small-N, intra-individual case analyses rather than generalisation to populations. Prior idiodynamic studies (e.g., Aubrey, 2022; MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011) also employ samples ranging from one to six participants because the focus is on detailed moment-by-moment fluctuations rather than large-scale trends. The participants were all intermediate to advanced users of English, which was determined based on their coursework and university placement records. The choice to focus on undergraduates majoring in English is strategic and pedagogically relevant. As English majors, these students are expected to demonstrate higher levels of language engagement and proficiency. By evaluating students of English majors, this study can clearly determine and explore the situational and emotional factors influencing WTC without the confounding effect of poor proficiency. The six participants were grouped into two groups (three students each) to encourage small-group interactions.

Data Collection

The data collection process involved three stages: (1) Video Recording of Communicative Task, (2) WTC Rating Using Idiodynamic Software, and (3) Stimulated Recall Interviews.

Video Recording of Communicative Task

A structured communicative task for groups was developed to assess learners' changing WTC. The task was developed as part of the regular classroom lesson. Both groups were offered a number of topics that were relevant to their personal and academic interests. Familiar and non-threatening topics were intentionally selected to allow learners to select a topic that matches their preferences or knowledge. This approach helped to minimise anxiety due to unfamiliar topics. Besides, learner control improves engagement with the task and interpretability of affective responses (Li et al., 2024; Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015).

This approach guarantees a balance between experimental control and ecological validity. The study remains authentic without affecting analytical focus by carrying out the task in a real classroom environment and managing topic selection and group dynamics at the same time. According to Peng (2012, 2014), in WTC-related studies, ecological validity demands placing learners in natural communication environments. In these environments, meaning-making is co-constructed. The flexibly structured task design follows this rule by encouraging instant communication in familiar classroom norms.

The duration of each group discussion was approximately between 15 and 20 minutes. Each group discussion was recorded visually using a fixed camera directly in the idiodynamic software. They were informed that the recordings would be used for retrospective self-assessment and interview purposes. Participants were encouraged to build on each other's contributions, express agreement or disagreement, and explore their perspectives collaboratively. Nevertheless, no competitive or evaluative framing was used to reduce performance pressure.

WTC Rating Using Idiodynamic Software

Immediately after the communicative task, each participant individually reviewed their video-recorded performance using the Idiodynamic Software. The software was downloaded from https://petermacintyre.weebly.com/idiodynamic-software.html (MacIntyre & Ducker, 2022). While watching the playback, they rated their WTC in real time on a scale ranging from −5 to +5. The participants clicked the mouse whenever they perceived a shift in their willingness to speak. These continuous ratings were saved and subsequently visualised as line graphs showing second-by-second fluctuations.

Stimulated Recall Interviews

Following the rating session, each participant took part in a semi-structured interview. The interview was designed to elicit insights into the reasons behind their WTC peaks and troughs. These interviews, adapted from protocols used by MacIntyre and Ducker (2022), included open-ended prompts such as "What were you thinking or feeling at this moment?" and "What influenced your willingness to speak here?" This interview technique allowed participants to explain the emotional and contextual triggers behind the peaks and dips observed in their rating graphs. The interviews were conducted in a quiet setting, recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data Analysis

The analysis integrated quantitative visualisation of WTC fluctuations with qualitative thematic analysis of stimulated recall interview data. First, individual WTC ratings generated through the Idiodynamic Software were plotted as time-series graphs for each participant. These graphs were visually examined to identify notable fluctuations in WTC, including sharp increases, sharp decreases, sustained peaks, and prolonged periods of low communicative readiness. Specific time points corresponding to these fluctuations were marked and matched with the video recordings of the communicative tasks.

Subsequently, participants' explanations during the stimulated recall interviews were examined in relation to the identified fluctuation points. Segments of interview data referring to increases or decreases in WTC were extracted and compiled for analysis. This process enabled the researchers to link changes in WTC ratings with participants' descriptions of their thoughts, emotions, and experiences during the interaction.

The interview data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework. First, the researchers familiarised themselves with the interview transcripts through repeated reading while cross-referencing the corresponding WTC graphs and video recordings. Second, initial codes were generated to capture factors associated with increases and decreases in participants' WTC during specific moments of interaction. Third, related codes were grouped into preliminary categories based on similarities in meaning and function. Fourth, these categories were reviewed against the coded extracts and the complete dataset to ensure coherence and consistency. Fifth, broader themes were developed and refined to represent the key factors underlying fluctuations in WTC. Finally, the themes were defined and reported using representative interview excerpts. To address the study's aim, the resulting themes were organised into broader emotional and situational categories that explained how different factors encouraged or discouraged participants' willingness to communicate during real-time interaction.

Although a second researcher independently reviewed the coded data, inter-rater reliability was not calculated numerically. Instead, discrepancies in code interpretation were resolved through discussion until agreement was reached. One discrepancy arose from a participant's statement, "I don't know how to continue the conversation". One researcher initially coded the excerpt as "topic unfamiliarity", interpreting the participant's difficulty as stemming from insufficient knowledge of the discussion topic. The second researcher coded it as "declining interest and engagement", interpreting it as an inability to generate further ideas despite understanding the topic. Following discussion and re-examination of the surrounding interview context, both researchers agreed to classify the excerpt as "topic unfamiliarity", as the participant subsequently explained that limited knowledge of the topic restricted the ability to contribute further to the discussion.

A second discrepancy involved the statement, "They talked about their hobbies, like scuba diving and arts, and I felt left behind". One researcher initially coded the excerpt under "topic unfamiliarity", interpreting the participant's reduced willingness to communicate as a result of limited familiarity with the discussion topic.

The second researcher coded the excerpt as “perceived exclusion from the conversation”, focusing on the participant's feeling of social detachment during the interaction. Following discussion and review of the surrounding interview context, the researchers agreed to classify the excerpt as “perceived exclusion from the conversation” because the participant emphasised feeling disconnected from the group's shared experiences rather than simply lacking knowledge of the topic.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, assured of confidentiality, and reminded that participation was voluntary. All names and identifiers were anonymised in reporting, and video recordings were stored securely with restricted access.

Results

This section reports the findings obtained from the idiodynamic ratings and the stimulated recall interviews with six Malaysian undergraduates. The idiodynamic rating graphs illustrate how each learner’s WTC changed from moment to moment during the group speaking task, while the interview data were used to clarify the experiences and conditions associated with these changes. In other words, the fluctuations observed in the graphs were interpreted in light of how the participants described their thoughts, feelings, and reactions at specific points in the interaction. By viewing the numerical shifts together with learners’ explanations, the analysis highlights how their WTC increased or decreased depending on emotional or situational factors. For clarity, the results are presented in two parts: the first part shows a detailed account of two contrasting cases, and the second part summarises the emotional and situational themes that emerged from all six participants.

Integrating Idiodynamic Graph and Interview Insights

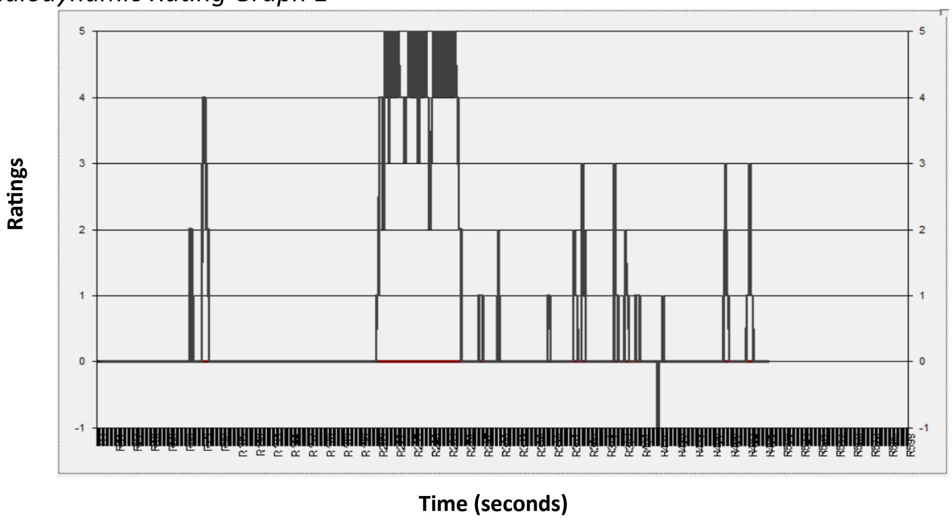
Participant 1

In Figure 2, Participant 1’s WTC displays repeated positive movements, rising sharply into higher values between +3 and +5, with several of these peaks sustained over consecutive intervals, forming short periods of stabilised high willingness. Only minor dips are present, and these are brief, with Participant 1 quickly returning to positive levels of WTC.

The fluctuations observed in Figure 2 align closely with Participant 1’s reflections during the stimulated recall interview. The repeated positive peaks between +3 and +5 correspond to moments she described as feeling “comfortable” and eager to “contribute” once the discussion shifted to a topic she was familiar with. She stated that she became more willing to speak when discussing her favourite shows and expressed a desire to persuade her peers to watch the movie, *Criminal Minds*, explaining that she “really want[ed] them to listen” even though she still felt nervous. This feeling of “good cautious anxiety” appears to have sustained her willingness rather than hindered it, possibly reflected in the plateaus of high WTC in the graph. In contrast, the minor dips towards lower values align with her report of becoming less communicative when the group discussed content she was “not really familiar with.” She emphasised that when a topic was “not [her] cup of tea,” she preferred to listen rather than speak, suggesting that brief low points in the graph reflect reduced engagement during topical disconnection. She also noted that greater communicative ease emerged towards the end of the interaction when the conversation became “more relaxed,” supporting the presence of stable high intervals later in the graph. Participant 1’s narrative suggests that her willingness was shaped by topic familiarity and persuasive intent, leading to sustained peaks, while brief lows reflected temporary disengagement when she could not relate to the content being discussed.

Figure 2

Idiodynamic Rating Graph 1

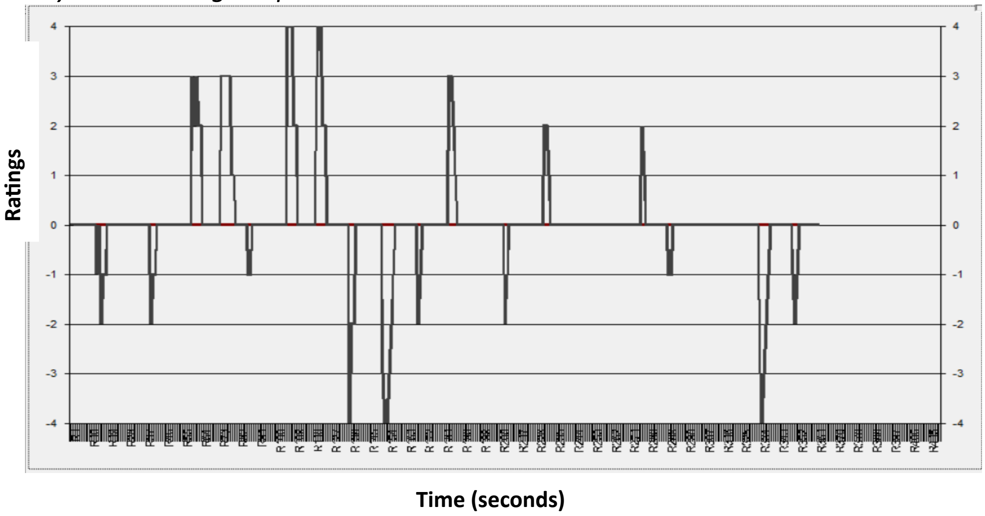


Participant 2

Figure 3 shows wider fluctuations across both positive and negative ranges, with several extended downward shifts reaching values below -3. These steep low dips appear repeatedly and often persist longer than the positive spikes, which rise intermittently to values between +2 and +3 before dropping again. The pattern seen in Figure 3 is characterised by frequent reversals between upward and downward movements, showing alternating periods of suppressed and heightened willingness.

The variability illustrated in Figure 3 is consistent with Participant 2’s account of fluctuating emotional and situational conditions during the task. The pronounced downward dips into negative ratings mirror her description of feeling “awkward,” “insecure,” and “left behind” when she lacked relevant experiences to contribute. She explained that she had “no strong hobbies” to talk about and felt unable to match her peers’ enthusiasm in topics such as scuba diving and arts, which she believed placed her at a conversational disadvantage. Negative dips in the graph likely reflect this reduced willingness to participate. She also reported insecurity about her language ability, stating that fear of being judged for grammatical mistakes made her "not really willing to talk," a perception that aligns with steep declines showing suppressed readiness to communicate.

Figure 3
Idiodynamic Rating Graph 2



However, upward spikes between +2 and +3 coincide with moments she remembered as meaningful, such as when she discussed caring for newborn babies. She described that moment as "exciting" because she "finally had something to talk about," suggesting that these peaks reflect short bursts of communicative confidence triggered by relatable content. Participant 2 also noted that positive peer responses temporarily encouraged her to speak more, stating she felt "more confident" when others reacted energetically, which aligns with short positive bursts in her WTC levels. Overall, the graph and interview together indicate that her WTC rose briefly when she had relevant experience to share and declined when she perceived a lack of topic knowledge or linguistic insecurity.

Comparison of Participants 3-6

Across the four participants (P3-P6), the idiodynamic patterns show that moment-to-moment WTC was more of a situational response to emerging interactional conditions (Table 1). High peaks commonly appeared when learners engaged with familiar or personally meaningful topics, especially when they had relevant experience to share or sensed that their peers were interested in their ideas. Positive shifts were also triggered by peer acknowledgement, such as attentive body language or invitations to elaborate, which encouraged learners to speak even when they felt mildly anxious or uncertain.

By contrast, low points were rarely caused by loss of interest or lack of confidence alone. Instead, declines occurred when learners lacked topic knowledge, when they chose to let others take the conversational floor, or when ideas were exhausted, leading to declining interest and engagement. These patterns suggest that WTC was actively negotiated within the group dynamic, rising to maintain interaction and falling to accommodate others or manage cognitive gaps. In this sense, WTC operated as a fluid communicative behaviour shaped by real-time interactional demands rather than fixed learner traits.

Table 1
Summary Table for Participants 3-6

Participant	Observed WTC Pattern	Triggers of High WTC	Example Quote	Triggers of Low WTC	Example Quote
3	Stable-high with rapid shifts	Enjoys topic, confident in English, supportive peer signals	“I always have something to say… I could sense they wanted me to talk.”	Pausing to avoid interrupting	“I didn’t want to interject with their flow.”
4	Positive fluctuations with hesitation	Encouraging body language and questions	“They tried to get into my topic… it made me want to talk.”	Topic unfamiliarity; self-doubt	“I don’t know how to continue the conversation.”
5	Strategic increase to keep talk going	Initiates when silence threatens group flow	“I spoke because I was afraid we would stop speaking.”	Steps back to listen to excited peers	“I should just listen… I don’t want to be rude.”
6	Topic-driven peaks with exhaustion drops	Strong enthusiasm for personal interests	“Something I really want to master… that’s why I was excited.”	Running out of ideas/content	“I ran out of things I wanted to say.”

The patterns observed across these four cases suggest that the moment-to-moment changes in WTC were not random but closely tied to the students’ immediate experiences during the interaction. The fluctuations shown in the idiodynamic graphs tended to rise when learners were able to contribute meaningfully or felt encouraged to speak, and they declined when they lacked ideas, were unsure about the topic, or chose to let others take the floor. These observable movements reflect a combination of personal feelings and interactional demands that shifted throughout the task. To illustrate these influences more clearly, the emotional and situational factors reflected in the six participants’ explanations are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2
Emotional and Situational Factors Influencing Real-Time WTC Fluctuations

Domain	Thematic Factor	Description Based on Idiodynamic–Interview Integration	Representative Quote
Emotional Factors	Personal excitement or interest	WTC increased when learners talked about something they liked, valued, or had personal experience with.	“I really wanted them to try watching *Criminal Minds*.”

	Desire to persuade or share	Some learners spoke more actively when they had a communicative purpose (e.g. convincing, informing, influencing others).	“I wanted to persuade them… I really wanted them to listen.”
	Anxiety and self-consciousness	Temporary dips appeared when learners worried about language accuracy, judgment, or unfamiliarity with the topic.	“I’m scared my grammar will be wrong and people will judge.”
	Declining Interest and Engagement	When ideas ran out, WTC dropped even if learners were still interested or willing to communicate.	“I ran out of things I wanted to say.”
Situational Factors	Topic familiarity/unfamiliarity	Topic choice directly affected moment-to-moment WTC. Familiar topics produced peaks, unfamiliar ones led to hesitation.	“I don’t know how to continue the conversation.”
	Peer response and encouragement	Affirming questions, eye contact, and body language increased WTC, whereas silence or disinterest caused hesitation.	“They tried to get into my topic… it made me want to talk.”
	Turn-taking and conversational flow	Dips sometimes represented willingness to let others speak rather than withdrawal from communication.	“I should just listen… I don’t want to be rude.”
	Maintaining group interaction	WTC increased when learners felt responsible to sustain the conversation, especially when silence threatened flow.	“I spoke because I was afraid we would stop speaking.”

The findings indicate that learners’ WTC was shaped by a combination of emotional and situational factors that operated dynamically throughout the communicative task. Among the emotional factors, personal excitement, interest in the discussion topic, and a desire to share ideas or persuade others were associated with increases in WTC. These factors often produced noticeable peaks in the idiodynamic ratings, particularly when learners were discussing topics that aligned with their personal experiences or interests. Conversely, anxiety, self-consciousness, and reduced conversational engagement were associated with declines in WTC. Such declines were observed when learners became concerned about language accuracy, anticipated negative evaluation, or felt they had exhausted the ideas they wished to contribute or to sustain the conversation.

Situational factors were equally influential in shaping moment-to-moment fluctuations in WTC. Topic familiarity emerged as one of the most consistent influences, with learners displaying greater willingness to communicate when discussing topics they knew well and lower willingness when confronted with unfamiliar content. In addition, peer responses and interactional dynamics played a significant role in regulating communication readiness. Supportive verbal and non-verbal feedback encouraged participation, whereas a lack of engagement or opportunities to contribute often resulted in hesitation. The findings also revealed that fluctuations in WTC were not solely driven by learners’ emotional experiences. Rather, learners continuously adjusted their participation in response to the evolving interaction, sometimes increasing their willingness to maintain conversational flow and, at other times, reducing their participation to accommodate other speakers. These findings suggest that WTC is best understood as a dynamic and context-sensitive phenomenon that emerges through the interaction of emotional experiences and situational conditions during communication.

Discussion

This study examined how Malaysian ESL learners' willingness to communicate shifted from moment to moment during a group communicative task, and how emotional and situational conditions shaped these changes. The idiodynamic graphs clearly showed that WTC did not remain constant. Instead, learners increased their participation when they were able to talk about familiar or personally meaningful topics, when they sensed supportive responses from peers, or when they felt responsible for keeping the conversation going. Conversely, drops in WTC were triggered when learners lacked topic knowledge, experienced momentary insecurity, ran out of ideas, or chose to step back to allow others to speak. These findings support previous research that conceptualises WTC as a dynamic and context-dependent phenomenon that evolves during communication rather than a fixed individual trait (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011; Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015).

A key finding of this study is that fluctuations in WTC were shaped by the interaction of emotional and situational factors. Emotionally, learners reported increased willingness when they felt excited, interested, or motivated to share their opinions, whereas anxiety, self-consciousness, and declining interest and engagement were associated with temporary declines in WTC. Situationally, topic familiarity, peer encouragement, conversational flow, and opportunities for participation influenced learners' readiness to speak. Importantly, these factors rarely operated independently. For example, familiar topics often increased learners' confidence and enthusiasm, while supportive peer responses encouraged learners to maintain their participation even when they initially felt nervous. This finding aligns with previous studies showing that WTC emerges through the interaction of multiple influences rather than a single determinant (Peng, 2012, 2014; He et al., 2021). The findings also provide a better understanding of reduced WTC. While previous studies have shown that declines in WTC are often associated with factors such as anxiety, limited linguistic resources, topic unfamiliarity, or unfavourable interactional conditions (He et al., 2021; Peng, 2012, 2014), the present study found that lower WTC did not always indicate communicative withdrawal. In several instances, participants intentionally reduced their participation to allow others to contribute, maintain conversational harmony, or avoid repeating ideas. This suggests that temporary declines in WTC may sometimes reflect strategic and socially responsive interactional choices rather than reduced WTC.

From a CDST perspective, these findings illustrate how WTC emerges through the continuous interaction of emotional experiences and situational conditions during communication. Rather than being determined solely by stable learner characteristics, communication readiness developed in response to evolving interactional circumstances, including changes in topic, peer reactions, and conversational dynamics. The observed fluctuations therefore support the view that WTC is best understood as a state-level construct that is highly sensitive to real-time communicative conditions (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011).

Methodologically, this study contributes to the growing body of idiodynamic research by examining real-time WTC fluctuations among Malaysian ESL learners. While previous Malaysian studies have primarily relied on survey-based approaches to examine general communication tendencies (Muhammad & Ismail, 2024; Razak et al., 2022;2025), the present study demonstrates the value of combining idiodynamic ratings with stimulated recall interviews to investigate how communication readiness changes during actual interaction. The findings therefore provide localised evidence that WTC among Malaysian learners is not merely an individual emotional readiness, but a dynamic and socially situated communicative behaviour.

Conclusion

The moment-by-moment analysis conducted in this study shows that Malaysian undergraduates' willingness to communicate is not a static reflection of confidence or personality, but an immediate response to what is happening as they speak. Learners did not simply "decide" to communicate more or less; instead, their willingness shifted in real time as they encountered familiar or unfamiliar topics, received encouragement or silence from peers, or attempted to maintain the flow of the conversation. Importantly, temporary declines in WTC did not always signify communicative withdrawal. In several instances, learners intentionally reduced their participation to allow others to contribute, maintain conversational harmony, or avoid repeating previously expressed ideas. This finding suggests that lower levels of observable participation may sometimes reflect strategic and socially responsive interactional behaviour rather than a genuine unwillingness to communicate. These shifts demonstrate that WTC is shaped by emotional readiness and situational demands that unfold within the same interaction, producing sharp rises and dips that cannot be captured through static surveys or general self-ratings. The findings therefore support the view of WTC as a dynamic, evolving state situated between trait-based tendencies and momentary interactional cues. By using an idiodynamic approach in a Malaysian context, this study provides empirically grounded evidence that WTC in local classrooms is best understood as a fluid communicative behaviour that emerges from real-time social engagement, rather than as a stable characteristic of individual learners. Although the study offers fine-grained insights into real-time WTC, it is limited by the use of a single communicative task, which may not reflect the broader range of interactions students experience. Future research may extend this work by examining larger groups, comparing different task types, or integrating additional classroom variables to explore how WTC develops across varied interactional contexts.

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SELF-ASSESSMENT AS A TOOL FOR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH IN EFL PRESERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Assessment in teacher education has become increasingly learner-centred, and it is now dedicated to reflection and autonomy of preservice teachers. This study investigated the process of self-assessment among preservice teachers of English education in South Korea in the framework of requirements of academic courses and preparations to take the national teacher certification exam. The study employed qualitative thematic analysis based on reflection notes and semi-structured interviews with nine participants. The findings revealed that self-assessment functions in three mutually dependent dimensions in a way that: 1) facilitates professional competence in exam preparation, 2) facilitates metacognitive monitoring of learning, and 3) contributes to the construction of teacher identity. These dimensions identify self-assessment as one of the tools of academic preparedness and a professional development and identity construction process. This study suggests that teacher education programmes should integrate structured self-assessment activities into coursework and teacher certification preparation programmes to promote preservice teachers' metacognitive awareness, reflective practice, and professional identity formation. The findings also imply that teacher education curricula in South Korea should balance examination-oriented preparation with reflective and identity-based pedagogical training so that preservice teachers can develop academic competence and sustainable professional self-awareness.

Keywords: self-assessment; assessment literacy; EFL preservice teachers; teacher education

Introduction

Assessment plays a fundamental role in the process of designing and optimising student learning processes (Orsmond et al., 2000), and it has moved beyond the conventional assessment to new options. The evaluation of teaching in education has changed from teacher-centred modes to learner-centred modes that foster learner autonomy, motivation, and responsibility in education scenarios. In particular, self-assessment is regarded as one of the alternative assessments that expands learners' potential to monitor their own progress, build up strategies for learning, and reflect on their outcomes (Andrade & Du, 2007; Boud, 1995; Zimmerman, 2008). It is also essential to enhance academic and linguistic skills, contributing to the professional growth and identity formation of preservice teachers (Brookfield, 2017; Farrell, 2015). Despite the advantages, it may still be difficult to establish self-assessment in teacher education systems. According to Leach (2010), learners are not always confident to assess their own performance. Furthermore, incorporating self-assessment may be affected by assessment literacy and institutional demands (Casanave, 2014; Fulcher, 2012). This is challenging in the Korean setting since involvement of learners is directly connected to a high-stakes national teacher examination, which involves linguistic and pedagogical ability. Therefore, the study of the experience of preservice teachers in self-reflection within this two-fold environment—academic growth and professionalism—suggest important perspectives on the way in which a future teacher develops.

While prior studies (Andrade & Cizek, 2010; Harris et al., 2014) have focused on the benefits and characteristics of self-assessment for language learning, less attention has been paid to how preservice teachers themselves articulate their reflective practices in relation to self-assessment strategies for their learning and professional goals. Understanding these perspectives can deepen knowledge of how self-assessment supports metacognitive awareness and the formation of teacher identity and readiness for professional practice. The study examined preservice English teachers' experiences and perceptions of self-assessment of their microteaching concerning professionalism and preparation for teacher certification.

Literature Review

Self-Assessment in Teacher Education

Self-assessment may be classified into the category of alternative assessment in education (Askew, 2001; Black et al., 2003). It focuses on diversifying assessment processes, promoting learner autonomy, motivation, and responsibility (Ross, 2006). Zimmerman (2008) asserted that learners develop motivational beliefs first, and then they practise self-monitoring, and finally, they experience evaluative reflection. This introspective cycle improves the sense of ownership of learning, making it more persistent and self-efficacious (Schunk, 1996). By doing so, self-assessment is also evaluative and instructive because the students will understand the quality standards that can be used in their own work (Andrade & Du, 2007; Boud, 1995). One of the recurring conclusions in research is that the engagement of learners in self-assessment may increase their motivation, engagement, and responsibility (Andrade & Du, 2007; Harris et al., 2014). Research has revealed that self-assessment fosters the development of independence among learners and is consistent with changing trends towards learner-focused pedagogy (Brown & Hudson, 2002). Self-assessment helps build self-regulated learning skills in the long term that are vital to academic success by making students set goals, reflect on their progress, and review their outcomes (Zimmerman, 2008).

Studies have shown that self-assessment can be improved and developed in a number of ways. The reliability and confidence of the learners are largely involved when there are clear instructions and training on the evaluation standard during the instructions. The study by Andrade and Du (2007) showed that after becoming acquainted with scoring rubrics and reflective prompts, the students experienced an increase in the reconciliation between the self-rating and external assessment. It is also important in professional development. Assessment literacy aids teachers in measuring learners and equips them with effective self-assessment (Andrade & Cizek, 2010; Malone, 2013).

Integrating the concept of self-assessment into the larger contexts of learner-centred schemes strengthens the idea of independence and constant involvement in the learning process (Nassaji, 2012). The efficacy of self-assessment is dependent on the cultural and contextual issues, including the perceptions of the learners in terms of fairness, trust in the ability of self-evaluation, and a feeling of ease in self-evaluation. In certain instances, students are hesitant since they are afraid of being judged or lack confidence in their potential to make judgment (Leach, 2010). Casanave (2014) implied that the tradition of assessment practices depends on the tradition of education, and therefore, the practicability of self-assessment should not be assumed. Often, time constraints, class size, and predetermined curriculum can limit the successful implementation of self-assessment. For example, in large classes, providing adequate feedback on the self-assessment of learners is challenging for instructors due to time constraints. Moreover, both teachers and learners frequently lack assessment literacy, the knowledge and skills required to design, implement, and interpret assessments appropriately (Fulcher, 2012; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014). Without explicit training, learners may feel ill-equipped to judge their own performance, and teachers may struggle to scaffold the process effectively (Popham, 2009).

Because self-assessment is significant in language learning, especially in productive skills (i.e., writing and oral communication), language teachers should ensure that it is both just and consistent (Andrade & Du, 2007; Brown & Harris, 2013). Well-established rubrics, scoring criteria, practice, and teacher feedback matter. The norms of student interaction and honesty in the cultures should be different. Finally, the most widely used is teacher-led assessment; self-assessment can be a more learner-centred, critical, and empowering assessment of the learner (Panadero et al., 2016). The purpose of self-evaluation in teacher education should therefore be refined by continuous research of its problems and benefits in emic terms, and these are based on the experiences of learners and teachers in their lives.

Recent studies on preservice teachers' self-assessment underscore the importance of self-assessment as a key driver of teacher development, professional competence, and instructional quality (Huang, 2022; Jalani et al., 2021; Karaman, 2024; Yigletu, 2023). Jalani et al. (2021) explored preservice teachers' self-assessment of their Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK), finding that while pedagogical knowledge was relatively strong, integration of technology with pedagogy and content was weak, highlighting the need for enhanced teacher training in technology use. Huang (2022) provided a conceptual review of EFL teachers' self-assessment, linking it directly to self-regulation and self-efficacy, and emphasised that self-assessment fosters reflection, instructional improvement, and professional growth. Karaman (2024) investigated the use of rubrics in student self-assessment, showing that structured tools help learners make more reliable judgments about their performance, thereby reinforcing accountability and learning autonomy. Yigletu's (2023) study revealed self-regulated learning among preservice teachers in self- and peer-assessments and suggested that systematic teacher training of assessment and evaluations is required to develop the culture of formative assessment in schools. According to these studies, the practice of self-assessment enhances the pedagogical competencies, technological integration, self-regulation, and professional identity of preservice and in-service teachers.

Methodology

Context and Participants

This study was conducted within a teacher education program in South Korea, where preservice English teachers were asked to evaluate their microteaching and writing during their professional preparation. Self-assessment activities on microteaching were integrated into coursework, along with writing speed essays, statements of teaching philosophy, and chapter presentations. The high-stakes national teacher certification exam also frames the institutional context and mediates student perceptions and involvement in self- and peer-assessment. This study involved nine preservice English teachers in a teacher education program. The participants were all preparing to take the teacher certification test and had already been exposed to reflective writing and activities that involve feedback in their coursework. The participants were between 22 and 26 years old. These are people who had taken a course called "English Rhetoric and Essay Writing," and it was a mandatory course to be taken by anyone who wanted to be qualified as a second-degree teacher of the English language. Participation in the research was voluntary, and pseudonyms were used to protect the anonymity of the students.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected from the participants' reflection notes and semi-structured interviews, asking the participants to reflect on their experiences, perceptions, and problems of self-assessment in the course. Reflection notes were used to capture ongoing, situated meaning-making processes (Farrell, 2015). Semi-structured interviews were selected to allow depth, flexibility, and participant voice while maintaining thematic focus (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The semi-structured interview protocol was developed based on previous studies (Andrade & Du, 2007; Meihami & Razmjoo, 2016) on self-assessment, reflective learning, and teacher identity formation in language teacher education contexts. The interview questions were informed by prior qualitative research examining learners' perceptions of assessment practices and reflective pedagogies.

The initial interview questions were refined through discussion with other qualitative research experts to improve clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research purposes. The finalized interview questions focused on four main areas: (1) how participants conceptualised self-assessment, (2) how self-assessment influenced their learning strategies and preparation for examinations, (3) what kinds of reflective or self-regulatory strategies they employed during the course, and (4) how self-assessment practices affected their emerging identity as future teachers. Follow-up questions were used flexibly during the interviews to encourage elaboration and clarification depending on participants' responses.

Reflection notes were collected biweekly throughout the semester. Participants were asked to write reflective entries after major instructional sessions and assessment-related activities. The reflection prompts encouraged students to describe their learning experiences, perceived challenges, and thoughts regarding self-assessment practices. Reflection notes were submitted electronically through the LMS to facilitate secure data collection and organization.

A total of nine participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the interviews after the completion of the course. Participants were recruited through an invitation announcement distributed by the instructor-researcher, and all participants provided informed consent prior to participation. Students were informed that participation was entirely voluntary, would not influence course grades in any way, and could be withdrawn at any time without disadvantage. The interviews were conducted individually in Korean after the final course grades had been submitted. Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes with an average duration of 52 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' permission using a digital recording device and were later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The qualitative thematic analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was applied to analyse the data. First, the interviews were carried out in their native language, Korean, and then verbatim translated into English. The nine interview transcripts, with an average interview duration of 52 minutes, produced approximately 45,000 words of transcribed data. To improve translation accuracy and preserve participants' intended meanings, the translated transcripts were reviewed multiple times by the researchers during the analysis process. The researchers first read the transcripts and reflection notes repeatedly to achieve familiarity with the data. The transcripts were inductively coded, and the emerging codes collapsed into broad themes.

Specifically, grounded theory, according to Charmaz (2014), was used to guide the analytic procedure, giving rise to the coding matrix in Table 1. The analysis of data included an inductive approach of initial, focused, and theoretical coding that enabled categories to be generated by the participants. By using constant comparison, the codes were narrowed down to sub-themes, including accuracy in exam performance, time management assessment, the identification of weaknesses, feedback use, clarity of teaching philosophy, and motivation checks for teaching roles. These sub-themes were further grouped under major themes such as assessment of exam competence, monitoring learning progress, and evaluating professional readiness, which are higher-order conceptualisations of the data. The themes document the multi-layered nature of self-assessment as both a social and individual process within the teacher education context. Based on the Charmaz constructivist disposition (Charmaz, 2014), the analysis tried to rest on the experiences of the participants, besides coming up with a theoretical standpoint on the role of self-assessment as a source of professional growth among preservice English teachers.

The researcher conducting the interviews was also the course instructor. Because this dual role may have influenced participants' responses, particular efforts were made to reduce social desirability bias and researcher influence during the data collection process. Participants were repeatedly assured that honest and critical responses were welcomed and that the study focused on understanding their authentic experiences rather than evaluating their performance. In addition, reflective field notes were maintained throughout the research process to support researcher reflexivity and awareness of potential bias.

Table 1
Coding Matrix of the Interviews with Preservice English Teachers (Self-Assessment Focus)

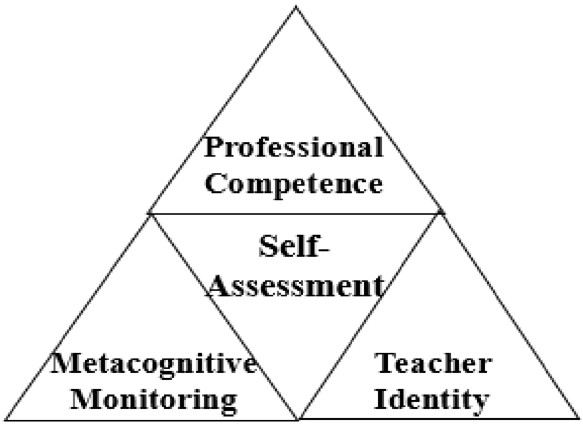
Major Theme	Sub-theme	Example Quote	Interpretation / Analytic Memo
Assessment of Exam Competence	Accuracy in exam performance	*"The speed essay was close to the teacher certification exam, so I could check how well I could produce concise and accurate responses under pressure."*	Self-assessment centres on exam-specific performance, linking classroom practice to institutional standards.
	Time management assessment	*"Through the repeated practice under exam-like conditions, I could measure my progress in managing time effectively."*	Learners focus on measurable progress in efficiency, framing skill improvement as exam-readiness.
Monitoring Learning Progress	Identifying weaknesses	*"Weekly formative assessments enabled me to evaluate my performance and identify specific weaknesses."*	Learners use assessment tasks to monitor progress and diagnose gaps in knowledge and skills.
	Using feedback	*"Based on the professor's feedback, I analysed which parts of my work needed revision and set specific goals for the next task."*	Feedback is considered a self-assessment tool, guiding performance adjustments.
Evaluating Professional Readiness	Clarity of teaching philosophy	*"Writing my teaching philosophy helped me to evaluate how clearly I could set my pedagogic goals."*	Self-assessment encompasses the ability to express professional goals, from content mastery to pedagogical clarity.
	Motivation checks for teaching role	*"I assessed my motivation to become a teacher and how well I*	Learners measure their motivation levels as an indicator of readiness

Major Theme	Sub-theme	Example Quote	Interpretation / Analytic Memo
		could connect this to guiding students."	for future teaching responsibilities.

Findings and Discussion

A qualitative analysis of the collected data reveals several dimensions of how self-assessment was experienced and articulated. Three major themes emerged: 1) professional competence for exam preparation, 2) metacognitive monitoring of learning, and 3) evaluating professional readiness as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Three Dimensions of Self-Assessment



Professional Competence for Exam Preparation

A major theme was the strong correlation between classroom practices and the exam-oriented performance assessment. Such activities as speed essays, presentations, and microteaching were regarded as true practice for the certification exam. The interviewed participants Two participants said that these activities helped them to check their level of English proficiency, time management, and develop logical arguments. For example, PSTs 1 and 2 described:

> The speed essay was close to the teacher certification exam, so I could check how well I could produce concise and accurate responses under pressure. (PST 1, interview translated)

> Through repeated practice under exam-like conditions, I could measure my progress in managing time effectively. (PST 2, reflection note)

PSTs 1 and 2 emphasised that the time constraints involved in speed essay writing functioned as an important form of practical training for examination-oriented writing tasks. They reported that limited writing time in class encouraged them to develop more strategic approaches to organizing and prioritising their ideas before beginning to write. Rather than writing immediately, they became more conscious of planning, structure, and efficiency during the composing process. For example, PST 4 explained:

> When I wrote the speed essay in less than 30 minutes, I would spend a lot of time planning. The awareness enabled me to change my approach. (PST 4, interview translated)

This account illustrates how the time restriction prompted the participant to engage in more deliberate self-monitoring. PST 4's comment suggests that the pressure of limited time increased awareness of the importance of organisation and strategic preparation. Examinations are strongly associated with timed performance and accuracy in the Korean context. In this sense, PST 4 interpreted timed writing as an opportunity to develop more effective planning strategies for examination-oriented contexts.

Similarly, two participants described how oral presentation activities contributed to their ability to organise and communicate ideas more clearly and logically. Participants perceived these experiences as beneficial preparation for the oral components of teacher certification examinations and professional communication. PST 8 noted:

> Presentation helped me to put my ideas together in a logical and concise order and present it in a clear and understandable way, which is significant in the oral part of the exam. (PST 8, reflection note)

This reflection indicates that PST 8 associated presentation activities with the development of organizational and communicative skills necessary for oral assessment situations. PST 8 seemed to have strong presentation skills in class and often stated that people need to have confidence when speaking in public. PST 8 also emphasised the importance of arranging ideas coherently and expressing them concisely under performance-oriented conditions.

These findings suggest that participants viewed both timed writing and presentation activities as opportunities to develop practical strategic skills related to examination performance, including planning, organization, conciseness, and clarity of communication. They are consistent with Boud's (1995) argument that self-assessment allows learners to bridge the gap between academic performance and external assessment standards. Rehearsing under exam-like conditions allowed students to participate in what Biggs (1999) defines as constructive alignment, in which learning activities are similar to those of the assessment, and thus performance skills are required to certify strengthening performance skills.

A case of how self-assessment can be used to change testing fear to a positive attitude of self-control is the coordination of classroom functions and certification standards. Andrade (2010) demonstrates that self-assessment results in the development of a more favourable view of assessment standards, which is evident here as students internalise the assessment performance standards. Recent research studies indicate such a relationship between systematic self-assessment and test preparation. Karaman (2024) suggests that rubrics can be more open and allow students a chance to assess their performance more responsibly and accurately. Jalani et al. (2021) found that preservice teachers have more demands in their pedagogical knowledge and fewer demands in their technological integration, and guided self-assessment is an imposed requirement to identify their weak points. All this adds to the argument that exam-consistent exercises, which involve self-assessment, contribute to certification exam preparation and the increase of professional competence.

Metacognitive Monitoring of Learning

The second theme of self-assessment is associated with metacognitive awareness of student progress. Rather than thinking abstractly, the participants applied self-assessment as a scientific means of weakness diagnosis and controlling future learning behaviours. These two excerpts illustrate reflective self-regulation and the use of feedback for improvement:

> I have been able to notice that I did not have concrete examples in my essays frequently. Since I noticed this trend, I made myself deliberately add supporting evidence. (PST 1, reflection note)

> Based on the professor's feedback, I analysed which parts of my work needed revision and set specific goals for the next task. (PST 2, interview translated)

These reflections show how PSTs 1 and 2 became aware of their weaknesses in essay writing and intentionally modified subsequent writing strategies to address the issue. The emphasis on identifying patterns and making deliberate adjustments suggests an increased awareness of the writing process. Other participants also described self-assessment as a process of identifying causes of performance difficulties and monitoring areas requiring improvement. For example, PSTs 3 and 5 stated:

> Self-assessment helped me to reflect on the reason why I lost points. (PST 3, interview translated)

> Weekly formative assessments enabled me to evaluate my performance and identify specific weaknesses. (PST 5, reflection note)

Three participants emphasised the role of detailed formative feedback in supporting ongoing reflection and improvement. PST 7 explained:

> The detailed comments on my reflections helped me recognize patterns of weakness, like grammar accuracy, so I could plan how to improve step by step. (PST 7, interview translated)

These claims invoke self-assessment as a process of self-regulation and comply with a description of reflective practice by Richards and Farrell (2005) as a metacognitive cycle. This is similar to the self-regulated learning model by Zimmerman (2002), in which one of the processes used to facilitate the establishment of the goals, monitoring them, and modifying the lesson plans. When it comes to comparing self-report and external feedback, it also becomes evident that the formative feedback enables students to become self-regulated learners as theorised by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006). Huang (2022) studied self-assessment in EFL and found that self-assessment is closely related to self-regulation and self-efficacy. Yigletu (2023) also discovered that assessment practices professional learning facilitated the effective observation of learning by teachers and the integration of self- and peer-assessment into the formative assessment cultures. The findings indicate that self-assessment is a metacognitive strategy and professional habit that enhances the adaptation, self-regulation, and improvement of the learners.

The Emergence of Teacher Identity as Professional Readiness

Beyond exam preparation, students used assignments to assess their broader professional readiness. Writing a teaching philosophy, for example, was described as a task that required not only self-expression but also evaluation of their ability to articulate instructional goals clearly. For example, PST 6 explained:

> Writing my teaching philosophy allowed me to evaluate how clearly I could set my goals. (PST 6, interview translated)

This excerpt suggests that PST 6 used the teaching philosophy assignment as an opportunity to clarify and organize personal instructional goals. PST 6 engaged in reflection about how coherently their educational beliefs could be expressed. PST 7 reflected on how self-assessment prompted consideration of professional responsibility in relation to future teaching practice:

> Self-assessment helped me to think about the possibility of passing the exam and to wonder whether I am ready to accept the responsibility towards students. (PST 7, reflection note)

This statement indicates that PST 7 connected self-assessment experiences with broader reflections on preparedness for the responsibilities associated with teaching. PST 7's comment specifically emphasises awareness of professional responsibility rather than merely examination performance. PST 9 described evaluating personal motivation in relation to future teaching roles:

> I assessed my motivation to become a teacher and how well I could connect this to guiding students. (PST 9, reflection note)

This reflection illustrates how self-assessment activities encouraged PST 9 to consider the relationship between personal motivation and the practical role of supporting students as a future educator. Four participants also described becoming more aware of discrepancies between their abstract teaching beliefs and actual instructional choices during practice-based activities. For instance, two participants commented on the gap between their abstract teaching beliefs and actual instructional practices during microteaching:

> Using microteaching, I was able to monitor the extent to which my teaching beliefs were actually in my teaching choices. (PST 3, reflection note)

> When I wrote my teaching philosophy, I knew that I was abstract in what I thought about. I had to relate them to the strategies in the classroom. (PST 4, interview translated)

These examples indicate that the development of self-assessment has also expanded to the assessment of professional identity and motivation, which solidifies the connection between academic activities and teaching responsibilities in the future (Brookfield, 2017; Farrell, 2015). The practice of building a teaching philosophy reminds me of the concept proposed by Schön (1983), according to which reflection-on-action is one of the tools of influencing professional development. Preparedness is also motivationally assessed. As Brookfield (2017) notes, reflective practice in the teaching process is concerned with doubting one of the technical capabilities and values, and assumptions of the choices made during the teaching.

Self-assessment of motivation and professional preparedness that appeared in this study exemplifies early recognition of teaching as a value-based process. In addition, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) highlighted that reflection can play a central role in identity-making and that methodical engagement in self-assessment will provide the framework within which novice teachers can present themselves as professionals. This is in line with the findings of Jalani et al. (2021) that preservice teachers require systematic opportunities to understand where gaps exist in the profession. Yigletu et al.'s (2023) study also claims that assessment-related professional development programs can serve the purpose of teaching preservice teachers how to evaluate their performance and their professional identity critically. In order to put the teaching philosophy and motivational assessment into the context of the entire concept of professional readiness, this study is pegged to the idea that, as Huang (2022) suggests, self-assessment leads to outcomes of performance in the short term and the emergence of professional identity in the long term.

The present findings demonstrate that preservice teachers perceived self-assessment as a reflective learning tool and a practical mechanism for preparing for institutional evaluation and teacher certification examinations. Participants connected reflective activities, formative assessments, and feedback practices to examination readiness, strategic learning, and professional accountability. This dual orientation toward both learning and examination performance appears to distinguish the current findings from several previous studies on self-assessment in EFL and teacher education contexts. For example, Huang (2022) pointed out that self-assessment promoted self-monitoring, goal setting, reflective thinking, and instructional improvement through strategies such as self-observation, reflective feedback, and self-evaluation. It showed that self-assessment increased teachers' awareness of their instructional effectiveness and professional self-regulation. Similarly, participants in the present study described how reflective assessment activities enabled them to identify weaknesses, revise learning strategies, and monitor their progress.

Likewise, Yigletu et al.'s (2023) study on assessment for learning investigated preservice primary mathematics teachers in Ethiopia, focusing on assessment for learning practices. Their findings revealed that formative assessment practices scaffolded learners' planning, monitoring, revision, and self-reflection processes. Similar patterns emerged in the present study, as participants described using feedback and reflective activities to regulate their learning and prepare strategically for future teaching assessments. While Yigletu focused primarily on measurable improvements in self-regulated learning skills through structured intervention, the present study further demonstrates how preservice teachers personally interpreted these practices as preparation for high-stakes assessment environments and future certification expectations.

In addition, the current findings resonate with broader discussions of teacher identity and reflective practice in teacher education. Whereas Jalani et al.'s (2021) study emphasised the limited opportunities available for preservice teachers to develop integrated TPACK knowledge, the current findings reveal how participants attempted to bridge this gap through reflective self-assessment, microteaching, and classroom-based evaluation tasks. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) argued that teacher identity is shaped through reflection, contextual experiences, and the negotiation of professional expectations. Their study emphasized that reflection allows preservice teachers to connect personal beliefs with professional roles and institutional demands. In the present study, participants similarly interpreted self-assessment activities as opportunities to monitor themselves, suggesting that assessment practices contributed to skill development and the formation of professional identity as accountable future teachers. The present study contributes to existing literature by showing that self-assessment in EFL teacher education was understood as a reflective learning process, a mechanism for self-regulated improvement, and a strategy for navigating examination-oriented and institutionally regulated teacher education contexts.

Self-assessment does not necessarily need to be an introspective process, but a systematic and practical effort to bring the short-term coursework to bear on the demands of the long-term career. It means that initiating self-assessment in teacher education is helpful in the context of the professional formation of future teachers, enabling preservice teachers to be able to critically and systematically evaluate their own professional development. Self-assessment endows the preservice teachers with effective performance outcomes and the development of professional dispositions, goals, and motivations.

Conclusion

This study examines the experiences of preservice teachers and their perceptions of self-assessment of their microteaching during teacher education. It has been found that self-assessment may lead to three dimensions, such as support in the development of professional competence in exam preparation, which leads to the metacognitive monitoring of learning, and support in the development of teacher identity. They demonstrated that self-assessment is an important tool in examining the immediate learning outcomes and controlling the developmental processes that led to the academic, professional, and personal development of the participants of the study.

The present study contributes to the literature on reflective practice and self-assessment by demonstrating that self-assessment in teacher education is a practice deeply shaped by institutional and examination-oriented contexts. Previous studies have largely conceptualised self-assessment as a mechanism for promoting learner autonomy, self-regulation, and reflective growth (Andrade & Du, 2007; Zimmerman, 2008). While the current findings support these functions, they reveal that preservice teachers strategically employed reflective practices to negotiate the demands of a highly competitive teacher certification environment in South Korea. In this sense, self-assessment functioned as a pedagogical tool for learning and a form of examination-oriented professional adaptation.

Although to a certain degree this study has provided constructive information about the self-assessment practice of preservice English teachers, there are several limitations. First, the study was conducted on a small sample of nine people in a single teacher education program in South Korea. The findings may not apply to preservice educators or other cultural and institutional backgrounds in general. The findings should be read as circumstantial and descriptive rather than representative. Second, it might have led to social desirability bias since they used self-reported data gathered via semi-structured interviews. The participants may have talked about the most positive aspects of self-assessment or downplayed the challenges to meet the perceived expectations of the instructor or researcher. Third, the research targeted students at a single point in time, mainly when they finish their homework and when they are undertaking their exams. A longitudinal follow-up of preservice teachers during their teaching careers may offer a better perspective on the longitudinal growth and development of self-assessment practices in relation to their profession.

The study highlights the value of creating reflective activities sensitive to the local educational contexts and fostering transferable skills of lifelong learning by foregrounding preservice teachers' voices. Future studies may broaden this line of inquiry through a cross-cultural or institutional comparison of reflective practices and thus add to the existing body of knowledge about the role of reflection as a pillar of reflection and teacher training.

Research Ethics

The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee) of Sunchon National University (Protocol Code: 1040173-202407-HR-023-05 (approval date: 13 August 2024)).

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STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION TEST ACHIEVEMENT, READING SELF-EFFICACY AND RELATIONSHIPS IN DIFFERENT TIME CONSTRAINTS

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ABSTRACT

Reading self-efficacy was believed to be a crucial factor for students' reading comprehension ability and achievement. Unfortunately, most research was performed only in a normal test situation with no emphasis on time constraints. This study investigates students' reading comprehension achievement level, reading self-efficacy level, and the relationship between the two aspects within different time constraints. The data were gathered from 119 'first-year students at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin through reading comprehension tests and the adapted version of the Self-Efficacy for Reading (SER) questionnaire in three reading comprehension tests with different time constraint namely standard, mild and severe time constraint. The data were analysed and compared through frequency distribution and correlation. Results indicated an increase in students' reading comprehension achievements and a stagnant moderate level of reading self-efficacy. A weak but significant, positive correlation was found in the test conducted under extreme time constraint. Extreme time constraint was concluded to be the most impactful not only towards the students' reading comprehension achievement but also towards the relationship between their reading comprehension achievement and reading self-efficacy.

Keywords: reading comprehension; reading comprehension achievement; reading self-efficacy; time constraints

Introduction

Reading is a language skill that not only represents an individual's ability to comprehend the meaning conveyed by the arrangement of letters but also reflects the ability to determine the meaning of a specific word 'in a given context. Seidi (2018) defined reading comprehension as a process of extracting meaning from interconnected texts. Reading comprehension assessments evaluate a reader's understanding of the author's intentions expressed through words and sentences. The human mind works fast to comprehend text (Carver, 1992; Walczyk et al., 1999).

Research suggests that readers' comprehension can be influenced by their affective factors, particularly self-efficacy (Ghonsooly & Elahi, 2010; Salari & Moinzade, 2015). Self-efficacy refers to an individual's judgment or self-assessment of their ability to successfully perform reading tasks, as defined by Bandura (1977). Unfortunately, most research only evaluated readers' comprehension and its relationship to self-efficacy in a single testing situation (Apriliyani & Usuludin, 2023; Fitri et al., 2019; Hager, 2017; Mohammed, 2022; Nonsawang, 2019; Oranpattanachai, 2023; Salehi & Khalaji, 2014). As a result, it cannot conclusively determine whether the observed influence applies to all testing situations, including those with time constraints. Carver (1992) noted that it is common to evaluate students' reading achievement through standardised tests with time restrictions; however, assessing the impact of affective factors on students' reading achievement under different time constraints is rarely addressed. Such studies would provide deeper insights into how affective factors such as reading self-efficacy, influence students' comprehension in various time constraints.

Despite its fundamental importance, empirical studies on the relationship between reading self-efficacy and reading comprehension achievement remain scarce in recent literature, particularly when accounting for different time constraints. Such a study potentially verifies the impact of reading self-efficacy on students' reading comprehension, regardless of the test situation, and emphasises the importance of reading self-efficacy in enhancing students' reading comprehension, irrespective of the testing context.

This study examines students' levels of reading self-efficacy and their reading comprehension achievements under three different time constraints: basic, mild, and extreme. The hypothesis tested is: There is a significant relationship between students' reading self-efficacy and their reading comprehension performance across these time constraints.

Literature Review

Reading is a sophisticated psycholinguistic process involving more than just the ability to decode or interpret a text. Seidi (2018) referred to this process as comprehension and described the term as the process of unlocking the meaning from the linked texts. Olivares et al. (2016), on the other hand, described comprehension as a complex process that requires the reader to understand ideas in each cycle, connect information from successive cycles, build up macro-ideas and regulate the whole process. Reading comprehension was said to be influenced by various internal and external factors. Alshammari (2013) claimed that the readers' attributes, such as language proficiency and mental ability which are the reading strategies used, previous knowledge, interest, first language skills, reading motivation and reading habit, would affect their ability to form meaning and links from the text. According to Chen et al. (2016), students' reading comprehension was significantly impacted by motivation, prior knowledge, vocabulary, and lack of interest. Cline et al. (2006) agreed that different individuals may use distinct strategies in reading which finally influence their final understanding of the text. Besides, Salari and Moinzade (2015) and Haghani and Bahmannejad (2018) stated that the individual's affective traits and cognitive process while reading the text are positively correlated to the outcome of the reading comprehension and thus supported the idea that the affective factors can influence reading comprehension problems.

Cognitive Load Theory is a comprehension theory which explains the reading comprehension process from an instructional standpoint. The theory was introduced by Sweller (1988) and acts as the initial outline for understanding how human cognition processes new information through the amount of cognitive load received and managed in working memory during learning or problem-solving. The main idea of this theory is that the human brain has a limited working memory which processes the new information and the schemas for information are stored in the long-term memory. It also introduces three types of cognitive load, which are intrinsic load, extraneous load, and germane load. Intrinsic cognitive load is the natural complexity of the learned material based on the reader's prior knowledge, while extraneous cognitive load refers to the unnecessary mental effort imposed by information's presentation, such as through poor instructional design. Germane cognitive load is the prolific mental effort that led to schema construction and automation, which leads to real learning and continuous understanding. Good comprehension involves managing the intrinsic load and minimising the extraneous load while fostering the germane load, which helps in schema construction.

The Cognitive Load Theory is known for its profound implications on learning outcomes and instructional design, which guide language teachers in aligning their teaching methods to the learners' cognitive capacity to optimise learning outcomes. Sweller (2010) believed effective instruction should manage intrinsic load while reducing the extraneous load to promote the germane load. Sweller et al. (2019) believed that while reading comprehension involves cognitive load, complex and time-limited tasks would lead to more cognitive loads. This theoretical perspective is particularly relevant to this study as it examined students' comprehension process within three different time constraints and highlighted the context which best promotes their reading comprehension achievement.

Time constraints are another focus of the study, and the term is represented in the study by test durations and were mentioned in various expressions depending on the situation and duration of the test. Haniff (2012) used the term untimed test to describe the test which allows any amount of additional time the students need or the time that is given beyond the predetermined time allocated for a standardised test. Testing and evaluation are essential in measuring the success of the education and training process. Oakley (2011) believed testing was important for reading comprehension, as it is the outcome which illustrates the readers' ability to link their background knowledge with the reading text. Standardised reading achievement tests are usually carried out under the same criteria such as test duration and scoring scheme which evaluates the participants' reading achievement without any possible bias.

Normally, many believed that unlimited time constraint affected the reading comprehension task the most compared to limited time constraint. Walczyk's (1995) study recorded a significantly higher score in the no-time-constraint condition, but a later study in 1999 revealed a better performance under mild time constraint. Mild time constraint was thus believed to promote readers' mindfulness which involved the application of more effort and motivation in the reading assessment. Gilbert et al. (1993) successfully show that extreme time limitation hampered the readers' critical thinking. Additionally, Breznitz et al. (2013) claimed that the correct application of time constraints may facilitate the readers' additional upgraded text-processing subroutines which enhances their reading process and achievement. Haniff (2012), however, discovered no significant correlation between students' reading test performance under timed and untimed conditions and thus suggested that time constraints have a minimal impact on students' reading performance. This was thought to be due to readers' mindfulness which Salomon and Globerson (1987) defined as "the volitional, metacognitively guided employment of non-automatic, usually effort-demanding processes" (p. 625). Mindfulness involves readers' motivational, attitudinal and cognitive elements and the training of reading with time constraints was believed to specifically modify the readers' cognition, motor and perceptual of words which also refers to the word decoding routines.

Another focus of this study is reading self-efficacy, which Bandura (1977) defined as individuals' judgments or self-assessments of a person's ability to perform a task successfully. Carroll and Fox (2017), considered self-efficacy as the individuals' belief in their capability in taking action to achieve a particular goal. Maddux (2012) however, came out with the simplest form to describe self-efficacy which is what I believed I can do and not what I believed I will do. Self-efficacy in short was perceived as the individual's self-belief of their capabilities in carrying out actions to achieve a certain goal successfully.

Self-efficacy was believed to have positively contributed to students' academic performance (Yogurtcu, 2013) and overall success (Bråten et al., 2013). Besides, self-efficacy increases students' task participation, hard work, perseverance and reduced hostile emotional reactions to difficulties in a task (Bräten et al., 2013). Carroll and Fox (2017) agreed that self-efficacy impacted the readers' comprehension process which involves the identification of letters and meanings. Furthermore, Lee and Jonson-Reid (2016) found that reading self-efficacy had a positive and significant impact on young children's reading achievement which was less related to gender differences but closely correlated with perceived reading achievement. In the present study, a more precised definition of self-efficacy was adopted, that is, reading self-efficacy.

The social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977) conceptualises self-efficacy under the personal factor in reciprocal determinism. The theory emphasises the interaction between behaviour, environment and reciprocal determinism, specifically personal factors, behaviour and environment in learning. Self-efficacy, according to Bandura

(1977), plays a crucial role in determining how individuals think, feel, and behave. In the context of reading, a student's reading self-efficacy influences their approach to reading assignments, the level of effort they put forth, and their resilience in overcoming challenges. This theory is relevant to the study as, while illustrating how a person's reading self-efficacy influences their action in comprehension in tests with three time constraints.

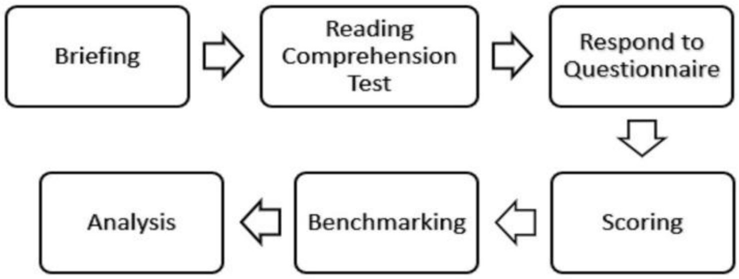
Methodology

The study on reading comprehension and reading self-efficacy under three-time constraint conditions involved 119 first-year students in UniSZA (39 males and 80 females). Using purposive random sampling techniques, 119 students were selected from the population of 2,100 students. The sample selection was done with the help from the university's student affair department and faculties. The sample size was determined according to the sample size table developed by Bartlett et al (2001).

The study examined reading comprehension using reading comprehension tests and reading self-efficacy using a questionnaire. Three sets of reading comprehension tests, adapted from the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) module were used in the study. Each test consisted of a passage of 700 to 800 words with eight multiple-choice questions. The passages were tested for readability through the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Readability Test, Dale-Chall Readability Formula and McAlpine EFLAW(TM) Readability Score. The readability test result indicated that the passages are appropriate for the study as they are easy to understand, suitable for the participants' age and require only average reading skills. The reading passages were reviewed for content validity and suitability by the English teachers at UniSZA. The reading comprehension tests were conducted over three durations: 30 minutes for basic time constraint, 20 minutes for mild time constraint, and 13 minutes for extreme time constraint. The implementation of three time constraints is based on a study conducted by Walczyk et al. (1999) to explore how these varying time constraints affect students' reading self-efficacy and reading comprehension achievement. Additionally, these time constraints reflect real-life scenarios that students encounter while reading. The second instrument for this study is the adapted version of the Self-Efficacy for Reading (SER) questionnaire developed by Prat-Sala and Redford (2010). This questionnaire comprised 12 items with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .794 for the current sample, indicating an acceptable level of internal consistency.

Figure 1 illustrates the whole research process of the present study. The data collection process for this study took place over three separate sessions. Each session began with a brief explanation by the researcher, followed by the test, administered within the designated test duration. Once the test was completed, students were required to complete the SER questionnaire. The process was conducted through UniSZA's online learning platform, E-KeLip, to ensure easy access and effective data collection.

Figure 1
The Research Process of the Study



The data analysis process started after the tests' answers and the questionnaire's responses were scored and benchmarked. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to calculate frequencies to identify the students' reading comprehension achievement level and their reading self-efficacy level for each test. Meanwhile, correlation analyses were carried to determine the potential relationship between the students' reading comprehension achievement and their reading self-efficacy for each test.

Results

Reading Comprehension Achievement

Table 1 presents the students' level of comprehension test achievement in the first test which was carried out with a basic time constraint. t. The result indicated that most students achieved average achievement level in the first reading comprehension test (53.85%) followed by good (25.2%), poor (19.3%) and excellent (1.7%) achievement level.

Table 1
Students' Level of Comprehension Test Achievement in Basic Time Constraint in First Reading Test

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Poor	23	19.3	19.3	19.3
Average	64	53.8	53.8	73.1
Good	30	25.2	25.2	98.3
Excellent	2	1.7	1.7	100.0
Total	119	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows that in the second reading comprehension test, almost half of the students (47.1%) achieved average level of reading comprehension achievement level followed by poor (13.4%), good (13.4%) and excellent (1.7%) achievement levels.

Table 2
Students' Level of Comprehension Test Achievement in Mild Time Constraint in Second Reading Test

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Poor	45	37.8	37.8	37.8
Average	56	47.1	47.1	84.0
Good	16	13.4	13.4	98.3
Excellent	2	1.7	1.7	100.0
Total	119	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 shows that the third test recorded the best result with almost half (43.7%) of the students attaining good achievement level followed by average (35.3%). Interestingly, 16.0% of the students achieved excellent achievement level while only 5.0% of them achieved poor achievement level.

Table 3
Students' Level of Comprehension Test Achievement in Extreme Time Constraint in Third Reading Test

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Poor	6	5.0	5.0	5.0
Average	42	35.3	35.3	40.3
Good	52	43.7	43.7	84.0
Excellent	19	16.0	16.0	100.0
Total	119	100.0	100.0	

The results of the three reading comprehension assessments indicated that most students demonstrated an average level of achievement when tested under basic and mild time constraints in the first and second reading tests. However, they performed well and achieved a good level of reading comprehension in the third test that was imposed by extreme time constraint.

Reading Self-Efficacy

Table 4 illustrates the result of students' reading self-efficacy level in the first test, conducted within a basic time constraint. The result indicated that more than half (63.0%) of the students experienced moderate level of reading self-efficacy followed by high (36.1%) and low (0.8%) reading self-efficacy levels during the first test. None experienced a very low level.

Table 4
Students' Level of Reading Self-Efficacy in Basic Time Constraint in First Reading Test

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very low	-	-	-	0
Low	1	0.8	0.8	0.8
Moderate	75	63.0	63.0	63.9
High	43	36.1	36.1	100.0
Total	119	100.0	100.0	

The result in Table 5 displays the reading self-efficacy level in the second test with 64.7% of the students experiencing moderate reading self-efficacy level while 30.3% of them experienced high reading self-efficacy level. Meanwhile, 5% of the students experienced a low reading self-efficacy level, while none experienced a very low level. The result indicated that the students' reading self-efficacy remained the same as the previous test.

Table 5
Students' Level of Reading Self-Efficacy in Mild Time Constraint during Second Reading Test

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very low	-	-	-	0
Low	6	5.0	5.0	5.0
Moderate	77	64.7	64.7	69.7
High	36	30.3	30.3	100.0
Total	119	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 shows the result for the students' reading self-efficacy level in the test with extreme time constraint. Most students (58.8%) experienced a moderate reading self-efficacy level, while 36.1% experienced a high level. Meanwhile, 5% of the students experienced a low reading self-efficacy level, while none experienced a very low level.

Table 6
Students' Level of Reading Self-Efficacy in Extreme Time Constraint in Third Reading Test

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very low	-	-	-	0
Low	6	5.0	5.0	5.0
Moderate	70	58.8	58.8	63.9
High	43	36.1	36.1	100.0
Total	119	100.0	100.0	

The data revealed that the students' reading self-efficacy levels fluctuated in numbers across the three tests but remained within the moderate level followed by high and low reading self-efficacy levels. The result of students' reading self-efficacy levels from the three reading comprehension tests indicated that the students' reading self-efficacy levels did not significantly change throughout the three tests.

Correlation of Reading Comprehension Test Achievement and Reading Self-Efficacy

Table 7 shows the results of the correlation analysis conducted between reading comprehension test achievement and students' reading self-efficacy in the first test which was a test with a basic time constraint. The test revealed a small positive correlation $r(117)=0.162$, $p=0.078$), 95% CI [-0.019, 0.33]. Based on Cohen's (1988) guidelines, confidence intervals between -0.019 to 0.33 indicated the existence of a positive but weak relationship between students' reading self-efficacy and reading comprehension test achievement in reading test with a basic time constraint and thus the H_1 is accepted.

Table 7
The Correlation Result Between Students' Reading Self-Efficacy and Reading Comprehension Test Achievement in Reading Comprehension Test with Basic Time Constraint in First Reading Test

		Reading Self-efficacy Score	Reading Comprehension Test Score
Reading Self-efficacy Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.162
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.078
	N	119	119
Reading Comprehension Test Score	Pearson Correlation	.162	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.078	
	N	119	119
95% Confidence Interval for Mean		[-0.019, 0.33]	

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

Table 8 displays the correlation result between students' reading self-efficacy and reading comprehension test achievement in the second test which was conducted with a mild time constraint. The analysis revealed a very small but positive correlation r(117) = 0.088, p=0.342), 95% CI[-0.093, 0.26]. According to Cohen's (1988) guidelines, confidence intervals between -0.093 to 0.26 indicated the existence of a positive but very weak relationship between students' reading self-efficacy and reading comprehension test achievement in reading test with a basic time constraint and thus the H_1 is accepted.

Table 8
The Correlation Result Between Students' Reading Self-Efficacy and Reading Comprehension Test Achievement in Reading Comprehension Test with Mild Time Constraint in Second Reading Test

		Reading Self-efficacy Score	Reading Comprehension Test Score
Reading Self-efficacy Score	Pearson Correlation	1	0.088
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.342
	N	119	119
Reading Comprehension Test Score	Pearson Correlation	0.088	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.342	
	N	119	119
95% Confidence Interval for Mean		[-0.093, 0.26]	

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

Table 9 shows the correlation result between students' reading self-efficacy and reading comprehension test achievement which was held with extreme time constraint in the third reading test. The analysis revealed a small positive correlation r(117) = 0.238, p=0.009, 95% CI[0.061, 0.4]. According to Cohen's (1988) guidelines, confidence intervals between 0.061 to 0.4 indicated the existence of a positive but weak relationship between students' reading self-efficacy and reading comprehension test achievement in reading test with a basic time constraint and thus the H_1 is accepted.

Table 9

The Correlation Result Between Students' Reading Self-Efficacy and Reading Comprehension Test Achievement in Reading Comprehension Test with Extreme Time Constraint in Third Reading Test

		Reading Self-efficacy Score	Reading Comprehension Test Score
Reading Self-efficacy Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.238**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.009
	N	119	119
Reading Comprehension Test Score	Pearson Correlation	.238**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.009	
	N	119	119
95% Confidence Interval for Mean		[0.061, 0.4]	

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

Discussion

The study revealed that students' reading comprehension achievement levels were primarily at an average level during tests with basic and mild time constraints, while they performed better on tests with extreme time constraint. The findings generally illustrate the impact of time constraints on students' reading self-efficacy and reading comprehension achievement levels and their relationships, while considering extreme time constraint as providing the most impact on students' reading comprehension achievement. This finding contradicts the work of Walczyk (1995) and Mai (2020), which suggested that readers excelled in reading assessments without any time constraints. It challenges the conclusions of Walczyk et al. (1999), who argued that mild time constraints are the most appropriate testing conditions. The findings contest the notion that time constraints hinder students' reading achievements, thereby challenging the perspectives of Alshammari (2013), Meyer et al. (1999), Lesaux et al. (2006), and Edward et al. (2021), who argued that the pressure of time limitations during reading negatively impacts reading comprehension. The findings indicated that time constraints are significant factors influencing the outcomes of reading ability (Alshammari, 2013; Ghonsooly & Elahi, 2010; Naseri & Zaferanieh, 2012). The strategies adaptation (Li & Wang, 2010; Liu & Wei, 2016), emotional regulation (Osman et al., 2016), and prior knowledge (Mai, 2020) are believed to impact reading comprehension results in time-pressured reading.

Apart from the reading comprehension achievement level, this study also revealed that the students' level of reading self-efficacy is at moderate level throughout the three reading tests. This finding is in line with Safian and Jiar (2022) which discovered the moderate reading self-efficacy level of pre-university students. Malaysian students lack confidence in their reading abilities which affects their overall comprehension performance. Furthermore, the analysis of the relationships between student's reading self-efficacy and their reading comprehension achievement revealed a small, positive correlation for the test with basic and extreme time constraints but discovered a very small but positive correlation for the test with mild time constraint. This indicated a weak but positive influence of students' reading self-efficacy towards their reading comprehension achievement which suggested that the students' reading comprehension achievement increases as their reading self-efficacy increases.

This study discovered different strengths of the relationship between reading self-efficacy and reading comprehension achievement within three different time constraints but the current literature supporting the finding is scarce as most studies investigate the relationship within a single time constraint. The finding, however, supported past studies which also identified a positive relationship between reading self-efficacy and reading comprehension achievement. Apriliyani and Usuludin (2023) for instance, discovered a weak positive correlation, whereas Fitri et al. (2019) identified a strong positive correlation between reading self-efficacy and reading comprehension achievement among EFL senior high school students in Indonesia. Similarly, this study is also consistent with previous research involving university students in Saudi Arabia (Mohammed, 2022; Shehzad et al., 2019) and high school and college students in Thailand who learned English as a foreign language (Nonsawang, 2019; Oranpattanachai, 2023).

Regardless of the strength of the relationship, the finding explicates the influence of students' reading self-efficacy towards their reading comprehension achievement. Reading self-efficacy is thus one of the factors influencing students' reading comprehension (Hager, 2017; Norudin et al. 2024) but the strength may vary due to various possible reasons such as prior knowledge (Bandura, 1977), metacognitive skills (Bandura, 1977; Meldawati & Hamid, 2023), self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 2000a), psychological states (Zeng & Rahmat, 2022) and others. Gilbert et al. (1993) believed that readers are incapable of thinking critically about the text information provided under severe time pressure, which highlights the negative effect of time constraints. This study however, illustrated a contradictory outcome and thus refuted the idea by highlighting the positive impact of time constraints on reading self-efficacy and reading comprehension achievement. The study hence disagreed with Haniff (2012), who did not regard time constraints as a contributory factor to students' reading achievement. The finding supported Breznitz et al. (2013), who viewed the correct application of time constraints as enhancing the reading process and achievement.

Theoretically, the result presents a contradicting view of the cognitive load theory by Sweller (2011). The theory suggests that time pressure influences the comprehension process by intensifying the intrinsic load due to the limited time to process the text based on their prior knowledge while upsurging their extraneous load due to the improper management of time to process the text. The finding, however, revealed the opposite scenario where the students scored better on the test with extreme time constraint which implied that time pressure does not negatively impact their comprehension load. The finding provides new insight into the comprehension process under time pressure, as it has been claimed to have affected one's deep-thinking process and metacognitive regulation (Paas & van Merriënboer, 1994), as well as decision-making speed-accuracy decisions (Hancock & Szalma, 2008) which eventually weakened the performance of the task.

Besides, the finding supported Bandura (1977)'s social cognitive theory, which believed that learners' actual performance is strongly influenced by their beliefs and this was illustrated through the positive correlation between students' reading self-efficacy and reading comprehension achievement. The finding, however, negates the idea of the theory which believed that high self-efficacy led to more resilience to time pressure. The finding provided a different view where, in extreme time constraint, even a moderate level of self-efficacy can resist time pressure without distressing the comprehension process. This finding also supported the possibility that within time-restricted reading, other factors such as sub-goal setting (Zimmerman, 2000b), self-regulated learning strategies and background knowledge (Mai, 2020) assist in resisting the impact of time constraint towards the comprehension process regardless of self-efficacy level.

Conclusion

The present study aims to identify the students' levels of reading self-efficacy and reading comprehension achievement under three time constraints: basic, mild, and extreme. Additionally, it seeks to verify and compare the relationship between students' reading self-efficacy and their reading comprehension achievement within the three different time constraints. The findings revealed that the students generally demonstrated a moderate level of reading self-efficacy across the three tests. Furthermore, the students showed average reading comprehension under basic and mild time constraints, while achieved good comprehension under extreme time constraints. Besides, the study found a weak, positive, but insignificant relationship between the two factors in the test with basic time constraint, and a very weak, positive, and insignificant relationship in the test with mild time constraint. Interestingly, the study identified a weak, positive, and significant relationship in the test conducted under extreme time constraint. This suggests that students' reading abilities are maximised when faced with stringent time constraints, challenging earlier research supporting no time constraint (Walczyk, 1995) and mild time constraint (Walczyk et al., 1999).

Through this discovery, language teachers and instructors are encouraged to implement reading activities with appropriate time restrictions to enhance students' reading comprehension and self-efficacy (Breznitz et al., 2013). The scholar believed that the correct application of time constraints may facilitate the readers' additional upgraded text-processing subroutines which enhances their reading process and achievement. The study also reveals how varying time constraints can lead to differing comprehension results, indicating that assessments conducted under a single test condition may not accurately reflect reader's true reading ability. Therefore, language teachers and instructors should consider incorporating time-restricted reading tests to better evaluate students’ reading ability and identify those who may have reading difficulties.

The findings of the study provide valuable additional insight into the literature on students’ reading self-efficacy and reading comprehension, but it is not without limitations. This study a sample of first-year students from a specific population at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, which limits the scope of the study. Future researchers are urged to explore the research model in different universities to enhance the generalisability of the findings. Future studies should include students from different years of study to facilitate broader generalisation across various age groups to verify the findings. This study placed no specific attention on gender pertaining to reading self-efficacy and reading comprehension achievement. Future studies should have a more balanced subject from both genders to have a more generalised finding which corresponds to both genders. This study shows that time constraint is one of the crucial elements to integrate in language learning, not only it positively affects the students’ reading comprehension but also their affective factors such as reading self-efficacy. In general, time restrictions may have more unexplored positive effects on readers’ comprehension and affective responses, potentially improving reading comprehension outcomes.

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TRANSLANGUAGING IN SOUTHERN THAILAND: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF HOW GRATITUDE, MINDSET, AND EMOTIONAL–COGNITIVE FACTORS INFLUENCE ENGLISH LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

This study examines translanguaging practices and their impact on student gratitude, mindset, and cognition in Southern Thai English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. A survey was conducted with 565 secondary and high school students from private Islamic and public schools in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, where Pattani Malay (Yawi) is widely spoken. Findings show that strategic use of translanguaging significantly enhances student gratitude, confidence, and classroom engagement. Using both students' first language and English helped clarify concepts and increase participation. While students generally displayed a growth mindset and motivation through peer success, public failure persisted, indicating a need for more supportive learning environments. The study highlights the benefits of asset-based, multilingual approaches and recommends policy reform, teacher training, and bilingual learning materials to better support multilingual learners in Thailand.

Keywords: translanguaging; English as a Foreign Language; student gratitude; mindset; multilingual education; southern Thailand

Introduction

Bilingualism has often been conceptualised as the coexistence of two separate and self-contained language systems within an individual's mind (García & Kleifgen, 2020; Jawad, 2021). This view has informed pedagogical practices that rigidly separate languages in the classroom, often discouraging or even prohibiting students from using their first language (L1) during instruction (Perfecto, 2020). Although such approaches are typically well-intentioned and aimed at full immersion in target language, they risk undermining students' linguistic identities and ignoring the cognitive assets their full language repertoires offer (Forbes et al., 2021; Michala et al., 2024). In the multilingual and globalised world today, the traditional monolingual model is out of step with how language is actually used.

As a response to this monolingual paradigm, translanguaging has emerged as a dynamic and inclusive framework for understanding and practising multilingualism. Rather than viewing languages as discrete systems, translanguaging conceptualises them as elements of a unified linguistic repertoire multilingual individuals draw upon flexibly to make meaning and communicate across contexts (García & Wei, 2014). This is more than simple code-switching; it represents a fluid and intentional use of all linguistic resources to enhance understanding, critical thinking, and meaningful interaction. Pedagogically, translanguaging repositions students' linguistic backgrounds as valuable resources rather than obstacles. It marks a shift from a performance-based model of language instruction to one that views language as a tool for learning. In this framework, students engage with content by using the linguistic resources that best support their comprehension and expression, enabling them to clarify complex ideas, solve problems, and communicate effectively (Almashour, 2024; Cenoz & Gorter, 2022).

Translanguaging is relevant in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, where learners are situated in English-only environments despite their multilingual backgrounds (Wei, 2018). English is linked to national development goals, leading many countries to adopt English-only language policies in schools (Aribah & Pradita, 2022; Sun et al., 2024). Strategically integrating L1 and L2 in instructional activities; such as reading in English and discussing in L1, or taking notes using both languages has been shown to enhance comprehension, validate students' identities, and support more inclusive learning environments (Huang & Chalmers, 2023; Yasar & Dikilitas, 2021). This is critical in classrooms shaped by transnational migration and linguistic diversity, where effective teachers must be equipped to support learners from a range of linguistic backgrounds (Moraru et al., 2025).

In Thailand, English language proficiency is considered a national priority (Hirsch & Lee, 2018), and EFL instruction adheres to a traditional English-only model. The predominant focus is on grammar instruction and receptive skills, with limited opportunities for authentic language use. This approach can contribute to low student confidence and the perception their mother tongue is an obstacle rather than an asset in the learning process (Canals & Al-Rawashdeh, 2018; Okoye & Ambele, 2023).

Nonetheless, in recent years there has been a shift in perspectives on the use of students' mother tongue in the classroom. Studies involving Thai university and high school students and teachers have reported positive attitudes toward translanguaging practices (Xiao & Lertlit, 2023). Educators note the strategic use of L1 supports comprehension and scaffolds content learning, while students report increased engagement and improved interactional competence (Ali & Raj, 2024; Gorter & Arocena, 2020; Wang et al., 2025). Despite these promising developments, large-scale implementation of translanguaging in Thailand is limited. Many teachers may be reluctant to adopt translanguaging strategies due to a lack of training or concerns about deviating from norms. Teachers also face structural constraints that influence their pedagogical decisions (Cenoz et al., 2022; Gorter & Arocena, 2020). Their beliefs and practices are often shaped by institutional expectations that do not accommodate bilingual or multilingual approaches. In some Thai educational contexts, research remains limited in the country's southern border provinces.

This study aims to examine translanguaging practices in English language learning among students in Thai schools located in the southern border provinces. The research focuses on four key objectives:

(1) To investigate the impact of translanguaging and cooperative learning on students' sense of gratitude and self-esteem in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms;
(2) To explore the relationship between reality-oriented translanguaging practices and students' language learning mindsets, particularly how a growth mindset may coexist with a fear of public failure;
(3) To examine students' perceptions of how using both L1 and English (L2) supports the development of cognitive processes such as writing, conceptual organisation, and the articulation of ideas in both languages; and
(4) To analyse how students independently apply translanguaging strategies (e.g., note-taking and peer interaction), and how these self-directed practices differ from teacher-initiated approaches

Literature Review

English language education has been shaped by a monolingual ideology that views languages as isolated, self-contained systems (García & Kleifgen, 2020). This perspective has informed pedagogical practices that discourage students' first language use, promoting instead an English-only immersion environment.

Translanguaging represents a significant shift in understanding how multilingual individuals utilise their linguistic resources. Moving beyond the traditional view of languages as separate and distinct systems, it posits that multilingual speakers draw from a single, integrated linguistic repertoire to construct meaning and communicate effectively (Paulsrud et al., 2021). This perspective challenges conventional notions of "proper" language use and emphasises the dynamic, context-dependent nature of multilingual communication, which encompasses cognitive, social, and cultural dimensions (O'Connor et al., 2019). Empirical evidence indicates translanguaging supports language development, cognitive growth, academic achievement, and the negotiation of identity by enabling students to draw upon their full linguistic repertoire (Чайка, 2023).

The term "translanguaging" was first coined by Cen Williams in 1994 to describe a pedagogical practice in Welsh bilingual education (Léglise, 2022). García and

Kleifgen's (2020) work has been particularly influential in developing the fluid languaging approach, grounded in post-modern and post-structuralist sociolinguistics (Bonacina-Pugh et al., 2021). This approach conceptualises bilinguals' mental grammars and linguistic practices as a structured yet unified system of linguistic features, highlighting how learners actively integrate their entire linguistic repertoire to negotiate meaning, construct knowledge, and engage socially in diverse multilingual settings (O'Connor et al., 2019).

In Thailand, code-switching between Thai and English is one common manifestation of translanguaging, particularly when students encounter unfamiliar vocabulary or complex grammatical structures, enabling them to extend understanding in both communication and academic tasks (Pomat et al., 2022). Despite its natural occurrence, Thailand's prevailing monolingual English language policies present challenges for the full integration of translanguaging strategies in classrooms (Nuemaihom et al., 2024). Nevertheless, Thai EFL teachers generally hold positive perceptions of translanguaging, especially in partial English-medium instruction programmes (Pomat et al., 2022). Students report that being able to use their first language supports interactional competence, strengthens linguistic awareness, and helps connect new English concepts to prior knowledge (Thongwichit et al., 2024). Translanguaging serves as a flexible, learner-centred strategy that promotes collaborative learning, active participation, and deeper engagement with classroom content.

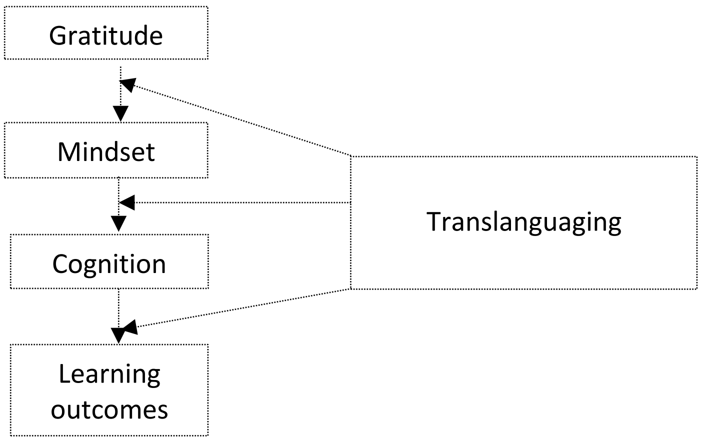
In Islamic educational contexts such as Indonesian *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) and mosque schools in the United Kingdom, translanguaging leverages students' multilingual backgrounds including local languages, Indonesian, Arabic, and English as valuable resources for English acquisition (Madkur et al., 2022; Rahman et al., 2023). The religious significance of Arabic enhances learning outcomes across cognitive, socio-cultural, and affective domains, fostering inclusive and culturally responsive practices (Madkur & As'ad, 2024). Teachers integrate translanguaging through code-switching and culturally resonant content including Qur'anic verses, Hadith, Arabic-English equivalents, and Islam-themed narratives. These practices reinforce comprehension, build multilingual repertoires, strengthen metalinguistic awareness, and bridge cultural and linguistic divides, enabling equitable learning experiences beyond monolingual paradigms (Agustin & Wahyudi, 2024; Maryansyah et al., 2024; Rahman & Singh, 2022).

Translanguaging also supports students' Islamic self-identity by linking classroom instruction to their cultural and religious values without impeding English acquisition. Integrating religiously grounded content encourages ethical understanding, strengthens cultural connections, and affirms identity while optimising language learning outcomes (Azmi et al., 2021; Irwansyah & Yuniarti, 2021; Madkur & As'ad, 2024; Umar et al., 2024).

Research Methodology

The descriptive study examines the relationship between translanguaging and affective-cognitive factors among Thai-Malay Muslim students whose first language is Malay-Patani, as illustrated in Figure 1. This conceptual framework is adapted from the translanguaging theory of Cenoz and Gorter (2021). It illustrates how pedagogical translanguaging influences the perceptions of Muslim students in English learning. The framework addresses three key dimensions of student perceptions: gratitude, mindset, and cognition. These dimensions are considered mediating factors through which translanguaging practices can enhance language learning outcomes.

Figure 1
The Conceptual Framework on Pedagogical Translanguaging and Affective-Cognitive Factors



The participants were 565 students from Islamic private and public-schools located in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, the three provinces bordering Malaysia, where Yawi (Pattani-Malay) is the most widely spoken language in both community settings and daily life. Yawi is used as their first or primary home language. Table 1 shows that the sample had more female (81.1%) than male (18.9%). This imbalance may be attributed to the high proportion of respondents from private Islamic schools, which comprised 69.7% of the sample. These schools may reflect cultural norms in the region that encourage religious-based education for girls. In contrast, government schools accounted for 22.7% and vocational schools for 7.6% of the participants, mostly male. The sample also consisted primarily of upper secondary students (77.7%) and fewer vocational students (2.8%) and high vocational students (4.6%).

Table 1
Participant Demographic Background (N=565)

Characteristic		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	107	18.9
	Female	458	81.1
School	Government School	128	22.7
	Islamic Private School	394	69.7
	Vocational School	43	7.6
Educational level	Second High School	84	14.9
	High School	439	77.7
	Vocational Level	16	2.8
	High Vocational Level	26	4.6
Total		565	100

The questionnaire was adapted from Wilang (2024) to measure students' attitudes towards language learning and from Yuvayapan (2019) to assess attitudes towards translanguaging. Gratitude was operationalised as the participants' self-reported frequency and intensity of grateful feelings in response to classroom experiences. The questionnaire included five demographic items and 40 items. Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated Strongly Disagree and 5 indicated Strongly Agree. To ensure clarity and consistency of meaning, the questionnaire was translated into Thai, and validated by experts.

A pilot study was carried out to further assess the instrument. The Cronbach's alpha values of 0.89 for attitudes towards language learning and 0.74 for attitudes towards translanguaging, demonstrating both scales were sufficiently reliable for use in the full study. Following validation, the questionnaires were distributed electronically using Google Forms.

Descriptive statistical analysis was used to establish participants' demographic profiles, including gender, school type, educational level, and their daily language practices. For the analysis of questionnaire responses, the mean and standard deviation were used as the primary descriptive statistics.

Results

Languages Used in Daily Communication

Table 2 presents data on the daily communication patterns of the 565 respondents, focusing on their use of Thai and the Yawi dialect. A total of 69.4% reported using a combination of Thai and Yawi in their everyday communication. This suggests code-switching or code-mixing between the two languages is the predominant communication practice within the studied communities. Exclusive use of either language is comparatively rare.

Table 2

Languages Used in Daily Communication

Languages	Frequency	Percentage
Yawi-Language (dialect)*	125	22.1
Thai language	48	8.5
Thai and Yawi-Languauges (dialect)*	392	69.4
Total	565	100.0

*The first language of speaking in Provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat but Thai language is the second language.

Exclusive use of the Yawi dialect was the second most common pattern, reported by 22.1% of participants. In contrast, communication solely in Thai was the least common (8.5%). In summary, the results indicate that most participants operate in a bilingual or dialect-rich linguistic environment, with a clear preference for mixed-language communication that reflects the sociolinguistic dynamics of the region.

Perceptions of Use of Translanguaging and Students' Feelings of Gratitude and Confidence

Table 3 presents the results related to students' perceptions of translanguaging practices in the classroom. Students perceive translanguaging not only as an effective educational tool but also as an engaging and enjoyable approach to learning. The highest-rated item was "I like those activities with translanguaging, to promote English, encourage learning in the classroom" (M=4.14, SD = 0.98).

Table 3

The Relationship Between the Perceptions of Use of Translanguaging and Students' Feelings of Gratitude and Confidence

	Items	M	SD
1	I love it when things involve translanguaging to help kids grow their English-language skills also lead to learning.	4.14	0.98
2	I love the opportunities for engagement in open-ended, cooperative tasks shared in my English classes incorporate L1s.	4.00	0.91
3	I am happy to see when I perform in English my translanguaging pays off well.	3.93	0.90
4	When my English classes are translingual, I feel better about my English.	3.86	0.91
5	I am interested in translanguaging the language of English.	3.82	0.90
6	I like learning English through translanguaging strategies in the classroom.	3.76	0.95
7	I am grateful for translanguaging strategies when applying my English abilities.	3.75	0.97
8	I appreciate being able to use translanguaging in the classroom.	3.74	0.95
9	I appreciate when there is the practice of translanguaging in the classroom.	3.74	0.93
10	I am thankful for making mistakes when I talk English with class.	3.31	0.99

Students particularly appreciate the collaborative nature of translanguaging activities. The item relating to enjoyment of teamwork during such tasks (M=4.00, SD = 0.92), indicating the method contributes to a positive and supportive classroom environment. Additionally, translanguaging appears to enhance students' self-perception regarding their English proficiency. This is reflected in the item "I feel good at English skills when translanguaging is practised in lessons" (M= 3.86, SD = 0.91), suggesting an increase in learners' self-efficacy.

However, an important finding is that students expressed reduced gratitude or comfort when making mistakes, even within a supportive translanguaging framework. The statement addressing this concern had the lowest mean score of 3.31 (SD = 0.99). This indicates that while translanguaging is broadly welcomed, there remains an underlying anxiety about making errors in public, which may inhibit full participation for some learners.

Table 4
Perceptions of Gratitude in Learning

	Items	M	SD
1	I thank you if in the learning room I get some experience.	3.91	0.91
2	I thank if you make me want to learn English	3.89	0.93
3	I thank you if I do have a chance to tell you I think of you in English class!	3.87	0.93
4	I will appreciate it if you do me good if I get good results from class activities.	3.87	0.92
5	I would be grateful if you provide me ideas how I can improve my English.	3.86	0.96
6	I thank you if I find learning way.	3.82	0.92
7	I thank for nothing, if anything I'll want to learn will be from English class.	3.80	0.99
8	I thank if I participate in the class activities.	3.72	0.95

According to Table 4, students express a high level of gratitude for various positive learning experiences. Items with mean scores above 3.80 highlight students' appreciation for opportunities to learn and gain experience in the classroom (M = 3.91, SD = 0.91), feel motivated to learn (M = 3.89, SD = 0.93), and achieve success in their class activities (M = 3.87, SD = 0.92). These results suggest that learners feel most grateful when they perceive progress in their English language development and experience a sense of achievement in their second language learning journey. They were also grateful to receive encouragement to improve their skills (M = 3.86, SD = 0.96) and for the opportunity to express their thoughts (M = 3.87, SD = 0.93). These findings indicate that students value a supportive learning environment in which their voices are heard and where constructive feedback is integrated into the learning process.

In comparison, slightly lower mean scores were reported for active participation in class activities (M = 3.72, SD = 0.95) and learning useful information (M = 3.80, SD = 0.99). On the whole, gratitude among students is more strongly driven by experiences of personal development and affirming feedback than by participation alone or the acquisition of information. This underscores the importance of learner-centred approaches that emphasise encouragement, engagement, and progress in language learning.

Students' Mindset and Feedback about Learning English

Table 5 reveals an internal tension in students' mindsets: a strong belief in their capacity for personal growth and change exists versus a persistent fear of negative evaluation and public failure. When my peers do well in English class, the students are motivated to get better (M = 3.81, SD = 0.99), indicating students demonstrate a growth-oriented attitude in response to peer success, rather than adopting a deficit or comparative model.

Table 5
Mindset and Feedback about Learning English

	Items	M	SD
1	I am motivated by the success of peers in English when I see others do well it motivates me.	3.81	.98
2	I can always transform my basic self as I learn English - as I translanguage.	3.72	.99
3	When it comes to learning English, I take criticism personally.	3.69	.98
4	I ignore errors in English class because I can use them.	3.60	.96
5	Negative feedback on my speaking discourages me	3.50	1.07
6	If I learn really hard, I might be perceived as unskilled.	3.26	1.08
7	I can appear confident in class, but I find it difficult to change how I truly feel about learning English.	3.20	1.14
8	I take risks in English class, even when it is hard.	3.19	1.07
9	The harder the exercise the more it makes me stubborn.	3.18	1.07
10	I'm feeling the daily squeeze in English class.	3.18	1.06
11	I need to try harder in order to use various English learning methods such as translanguaging.	3.17	1.10
12	It makes me feel bad when students are better than me in English class.	3.14	1.11

They strongly agreed that they can always change basic aspects of themselves (M = 3.73, SD = 0.99). They also feel comfortable learning from their mistakes (M = 3.61, SD = 0.97). These responses reflect a mindset open to development and adaptability in the face of challenges.

However, students expressed anxiety related to judgement and evaluation. They interpret criticism as a personal attack (M = 3.70, SD = 0.98). They also dislike negative feedback even if it is helpful (M = 3.51, SD = 1.07). These results suggest that while students may intellectually acknowledge the value of feedback and error-based learning, they do not always feel emotionally safe or secure when confronted with criticism.

Lower but still relevant scores were reported for feelings of inadequacy when others succeed (M = 3.14, SD = 1.11) and for pushing themselves to take risks in learning (M = 3.19, SD = 1.08), indicating some apprehension towards fully embracing growth opportunities that involve vulnerability.

While students demonstrate an internal drive for self-improvement and growth, they continue to experience persistent communicative language anxiety. The results suggest that psychological safety in learning environments provide meaningful academic challenges.

Students' Perceptions of Cognitive Learning

Table 6 presents findings that reveal a strong student preference for bilingual methods of instruction. Students most strongly agreed that the use of both their first language and English by their teacher is an effective instructional approach (M = 3.69, SD = 0.98). They also agreed that using the first language during writing tasks helps students understand subject matter more clearly (M = 3.50, SD = 1.07) and contributes to the development of English language proficiency (M = 3.50, SD = 1.02). Additionally, the use of bilingual instructional materials was seen as motivating (M = 3.51, SD = 1.01). Students reported better learning outcomes when teachers used bilingual terminology during lessons (M = 3.58, SD = 1.02).

Table 6

Students' Perceptions of Cognitive Learning

	Items	M	SD
1	I find it easier to understand the lessons when the teacher uses L1 and English.	3.69	.98
2	It helps me learn new things when the teacher uses some L1 and English words.	3.58	1.02
3	I use L1 whenever it is necessary and bilingual teaching materials are of great help to me.	3.52	1.02
4	My first language (L1) together with English when writing helps me to better understand the topic.	3.50	1.07
5	My English improves when I utilise both L1 and English in writing.	3.50	1.02
6	I use L1 to verify if the new word or concept means what I'm thinking it does.	3.45	1.09
7	I note-take in L1 when the teacher uses it.	3.40	1.08
8	Even when the teacher is limited to English, I take notes in L1.	3.18	1.12
9	While writing, I subconsciously alternate from L1 and English.	2.97	1.25
10	L1 is the language I describe new material to my partners in high school classes.	2.91	1.37

However, responses related to students' own use of the L1 in class revealed more variability. Many students reported relying on their L1 to process or verify new concepts (M = 3.45, SD = 1.09) and to take notes in L1 when the teacher does so (M = 3.40, SD = 1.08). In contrast, they were less likely to use their L1 to explain new ideas to classmates (M = 2.91, SD = 1.37), a finding characterised by both a low mean and high standard deviation. This suggests students differ widely in their comfort levels when using the L1 in peer-to-peer interactions.

Students marginally disagreed that they unconsciously switched between languages when taking notes (M = 2.97, SD = 1.25) and with always using the L1 for note-taking regardless of the language of instruction (M = 3.18, SD = 1.12). These results indicate personal use of L1 particularly in peer interactions and independent tasks varies among learners.

Correlations Among Gratitude, Mindset, and Emotional Regulation

Table 7 presents the correlation analysis examining the relationships among gratitude, mindset, and cognition. The results indicate that all three variables were significantly and positively correlated with one another. Specifically, a strong positive correlation was observed between mindset and cognition, $r(563) = .54$, $p < .001$, suggesting that higher levels of self-reported mindset are associated with higher levels of cognitive engagement. Gratitude also demonstrated a significant moderate-to-strong positive correlation with mindset, $r(563) = .52$, $p < .001$. Additionally, gratitude was significantly and positively correlated with cognition, $r(563) = .47$, $p < .001$. Overall, these findings indicate a mutually reinforcing positive network among gratitude, mindset, and cognition, supporting the notion that these constructs can co-occur and influence one another within a psychological framework in the context of pedagogical translanguaging.

Table 7
Correlations among Gratitude, Mindset, and Emotional Regulation

Variable	Gratitude	Mindfulness	Cognition
1. Gratitude	—		
2. Mindset	.52**	—	
3. Cognition	.47**	.54**	—

** $p < .001$ (two-tailed) Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

The study showed that use of translanguaging in class helped students to gain a deeper understanding of their learning. They can process more complex ideas, and demonstrate improved overall performance when allowed to use their first language. These finding challenges traditional monolingual paradigms. As Ali and Raj (2024) observe, translanguaging is not merely a language practice but a dynamic pedagogical tool that enhances academic writing by drawing on the full linguistic repertoire of learners. This approach directly counters the long-standing belief that using the first language interferes with second language acquisition.

The present study also shows that Thai Muslim students experience reduced language anxiety and enhanced cultural and linguistic identification, a point supported by Almashour (2024). The qualitative research with 10 bilingual participants shows that linguistic flexibility improves cognitive engagement and social cohesion. Almashour found that translanguaging empowers Jordanian graduate students to navigate their hybrid identities and excel academically by integrating their cultural heritage into Canadian universities.

When students are allowed to use their first language, Yawi, in the classroom, they feel recognised and valued, with their linguistic and cultural identities affirmed rather than marginalised. This contributes to a collaborative and supportive learning environment, which is essential for increasing engagement and motivation. Students experience positive affective outcomes by having their entire linguistic repertoire and cultural identity acknowledged, thereby fostering an appreciative classroom atmosphere. Gratitude in translanguaging amplifies cognitive focus on communication (Wilang, 2024). Students feel respected and grateful for this linguistic freedom, which in turn boosts motivation. In Alamer and Almulhim's (2021) study, EFL

Saudi undergraduates experienced extensive language anxiety in learning English. The study found that autonomous factors did not significantly predict any of the specific subtypes of anxiety identified in the study. These findings are consistent Ali and Raj (2024) who show that translanguaging enhances student engagement and comprehension. They utilised surveys and K-means clustering analysis to evaluate the attitudes of Indian university students toward a translanguaging instructional approach, and found the approach most effective when instruction is tailored to acknowledge students' diverse linguistic identities. The use of students' first language facilitates clearer thinking and faster cognitive processing. Integrating linguistic and cultural resources through translanguaging thus transforms potential barriers into valuable pedagogical tools, enhancing both cognitive engagement and cultural affirmation in the classroom (Boonsuk & Ambele, 2024).

Conclusion

This study shows that students strongly favour bilingual pedagogy and translanguaging, challenging the traditional monolingual approach. By integrating the home language into English learning environments, translanguaging enhances cognitive flexibility, collaborative learning, emotion, and culture. The evidence supports moving from rigid monolingual teaching policies towards more flexible practices that recognise and build on learners' full multilingual resources.

Immediate implications include the necessity for targeted teacher education programmes in translanguaging and bilingual pedagogies, including both pre-service and in-service professional development that equips teachers with practical classroom strategies, as well as curriculum and policy reforms that formally support and legitimise the strategic use of students' first languages in English instruction. Such changes can reduce student anxiety, foster creativity, promote equity, and ultimately improve English learning outcomes. This approach represents an important step towards equitable and culturally responsive education that respects and uplifts multilingual learners instead of erasing their linguistic identities.

Both students and teachers hold overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards translanguaging, recognising its benefits for meaning-making, engagement, and inclusivity. While this study offers meaningful insights into the role of translanguaging in English learning among Thai Muslim-Malay students, its scope is limited by the sample size and the regional focus. These limitations point to the need for further research involving more diverse populations to strengthen the applicability of the findings. Future studies that incorporate longitudinal designs, classroom observations, and examination of curriculum implementation across varied educational contexts could provide a deeper understanding of the long-term effects and practical implementation of translanguaging pedagogy.

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