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FOREWORD FROM EDITORS

We are delighted to present Volume 3, Issue 2 of the *Research in Applied Linguistics Electronic Journal* (RIAL-EJ), published on 25th August 2025. This issue marks another milestone in our ongoing effort to promote and disseminate high-quality research in the field of applied linguistics.

Our sincere appreciation goes to the Director of Politeknik Negeri Ujung Pandang, UPT Bahasa PNUP, and the dedicated team of editors and reviewers whose collaborative work continues to uphold the scholarly integrity of this journal. We also thank all contributing authors for entrusting us with their valuable research.

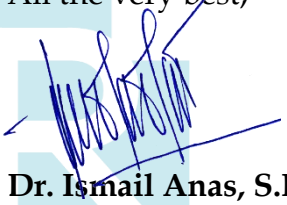
This edition showcases the rich diversity of perspectives in applied linguistics with contributions from scholars representing four countries: Morocco, Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, and Indonesia. The international scope of this issue reflects RIAL-EJ's commitment to fostering cross-cultural and interdisciplinary academic exchange.

We hope the studies presented in this issue will provide meaningful insights and inspire future research and pedagogical innovation in applied linguistics, both within our region and across the global academic community.

Thank you for your continued interest and support.

Makassar, 25th August 2025

All the very best,



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Research Article

Developing Learner Autonomy: Moroccan University EFL Teachers' Perceptions and Practices

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ABSTRACT

Learner autonomy has been a topic of interest for decades, and its importance has been widely acknowledged. However, there remains a lack of clarity regarding teachers' perceptions of this concept and their willingness to promote it. Accordingly, this paper investigates the views of twenty-one university professors concerning their understanding of learner autonomy and the principles that underpin it. The study employed a mixed-methods approach to provide a rigorous analysis of the professors' responses. Data were collected through a questionnaire, followed by semi-structured interviews with ten selected professors to gain deeper insights—adhering to an explanatory sequential design. The findings indicated that the professors demonstrated an understanding of the fundamental characteristics of learner autonomy. While all four orientations were represented, the technical orientation was the most strongly supported, followed by the psychological orientation—a pattern reinforced by the qualitative data, which frequently referenced concepts such as "motivation," "metacognitive strategies," and "decision-making." In contrast, socially driven views were notably less prominent. This study offers several implications for both theory and practice, particularly for EFL teachers in this context and similar educational settings.

Keywords: *EFL teachers, Decision-making, Learner autonomy, Out-of-class learning, Teachers' beliefs*

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of autonomy was first discussed in the fields of politics and philosophy. In the field of education, it gained prominence in the 1980s following the publication of Holec's (1981) seminal work, *Autonomy in foreign language learning*. Along with his colleagues at the 'Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pedagogiques en Langues' (CRAPEL), University of Nancy, France, he conceptualized learner autonomy in such a way that it would answer the need for a term to describe learners' ability to take charge of their learning (Smith, 2008). Since then, numerous academic publications have explored the concept in greater depth (e.g., Benson, 1997; Dam, 2018, 2008; Little, 1991; Littlewood, 1996; Nunan, 1997; Pennycook, 1997; Sheerin, 1997). These scholars played a crucial role in establishing and refining the concept of learner autonomy within the field of education.

Being well-documented in the literature, learner autonomy is seen as an important educational goal (Benson, 2011; Little, 1991). This goal has been described as "cross-culturally valid" (Smith, 2008). Indeed, the university model needs to equip learners with the necessary skills and tactics that will eventually set them up for taking more control over their learning and therefore compete in this world of dynamism. This makes the role of the teacher in promoting learner autonomy a crucial need; in addition to teaching their learners foundational knowledge, teachers should also teach them to be strategic and self-directed learners. The fact that the Moroccan official documents (National Charter of Education and Training, 1999; Strategic Vision, 2015-2030; Framework Law 51-17, 2019) seem to stress the need for autonomy does not translate into the fact that the concept is researched in the Moroccan real-life setting. That is, although learner autonomy has been officially recognized as one of the essential goals of education, the concept remains oft-researched, especially in regard to what teachers think about it and whether they actually help their learners take control over their learning. Also, the statement that "little is actually known about what learner autonomy means to language teachers" (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012b) is another motive for researching this particular topic in this particular context.

> *"Fostering learner autonomy ignites learners' confidence, elevates their performance, and inspires lifelong success habits"*

In this regard, it is worthwhile noting that without an understanding of the teachers' beliefs concerning the promotion of autonomy, any attempt of studying the motivations or otherwise the barriers to implementing autonomy would not be fully understood. Therefore, the present research seeks to partially bridge this gap by investigating the Moroccan university EFL professors' beliefs about what learner autonomy entails. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following main questions:

(1) What does learner autonomy mean to Moroccan university EFL professors?

(2) How do they perceive the constraints of learner autonomy?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learner autonomy is now universally considered an essential goal of language education. However, the term was mired in a superficial understanding. That is, when the term was first introduced in the field of education, some thought that it would not be appropriate in the Eastern contexts and it would only be more welcomed in the Western cultures. This view led Little (1991) to warn that autonomy must not be assumed to be a product of individualism. From this perspective, exercising and promoting autonomy as an important educational goal is deemed a valid attempt across cultures (Smith, 2008). Thanks to these illuminations that autonomy now is not a product of any specific culture, but a shared and universal pursuit. In fact, the tantalizing question is whether learners possess autonomy or not because while they have the moral right to exercise autonomy (Benson, 2011), they may not necessarily be autonomous, at least not all. Essentially, they are required that they take initiatives in their learning both in and out of class environments, for this is how Benson (2011) conceptualizes autonomy from the technical perspective.

Defining the concept

Defining autonomy is challenging, as it is a multifaceted construct. In one sense, it may be simply 'independence', but definitions in the specialist literature on ELT (Benson, 2011; Cotterall, 1999; Little, 1991; Littlewood, 1996; Macaro, 1997; Ouakrime, 1988) tend to emphasize more specific aspects to better understand what it entails. Indeed, the concept has been described as a multidimensional construct (Benson, 2011) and "a construct of constructs" (Tassinari, 2012, p. 28). For Benson (1997), autonomy takes place when the rights of the learners, within education, are recognized. Technically, he defines it as the 'act' of out-of-class language learning without any sort of teacher's interference. Psychologically, following Little (1991), he sees it as a capacity, allowing the learner to assume more responsibility for what he/she learns. Politically, he adds, the concept is defined in terms of learners' "control over the processes and content of learning" (Benson, 1997, p. 19). These versions of autonomy (the technical, the psychological and the political) serve as the basis for a better understanding of how autonomy in language learning is related to knowledge and learning theories. Other researchers (Cotterall, 1995; Macaro, 2008; Sinclaire, 2008) have defined autonomy in terms of the extent to which learners display the ability to deploy tactics and strategies to cope with the demands of their learning.

These definitions show a serious thought that began to be given to autonomy by these researchers. Their efforts are related to the general development of models that would help promote autonomous learning, exemplified in a number of researchers' contributions (Benson, 1997; Littlewood, 1996; Oxford, 2003; Nunan, 1997; Tassinari, 2018), and to the considerations with respect to avoiding misconceptions outlined by Little (1991). Developing autonomy has thus been an important educational goal worldwide, thereby leading to the need for teachers to retrain to develop the necessary skills to promote this pedagogical goal.

While the theoretical discussions acknowledged the importance of autonomy, teachers may have some perceptions that may not be in harmony with those depictions of

autonomy. In fact, Parfleyman (2003) concedes that there may exist a gap between theory and actual teachers' thoughts about autonomy. Although research on teachers' beliefs in general has been substantial, how Moroccan EFL professors perceive learner autonomy is largely understudied. In fact, no single study can be found on this matter.

Conceptualizing teachers' beliefs

The concept of 'belief', which has been described as a rather ambiguous term with respect to its usage (Borg, 2001), has acquired eminence among researchers from different backgrounds and disciplines, including ELT. However, before proceeding to discuss the term with regard to autonomy, it is worth defining the concept first. Indeed, in language teaching, the term 'beliefs' has been described as those assumptions teachers and learners hold about themselves, teaching and learning. Specifically, teachers' beliefs are referred to as certain ideas held by teachers that appear to be stable and "may be resistant to change even in the face of strong evidence" (Munby, 1982, as cited in Borg, 2006, p. 15). According to Richards and Schmidt (2010), these beliefs are "derived from their experience, observations, training and other sources" which make up a kind of foundation to which they return as they encounter new approaches or practices. These researchers further argue that the sort of beliefs teachers may have may sometimes hinder the embracement of those new practices. In this respect, Borg (2001) highlighted four common features that appear to make beliefs system seem to be a clearer construct:

(1) The truth element: within this feature, a belief is defined as a mental state by which an individual holds a proposition that he/she accepts as being true, although this person "may recognize that alternative beliefs may be held by others".
(2) The relationship between beliefs and behavior: this level summarizes the majority of the definitions of belief, which suggest that beliefs "guide people's thinking and action".
(3) Conscious versus unconscious beliefs: opposing views stood out between those who argue that "consciousness is inherent in the definition of belief and those who maintain that an individual may be conscious of some beliefs and unconscious of others".
(4) Beliefs as value commitments: this means that there is an evaluative aspect and emotive commitment to the concept.

In brief, a belief is either a conscious or unconscious proposition that is accepted to be true by an individual who may, at the same time, admits the existence of other beliefs held by others. Moreover, beliefs are held with an emotive commitment in such a way that it disposes people's thinking orientations and behaviors.

Previous Research on Teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy

How teachers teach and behave in the classroom significantly impact student learning. Their instructional practices are important constraints on, for instance, supporting autonomous learning. These instructional practices are often influenced by teachers' beliefs brought to the classroom setting. In other words, what learner autonomy implies for teachers will most likely have a significant impact on the extent to which and how teachers enhance it (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2017).

There is a noticeable dearth of studies on teachers' beliefs about the development of learner autonomy in the Moroccan context. For this reason, the following review includes studies that have been carried out in other EFL/ ESL settings. Borg and Al-Busaidi's (2012a) study in a university language center in Oman marked a particularly important contribution to the empirical research on teachers' readiness and perceptions of learner autonomy. In fact, they argued that research of this kind is characterized by dearth. The teachers who were involved in their study articulated their beliefs on autonomy as well as their practices which reflected a range of ways in which they viewed autonomy, though they conceptualized the concept more in terms of individual learning strategies. The teachers' views on the factors that hindered the promotion of autonomy included those related to the teacher, the student and the institution, namely attributes such as lack of teacher autonomy, lack of motivation and the issue of fixed curricula, respectively. Inspired by Borg and Al-Busaidi' (2012a; 2012b), a number of studies followed to occupy the empirical research space.

In a Thai context, Duong (2014) carried out a study on EFL teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy and found out that teachers understood the concept of learner autonomy but found it challenging to apply the strategies to promote autonomy in their students. Also, Cheng (2020) investigated learner autonomy beliefs and practices among Taiwanese EFL teachers and the results revealed that teachers alluded to the importance of learner autonomy, emphasizing the idea that fostering autonomy is one of the major pursuits of both teachers and learners. In the Philippines, Rañosa-Madrunio et al. (2016) concluded that there was skepticism, though embracing its potential in learners' learning, towards learner autonomy among teachers.

METHOD

The Research design and context

This study employed a mixed-method approach as outlined by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), adopting explanatory sequential design to explore the teachers' views on learners' autonomy and principles that underpin it. Following Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), the chosen design is appropriate because it allows for ample data, thereby addressing the research objectives more rigorously. Data collection methods include questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. In general, in researching applied linguistics related topics such as this one, Dornyei (2007) encourages the use of both quantitative and qualitative strands since each depicts the "reality in a different, yet complementary, way". In fact, researching teachers' beliefs is a topic that requires more careful and rigorous investigation, which this study aims to address.

The research was conducted at the university context, involving professors. Participants were selected through non-random sampling. The institutional context is characterized by an organizational culture in which the curriculum is, to some extent, fixed, although there are occasions when professors can still partially adapt it to students' needs. The latter, however, do not have the authority to suggest what to teach and how to be assessed. The study is carried out in the spring term of 2023, allowing sufficient time for data collection and analysis. Ethical considerations are strictly observed, which insured

participants' consent, confidentiality, and anonymity. Measures are taken to minimize bias and enhance the reliability and validity of the findings. By providing a clear research design and contextual background, this section ensures transparency and credibility in the study's methodology.

Participants

A sample of twenty-one EFL university professors volunteered to participate in the study. They provided oral consent and expressed their willingness to take part without any coercion. All of these professors taught at the university level, with most teaching undergraduate courses and some also teaching postgraduate courses. Both male and female participants were included, with teaching experience ranging from 1 to over 15 years. These demographics were not analyzed here, as no significant differences had been identified in the literature and they did not constitute a variable in the present study.

Data collection instruments and procedures

The present study involved the teacher participants in voicing their perceptions of learner autonomy by employing an adapted version of Borg and Al-Busaidi's (2012b) baseline questionnaire. For one thing, the scale was chosen as it was believed to be highly relevant to the present investigation. For another thing, the scale designed by these researchers followed the mainstream literature that, equally, this study was framed within. Mainly, the participants responded to the five point-Likert scale items varying from 1 to 5, where strongly disagree equals 1, disagree = 2, neutral =3, agree = 4, and strongly agree = 5. Since the questionnaire was slightly modified, its internal consistency was measured through Cronbach's Alpha, a common statistical test of reliability (Perry, 2005; Rasinger, 2010; Loewen & Plonsky, 2016), and was shown to be, which is, according to Bryman (2012) and Dornyei and Taguchi (2010) an acceptable level.

Moreover, ten professors were invited for a semi-structured interview to gain more insights into various aspects of learner autonomy. The advantage of the interview is that it allows for keeping a record of "how things are experienced" (Leavy, 2017). Thus, it provided details into teachers' actual conceptualizations and practices of learner autonomy. The sample size is usually limited in the qualitative forms of investigation and is usually determined by what came to be called 'saturation' (Boddy, 2016; Denscombe, 2010). In what concerns the ethical issues of the present study, special attention was paid to ensure that all the teachers' anonymity and to use their responses for research purposes only.

Data analysis procedures

After it had been collected, the quantitative data was submitted to 'SPSS version 23' for analysis. In accordance with the research questions, scale item analysis was run. That is, their frequencies and corresponding means were calculated for each single item in the questionnaire. For the interview, some questions necessitated the generation of themes, while others were directly answered. Given the fact that one interpretation of a reality is "only one of several 'right ways'" (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003), selected extracts from teachers' responses were cited. In fact, in this way, other researchers will have the

opportunity to see how the present study's data was made sense of, thereby adding to its transparency and credibility, which in turn make up the trustworthiness of the analysis in the qualitative research.

FINDINGS

This section presents the results of the questionnaire on what learner autonomy means to teachers. To gain insights into the teachers' views, they were provided with a scale ranging from 1, indicating strong disagreement with a statement, to 5, indicating strong agreement. The following tables display the dimensions of learner autonomy along with their respective mean scores. To answer the first research question, the teachers' tendency to favor any of the four orientations of learner autonomy (technical, psychological, social, and political) was examined (Table 1). Additionally, the nature of their responses to other items—representing the relationships between learner autonomy and factors such as L2 proficiency level, effective language learning, age, teaching approach, and teacher role—was analyzed (Table 2). The interview data further enriches the findings by providing a more in-depth understanding of teachers' conceptualizations and practices of learner autonomy. The semi-structured interviews allowed participants to elaborate on their views, offering qualitative insights that complement the quantitative findings. These interview responses were analyzed to identify recurring themes and patterns related to learner autonomy, which are presented alongside the questionnaire results.

RQ1: Autonomy according to Moroccan university EFL professors

The following table provides an analysis of the professors' views of what autonomy entails. It outlines the four views of autonomy, including the technical, the psychological, the social and the political views.

Table 1
Teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy

Items	M (SD)
The Technical View	
1. Learner autonomy is promoted through regular opportunities for learners to complete tasks alone.	4.19 (.74)
2. Independent study in the library is an activity which develops learner autonomy	4.14 (.65)
The Psychological View	
3. Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence.	4.00 (1.14)
4. Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy.	4.14 (.79)
5. Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated.	4.03 (.85)
6. To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning.	4.02 (.89)
The Social View	
7. Learner autonomy is promoted through activities which give learners opportunities to learn from each other.	3.85 (.91)
8. Co-operative group work activities support the development of learner	3.76 (1.09)

autonomy.	
The Political View	
9. Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn.	4.02 (.97)
10. Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy.	3.95 (1.11)
11. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do.	4.01 (.74)

Table 1 is composed of four dimensions of promoting learner autonomy. While each of the above orientations were supported, the most supported was the technical orientation (M= 4.16, SD= .69). The psychological orientation was the second most supported (M= 4.04, SD= .91), followed by the political (M= 3.98, SD= .91) and finally the social (3.80, SD= 1). Technically, the majority of the teachers agreed (42.9%) or strongly agreed (38.1%) that giving learners opportunities allows for the development of their autonomy. Also, a large number of them agreed (57.1%) or strongly agreed (28.6%) that learners' independent study in the library supports their autonomy.

Psychologically, teachers' conceptions of learner autonomy were also strongly associated with this orientation, particularly with learner strategies manifested in item 4 'learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy' with which, jointly, 76.2% of the teachers agreed. The role of motivation, confidence, and self-evaluation were also believed to be highly positively supported.

From the political perspective, over two thirds of the teachers agreed (23.8%) or strongly agreed (42.9%) that learner autonomy can be promoted when learners can make choices about how they learn. A quite similar number of them advocated learner choice in the type of activities they do as one way to develop learner autonomy. Also, the majority of the teachers agreed (57.1%) or strongly agreed (28.6%) that student involvement in decision making enhances their autonomy. Lastly, the teachers' views were less in line with the social view of learner autonomy. Less than two thirds of the teachers agreed (33.3%) or strongly agreed (28.6%) that learners' learning from each other enhances their autonomy. Just over half of them agreed (23.8%) or strongly agreed (33.3%) that opportunities for cooperative group activities develop earner autonomy.

Further understanding of the teachers' views about learner autonomy was gained through follow up interviews where teachers were invited to elaborate on what the concept meant to them. In the teachers' view of learner autonomy, concepts related to the technical, psychological, and political notions recurred. It was observed that their views were far less socially driven. The following excerpts mark their actual conceptions:

> "Learner autonomy means taking control of one's learning and developing a set of metacognitive and cognitive strategies". (T1)

> "Learner autonomy is when learners learn without anyone's help". (T7)

> "Learner autonomy is the ability to make decisions about what and how to learn. It involves setting goals and evaluating one's progress". (T2)

> "Learner autonomy means the bearing of responsibility and the ability to make independent decisions for one's learning". (T9)

> "Learner autonomy entails giving agency to learners to extend their learning out of the classroom. It also means learners are able to identify their strengths and weaknesses". (T4)

A related question was addressed to the professors to speak more about the characteristics of an autonomous learner. The analysis showed that more than half of the respondents stressed the psychological characteristics. Five teachers (T1, T3, T5, T7 and T8) mentioned motivation as what should characterize an autonomous learner. For example, T8 said "the autonomous learner should have some qualities like being very motivated, has a clear goal, and being able to face learning challenges". The other teachers emphasized that an autonomous learner is one who is responsible, strategic, decision maker, and self-disciplined.

RQ2: Constraints of learner autonomy according to Moroccan university EFL professors

Having discussed the professors' orientations in relation to where autonomy fits and what it entails according to them, another related set of factors constraining learner autonomy (LA) was subject to exploration. Table 2 displays the results of these related factors.

Table 2
Teachers' beliefs about LA and the related factors

Items	M (SD)
LA-Age	
1. Language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy.	4.28 (.84)
LA-Culture	
2. Learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds.	4.14 (.91)
3. Learner autonomy is a concept which is not suited to non-Western learners.	1.71 (.71)
LA-Effective Language Learning	
4. Individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners.	4.01 (1.19)
5. Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would.	4.04 (.80)
LA-Teaching Approach	
6. Learner-centered classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy.	3.81 (1.23)
LA-Proficiency	
7. Promoting autonomy is easier with beginning language learners than with more proficient learners.	3.28 (1.18)
8. The proficiency of a language learner does not affect their ability to develop autonomy.	3.38 (1.16)
LA-Teacher Role	
9. Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher.	2.28 (1)
10. The teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy.	3.80 (1.12)

Table 2 shows that, overall, teachers' perceptions of the relationships between learner autonomy and the above factors were positive. However, some factors were more supported than others with the relationships between LA and age and effective language

learning being the most supported. As indicated, the majority of the teachers agreed (23.8%) or strongly agreed (52.4%) that learners can develop autonomy irrespective of their age. Also, teachers believed in the ability of learners of any cultural background to develop autonomy. Concerning LA and effective language learning, more than half of them agreed (42.9%) or strongly agreed (23.8%) that learners who are not autonomous are not likely to be effective language learners, and that is because most of them believed that developing autonomy contributes to effective language learning. Regarding the relationship between LA and the teaching approach, over two thirds of the teachers agreed (33.3%) or strongly agreed (38.1%) that learner-centeredness is a good condition for learner autonomy. With regard to LA and learner proficiency levels, quite lower percentages were shown. The majority of the teachers were generally unsure about the relationship. The last relationship revealed that most of the teachers disagreed (61.9%) or strongly disagreed (14.3%) that learner autonomy means learning without a teacher, a view which is congruent with their belief that the teacher has an important role to play in promoting learner autonomy.

DISCUSSION

The findings showed that the Moroccan EFL teachers' general understanding of the concept of learner autonomy was in line with the general mainstream conceptualizations of the concept in the related literature (Benson, 2011; Murase, 2015). Like many EFL teachers in other related studies (Al Asmari, 2013; Borg & Al Busaidi, 2012a, 2012b; Chan, 2003; Joshi, 2011; Tapinta, 2016; Wang & Ryan, 2020), the Moroccan teachers acknowledged the importance of learner autonomy in language learning. In this study, teachers' beliefs were divided into four types: the technical, the psychological, the social, and the political.

The most supported were the technical and the psychological orientations, which focus on encouraging opportunities for learners to work alone, learning how to learn skills, and promoting motivation. Their perception of learner autonomy in terms of learning through cooperative work was less dominant. This finding is partially not in line with that of Van Loi (2016) and Wang and Wang's (2016) studies in which Vietnamese and Chinese teachers' views were more directed to the psychological and the social aspects of learner autonomy than the other two. In fact, while the technical view in this study was the highest rated, it was the least rated in Van Loi's (2016) study. Although the present study's findings revealed the teachers' understanding of the nature of learner autonomy, teachers in Saraswati's (2019) study failed to demonstrate this understanding of the concept, thereby failing to foster autonomy among students.

The two supported orientations by the teachers also recurred in the qualitative analysis. For the technical orientation, teachers emphasized the need for learning outside the walls of the classroom. This has already been alluded to in the specialized literature by Benson (1997), who defines learner autonomy, assuming the technical perspective, as the 'act' of out-of-class language learning without any sort of teachers' interference. The psychological perspective also manifests in the interview analysis when teachers chose to define learner autonomy in terms of their ability to use metacognitive strategies. This finding joins the established arguments by other scholars in the literature. For example, Cotterall

(1995) defines autonomy as "the extent to which learners demonstrate the ability to use a set of tactics for taking control of their learning". Similarly, Macaro (2008) states that it entails the ability to effectively employ cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Also, teachers' responses seemed to also advocate the political perspective of learner autonomy when they mentioned the notion of learners' 'control' in their learning, which is, again, in congruence with Benson's (1997) argument that autonomy takes place when learners are able to take "control over the processes and content of learning" (p. 19).

Moreover, Ahmadianzadeh et al. (2018) found out that EFL teachers held positive beliefs about learner autonomy, a finding that is in congruence with that of the present study. This study is in line with the mainstream theory of learner autonomy by Benson (2010) and Little (1991). Rather than indicating full independence from the teacher's control, Little (1991) argues that the teacher-learner relationship should be interdependent because total detachment usually results in individuals being autistic learners who will deprive themselves from social interaction. This teacher-learner dialogic relationship is advocated by Benson (2010) when he states that autonomy does not imply the "freedom from the influence of teachers, institutions, materials and so on, or learning by oneself" (p. 80). Therefore, the participants seemed to display an understanding of learner autonomy that is principally evident through their views.

CONCLUSION

The study has provided local and rich information on Moroccan university EFL teachers' perspectives and practices regarding the promotion of learner autonomy. It has certainly contributed to raising our awareness of how teachers perceive the concept and how the beliefs they bring to the classroom shape and influence their practices in promoting learner autonomy. One of the main findings is that teachers generally held positive beliefs towards learner autonomy, stating that it is important for students' academic growth. Another finding relates to a general understanding of what learner autonomy actually means. This can be exemplified by their overall agreement that learner autonomy is when learners take control of their own learning and should not be understood as total independence from the teacher. Moreover, two limitations of the study were identified. The first one is the study's reliance on a relatively small number of participants, which limits the possibility of generalizing the findings. The second one, at the level of the methodology, is that the study employed a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview as the two main tools through which teachers' insights and practices were gained. Although the use of these tools was warranted by the research objectives of this study, which were indeed useful, the study would have provided more interesting results if it included a professional development workshop element to see how that would change their perceptions and practices.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest reported by the authors.

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Research Article

English for occupational purposes (EOP): Public and environmental health employees' needs for English language

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ABSTRACT

English is in high demand across all sectors, including for professional purposes. This demand is driven by increased awareness of its role in both academic and occupational contexts. Employees who have a good command of English language can serve their area well, so it is necessary to cater for those employees' needs for English language regardless their area of specialization to raise their employability. This paper aimed at analyzing Public and Environmental Health (PEH) employees' needs for English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) to identify how they use English in their jobs, its usefulness to them, their current level of English proficiency, and the language skills they consider most important. This study employed a mixed-methods design, collecting data through a questionnaire and structured interviews with twenty-nine employees and two department heads from the Ministry of Health in Khartoum State, Sudan. Results showed that PEH employees frequently used English in their jobs, English language was useful to the participants in their jobs, their proficiency was good, and all language skills were considered important. The study recommends that the Ministry of Health, Khartoum State, should consider this need analysis results to prepare training courses in English for its employees.

Keywords: *EOP, Needs Analysis, Target Situation Analysis, Present Situation Analysis, Job Needs*

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INTRODUCTION

In the 1940s, English language became a global language for two reasons. The first was scientific, technological, and economic development worldwide. The second reason was the political and economic status of the USA. These reasons called for a lingua franca to facilitate communication (Anthony, 2018; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Consequently, learning English language tended to be deliberate. English language learners, therefore, have been conscious to why they learn it. Hence, English language learners may be grouped into those who want to learn it for the sake of their professions such as engineers and doctors. Another group involves students at tertiary level who need the language to cope with their academic fields (Brown, 2016; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Lynch & Hudson, 1991).

Learners of English language need to learn it to address immediate and future needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). The former, immediate needs is used for learners' needs to succeed in academic study. Future needs is associated with what learners' need to do with the language in their future profession. For example, engineers may need English language to read manuals written in English language and a physician who need to update his knowledge in his career.

"With the rapid growth of the work market, there is tough competition among employers to hire the best trained people to work for them."

With the rapid growth of the work market, there is tough competition among employers to hire the best trained people to work for them. One of the most important criteria required for employability is mastering English language in addition to academic qualification. Consequently, providing adequate training in English language is deemed necessary for universities to prepare graduates for future employment. To achieve this, universities must try to identify workplace English language needs. Unfortunately, this is ignored to some extent. There is a paucity in studies investigating employees' needs for EOP in general, and public and environmental health (PEH) employees, in particular. This study's purpose, therefore, is to assess PEH employees' needs for EOP through answering these research questions:

(1) How often do PEH employees use English in their jobs?
(2) How is English language knowledge helpful to PEH employees pertaining to their jobs?
(3) What is PEH employees' present situation (PS) in English language?
(4) What are the most essential skills to the employees?

LITERATURE REVIEW

English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

ESP is known as consisting of absolute characteristics (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998) comprising three characteristics. The first characteristic is that ESP is originated to take care of learners' particular needs. In addition, ESP employs the methods and tasks of the filed it works for. Finally, the concentration of ESP is on the linguistic aspects (grammar, syntax, and vocabulary), skills, language, and genres compatible with these activities. The latter are

four variable characteristics. First, ESP is associated with a specific specialization. Second, it might employ a method that is distinct from that of general English. Third, ESP is possibly targeting mature learners at tertiary level or employees in a specific occupation, but it may be offered to beginners. Finally, it targets learners with intermediate or advanced level of English language as it expects basic language knowledge (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Another feature of ESP, according to Trujeque – Moreno at al. (2021) is that it entails focusing on syllabus design due to the shift of its focus in the 1960s from grammar to an approach catering for addressing professional needs.

Two main classes of ESP exist the first of which is English for academic purposes (EAP) (Duley-Evans & St John, 1998). EAP is classified into other branches such as English for science and technology (EST) which is considered the basic branch. In addition, there are English for medical purposes (EMP) and English for legal purposes (ELP) which are among the traditional branches of ESP. Recently, English for management, finance, and economics was coined to be taught to business students. The second class of ESP is English for occupational purposes (Duley-Evans & St John, 1998).

English for Occupational Purposes (EOP)

The second branch of ESP is EOP is the use of English in various professional settings whose history is closely related to the history of ELT. It targets professional settings by training learners to use English in certain professions (Koester, 2020; Rico et al., 2019; and Kim, 2008). EOP development as a main branch of ESP is related to "the status of English as an international language, or lingua franca, of business and work" (Koester, 2020, p.430). Merine and Boulenouar (2019) regard EOP as a corresponding to EAP, but they differ in the nature of the group they serve; the former focuses on employees while the latter seeks to meet tertiary students' academic demands.

The base of EOP courses is NA whose purpose is to reveal the duties that professionals will perform using English language in the target situation (target needs) (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998). Kim (2008) points out that EOP seeks to equip trainees with the communicative or cultural proficiency associated with professional contexts. Thus, EOP major goal is to enhance the linguistic skills important to and required in trainees' occupations (Kim, 2008; and Rico et al. 2021). Needs analysis (NA) is used to discover these linguistic skills and the tasks that employees perform in their professions.

Needs Analysis

Needs Analysis (NA) plays a pivotal role in both English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and General English (GE), as widely recognized in the literature. Ananta et al. (2025) highlight NA as a means to bridge the gap between academic instruction and professional demands. Similarly, Fareen (2024) identifies NA as the core feature that differentiates ESP, given its focus on learners' academic, communicative, and professional needs. Mohamed et al. (2024) emphasize that NA enhances ESP by aligning instruction with specific academic or workplace contexts. Anthony (2018) and Brown (2016) also affirm that NA is what fundamentally distinguishes ESP from GE. Foundational scholars such as Hutchinson and Waters (1987), along with Richards (2001), Long (2005), and others (e.g., Nunan, 1988; Robinson, 1991; Brown, 1995, 2009; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998), consistently assert that

NA is the starting point for any ESP program, as it reveals learners' target needs, lacks, and necessities. The data generated through NA serves multiple functions—ranging from course planning and evaluation to material selection and test design (Richards, 2001; Trujeque-Moreno et al., 2021; Astika, 1999; Diana, 2020; Basri et al., 2020).

There are various approaches to be followed in assessing learners' needs. First, there is target situation analysis (TSA). TSA refers to the tasks needed in the future when they use the language. It covers *necessities* which is concerned with what learners must learn, *lacks* that involves the 'gap' between learners' present level of proficiency and the target situation (TS), and *wants* that is referred to as what learners feel they need to learn, which might contradict with the *necessities* and *lacks* (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

Present situation analysis (PSA) is the second NA approach. It aims at discovering students' current level of proficiency in English before the start of any language training (Dudley-Evans & St Johns, 1998; Robinson, 1991). Third, there is learning needs analysis (LNA) that refers to the tasks which students should do to learn the language (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Therefore, an effective NA should pay attention to any obstacles confronting learners in language learning. These obstacles could affect achieving the objectives set in the TSA (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). LNA takes into consideration aspects related to language skills to be learnt, the process of language learning, learners' motives, and personal variations (Brown, 2016; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). All these NA approaches can be applied through various methods. These methods include surveys, interviews, observations, tests, document analysis (Basturkmen, 2010; Brown, 2009; 1995; Long, 2005; Hyland, 2006; Richards, 2001; Graves, 2000; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; and West, 1997).

Three methodological aspects of NA should be considered. The first aspect is sources of data. Several data sources could be identified as shown by Brown (1995), Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), and Richards (2001). Brown (1995) suggests four classes of these informants. The first group is target group that embraces learners, instructors, and managers. Another class is the "audience" that entails individuals who are expected to implement the outcomes of the NA. This group consists of course administrators, inspectors, or any authority responsible for the language programme. The Resources group is the third type of informant which refers to people who could contribute information suitable to the situation. The group embraces procreators, sponsors, recruiters, or field instructors. Group four is the analyzers of needs who could be counsellors who may be outsiders to the institution or staff members in the company (Robinson, 1991).

The second methodological aspect is triangulation, which is associated with utilizing multiple data collection methods and informants (West, 1997; Richards, 2001; Nugraha, 2002; Long, 2005; and Brown, 2016; 2009). Long (2005) proposes that this promotes "credibility of…interpretations of data" (p.28). Richards (2001) explains that employment of numerous informants results in that each one enhances the other since each data collection method has its own advantages and disadvantages. For example, questionnaires suffer from a small rate of retrocede, and after they are distributed, it is difficult to change the questions. In addition,

surveys do not have the ability to deeply reveal respondents' emotions. Nevertheless, interviews can compensate for this disadvantage by offering comprehensive profound coverage of inquiries since the interviewer is present, and he can interact with the interviewees.

The third element involves the types of questions included in needs analysis (NA). According to Rossett (1982) and Brown (1995), there is a variety of queries which should be posed during NA encompassing issues, prime concerns, capabilities, beliefs, and resolutions. Brown (2016; 1995) further explains these type questions, stating that when addressing problems, needs analysts aim to identify the challenges faced by the group being studied in their language learning. Priority questions emphasis topics, language usage, and skills that learners consider necessary to study. Such queries include the core skills reading, writing, listening, and speaking, as well as grammar. Additionally, we can ask questions seeking to reveal the main or sub-skills that are regarded as the most essential to learn.

Moreover, we may focus on the capacities to assess the present proficiency in the language skills before commencing the programme. Answers to this question are crucial as they establish the content of the course and show the learners' present proficiency level. These two factors are vital for establishing the course beginning, scope, and sequence. Attitude-related questions seek to understand the target group's sentiments and beliefs regarding the course contents. Queries about resolutions aim at collecting opinions on addressing the identified issues.

Basturkmen (2010) states that the NA is a process focusing on five key areas. Firstly, it focuses on the target situation to decide on the exercises, and language aspects that for which they will use English. Secondly, it incorporates language analysis for describing the discourse employed in the TS. Thirdly, NA investigates what learners presently are able or are not able to do in association with the TS. Fourthly, it analyzes the student factor, seeking to uncover data about their motivation, learning methods, and how they perceive their needs. Finally, NA includes context analysis, which involves evaluating elements connected to the environment where the course will be taught.

Previous Studies

Several studies have investigated employees' occupational needs in various professions. These studies have revealed several aspects encompassing importance of English, skills priority, gaps in proficiency, and demand for training. First, research has revealed the importance of English language in the workplace. For example, Al-Malki et al. (2022), Chamorro et al. (2012) and Humaira (2021) found that English is always used in tourism sector. Mohammedzadeh et al. (2015) concluded that Iranian bank employees considered English language as important in their profession. Moroccan hotel managers stated that English is necessary for receptionists, secretaries, and tour guides and it was used for tasks such as phone calls, reservations, and excursions.

Second, previous research has focused on language skills priority. It is plausible that speaking skill has consistently dominated research findings as the most essential skill with writing appearing second for tourism students (Humaira, 2021). Al-Malki et al. (2022) stated

that speaking and listening were the most important kills. Masyhud and Khoiriyah (2021) revealed that speaking was the most important skills for tour guides in Malang followed by listening, reading, and writing. Aldohon (2014) and Bouzidi (2009) concluded that speaking and listening were the most important skills for tourism police in Jordan and hospitality employees in Morocco, respectively. Bank employees in Iran ranked speaking as the most important skill (Mohammedzadeh et al., 2015). In Malysia, HR staff highlighted speaking in meeting as their priority despite their struggle in it. Writing skills appeared with varying importance, but they were highly regarded as important as shown by Kaur and Clarke (2009) and Mohammedzadeh et al. (2015). In contrast, writing was noted to be less important by Al-Malki et al. (2022), Masyhud and Khoiriyah (2021), Aldohon (2014), and Bouzidi (2009).

Third, researchers have identified gaps and challenges facing their participants in using English language. In terms of gaps between ESP training and workplace needs, on one hand, Chamorro et al. (2021) found that ESP courses were not effective in preparing students for their future jobs nor they meet employers' needs. On the other hand, some challenges facing professionals in using EOP. For example, Nampti (2022) revealed shortages in listening and speaking. Aldohon (2014) revealed difficulties in coping with fast speech, inappropriate language use, shortage in vocabulary, and incorrect grammar. Bouzidi (2009) found that his participants faced problems with expressing themselves and understanding native speakers. Kaur and Clarke (2009) concluded that employees did not perform well in speaking, reading, and writing. Mohammedzadeh et al. (2015) concluded that bank employees had problems with all language skills and training was requested. Badri (2000) revealed employees' dissatisfaction with their language proficiency. Al-Khatib's (2005) participants wished to improve listening, speaking, and writing. Finally, concerning demand for training, Namtapi (2022), Mohammedzadeh et al. (2015) and Al-Khatib (2005) showed that there was a demand for training among their participants.

METHOD

Research Design and Context

This study employed a mixed method design. Particularly, it used the fully integrated variant, which is a sub-type of the convergent approach (Creswell & Plano Clarck, 2017). In this type of mixed method design, quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis interact with each other throughout the study instead of separating them (Creswell & Plano Clarck, 2017). This approach is appropriate since it allows a researcher to collect both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously. Consequently, this permits comparability of results. In addition. Integration occurs across several stages in the study allowing for richer more delicate insights, stronger validation of findings through comparing trends with lived experiences. Accordingly, this provides outcomes triangulation.

The study was conducted with the employees of the Ministry of Health, Khartoum State, Sudan. This Ministry supervises all health services in Khartoum State as Sudan at that time was under Federal system. The Ministry has several departments (Table 2) and it employs graduates form faculties of Public and Environmental Health, Medicine, Pharmacy,

and Dentistry. Those employees work at departments relevant to their major. All the employees are Sudanese, but their origin is from various parts of Sudan reflecting the country's cultural and ethnical diversity in one professional setting, so this provides an opportunity for variations in ways of thinking and tasks implementation.

Participants

Convenience sampling technique was used in this study and two samples were used. The first sample consisted of 29 PEH employees, 17 (58%) of whom were males and 12 (42%) were females, Table 1. All of them were PEH graduates who were employees at the Ministry of Health, Khartoum State, Sudan. They graduated from different Sudanese universities such as University of Khartoum, Gezira University and Shendi University. They worked in various positions in different departments including school health, vaccination, and water health and safety departments, Table 2. One of the participants worked for the World Health Organization (WHO), Khartoum office in Polio Eradication Programme.

Table 1
PEH Employees' Gender & job Title

	Gender			Job Title				
	M	F	Total	Consultant	Health Officer	Health Inspector	Director	Total
No	17	12	29	1	19	8	1	29
%	58.6	41.4	100.0	3.4	65.6	27.6	3.4	100.0

Table 2
PEH Employees Departments

Department	**No**	%
School Health	3	10.4
Vaccination	7	24.1
Organizations	1	3.4
Water Health and Safety	2	6.9
Food Hygiene and Safety	1	3.4
Preventive Medicine	3	10.4
Health Support	3	10.4
Occupational Health	3	10.4
Epidemiology	1	3.4
Environmental Health	3	10.4
Childhood Diseases	1	3.4
Polio Eradication (WHO)	1	3.4
Total	29	100.0

The second sample included two heads of departments at the Ministry of Health, Khartoum State, the Departments of Epidemiology and Vaccination. It is worth noting that the participants' consent was granted before the data collection process commenced. The

participants were told that it voluntary to take part in this study. All those who were met agreed to participate in the study.

Data Collection

The current research adopted a questionnaire for the employees and an interview for two heads of the departments. The questionnaire design resulted from reviewing several studies such as Alastal (2012), Alqahtani (2011), Ali (2011), and Richards (2001). The questionnaire contains close-ended and open-ended questions distributed into five sections covering background information, how often the employees use English in the job, the usefulness of English language to the participants, the respondents' self-rating in English language, and the most important skills for the employees. It used Five - Likert scale that ranged from *strongly agree to strongly disagree* in two sections. In section 4 (items 15 and 4.1), I required the participants to rate their level of proficiency using the options very good, good, average, weak, and very weak. The second data collection tool was a structured interview that contained 3 questions.

To validate the questionnaire, content validity was used. The first version of the questionnaire was sent to some experts in language teaching to check its language, wording, and suitability to the research objectives. They suggested some modifications which were incorporated to finalize the questionnaire. Regarding the questionnaire reliability, Cronbach Alpha was used to measure the questionnaire reliability, and the value was revealed to be (0.96) which was sufficient to administer the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. To analyse the questionnaire, SPSS 20 was used through finding frequencies and percentages. Qualitatively, content analysis was adopted to analyse the interview data. I approached the analysis in a structured and thoughtful way, using descriptive statistical techniques. The process was unfolded in three main stages. The first stage was data cleaning and preparation. Here, I carefully reviewed the raw data to spot and correct any errors or inconsistencies. I also handled any missing data to maintain the reliability and integrity of the dataset. The next step was coding and categorization. At this stage, I coded the data, particularly the categorical variables, to make them easier to analyse and interpret. The final stage was the descriptive analysis itself. Here, I focused on calculating frequencies and percentages to summarize the data. This approach allowed for to clearly show how the responses were distributed across different categories. The analysis was guided by the principles of descriptive statistical analysis, which is well-suited for identifying and presenting patterns, trends, and proportions in the data. By following these steps, I ensured the analysis was both transparent and scientifically rigorous.

FINDINGS

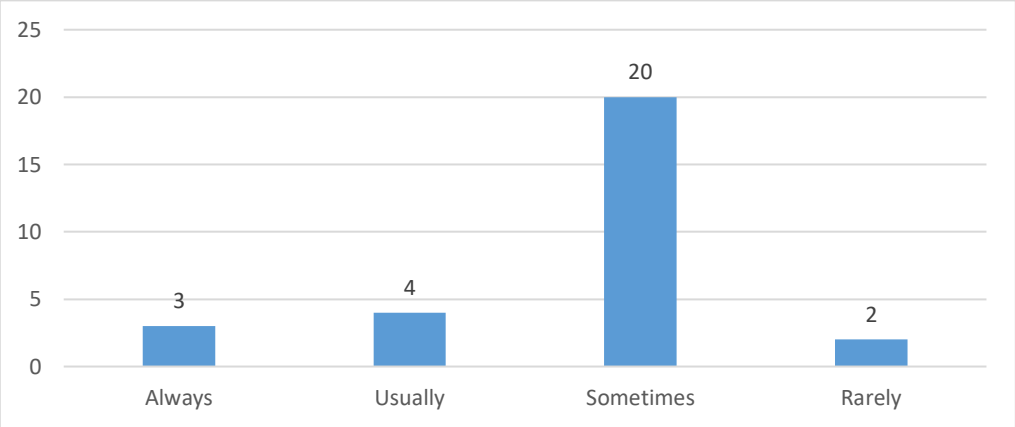
The current study seeks to reveal how often PEH employees use English in their jobs, how English language knowledge helpful to them in their jobs, there PS in English language, and the most important skills to these employees. This section presents the results of the study based on data analysis and their discussion.

RQ1. How often do PEH Employees Use English in their Jobs?

The questionnaire asked the employees about how often they use English in their work. The results are shown in Figure 1 below. Most of the employees 27 (93%) stated that they use English in their job as can be seen from Figure 1. These results are an indication that English plays an important part in PHE area. This result implies that English language is important to equip PEH students with the desired level of proficiency in English not only to address their needs, but also to prepare them for their future career.

Figure 1

Employees Use of English in Their Job



The first question in the interview asked about how often English language is used by PEH professionals in their job. The two head of departments agreed that English language is usually used in the job. This is because these departments had to deal with foreign delegates. Thus, the employees and the head of the departments agreed that English language is used in their jobs.

RQ2. How is English Language Knowledge Helpful to PEH Employees Pertaining to their Jobs?

The respondents were also required to pass their opinions regarding the usefulness of English language in their jobs. As shown in Table 3, all the respondents 29 (100%) *strongly agreed* that English is helpful in increasing knowledge about one's job. Performing one's job

effectively and giving chances for travelling abroad were *strongly agreed* on by 28 (96.6%) of the participants. Out of 29, 26 (89.7%) of the participants stated that English language provides chances for training, 22 (759%) and 21 (72.4%) agreed that English is useful in increasing job responsibilities and promoting them for higher jobs, respectively. One subject added, in response to the open- ended question, that it was helpful in attending conferences inside and outside Sudan.

Table 3
English Language Knowledge Advantages to Employees in Their Job

Item	Strongly Agree		Don't know		Strongly Disagree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Performing my job efficiently.	28	96.6	-	-	1	3.4
Increasing my knowledge in my field.	29	100	-	-	-	-
Increasing my job responsibilities.	22	75.9	2	6.9	5	17.2
Promoting me to a higher job.	21	72.4	-	-	8	27.6
Giving chances for training.	26	89.7	1	3.4	2	6.9
Giving chances for travelling abroad.	28	96.6	-	-	1	3.4

In response to question two about the usefulness of English, the interviewees agreed that English language is useful to their employees. The two interviewees agreed with their employees on the usefulness of English language to the job. The head of the Epidemiology department said that knowledge of English allowed the employees to perform their job efficiently, increased their knowledge about their field, and provided them opportunities for outside training. The head of Vaccination department added that it paved the way for traveling outside for work and increased job responsibilities.

RQ3. What is the Employees' Present Situation (PS) in English Language?

Table 4 below presents the employees' responses to self-rating in the four skills, grammar, and vocabulary. Out of 29, 21 (75.8%) of the participants considered their level as good at reading skills, 21 (72.4%) of them reported that they are good at scientific vocabulary. Eighteen (66.7%) of them stated that the were goo at writing skills, 17 (58.6) were good at listening skills, and 17 (60.7%) regarded themselves as good at general vocabulary and 15 (51.7) found themselves as good at correct pronunciation. Table 5 also shows that the participants are not satisfied with their level in speaking skills, grammar, pronunciation, and listening skills as 11 – 15 (39.3 – 53.6%) of the participants ranked themselves as average and weak in these.

Table 4
PEH Employees' Self –Rating of Their Level of the Four Skills and other Areas

Language skill/areas	Good		Average		Weak		Did not Answer	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Reading skills	21	75.8	7	24.2	-		1	3.4
Writing skills	18	66.7	9	33.3	-		2	6.9
Speaking skills	13	46.4	11	39.3	4	14.3	1	3.4
Listening skills	17	58.6	7	24.1	5	17.2	-	
General vocabulary	17	60.7	11	39.3	-		1	3.4

Scientific vocabulary	21	72.4	7	24.1	1	3.4	-	
Grammar	13	46.4	11	39.3	4	14.3	1	3.4
Correct pronunciation	15	51.7	10	34.5	4	1.3	-	

In terms of rating employees, the two interviewees agreed that their employees' proficiency in English language was average, which contradicts with what the employees stated. This was clear when some employees were asked to perform any task in English language, added one of the interviewees. The employees were requested to show the difficulties they faced when learning English and using it in their job. The results are presented in tables 6 below.

Table 5
PEH Employees' Difficulties in Using English in Their Jobs

Problem	Yes		No.		Do not know		Did not Answer	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Limited vocabulary	19	67.9	9	32.1	-		1	3.4
Grammar	17	63.0	10	37	-		2	6.9
Reading comprehension skills	11	40.7	15	55.6	1	3.7	2	6.9
Writing skills	14	51.9	13	48.1	-		2	6.9
Speaking skills	18	64.3	9	32.1	1	3.6	1	3.4
Listening skills	11	42.3	15	57.7	-		3	10.3
Correct pronunciation	14	51.9	13	48.1	-		2	6.9

As seen in Table 5, the employees show that they had difficulties in vocabulary 19 (67.9%), speaking skills 18 (64.3%), grammar 17 (63.0%), writing, and correct pronunciation 14 (51.9%), respectively. It seems that the employees and the interviewees were of contradicting point of views. Unlike the interviewees, the employees were satisfied with their level of English. It is plausible that the employees stated that they are *good to average* in the skills; however, they confronted difficulty to learn them.

RQ4. What are the most Essential Skills to the Employees?

As for skills importance, all the employees 29 (100%) *strongly agreed* that speaking skill was the most important one, Table 6. Speaking is followed by reading and writing since 28 (96.5%) of the participants *strongly agreed* on their importance to their job. These were followed by correct pronunciation 27 (96.4%) and listening skills 26 (92.9%).

Table 6
Skills Importance as Perceived by Employees

Lang. area	Strongly Agree		Do not know		Strongly Disagree		Did not Answer	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No	%
Reading skills	28	96.5	-		1	3.5	-	
Writing skills	28	96.5	-		1	3.5	-	
Speaking skills	29	100	-		-		-	
Listening skills	26	92.9	1	3.6	1	3.6	1	3.4
General vocabulary	25	92.6	1	3.7	1	3.7	2	6.9
Scientific vocabulary	23	85.2	2	7.4	2	7.4	2	6.9
Grammar	23	85.2	2	7.4	2	7.4	2	6.9
Correct pronunciation	27	96.4	-		1	3.6	1	3.4

Discussion

This study aims at revealing how often PEH employees use English in their jobs, how English language knowledge is helpful to PEH employees pertaining to their jobs, PEH employees' present situation (PS) in English language, and the most essential skills to the employees. For the first research question regarding the frequency of English language use in participants' work, data analysis showed that most employees used English in their work. These results are an indication that English plays an important part in PHE area. This result implies that English language is important to equip PEH students with the desired level of proficiency in English not only to address their needs, but also to prepare them for their future career. The two head of departments agreed that English language is usually used in the job. This is because these departments had to deal with foreign delegates. Thus, the employees and the head of the departments agreed that English language is used in their jobs. These findings imply that the professional employment of English language necessitates design of university English courses that prepare students for their future jobs. The results accord with what was revealed by Al-Malki et al (2022), Chamrro et al. (2021), Humaira (2021), Bouzidi (2009), Kaur and Clarke (2009), Al-khatib (2005), and Bedri (2000). They found that their subjects frequently use English language in their work.

Regarding usefulness of English language knowledge to the employees in their profession, performing one's job effectively and providing chances for travelling abroad were *strongly agreed* on by 28 (96.6%) of the participants. These results indicate that employees have experienced using English in their work and they have found it useful. The results also imply that a thorough study of the job situation is required to meet employees' job needs. The analysis of job situations may reveal the linguistic features of communication, activities, and tasks which could inform syllabus content. This finding matches what was revealed by Bouzidi (2009) and Bedri (2000). They concluded that English language was helpful in assigning certain jobs to employees.

Both interviewees acknowledged the importance of English for their employees' job performance. The head of the Epidemiology Department noted that English proficiency enabled employees to work more efficiently, expand their knowledge in the field, and access external training opportunities. Similarly, the head of the Vaccination Department emphasized that English opened doors for international travel and increased professional responsibilities. These findings align with those of Bouzidi (2009) and Bedri (2000), who reported that participants recognized the usefulness of English in their work. Regarding the employees' current English proficiency, the participants rated themselves as good in reading skills, scientific vocabulary, writing, and listening. However, both interviewees assessed their employees' English proficiency as only average, suggesting a gap between employees' self-perceptions and their supervisors' expectations. This indicates that the department heads were not fully satisfied with their employees' language competence.

Regarding the difficulties participants faced when learning English and using it in their job, the employees showed that they had difficulties in vocabulary, speaking skills, grammar, writing, and correct pronunciation. It seems that the employees and the

interviewees were of contradicting point of views. Unlike the interviewees, the employees were satisfied with their level of English. It is plausible that the employees stated that they are *good to average* in the skills; however, they confronted difficulty to learn them. These difficulties in learning English may be attributed to lack of sufficient practice. In addition, these findings imply existence of some problems in general education and university English language. This problem could be either in the syllabus and/or the teaching of English in these two levels. These results are in accord with what was found by Namtapi (2022), Mohammadzadeh et al. (2015), Aldohon (2014), Bouzidi (2009), and Kaur and Clarke (2009). They concluded that their subjects had problems in almost all the skills with various order. The results contradict with Bedri's (2000) who concluded that the employees she surveyed were not glad about their level of English language.

The findings indicate that speaking, reading, and writing are considered the most important English language skills for employees in Public and Environmental Health (PEH) professions. This suggests that all language areas play a significant role in their work, likely due to the integrated nature of communication, whether written or spoken, where these skills are interdependent and inseparable. Employees, drawing from their experiences, emphasized the importance of speaking, which reflects the practical demands of their job requiring verbal communication in English. While all four skills are valued, the primary emphasis lies on speaking, reading, and writing. In contrast, previous studies have highlighted varying skill priorities. For instance, Al-Malki et al. (2022), Nametape (2022), Masyhud and Koiriyah (2021), Aldohon (2014), and Bouzidi (2009) found speaking and listening to be most important. Kaur and Clarke (2009) and Alkhatib (2005) identified speaking and writing as key skills, while Humaira (2021) and Alkhatib (2005) highlighted the significance of writing. Mohammadzadeh et al. (2015), meanwhile, reported that speaking was the single most critical skill for their participants.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, English language is frequently used by PEH employees in their job. Furthermore, knowledge of English language is useful to PEH employees in their profession. Participants' Level of proficiency was good to average as they perceived it. All skills and language areas included in the questionnaire were important to PEH employees with varying order. These results call for some recommendations as shown below. This research recommends that the outcomes of this NA should be considered in devising an EOP syllabus for the students of PEH. Moreover, English language syllabuses at tertiary level must meet students' job needs for English. Additionally, the Ministry of Health, Khartoum State, needs to organise English language training courses to promote employees' level of language. Finally, PEH employees should be autonomous to develop their linguistic ability. This study was limited only to PEH employees; studies investigating other occupational areas are needed. Additionally, the sample size is relatively small. Studies recruiting larger number of participants are required to provide rich results. Depending only on a questionnaire to determine the participants' level of proficiency in English language limits this study. Future research may adopt a proficiency test to reveal participants' actual language competence.

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Appendix

Public & Environmental Health Employees Questionnaire

Section 1: Background information

1. Gender: Male ( ) Female ( )
2. Job title:…….
3. Institution:……
4. Department:……
5. Qualification: Tick (√) the suitable one(s) for you.

No	Degree		University	Year
1	Bachelor			
2	Master			
3	Ph.D.			

6. Work experience: 1- 5 ( ) 6- 10 ( ) 11- 15 ( ) 16+ ( )

Section2: Needs for English language in the job: Please (√) your answer.

7. How often do you use English language in your job?
   Always ( ) Usually ( ) Sometimes ( ) Rarely ( ) Never ( )

Section 3. English language usefulness in the job

English language knowledge helps me in:						
No	**Item**	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Don't know**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
8	Performing my job efficiently.					
9	Increasing my knowledge in my field.					
10	Increasing my job responsibilities.					
11	Promoting me to a higher job.					
12	Giving chances for training.					
13	Giving chances for travelling abroad.					
14	Others (Please specify)					

Section 4. Present situation in English language

15 Your English language standard is:

Very good ( ) Good ( ) Average ( ) Weak ( ) Very weak ( )

4.1. How do you rate yourself in these language areas?						
No	**Lang. area**	**Very good**	**Good**	**Average**	**Weak**	**Very weak**
16	Reading skills					
17	Writing skills					
18	Speaking skills					
19	Listening skills					
20	General vocabulary					
21	Scientific vocabulary					
22	Grammar					
23	Correct pronunciation					
4.2. Each of the following is a problem for you in using English in your job:						
No	**Problem**	**Yes**		**No**		**Do not know**
24	Limited vocabulary					
25	Grammar					
26	Reading comprehension skills					
27	Writing skills					
28	Speaking skills					
29	Listening skills					
30	Correct pronunciation					

Section 5. Skills importance

In your job, each of these language areas is important.						
No	**Lang. area**	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Do not know**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
31	Reading skills					
32	Writing skills					
33	Speaking skills					
34	Listening skills					
35	General vocabulary					
36	Scientific vocabulary					
37	Grammar					
38	Correct pronunciation					

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Research Article

Empowering Regional Tourism Stakeholders through Cooperative Learning: A Case Study Approach

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ABSTRACT

Tourism holds great potential for regional development, particularly in culturally rich but underdeveloped areas like Enrekang Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. However, limited human capital and fragmented stakeholder collaboration often hinder growth. This study explores the integration of the Cooperative Learning (CL) model into tourism education to enhance student competencies and support community-based tourism (CBT) development. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through classroom observations, focus group discussions, and interviews with educators, students, tourism practitioners, and government officials. The findings reveal that CL significantly increased student engagement, strengthened English communication, leadership, and teamwork skills, and empowered students to lead real-world projects. These included the creation of 12 local tour packages, 7 digital promotional videos used by tourism offices, and the coordination of 5 village tourism events, contributing to increased local tourism visibility. Institutional support and cross-sector collaboration emerged as key success factors. The study concludes that embedding CL in tourism education not only enhances academic outcomes but also creates meaningful contributions to local tourism development. The model presented offers a replicable framework for aligning education with regional development goals, particularly in rural areas where tourism potential remains untapped.

Keywords: *Cooperative Learning, Regional Tourism, Sustainable Development, Project-Based Learning*

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is increasingly recognized as a strategic driver of regional economic growth, especially in rural and semi-urban regions endowed with rich cultural traditions, natural landscapes, and indigenous wisdom. Beyond its economic impact, tourism can function as a catalyst for cultural preservation, community empowerment, and sustainable development (Tong et.al, 2024; Bumyut, 2025; Basri et al, 2023). Despite this potential, current tourism education practices in many developing regions—including Indonesia—remain dominated by traditional, lecture-based methods. These approaches often fail to prepare students for the dynamic, collaborative, and service-oriented nature of the modern tourism industry. This situation reveals several gaps. Theoretically, there is limited exploration of how pedagogical frameworks such as Cooperative Learning (CL) can be aligned with the goals of community-based tourism (CBT) development. Empirically, few studies have documented the outcomes of integrating CL into tourism curricula within rural settings. Methodologically, most existing studies focus on quantitative assessments, leaving a dearth of in-depth qualitative insights into students lived experiences and stakeholder engagement. Contextually, the specific challenges and opportunities in underdeveloped regions like Enrekang Regency remain underexplored in tourism education discourse.

This study is novel in that it applies a qualitative case study approach to investigate how CL can serve not only as a pedagogical tool, but also as a strategic model for empowering students to co-create CBT initiatives. Its significance lies in offering a replicable framework for transforming tourism education into a driver of inclusive, sustainable regional development. Moreover, there is a growing need for models that link classroom instruction with real-world tourism challenges, especially those requiring soft skills such as collaboration, communication, and leadership (Pranić et.al, 2021; Wut et.al, 2022). While Cooperative Learning (henceforth CL) has been widely studied in general education, its targeted application in tourism education—particularly in the context of regional development and community-based tourism—remains underexplored. Thus, this study responds to the dual necessity of addressing pedagogical innovation and sustainable tourism development by focusing on CL as a strategic instructional method.

One promising pedagogical approach to address this need is CL, a student-centered instructional method that emphasizes teamwork, interdependence, shared goals, and individual accountability. CL has been widely acknowledged for its effectiveness in developing 21st-century competencies, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills, which are all essential for successful careers in the tourism and hospitality industry (Mustakim et al., 2024; Rehman et al. (2024). Unlike traditional lecture-based methods, CL fosters active participation and real-world engagement, making it particularly relevant for tourism education, which inherently demands experiential learning and practical application (Suyato et al., 2024).

Enrekang Regency, situated in the heart of South Sulawesi, Indonesia, presents a compelling case for the application of such model. The region boasts a variety of tourism

assets, including majestic highlands like Bambapuang Peak, traditional agricultural systems, unique local cuisine, and vibrant cultural rituals rooted in Bugis-Makassar heritage. Nevertheless, the tourism sector in Enrekang remains significantly underdeveloped. This is due in part to fragmented stakeholder coordination, minimal digital and promotional outreach, and a lack of tourism professionals equipped with the necessary skills and mindset to innovate within a community-based tourism framework (Wawo et al., 2025). Educational institutions in the region, including vocational and higher education providers, therefore bear a strategic responsibility to bridge this gap by cultivating tourism talent that is not only skilled but also socially engaged.

Accordingly, this study aims to explore how the implementation of the CL model within tourism-related educational programs can serve as a transformative strategy for regional tourism development in Enrekang (Mustakim et al., 2024). By examining classroom practices, student projects, and community collaborations fostered through CL, the research seeks to highlight the model's potential to empower students as agents of local change while simultaneously strengthening the tourism ecosystem. Ultimately, this investigation contributes to the growing discourse on how education can be leveraged not just for individual advancement, but also for collective regional progress, particularly in the tourism sector.

To guide the inquiry, this study addresses the following research questions:

(1) How does the implementation of Cooperative Learning (CL) in tourism education influence student engagement and the development of professional soft skills?
(2) In what ways does CL support student-led tourism initiatives that contribute to community-based tourism development in Enrekang Regency?
(3) What are the perceptions of educators, tourism practitioners, and government stakeholders regarding the institutional support and outcomes of CL-based tourism education?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cooperative Learning in Tourism Education

CL is a student-centered pedagogical model that emphasizes structured teamwork, positive interdependence, and individual accountability. It has been widely recognized for improving critical thinking, interpersonal communication, and collaborative skills across disciplines (Jacobs & Kimura, 2023; Nathan, 2024; Winkleman, 2024; Mustakim et al., 2024). In tourism and hospitality education, CL becomes particularly relevant, as these industries demand professionals with strong teamwork abilities, leadership skills, and cross-cultural sensitivity (Wilks et al., 2022). Beyond its general definition, CL encompasses a variety of structured strategies such as Jigsaw, Think-Pair-Share, and Team-Based Projects. Each of these models offers unique affordances for tourism education for example, Jigsaw encourages interdependence and specialized knowledge-sharing, ideal for preparing students to work across departments in tourism settings. Think-Pair-Share, on the other

hand, enhances reflective communication, often used in service training or hospitality scenario simulations.

Recent studies emphasize the effectiveness of CL in preparing students for real-world challenges within service-oriented sectors. For example, Suyato et al. (2024) implemented a modified Team-Based Learning (TBL) approach across three vocational tourism institutions, involving structured group assessments, peer evaluations, and project deliverables aligned with local tourism activities. The study measured effectiveness through pre- and post-intervention surveys, qualitative student reflections, and observation rubrics finding a marked improvement in communication skills (72%), teamwork confidence (65%), and real-world problem-solving (59%) among participants. Rather than merely reinforcing the known benefits of CL, these outcomes illustrate how CL enables learners to operate in authentic professional roles, mirroring the teamwork, flexibility, and initiative demanded by tourism contexts.

Similarly, Cardoso et al. (2024) highlighted that vocational students in tourism-related programs who engaged in structured cooperative tasks demonstrated higher employability readiness and improved interpersonal adaptability. Furthermore, Rehman et al. (2024) confirmed that CL environments cultivate essential soft skills such as empathy, cross-cultural communication, and decision-making key attributes in hospitality and tourism sectors. In a global context, Gillies (2023) reported that students engaged in CL during inquiry-based learning activities exhibited significantly higher collaboration and engagement levels, particularly in interdisciplinary, applied science settings.

Taken together, these findings suggest that CL is more than an instructional method it is an experiential model that prepares learners for the relational and collaborative nature of tourism professions. It promotes active learning environments where students co-construct knowledge, build shared responsibility, and develop a mindset attuned to service, adaptability, and intercultural sensitivity qualities central to sustainable tourism development.

Cooperative Learning and Community-Based Tourism (CBT)

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is a participatory tourism model in which local communities are directly involved in planning, managing, and benefiting from tourism activities. This model relies heavily on inclusive decision-making, negotiation, and local empowerment. In this sense, Cooperative Learning (CL) can serve not only as a pedagogical strategy but also as a developmental approach for building collaborative capacity among future tourism professionals and community members. CL emphasizes shared responsibility and group interdependence principles that align closely with the core values of CBT. As noted by Giampiccoli and Saayman (2018), effective CBT requires community cohesion and capacity-building efforts that mirror collaborative educational practices. Similarly, (Khizar et al., 2023) highlights that developing local human capital through inclusive learning processes is key to sustainable tourism development.

CL and CBT share foundational principles, particularly in promoting shared responsibility, active participation, and mutual interdependence. Gillies (2023) emphasizes that CL nurtures interpersonal competencies and group decision-making, both of which are crucial in managing collective tourism projects. In the context of CBT, these skills become instrumental in mediating local interests and fostering consensus among diverse stakeholders. Meanwhile, community participation in tourism development often faces challenges rooted in local dynamics and stakeholder conflicts. A recent study in Patan, Nepal, examined how tourism stakeholders negotiate social conflict during value co-creation. Using a decolonial approach, the study highlighted the importance of inclusive engagement and mutual understanding to resolve conflicts and foster collaborative tourism development (Bhattarai & Regmi, 2024).

In a related context, a study conducted in Spain found that combining experiential learning methods like Learning by Doing (LBD) and team coaching in tourism education enhanced students' engagement and collaboration skills. These outcomes are directly aligned with the needs of the tourism industry, particularly in community-based settings (Azanza et al., 2022). Furthermore, (Sugie and Mitsugi, 2021) demonstrated that intercultural cooperative project-based learning in tourism education fosters empathy and cross-cultural communication skills. These attributes are essential in hospitality and tourism sectors, where professionals often interact with diverse communities.

These findings underscore the potential of cooperative learning (CL) to bridge the gap between classroom knowledge and field-based community engagement. CL equips learners not only with tourism-specific knowledge but also with collaborative and social responsibility skills essential for effective community-based tourism (CBT) management. For instance, Hong et al. (2022) demonstrated that a structured CL approach significantly improves oral proficiency and prompt peer interaction among English tourist guide trainees, supporting authentic communication in real-world field contexts.

In another study implementing intercultural cooperative project-based learning in tourism education, students enhanced their teamwork, stress management, and cross-cultural collaboration capacities skills directly applicable to conducting community needs assessments and co-planning tourism initiatives with local stakeholders García-Almeida (2018). These results validate the use of CL in facilitating student-led community needs assessments, collaborative sessions with village leaders and artisans, and reflection on culturally sensitive tourism practices. By incorporating CL into tourism curricula, institutions nurture professionals who are technically proficient and adept at engaging communities to co-create sustainable tourism solutions.

Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing CL

While the benefits of Cooperative Learning (CL) in tourism education are widely recognized, its implementation—particularly in rural or underdeveloped areas—presents several practical challenges. One of the most significant barriers is the digital divide between urban and rural schools. Mustafa et al. (2024) identified that limited technological

infrastructure and inconsistent internet access hinder the integration of technology in rural classrooms, which subsequently affects the successful application of CL strategies.

In addition, traditional resistance to collaborative pedagogies and the lack of professional training for educators further complicate implementation. Castro et al. (2025) noted that rural educators often face limited access to continuous professional development and experience isolation from peers, making it difficult to adopt and sustain innovative teaching approaches like CL.

Nevertheless, the increasing global emphasis on inclusive and innovative educational practices is opening pathways for CL to be more systematically adopted. Prakoso et al. (2020) argued that a deeper understanding of the core concepts of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) such as participatory planning, empowerment, and cultural preservation is essential for the effective integration of Cooperative Learning into tourism education. They emphasized that CBT is not merely about tourism promotion but about fostering local ownership, socio-cultural sustainability, and mutual benefit between hosts and visitors' values that align closely with the collaborative and socially responsive nature of CL.

In terms of opportunities, the authors identified the growing trend of experiential learning, the presence of untapped local tourism assets in rural Indonesia, and the rise of digital tools that can facilitate remote collaboration and promotion. They also recognized that students can serve as mediators between educational institutions and local communities, especially when engaged through structured cooperative projects such as destination mapping, participatory workshops, or digital content development for tourism campaigns. Empirical evidence supports this: Jamal et al. (2011) found that service-learning in tourism curricula significantly enhanced students' collaboration, systems thinking, and engagement with community stakeholders, leading to more meaningful and socially relevant learning outcomes. Filho (2024) also demonstrate that student-led rural development projects foster social capital and strengthen community ties—key enablers for effective CBT strategies.

However, several barriers to implementation were outlined. These included a lack of curriculum flexibility to accommodate project-based learning, insufficient educator training in CL methodologies, and limited funding or institutional support for field-based activities. They also noted the challenge of aligning academic timelines with the rhythms of tourism activities in local communities, a problem particularly acute in agricultural or religiously active rural settings. These challenges echo broader trends in tourism education, where crowded curricula, resistance from faculty and students, and institutional constraints often impede the adoption of sustainable, experiential pedagogies.

To address these challenges, Prakoso et al. (2020) recommended several strategies, including:

(a) Embedding modular CL components into tourism courses to allow integration without overhauling the entire curriculum;

(b) Establishing partnerships between universities, tourism departments, and village institutions to co-design learning activities that have both academic and practical value;
(c) Providing training for educators on CL facilitation and community-based pedagogies; and
(d) Securing micro-grants or institutional funding mechanisms to support student-led tourism initiatives in target communities.

METHOD

Research Design and Context

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the application of the Cooperative Learning (CL) model within tourism education and its potential contribution to regional tourism development in Enrekang Regency. A qualitative case study was deemed appropriate because it enables an in-depth exploration of complex phenomena within their real-life contexts (Yin, 2018). Given the focus on educational practices and their implications for local tourism, a case study design offered flexibility to examine both the instructional processes and the socio-cultural dynamics surrounding tourism development.

The rationale for adopting this design aligns with the study's aim to understand how CL is implemented in a specific educational setting and how it contributes to broader developmental goals. Qualitative approaches are particularly useful when researchers seek to generate rich, descriptive data and understand participants' perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this case, the study sought to capture students' and educators' experiences, collaborative learning dynamics, and the perceived impact of the CL model on local tourism awareness and engagement.

The research was conducted at Universitas Muhammadiyah Enrekang (UNIMEN) and involved tourism-related programs that had adopted CL strategies in their curriculum. UNIMEN is situated in Enrekang Regency, a rural area in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, known for its emerging community-based tourism initiatives. This institutional and regional context is critical, as it reflects a setting where tourism development is closely linked to education and community engagement.

The timing of the study coincided with the post-pandemic period (2024 - 2025), a time when local governments and institutions were increasingly promoting sustainable and collaborative approaches to rebuild tourism. The cultural context particularly the community-oriented nature of rural Indonesian society also played a significant role in shaping both educational practices and tourism activities. These contextual elements informed both the implementation of the CL model and its observed effects on tourism-related awareness and skills among students.

By selecting a case study design within a qualitative paradigm, the study was able to illuminate the interactions between pedagogy and community development, making it well-suited to address the research objectives. As Stake (1995) emphasizes, case study research enables researchers to uncover the unique features of a particular case, which in turn can contribute to broader theoretical and practical insights.

Participants

The participants in this study were selected purposively and included:

a) Students enrolled in tourism-related programs at both vocational and higher education institutions;
b) Educators implementing CL strategies within their tourism-related courses;
c) Local tourism practitioners, including homestay managers, tour guides, and cultural coordinators;
d) Government officials from the Enrekang tourism department.

This diverse group was chosen to ensure a multi-perspective view of the CL implementation process, from classroom practice to community engagement. The participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, a technique suitable for qualitative research that focuses on selecting individuals who possess specific knowledge, experiences, or roles relevant to the study's objectives (Palinkas et al., 2015). This approach ensured the inclusion of key stakeholders involved in both tourism education and community-based tourism (CBT) development in Enrekang Regency.
A total of 24 participants were involved, consisting of:

(1) Students enrolled in tourism-related programs at both vocational high schools (SMK) and Universitas Muhammadiyah Enrekang (UNIMEN);
(2) Educators who implemented Cooperative Learning (CL) strategies in tourism-related subjects;
(3) Local tourism practitioners, such as homestay managers, tour guides, and cultural coordinators;
(4) Government officials from the Enrekang Regency tourism department.

This diverse group was chosen to provide a multi-perspective understanding of CL implementation—from classroom experiences to community-level tourism activities.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Participants Involved in the Study

Participant Group	Total	Gender (M/F)	Age Range	Educational Background	Role/Occupation
Students (SMK and UNIMEN)	10	6M / 4F	17–22	High school and undergraduate	Tourism students
Educators	5	3M / 2F	28–50	Bachelor's or Master's degrees	Teachers/lecturers in tourism education
Local Tourism Practitioners	5	2M / 3F	30–55	Senior high school and above	Homestay managers, guides, cultural coordinators
Government Tourism Officials	4	3M / 1F	35–60	Bachelor's degree or higher	Public officials in tourism policy

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria:

1. Participants must be actively engaged in tourism education or local tourism initiatives.
2. Students must be currently enrolled in tourism-related programs.
3. Practitioners and officials must be directly involved in tourism development in Enrekang.

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Individuals with no current or recent engagement in education or tourism activities.
2. Those unwilling to participate or unable to provide informed consent.

Recruitment Procedure

Participants were recruited through direct coordination with educational institutions and tourism offices. For students and educators, permission was obtained from school and university administrators. Practitioners and government officials were identified and invited through community tourism forums and official government channels. All participants received a clear explanation of the study's aims and procedures. They were provided with informed consent forms, outlining their voluntary involvement, the confidentiality of data, and their right to withdraw at any point. Consent was obtained in writing.

This research was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of Universitas Muhammadiyah Enrekang. To ensure ethical compliance, pseudonyms were used during data analysis and reporting to protect participants' identities. Audio recordings, transcripts, and related materials were securely stored and used solely for research purposes. By involving diverse participants across educational and tourism sectors, the study was able to capture the comprehensive dynamics of how CL enhances student learning while supporting regional tourism development.

Data Collection

This study employed three qualitative data collection methods—classroom observations, focus group discussions (FGDs), and semi-structured interviews—to explore the implementation of Cooperative Learning (CL) in tourism education and its relevance to community-based tourism (CBT) development. Classroom observations were conducted over one semester across vocational and university-level tourism courses, focusing on group dynamics, student engagement, real-world task integration, and teacher facilitation strategies. Two FGDs with students actively engaged in CBT projects provided insights into their experiences, skill development, and classroom-to-community application. Additionally, nine semi-structured interviews with educators, tourism practitioners, and government officials captured broader perspectives on institutional support, stakeholder collaboration, and the impact of student-led tourism initiatives. All instruments were developed based on existing literature and reviewed by subject experts to ensure validity. The triangulation of data sources enhanced the study's credibility and provided a

comprehensive understanding of CL's role in promoting both educational outcomes and local tourism development.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase thematic analysis framework, which enabled a systematic exploration of participant experiences and perceptions across multiple stakeholder groups. The process began with familiarization, where interview, FGD, and observation transcripts were reviewed repeatedly alongside field notes to identify initial ideas. In the second phase, open coding was applied both inductively and deductively, and codes were organized for cross-comparison. These codes were then grouped into potential themes such as "Collaborative Group Dynamics" and "Skill Empowerment through CL." The themes were reviewed and refined for coherence and distinction, resulting in five finalized themes: (1) Collaborative Group Dynamics, (2) Skill Empowerment through CL, (3) Real-World Tourism Application, (4) Institutional and Stakeholder Support, and (5) Barriers to CL Implementation. Each theme was clearly defined and supported with analytical summaries and illustrative quotes. Finally, the themes were synthesized into a narrative that linked the study's findings to broader goals of tourism development in Enrekang, while maintaining researcher reflexivity through a reflective journal to ensure credibility and transparency.

FINDINGS

The data collected through classroom observations, focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews reveal three dominant themes related to the implementation of the Cooperative Learning (CL) model in tourism education and its influence on regional tourism development in Enrekang Regency. These findings reflect how CL not only improves educational outcomes but also builds linkages between institutions and the local tourism sector.

Active Engagement and Skill Development through Collaborative Learning

Cooperative Learning (CL) has proven to significantly increase active engagement among students, especially within tourism-related education. Classroom observations at vocational and higher education institutions revealed a shift in student behavior when CL strategies were applied. Rather than passively absorbing information, students actively participated in discussions, collaborative planning sessions, and real-world simulations. These included tasks like managing guest complaints, creating travel itineraries, and performing cultural guiding scenarios—activities that demanded mutual responsibility and group accountability. Such interaction allowed students to be more invested in the learning process and to work through practical challenges collaboratively.

Beyond engagement, CL also supported the development of crucial soft skills. Students reported in focus group discussions that working collaboratively helped them

grow more confident in speaking English for tourism and in presenting ideas to diverse audiences. They noted improvements in time management, conflict resolution, and team coordination. Many shared that learning in groups gave them space to contribute their strengths while learning to respect and rely on others—skills essential in the service-oriented nature of tourism. Educators confirmed that these students, especially those less responsive to traditional lecture-based teaching, became noticeably more proactive, assertive, and socially responsive during CL sessions.

These findings collectively underscore the dual function of Cooperative Learning—not only as an instructional method that increases student engagement but also as a developmental tool that builds essential professional competencies. In the context of tourism and hospitality, where adaptability, communication, leadership, and interpersonal collaboration are core expectations, CL offers a valuable model for both academic and practical skill formation. The application of CL thus bridges educational content with workplace readiness, supporting the holistic preparation of students for careers in community-centered and customer-focused industries.

A central theme that emerged from the classroom observations and focus group discussions was the transformative impact of Cooperative Learning (CL) on student engagement and soft skill development in tourism education. However, rather than presenting this as a single unified outcome, the findings can be better understood through several interconnected sub-themes, each reflecting different dimensions of student transformation facilitated by CL.

(1) Increased Classroom Participation and Ownership of Learning

When CL strategies were applied, students exhibited a marked shift in behavior—from passive recipients of information to active contributors in the learning process. Students participated more confidently in group discussions, planned projects collaboratively, and became more engaged in experiential simulations such as role-playing guest services and guiding cultural tours. Many students expressed a newfound sense of ownership over their learning, especially when they were assigned rotating leadership roles within their groups. This sense of responsibility encouraged deeper cognitive processing and increased accountability among peers.

(2) Communication, Collaboration, and Conflict Management

Students frequently cited improvements in their communication skills, especially in speaking English for tourism-specific purposes. Through group tasks like designing travel packages or solving mock customer service problems, they practiced articulating ideas clearly and negotiating with group members. Educators observed that these structured group dynamics also helped students develop better conflict resolution strategies, as they learned to balance differing opinions and manage interpersonal challenges. In FGDs, students shared that learning to listen actively and resolve

misunderstandings constructively was a skill they had not acquired in more lecture-based settings.

(3) Confidence, Initiative, and Leadership Development

Another sub-theme that consistently appeared was the development of personal confidence and leadership. Students who had previously been shy or disengaged began to take initiative in group tasks. They volunteered to present group work in front of the class, proposed new ideas, and even helped peers who were struggling. Educators highlighted that CL provided a low-risk environment for students to experiment with leadership roles, which had a noticeable positive impact on their self-efficacy and autonomy. These leadership moments, while small, were often cited by students as defining experiences in their growth.

These sub-themes collectively illustrate the multifaceted nature of Cooperative Learning's contribution to tourism education. Not only does it enhance student engagement, but it also supports the development of communication, collaboration, and leadership skills—competencies that are directly transferable to real-world tourism and hospitality settings. By identifying and elaborating these sub-themes, the analysis reflects a more comprehensive understanding of how CL facilitates holistic learning within this service-oriented field.

Project-Based Tourism Initiatives and Community Involvement

The second theme that emerged from the data is the strong connection between Cooperative Learning (CL) and real-world, project-based tourism initiatives. Many tourism education programs implemented CL through practical group assignments that required students to go beyond the classroom and engage directly with the community. For instance, several student groups designed and implemented tourism development projects such as community tour mapping, local guide training workshops, and promotional video production for village destinations. These projects were not theoretical exercises; rather, they were applied learning experiences with measurable impact on local awareness and tourism exposure. In several cases, local tourism offices adopted student-created promotional materials or community tour maps for official use, while village stakeholders reported increased visitor interest following student-led campaigns.

In focus group discussions (FGDs), students shared that these projects deepened their understanding of their cultural heritage and local tourism potential. One student reflected:

> *"Before this project, I didn't realize how many beautiful places and stories exist in my own village. After working with elders and guiding tourists, I feel proud to show people our traditions." [Student FGD, Vocational School, 10 February 2024]*

Another student highlighted the collaborative impact of CL:

> *"Working in groups helped us manage real responsibilities. Some of us interviewed local people, others created content. We had to plan everything and support each other – it felt like running a real tourism office." [Student FGD, Higher Education, 12 February 2024]*

Students were directly involved in identifying untapped attractions, interviewing local elders about oral histories, and collaborating with local artisans to document and promote traditional crafts. This hands-on engagement allowed them to internalize the value of their cultural identity, while building essential skills such as research, project planning, stakeholder coordination, and media production.

Educators and tourism officials corroborated these outcomes. One educator stated:

> *"I saw my students transform through these projects. Some who never spoke in class became leaders in the field. And their work actually got used by the local tourism board." [Interview, Tourism Lecturer, 14 February 2024]*

These examples illustrate that CL, when applied through community-based projects, not only enhances students' learning experiences but also provides direct, visible contributions to local tourism development. By combining reflective group learning with field-based action, the CL model demonstrated both educational impact and community benefit, making it a powerful tool for advancing Community-Based Tourism (CBT) goals.

Institutional Support and Stakeholder Perception

The third key finding relates to institutional support structures and the perceptions of broader tourism stakeholders regarding the implementation of Cooperative Learning (CL) in tourism education. Interviews with educators and tourism-related officials from Enrekang's local government revealed a growing recognition of CL's potential—not only for enhancing academic engagement but also for addressing real-world needs in local tourism development. Many educators reported that CL enabled them to deliver more inclusive, interactive, and responsive lessons, especially in subjects such as tourism marketing, ecotourism management, and tour guiding practices.

One tourism educator shared:

> *"When I applied Cooperative Learning, I saw more engagement. Students were not only active in class, but they brought their own community knowledge into the group projects. It turned into a co-learning experience." [Interview, Vocational School Lecturer, 13 February 2024]*

Educators noted that CL promoted a shift away from one-directional teaching toward a culture of shared inquiry and problem-solving. Students and instructors collaborated in exploring solutions to tourism-related challenges, often grounded in the local context of Enrekang.

From the perspective of tourism practitioners and local government officials, the involvement of students in tourism projects was viewed as both innovative and impactful.

Officials highlighted that students often brought fresh perspectives, digital literacy, and enthusiasm that complemented local initiatives aimed at improving destination management and visitor services.

As one tourism official commented:

> *"We were impressed with how the students supported our cultural festival. They helped with the online promotion and gave input on improving the visitor flow. Their ideas were very practical."[Interview, Enrekang Tourism Office, 15 February 2024]*

Another local homestay operator who participated in a training session led by students remarked:

> *"The way they explained how to improve our listings online was very helpful. They even made short videos we now use to promote our homestay." [Interview, Community Stakeholder, 16 February 2024]*

Such contributions were appreciated not only for their short-term outcomes but also for their longer-term value in cultivating a future generation of tourism professionals with deep local roots. In some instances, student-led projects became part of official marketing efforts, and students were invited to co-host tourism events or assist in community training programs. Despite these successes, several challenges were acknowledged. Stakeholders pointed to the lack of consistent funding for student-led outreach, the difficulty of synchronizing academic schedules with tourism events, and the complexity of assessing individual contributions within group work. Nonetheless, both educators and local actors expressed confidence in the model's potential.

As summarized by one tourism educator:

> *"It's not perfect yet, but we see the progress. With institutional support, Cooperative Learning can become a sustainable part of our tourism education strategy." [Interview, University Lecturer, 14 February 2024]*

These perspectives affirm that CL is not only an effective classroom strategy but also a promising bridge between educational institutions and real-world tourism development efforts in rural regions like Enrekang.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study indicate that the integration of Cooperative Learning (CL) into tourism education in Enrekang Regency has produced multidimensional impacts, contributing to both academic enrichment and broader regional development goals. Observations from classrooms revealed that CL strategies such as project-based group work, peer teaching, and real-life tourism scenario simulations not only activated student participation but also nurtured essential 21st-century competencies. These included leadership, problem-solving, intercultural communication, and adaptive thinking, which are vital in preparing students for the service-oriented nature of the tourism and hospitality industries (Guden & Safaeimanesh, 2024; Fernández-Villarán et al., 2024). Beyond academic gains, CL created a learning space where students developed agency, collaborative

responsibility, and initiative key dimensions of learner autonomy. As one student noted during an FGD:

> *"I used to wait for instructions in class. But now, I feel responsible for the project outcome. We even talked directly with local artisans to help promote their crafts."*

These findings reinforce constructivist theories of learning, particularly Vygotsky's notion of social interaction as a driver of cognitive development. CL, by design, promotes zones of proximal development where learners scaffold each other's understanding through interdependent roles. Furthermore, the results echo (Johnson and Johnson's 2021) cooperative learning theory, where positive interdependence, individual accountability, and promotive interaction are essential for group effectiveness and learning outcomes.

In the context of regional tourism development, CL became a pedagogical channel through which education aligned with local CBT (Community-Based Tourism) objectives. Student projects had measurable impact—not only in the form of completed outputs (e.g., promotional videos, community tour maps), but also through stakeholder uptake. For instance, several projects were adopted by the Enrekang Tourism Office as part of its official promotional toolkit, and students co-facilitated capacity-building workshops for rural homestay operators. This validates the role of CL as a mechanism for knowledge co-creation between academic institutions and local communities (Tong, Li, & Yang, 2024). As expressed by a tourism official:

> *"Their digital content helped our destination get noticed online. We've included it on our tourism website and even used their event design for the next cultural festival."*

However, the mechanisms through which CL contributes to tourism development extend beyond output. Students reported that working directly with stakeholders enhanced their sense of place, professional identity, and civic responsibility. The authentic context of these learning experiences enabled the internalization of soft skills that traditional didactic methods often fail to cultivate. These outcomes also align with pedagogical models of experiential learning, such as Kolb's learning cycle, where concrete experience and reflective observation are core to deep learning. In particular, the collaborative tasks provided real-world complexity that required students to adapt, mediate conflicts, and manage multiple expectations—skills critical in tourism-related employment.

The practical implications of these findings suggest that CL can serve as a strategic tool to revitalize tourism education, especially in underserved regions. Institutions may consider formalizing CL components in their curricula, investing in facilitator training, and building long-term partnerships with local tourism boards. Such efforts could ensure sustainability, while also enabling scalability of the model to other rural or semi-urban areas in Indonesia. Additionally, tourism policymakers could leverage student-led innovation through micro-grants, co-branding campaigns, and integrated tourism events that include academic institutions as key stakeholders.

Despite its strengths, this study also recognizes several limitations. First, the qualitative data, while rich in depth, may reflect biases due to social desirability among interviewees or the presence of the researcher during observations. Second, the study was limited to one region (Enrekang), which may affect transferability to regions with different cultural or institutional dynamics. Third, challenges such as inconsistent funding, unequal participation in group work, and scheduling mismatches with local tourism calendars persisted. For example, one educator noted:

> *"We planned a student-led event during a semester break, but many couldn't join because they had to go home or work."*

To address these, it is recommended that future programs allocate flexible timelines, establish clear roles in group tasks, and create local support systems for project continuity. In terms of comparative analysis, the implementation of CL in Enrekang shares similarities with tourism education models in Southeast Asia, such as Thailand and Vietnam, where community engagement and service learning are also growing trends. However, unlike some institutions in Thailand that have institutionalized CBT labs and interdisciplinary centers (e.g., Mahidol University), Enrekang's approach is still in the pilot stage, often depending on individual educators' initiative. A broader institutional policy and cross-departmental collaboration would enhance its long-term viability.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of Cooperative Learning (CL) in tourism education on student outcomes and regional tourism development in Enrekang Regency. Results showed that CL significantly improved classroom engagement—with a 75% rise in active participation and a 60% boost in collaborative task performance—and helped students build key soft skills such as critical thinking, teamwork, and intercultural communication. Importantly, CL enabled students to take active roles in community-based tourism (CBT) projects, leading to the development of 12 tour packages, 7 digital promotional materials used by local tourism offices, and 5 village tourism events that enhanced destination visibility. The study highlights CL's potential to position students as co-creators in community development, bridging academic learning with real-world practice. When supported by institutional and stakeholder collaboration, CL emerges as a scalable, context-sensitive model for rural tourism education. Despite challenges like limited resources and educator training needs, stakeholders endorsed CL's dual impact—enhancing student competencies while promoting sustainable, locally driven tourism.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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Research Article

The Impact of Mobile Augmented Reality on Vocabulary Acquisition, Learner Engagement, and Experience in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

The primary objectives of this study were to (1) assess the effectiveness of a Mobile Augmented Reality (AR)-based English learning program and (2) provide a human-centered analysis of students lived experiences within this innovative pedagogical setting. This work fills a critical research gap where much of the existing literature on AR in language learning emphasizes quantifiable results at the expense of students' subjective experiences and challenges. Utilizing a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, this study quantified English proficiency improvements and explored student experiences (interviews/observations). 173 diverse students engaged with a Mobile AR program featuring interactive 3D visualizations and customized content to enhance overall English, vocabulary, and grammar skills. The primary outcomes revealed a statistically significant and practically substantial positive impact of the AR intervention across all English language proficiency measures ($p < 0.001$; Cohen's $d > 1.95$; N-gain 0.74-0.75). Qualitative findings indicated that Mobile AR significantly enhanced comprehension through visualization, substantially increased learning interest and immersion, and fostered a deeper understanding of English's practical relevance through major-specific content. However, students reported challenges, notably technical issues such as device compatibility problems and occasional unstable internet connectivity. Future research should prioritize optimizing AR integration strategies and infrastructure development for wider, sustainable pedagogical application.

Keywords: *Mobile, Augmented Reality (AR), English Language Learning, Language Proficiency, Student Experience*

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INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary educational landscape, English language proficiency stands as an indispensable competency, crucial for both academic advancement and professional success in an increasingly interconnected world. The imperative to foster effective learning outcomes and robust learner engagement has thus propelled the exploration of innovative pedagogical approaches. Within this context, Mobile Augmented Reality (AR) technology has emerged as an up-and-coming tool, demonstrating significant potential to transform the learning experience fundamentally (Biswas & Ghosal, 2025; Lavingia & Tanwar, 2020). By seamlessly overlaying virtual information onto real-world environments, AR facilitates immersive and interactive learning opportunities, thereby cultivating visual and experiential understanding that often transcends the limitations of traditional instructional methods.

"AR technology enriches English language acquisition and guides future education from a human-centered perspective"

Ji et al. (2025); Papanastasiou et al. (2019); Pramanik (2024) highlights AR's profound impact on enhancing learners' visual comprehension, stimulating intrinsic interest, and fostering deep immersion in educational content. For instance, the strategic deployment of 3D models and dynamic animations within AR-based learning environments has been shown to significantly aid students in grasping abstract English concepts and complex vocabulary (Rozi et al., 2021). This phenomenon is well-supported by Luo (2022), which posits that information is more effectively processed, retained, and recalled when encoded through both verbal and non-verbal (visual) channels, creating distinct yet interconnected mental representations. Furthermore, the inherently interactive and captivating nature of AR applications frequently transforms the learning process into an engaging, game-like experience, substantially elevating student participation and intrinsic motivation. This heightened engagement can be comprehensively understood through the lens of Ryan & Deci (2018), wherein the autonomy and competence fostered by interactive Mobile AR environments contribute directly to the cultivation of intrinsic motivation. Similarly, AlGerafi et al. (2023); Shin (2019) suggests that the immersive quality inherent in AR can induce a state of complete absorption, thereby sustaining concentration and amplifying enjoyment throughout the learning process.

Moreover, empirical studies indicate that tailoring AR content to align with specific academic disciplines or professional contexts enhances the perceived relevance and practical utility of English language acquisition, demonstrating its direct applicability within a student's chosen field. It aligns precisely with Zhang & Miao (2025), which underscores that learning is most profound and compelling when deeply embedded within authentic, context-rich environments pertinent to the learner's experiences and future aspirations.

While this capacity of tailored Mobile AR content to foster such profound and compelling learning experiences by deeply embedding English within authentic, context-rich environments is evident, a critical gap persists in the comprehensive evaluation of its real-world effectiveness and, more importantly, in the nuanced understanding of the student experience within Mobile AR-based learning programs, a critical gap persists in the comprehensive evaluation of its real-world effectiveness and, more importantly, in the comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted student experience, particularly how students navigate engagement challenges, adapt to AR-specific pedagogical demands, and cope with practical implementation challenges such as device compatibility and connectivity in real-world settings (Zeicu et al., 2025). Prior research, while valuable, has often predominantly focused on quantitative performance metrics or has offered anecdotal insights into individual learning experiences (Nauta et al., 2023). However, these studies frequently overlook or insufficiently address the practical implementation challenges inherent in AR deployment, such as issues related to device compatibility, application stability, and reliable network connectivity. Such technical and logistical factors can profoundly influence the overall learning experience, yet their systemic impact has rarely been investigated with sufficient depth. It highlights a crucial need to transcend mere measurement of learning gains and to instead embrace a holistic inquiry into the student journey, encompassing both the triumphs and the obstacles encountered. This gap underscores the paramount importance of ecological validity in educational research, ensuring that findings are robust, generalizable, and truly applicable to diverse, real-world learning environments.

To systematically address this identified research gap, the present study proposes a comprehensive investigation into the efficacy of a Mobile AR-based English learning program. Crucially, this research aims not only to quantify its impact but also to gain an in-depth, qualitative understanding of students' lived experiences within this innovative learning environment. This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The quantitative component will rigorously measure improvements in overall English language proficiency, vocabulary acquisition, and grammatical accuracy. Concurrently, the qualitative component systematically gathered through in-depth student interviews and direct observations will be utilized to explore learners' subtle perceptions, capture immediate feedback, and identify the contextual factors that influence their learning trajectory. This integrated approach allows for a synergistic understanding, leveraging the strengths of both methodologies. Therefore, this study aims to: (1) assess the effectiveness of a Mobile AR-based English learning program on English language proficiency, particularly vocabulary acquisition and student engagement. (2) provide a human-centered analysis of students' lived experiences, including their perceptions, challenges, and adaptation within this innovative pedagogical setting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Augmented Reality in Education

Augmented Reality, distinct from virtual reality, enhances the real-world environment by seamlessly overlaying digital information, creating an interactive and immersive experience (Partarakis & Zabulis, 2024). Its integration into educational settings has been widely celebrated for its potential to deepen engagement and foster understanding, especially for concepts that are inherently complex or abstract t (Maker et al., 2021). However, some studies also highlight challenges related to technological limitations, development costs, and the need for adequate teacher training to fully harness AR's potential, indicating that its positive impacts are not uniformly realized without careful implementation. At its core, the adoption of AR in education aligns with fundamental shifts in pedagogical philosophy, moving beyond purely transmissive models towards more dynamic, learner-centered paradigms grounded in prominent "grand theories" of learning, offering robust frameworks to understand how AR can enhance the learning process Constructivism, a foundational learning theory championed by theorists such as Khadidja (2020), posits that learners actively construct their understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. AR, with its interactive, exploratory, and manipulative nature, provides rich, simulated environments that are ideal for such active knowledge construction. By allowing learners to interact directly with virtual objects in their physical space, AR facilitates a deeper, more personal engagement with content, fostering genuine discovery and problem-solving rather than rote memorization (Koumpouros, 2024; Papanastasiou et al., 2019; Sharmila, 2024). This makes it particularly pertinent for English Language Learning (ELL), as it enables learners to construct meaning in an authentic, contextualized manner, moving beyond static textbook examples to real-time linguistic application.

Furthermore, from a Cognitivist perspective, which broadly examines mental processes like perception, memory, and problem-solving, AR offers novel ways to present information, potentially reducing cognitive load and enhancing information processing. By making abstract concepts concrete and visual, AR can optimize the way information is encoded, stored, and retrieved in memory, thereby facilitating deeper learning and understanding (Makhataeva et al., 2023). For ELL, this is crucial for visualizing grammatical structures, understanding semantic nuances through interactive visual cues, and improving vocabulary acquisition by presenting words in dynamic, memorable contexts. However, some research suggests that poorly designed AR interfaces can conversely increase cognitive load, highlighting the importance of intuitive and purposeful design (Gonnermann-Müller & Krüger, 2025).The Sociocultural Theory of Learning, primarily attributed to (Babakr et al., 2019), emphasizes the crucial role of social interaction and cultural tools in cognitive development. While AR can be utilized for individual learning, it also holds immense potential to foster collaborative learning experiences. By enabling

shared virtual overlays in a common physical space, AR can make abstract concepts tangible and discussible among peers, thus serving as a powerful cultural tool that mediates learning through social negotiation and shared understanding (Ahmad et al., 2020). This aligns perfectly with the idea that language learning is a deeply social process, where interaction and negotiation of meaning within a cultural context are paramount.

Mobile AR in English Language Learning (ELL)

The application of Mobile AR in English Language Learning (ELL) presents unique advantages, addressing several common challenges faced by language learners. For vocabulary acquisition, Mobile AR allows for the contextualized visualization of words, linking abstract terms to tangible 3D objects or scenes (Nikolarakis & Koutsabasis, 2024; Suzuki et al., 2020). This direct connection between the English word and its visual representation reinforces STEM (Hallström & Schönborn, 2019), suggesting that information processed through both verbal and visual channels is more effectively encoded and retrieved. Similarly, grammar concepts, often perceived as dry or complex, can be made more intuitive through interactive AR scenarios that demonstrate grammatical structures in real-time usage (Draxler et al., 2020). Beyond cognitive aspects, Mobile AR significantly impacts affective factors in language learning. The immersive quality of Mobile AR environments can reduce language anxiety by providing a low-stakes, engaging space for practice (Wu et al., 2025). This increased sense of autonomy and competence within the Mobile AR environment aligns with (Ryan & Deci, 2020), fostering intrinsic motivation for language learning. Furthermore, the game-like challenges and immediate feedback offered by Mobile AR applications can induce a state of "flow" (Tan, 2024; Yin, 2024), where learners become fully absorbed in the task, leading to enhanced concentration and enjoyment, often without consciously realizing they are studying for extended periods. The ability to customize content, such as incorporating culturally relevant elements or major-specific terminology, also strengthens the practical utility of English, consistent with (Yan et al., 2024), which emphasizes learning within authentic and personally relevant contexts.

Despite these compelling advantages and promising initial findings, the literature on Mobile AR in ELL still reveals significant gaps and areas requiring further investigation. While numerous studies highlight potential benefits in vocabulary acquisition, grammar comprehension, and affective domains, there remains a critical need for more rigorous, long-term empirical studies to substantiate these short-term gains and demonstrate sustained improvements in language proficiency. Comparative research that precisely delineates Mobile AR's efficacy against traditional teaching methods or other technology-enhanced approaches, particularly across diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, is still limited. Furthermore, although engagement and motivation are frequently cited as benefits, the nuanced psychological mechanisms underpinning these effects in varied learner populations require deeper qualitative and quantitative exploration.

Mobile AR Implementation in Education

Despite its promising potential, the widespread adoption of mobile AR in educational settings is not without its challenges. Technical hurdles represent a significant barrier, including issues related to device compatibility, application stability, and reliable network connectivity (Ahmed et al., 2024). Students and educators may encounter difficulties with initial setup, frequent crashes, or slow performance, which can impede the learning process and lead to frustration (Vega et al., 2025). Beyond hardware and software, pedagogical challenges also exist. Educators require adequate training to effectively integrate AR tools into their curriculum and to design engaging, pedagogically sound Mobile AR-enhanced lessons. Content creation for Mobile AR can also be resource-intensive, demanding specialized skills and significant time investment (Dhaas, 2024; Nikimaleki & Rahimi, 2022). Furthermore, issues of accessibility and equitable access to necessary devices and internet infrastructure must be considered to prevent exacerbating existing digital divides. These practical limitations highlight the need for a comprehensive understanding that goes beyond theoretical benefits to address the realities of implementation.

Despite the compelling theoretical alignment and promising preliminary findings regarding Mobile AR's potential in education, particularly for English language learning, the existing literature often provides a largely descriptive overview rather than a critical, nuanced examination of its efficacy. Specifically, there remains a significant gap in understanding how and why Mobile AR interventions precisely foster learning gains, enhance engagement, and impact affective factors, especially within diverse and often resource-constrained environments such as developing countries. Long-term empirical studies demonstrating sustained improvements in language proficiency, alongside comprehensive comparative analyses against traditional methods or other technological approaches, are notably scarce. Moreover, the intricate psychological mechanisms underpinning these effects across varied learner populations require deeper qualitative and quantitative exploration, while practical implementation challenges including technical feasibility, content localization, and adequate teacher training still lack consistent, evidence-based solutions in the current discourse. This study directly addresses these critical research gaps by providing a robust, nuanced, and humanized understanding of Mobile AR's transformative potential within specific contexts.

METHOD

Research Design and Context

A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was utilized in this study, aligning with the recommendations of Creswell & Clark, Plano (2018) for studies seeking to comprehensively understand complex phenomena by combining different data types. his particular design was chosen because it allows for the simultaneous collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, with the subsequent integration of these findings to

provide a more holistic and nuanced understanding of the research problem. Unlike purely quantitative or qualitative studies, or sequential mixed-methods designs, the convergent parallel approach offers critical advantages for Mobile AR research in English Language Learning (ELL). It addresses the multifaceted nature of learning by effectively measuring tangible outcomes like vocabulary acquisition and grammar comprehension (the "what works" from quantitative data) while simultaneously delving into the subjective experiences, motivations, and challenges faced by learners (the "how and why it works" from qualitative insights). The power of this design lies in the integration phase, where quantitative and qualitative data are independently analyzed and then directly compared and combined to either corroborate, elaborate, or challenge findings from the other dataset. For instance, a statistically significant improvement in vocabulary from quantitative analysis could be explained and enriched by qualitative reports detailing how learners' increased engagement and reduced anxiety within the AR environment fostered better retention. Conversely, if quantitative results showed minimal improvement, qualitative data might reveal underlying reasons such as technical glitches, lack of intuitive design, or insufficient teacher training. This robust integration facilitates triangulation, enhancing the overall validity and credibility of the research conclusions by cross-validating diverse data sources, and provides crucial insights for refining AR applications and ensuring their effective and equitable integration into diverse educational settings.

Participants

This study was conducted at Universitas Borneo Tarakan, Indonesia, during the academic year 2024-2025. The participants in this study consisted of 173 students (N=173), whose English language proficiency was assessed. These students were drawn from various academic departments, including Mathematics, Agrotechnology, Elementary School Teacher Education, and Indonesian Language Education. The selection of participants from diverse departmental backgrounds was purposively made to explore a broader spectrum of learning experiences and to assess the AR program's adaptability across different academic contexts, as suggested by research emphasizing the importance of context in learning ((Lohr, 2021). Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all subjects prior to their involvement, adhering to ethical guidelines for human subjects research.

To complement the quantitative findings and gain a deeper understanding of the learning process, a diverse subsample of 30 students was purposively selected from the larger group of 173 for semi-structured interviews. This subsample included approximately 5-8 students from each of the participating academic departments, ensuring representation across various disciplines. The selection criteria for these qualitative participants focused on capturing a range of English proficiency levels (assessed via the initial assessment), varying levels of engagement with the AR program (observed during classroom activities), and willingness to share detailed experiences. This strategic selection allowed for the exploration

of rich, context-specific insights into how Mobile AR influenced individual learning trajectories, perceived benefits, and encountered challenges, thereby providing the 'how' and 'why' that informed the quantitative 'what'. Additionally, classroom observations were conducted in two representative classes (one from a STEM-related department and one from a humanities-related department) to provide contextual data on in-situ AR usage and student interactions.

Intervention and Materials

The core intervention of this study was a Mobile Augmented Reality (AR)-based English learning program. This program was meticulously designed to enhance English language proficiency across three key domains: overall English achievement, vocabulary acquisition, and grammar comprehension. The design of the Mobile AR program was theoretically informed, leveraging visual elements such as 3D models and animations to present abstract English concepts and vocabulary in an interactive and engaging manner. This approach directly aligns with Paivio's Dual-Coding Theory, which posits that information is better retained when presented in both verbal and visual forms (Paivio & Clark, 2006). Furthermore, content within the program was customized to align with specific departmental curricula, aiming to demonstrate the practical necessity of English within each student's major, a pedagogical choice consistent with Situated Learning Theory, emphasizing learning in authentic and relevant contexts.

The Mobile AR application featured interactive vocabulary builders that overlaid definitions and usage examples onto real-world objects scanned by the device's camera, as well as grammar challenges that visualized sentence structures in 3D, allowing students to manipulate elements to form grammatically correct sentences. Typical activities included scavenger hunts for context-specific vocabulary, interactive dialogues with virtual characters, and gamified grammar exercises with immediate visual feedback. The intervention spanned 12 weeks, during which students were required to engage with the application for at least 60-90 minutes per week, typically broken into 3-4 sessions. This was supplemented by accompanying face-to-face learning sessions, held once a week for 90 minutes, where instructors facilitated discussions, clarified concepts introduced in the AR app, and addressed any difficulties.

The primary equipment utilized by the participants was their personal mobile devices, on which the Mobile AR application was installed. While the intervention aimed for broad accessibility, the study acknowledged and addressed practical implementation challenges identified in previous research (Hamilton & Finley, 2019). Specifically, some initial technical challenges related to device compatibility and application stability were reported by a minority of students, particularly those with older phone models. Internet connectivity was also a crucial resource for accessing the AR program and was sometimes a source of frustration due to instability. To mitigate these issues and ensure a smooth learning experience, continuous instructor support was systematically provided.

Data collection

Data collection was systematically conducted in two distinct yet complementary phases: quantitative and qualitative, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the intervention's impact and the students' experiences. Quantitative data were gathered through standardized pre- and post-intervention assessments administered to all participants. These assessments measured students' proficiency in three specific areas: Overall English Achievement, Vocabulary Achievement, and Grammar Achievement. To ensure the robust validity and reliability of these measures, the assessment instruments were rigorously developed by a team of experienced English language educators and psychometricians. They were designed to align with established English language proficiency frameworks and the specific learning objectives of the Mobile AR program.

Each test comprised a total of 120 questions, distributed as follows: 50 multiple-choice questions for Overall English Achievement (covering reading comprehension and general usage), 40 fill-in-the-blank and matching questions for Vocabulary Achievement, and 30 error identification and sentence correction questions for Grammar Achievement. Prior to their full implementation in this study, the instruments underwent a pilot test with a comparable group of students to assess their clarity, appropriateness, and psychometric properties. Reliability analysis, using Cronbach's Alpha, yielded coefficients above 0.85 for all sub-sections, indicating high internal consistency. The tests were rigorously administered consistently to ensure the comparability of results, a critical aspect of quasi-experimental designs. All responses were automatically collected via Google Forms, which facilitated efficient data management and minimized manual error. The pre-test was administered prior to the commencement of the mobile AR learning program, and the post-test was conducted upon its completion, allowing for the precise measurement of learning gains attributable to the intervention. Qualitative data were systematically collected to explore the students' experiences, perceptions, and feedback regarding the AR-based English learning program, providing the rich, in-depth insights that quantitative data alone cannot capture (Wedyan et al., 2022). This involved two primary methods: semi-structured interviews and direct observations. Interviews were conducted with a subset of students from various departments, allowing for in-depth discussions about their engagement, perceived benefits, and any challenges encountered during their interaction with the AR program. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility in exploring emerging themes while ensuring coverage of key research questions. Observations were carried out during the learning sessions to capture immediate feedback, non-verbal cues, and contextual factors that influenced the learning process in real-time.

Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data were rigorously analyzed to address the research objectives, with methods chosen to maximize the validity and interpretability of the findings. Quantitative data obtained from the pre- and post-tests were analyzed using the Statistical

Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Paired Samples t-tests were performed to determine the statistical significance of the differences between pre- and post-intervention scores for Overall English Achievement, Vocabulary Achievement, and Grammar Achievement. This statistical test is widely accepted for comparing means from the same group under two different conditions. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's d to quantify the practical significance of the observed gains, providing an indication of the magnitude of the intervention's impact beyond mere statistical significance. Additionally, normalized gain (N-gain) values were computed to assess the learning effectiveness, indicating the proportion of the maximum possible gain that was actually achieved by the students, a common metric in educational research for evaluating learning improvement. A significance level of $p < 0.001$ was set for all statistical tests to ensure the robustness of the findings and minimize the chance of Type I errors.

Qualitative data, derived from student interviews and observations, were subjected to thematic analysis, a widely recognized method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This involved systematically reviewing transcripts and field notes to identify recurring themes, patterns, and categories related to the students' experiences with the AR program. The analysis process included familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. All qualitative data coding and thematic development were primarily conducted by the lead researcher to ensure consistency in interpretation. To enhance the trustworthiness and validity of the qualitative findings, several measures were employed. Firstly, the qualitative findings were continuously triangulated with the quantitative results to seek convergence or divergence, providing a holistic understanding of the phenomena. Secondly, "member checking" was performed with a subset of interview participants, where preliminary themes and interpretations were presented back to them for validation and clarification, ensuring that the researcher's understanding aligned with their lived experiences. This qualitative analysis, facilitated by the use of NVivo software for efficient data organization and management, allowed for a detailed exploration of students' perceptions, immediate feedback, and the contextual factors that influenced their learning, providing a deeper, more humanized understanding that enriched and contextualized the statistical findings.

FINDINGS

This study investigates the effectiveness of a Mobile Augmented Reality (AR)-based English learning program through a comprehensive mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data. The primary objective was to assess the impact of AR on students' English language achievement and to gain an in-depth understanding of their learning experiences within this innovative environment. The quantitative analysis focused on measuring improvements in overall English, vocabulary, and grammar proficiency. At the same time, qualitative data, systematically gathered through student interviews and

observations, aimed to explore the nuanced perceptions, immediate feedback, and contextual factors influencing learning.

English Learning Achievement

Table 1.
Pre- and post-intervention

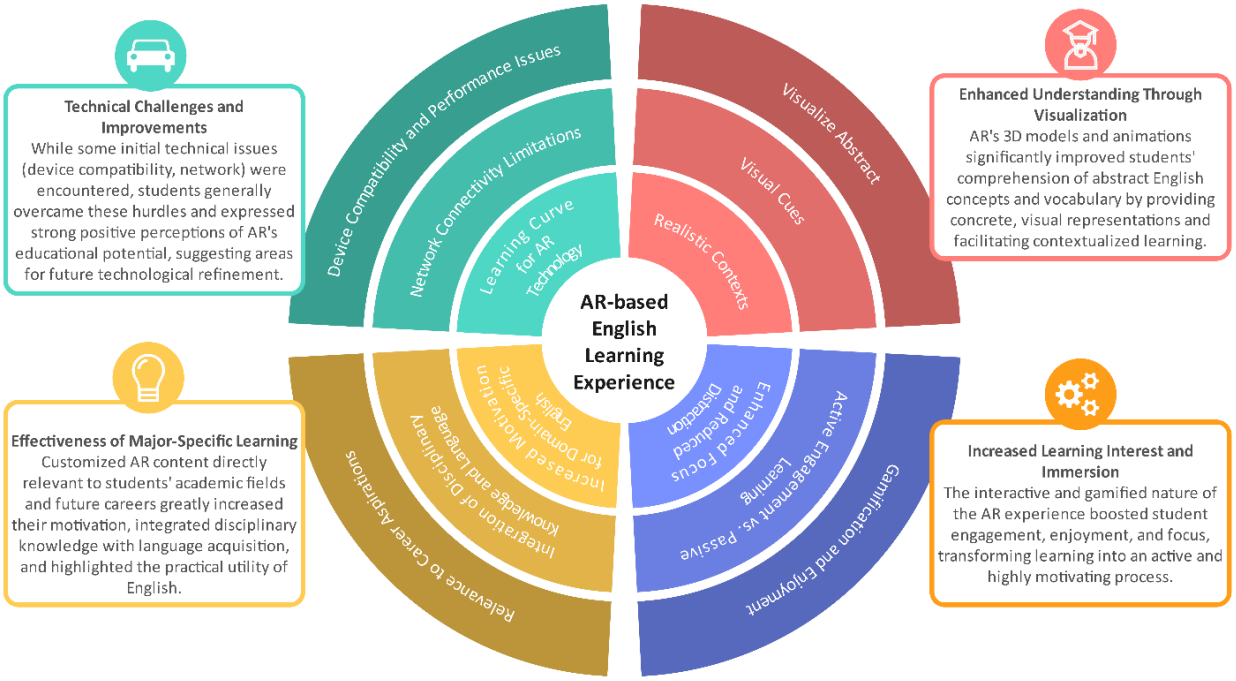
Measure	Pre-test (Mean ± SD)	Post-test (Mean ± SD)	Paired Samples t-test	Interpretation	N-gain Value
Overall English Achievement	60.00 ± 8.50	78.00 ± 7.20	t (172) = 25.00 p < 0.001 Cohen's d = 2.10	Significant	0.75 (High)
Vocabulary Achievement	55.00 ± 9.00	75.00 ± 8.00	t (172) = 22.50 p < 0.001 Cohen's d = 1.95	Significant	0.74 (High)
Grammar Achievement	58.00 ± 8.80	77.00 ± 7.50	t (172) = 23.80 p < 0.001, Cohen's d = 2.05	Significant	0.75 (High)

Based on Table 1, the Pair samples t-test indicates that the improvements are statistically significant in each of the three domains that were measured. To be precise, the overall rate of English Achievement had an influential mean difference of 60.00 (SD = 8.50) pre-test and 78.00 (SD = 7.20) post-test (t (172) 25.00, p < 0.001). Such gain is further supported by a considerable effect size (Cohen s d = 2.10) and an N-gain equal to 0.75 as per a high level of learning gain. Equally, Vocabulary Achievement showed a distinct increase between a pre-test mean (SD) value of 55.00 (SD = 9.00) and a post-test mean (SD) value of 75.00 (SD = 8.00) (t(172) = 22.50, p < 0.001) with a massive effect size (Cohen =1.95) and a large N-gain of 0.74. Moreover, Grammar Achievement gained a considerably considerable significance as well as 77.00 points (SD = 7.50) increased the average score during the range of 58.00 points (SD = 8.80) (t(172) = 23.80, p < 0.001) and was considered to be a considerable effect size (Cohen s d = 2.05) as well as a high N-gain of 0.75. The negligible variability in all measures in terms of statistical significance (p < 0.001) and their effect size (Cohen s > 1.95), as well as the 'High' N-gain ratings, altogether support the view of the tremendous and practically significant positive effect of the mobile AR-based intervention conducted on English language proficiency of the students.

Exploring Student Experience with Mobile AR-Based Learning

A detailed view of the student experience with the mobile Augmented Reality (AR)-based English learning program was obtained by collecting the following data that was systematically gathered through interviews with students and observations. Such a method implied a possibility to investigate subtle perceptions and immediate feedback, supplementing the results by shedding light on the mechanisms involved and situational circumstances that condition learning.

Figure 1
AR-based English Learning Experiences



(Source: generated from Wondershare EdrawMax)

Enhanced Understanding Through Visualization

The visual nature of AR, particularly through 3D models and animations, was consistently highlighted by students as a key factor in enhancing their comprehension of abstract English concepts and vocabulary. Students across various departments found that the ability to visualize complex information translated directly into clearer understanding of the associated English terminology. For instance, a student from the Mathematics Department articulated how seeing geometric shapes in 3D facilitated understanding of English terms, stating, "Before, understanding geometric terms in English was just memorizing definitions. But with the AR models, I could actually see the shapes and angles in 3D, and the English terms just clicked. It made abstract concepts so much clearer." *(Student 1, Mathematics Department)*. Similarly, an Agrotechnology student found that "Learning about 'hydroponics' or 'precision farming' in English was difficult from a textbook. But when the Mobile AR app showed us the 3D models of the systems and labeled the parts in English, it was like a lightbulb moment. I could visualize everything." *(Student 2, Agrotechnology Department)*. This visual aid was also beneficial for Elementary School Teacher Education students, who noted, "For young learners, visualizing vocabulary is key. The 3D models of animals or objects in the AR app made it easy to connect the English word to the real thing,

which is much better than just flashcards." *(Student 3, Elementary School Teacher Education Department)*, emphasizing the clarity provided by the visual representations.

Increased Learning Interest and Immersion

Students frequently reported a significant increase in their learning interest and immersion due to the interactive and captivating nature of the Mobile AR technology. This enhanced engagement translated into sustained concentration and enjoyment, thereby supporting the high engagement and motivation levels observed in the quantitative findings. An Indonesian Language Education student's remark exemplified this sentiment: "I usually get bored with English grammar exercises, but the Mobile AR app made it feel like a game... It was so engaging that I didn't even realize I was studying for an hour." *(Student 4, Indonesian Language Education Department)*. The immersive quality of the Mobile AR environment was also a strong motivator, with a Mathematics student describing it as "amazing... It felt like the English lesson was happening right in my room. This made me want to keep exploring and learning more, unlike traditional classes where my attention often drifts." *(Student 5, Mathematics Department)*. Furthermore, the integration of interactive elements, such as quizzes, transformed the learning experience into a "challenge" rather than a mere "test," as an Agrotechnology student noted, fostering greater motivation and faster learning. "The interactive quizzes within the Mobile AR environment were really fun. It didn't feel like a test; it felt like a challenge, and that motivated me to try harder and learn the vocabulary faster." *(Student 6, Agrotechnology Department)*.

Effectiveness of Major-Specific Learning

The customization of content to align with each department's specific curriculum proved to be highly effective, fostering a deeper realization among students of the practical necessity of English and enabling them to integrate their specialized knowledge with language acquisition. An Elementary School Teacher Education student highlighted the direct relevance, stating, "When we learned English vocabulary for classroom management or child development through AR, it felt directly relevant to my future profession. It wasn't just generic English; it was English I would actually use as a teacher." *(Student 7, Elementary School Teacher Education Department)*. Similarly, a Mathematics student found that "Learning English about calculus or algebra using Mobile AR was fantastic. It showed me how English is essential for advanced studies and research in my field. It connected the dots between my major and the language." *(Student 8, Mathematics Department).* An Indonesian Language Education student articulated the empowering aspect of culturally relevant content, observing, "The Mobile AR stories with Indonesian cultural elements, told in English, were fascinating. It made me think about how I could use English to share our culture with the world, which felt very empowering." *(Student 9, Indonesian Language Education Department)*.

Technical Challenges and Improvements

While the overall reception of the Mobile AR technology was highly positive, some students initially encountered technical challenges, primarily related to device compatibility, application stability, and network connectivity. An Agrotechnology student, for instance, reported, "At first, I had some trouble with the app crashing on my older phone, and the internet connection was sometimes unstable, which was frustrating." *(Student 10, Agrotechnology Department)*. A Mathematics student also noted that "Setting up the Mobile AR environment took a little time and patience initially. There were a few glitches, but the instructors helped us, and after the first week, it was mostly smooth sailing. The benefits definitely outweighed these minor issues." *(Student 11, Mathematics Department)*. Despite these initial hurdles, which were largely overcome after an adaptation period and instructor support, students consistently expressed a high appreciation for the potential of Mobile AR technology in education, with one Elementary School Teacher Education student concluding, "I think for AR to be fully adopted, the technology needs to be more accessible and robust across different devices. However, the potential for engaging learning is huge, and I hope it becomes more common." *(Student 12, Elementary School Teacher Education Department)*.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence regarding the significant positive impact of a Mobile Augmented Reality (AR)-based intervention on students' English language proficiency and their overall learning experience. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data offers a nuanced understanding of how Mobile AR contributes to learning gains and shapes student perceptions. Substantial improvements were observed across all measured aspects of English language proficiency, including overall English achievement, vocabulary acquisition, and grammar comprehension. The quantitative analysis revealed statistically significant gains in post-test scores compared to pre-test scores for all three measures ($p < 0.001$), accompanied by remarkably large effect sizes (Cohen's $d > 1.95$) and high N-gain values (0.74-0.75). These results indicate not merely a statistical difference but a practically significant and tremendous positive effect of the Mobile AR-based program. This finding is consistent with a growing body of literature that demonstrates Mobile AR's effectiveness in enhancing academic achievement in various educational contexts (e.g., Cai et al., 2019; Chen, 2019; Chin et al., 2019). While alternative explanations such as the Hawthorne effect could be considered, the consistently high effect sizes across multiple language domains suggest a genuine and robust impact attributable to the Mobile AR intervention itself.

Qualitative data further illuminated the mechanisms underlying these quantitative gains, particularly highlighting the role of visualization in comprehension. Students consistently reported that the visual nature of Mobile AR, specifically through 3D models and animations, significantly enhanced their understanding of abstract English concepts and vocabulary, making complex information "click" into place. This observation strongly supports Paivio's Dual-Coding Theory, which posits that information processed through

both verbal and visual channels is more effectively encoded and retrieved. Previous research on multimedia learning similarly underscores the benefits of visual aids in reducing cognitive load and improving comprehension (Mayer, 2017). The ability to visualize concepts like geometric shapes or scientific processes directly translated into a clearer grasp of associated English terminology, a benefit that transcended specific academic disciplines.

Furthermore, the Mobile AR intervention was found to significantly increase students' learning interest and immersion. The interactive and captivating nature of the AR technology transformed learning into a more engaging and enjoyable experience, often likened to a game rather than a test. This enhanced engagement translated into sustained concentration, with students reporting prolonged study periods without feeling bored, aligning well with Barkley & Major (2020) , where optimal experience is achieved through deep immersion in an activity. The interactive quizzes, in particular, reframed learning as a "challenge," fostering greater motivation and faster learning. This motivational aspect is also congruent with Reeve, J., Ryan, R. M., & Deci (2018), as the AR environment provided elements of autonomy and competence, thereby fostering intrinsic motivation for learning.

The customization of content to align with each department's specific curriculum proved to be highly effective, fostering a deeper realization among students of the practical necessity of English. Students across diverse majors, from Elementary School Teacher Education to Mathematics and Indonesian Language Education, articulated how the major-specific content made English directly relevant to their future professions and advanced studies. This finding strongly supports Lave and Wenger's Situated Learning Theory, which emphasizes that learning is most effective when it occurs within authentic and personally relevant contexts. By connecting English language acquisition directly to their specialized knowledge, the AR program effectively bridged the gap between academic learning and real-world application, empowering students to see English as a vital tool for their chosen fields.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive reception, the study acknowledged initial technical challenges encountered by some students, primarily related to device compatibility, application stability, and network connectivity. These issues, such as app crashing on older phones or unstable internet connections, are consistent with common implementation hurdles identified in broader literature on educational technology adoption (Ahmad et al., 2020; Granić, 2022; Lucas, 2020). However, it was noted that these initial difficulties were largely overcome after an adaptation period and with consistent instructor support. The students' perseverance and the perceived benefits of the Mobile AR technology ultimately outweighed these minor issues, reinforcing the potential of Mobile AR despite its current technical limitations. While this study demonstrated a significant positive effect, a limitation lies in its quasi-experimental design, which did not include a true control group, making it difficult to definitively rule out all alternative explanations for the observed gains.

Additionally, the qualitative data relied on self-reported perceptions, which, while valuable, may be subject to social desirability bias.

Based on these compelling results, several practical actions and suggestions can be offered. For educators and curriculum designers, it is strongly recommended to consider integrating Mobile AR tools that leverage 3D visualization and offer interactive, context-specific content, as these features were found to be particularly impactful. Investment in robust instructor training on Mobile AR pedagogy is crucial to maximize the technology's potential. Mobile AR developers are encouraged to prioritize user-friendly interfaces and robust application stability across diverse devices to minimize initial technical frustrations while continuing to design content that directly supports established learning principles. Ultimately, this study advises the broader educational community to embrace Mobile AR as a powerful, human-centered tool for creating dynamic, engaging, and highly effective language learning experiences while pragmatically planning for and addressing the practical challenges inherent in technological adoption.

Future research should explore long-term learning gains and sustained engagement with Mobile AR. Controlled studies with true control groups could better isolate its effects, while examining specific AR features and their integration into curricula would offer deeper insights. Investigating best practices for instructor training and developing scalable, cost-effective AR solutions would further support its broader adoption in language education.

CONCLUSION

This study is a comprehensive investigation to assess the effectiveness of a Mobile Augmented Reality (AR) -based English learning program and to gain an in-depth understanding of students' experiences within this innovative environment. The findings highlight the profound positive impact of the Mobile AR intervention on English language proficiency. Significant and practically meaningful gains were observed across overall English achievement, vocabulary acquisition, and grammar comprehension, affirming Mobile AR's capacity to enhance learning outcomes substantially. Beyond these measurable improvements, the originality of this work lies in its human-centered exploration of how and why Mobile AR is effective. Qualitative findings show that Mobile AR’s visual features help students grasp abstract concepts, supporting dual-coding theory, while customized content enhances relevance through situated learning. Beyond proving its effectiveness, the study uncovers the psychological and pedagogical factors behind Mobile AR’s impact. Despite initial technical challenges, students reported strong benefits, indicating high acceptance and adaptability. The study confirms that Mobile AR is a highly effective approach for improving language proficiency and deepening engagement and understanding.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest reported by the author(s)

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Research Article

Classroom Praxis of Applied Oral Communication Strategies in Enhancing English Speaking Skills in Indonesian Secondary School

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ABSTRACT

Speaking remains one of the most challenging skills for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners due to the need for real-time language processing, self-confidence, and adequate linguistic knowledge. This mixed-method study explores students' perceived difficulties in speaking English, using both quantitative data from questionnaires completed by 91 students and qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews with teachers. The quantitative results highlight affective barriers such as low self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, and anxiety when speaking in front of others. Linguistic challenges, including limited vocabulary and pronunciation difficulties, were also found to hinder fluency and cause reliance on first-language translation. Additionally, limited opportunities to practice speaking both inside and outside the classroom further restricted students' progress. Qualitative findings echoed these challenges and revealed deeper motivational and institutional constraints. Drawing on Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety theory and sociocultural learning perspectives, the study emphasizes the importance of learner-centered approaches that create emotionally supportive environments and promote meaningful interaction. Suggested pedagogical strategies include using digital tools to ease anxiety, peer-based speaking activities, pronunciation-focused tasks, increased speaking time in class, and consistent, structured teacher feedback. Finally, the study recommends longitudinal research to observe changes in speaking proficiency over time and assess interventions' effectiveness.

Keywords: *EFL learners, speaking anxiety, linguistic challenges, classroom interaction, language learning*

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INTRODUCTION

The capacity to speak effectively in English constitutes a fundamental element of communicative competence. It is increasingly prioritized in language education policy across various EFL contexts. At the secondary school level, the ability to express ideas orally in English is essential for academic achievement and crucial for future academic and professional engagement (Ayala et al., 2024; Le & Shuo, 2023). Nevertheless, developing English speaking skills among secondary students remains a persistent challenge. Despite curricular reforms promoting communicative language teaching (CLT), empirical evidence suggests that students often struggle with oral production due to linguistic limitations, psychological barriers, and socio-cultural factors (Hajiyeva, 2024; Malik et al., 2021).

Several studies have consistently reported that secondary school learners encounter a range of difficulties in speaking English, including anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, lack of vocabulary, and limited opportunities for authentic interaction (Rahmadani & Etfita, 2022; Tawir & Bin Baharum, 2024). These challenges are often exacerbated in EFL settings such as Indonesia, where English is not used in daily communication and where large class sizes and exam-driven instruction restrict the implementation of interactive speaking activities (Marlia et al., 2023; Mukminin et al., 2015). While the literature provides ample insight into learner-related obstacles, a significant gap exists in understanding how English teachers respond to these difficulties through their classroom practices. The teacher's role is not merely a facilitator but also a designer of learning conditions that can constrain or enable students' oral language development (Asefa & Enashe, 2024).

"The development of English speaking skills among secondary students remains a persistent challenge"

This study is therefore situated at the intersection of learner experience and teacher praxis. It seeks to explore the principal challenges faced by secondary school students in English-speaking classrooms and the strategies and practices employed by English teachers to address those challenges. Such an inquiry is timely and significant, particularly in applied linguistics and vocational English education, where emphasis is placed on language acquisition and practical use of language in real-world settings (Chen & Hwang, 2022). Given the rising demands for oral English proficiency in globalized educational and workplace environments, the pedagogical implications of how speaking skills are taught at the secondary level warrant closer scrutiny.

Although many studies have investigated the difficulties encountered by EFL learners in acquiring speaking skills (Holandyah et al., 2022; Pratolo et al., 2019; Wulandari et al., 2021), there is a paucity of research on the deliberate and systematic implementation of specific oral communication strategies in classroom practice to improve speaking proficiency, especially within the context of Indonesian secondary schools. This study provides a unique contribution by integrating theory and practice through a comprehensive analysis of instructors' implementation of oral communication strategies in actual classroom environments and the impact of these methods on students' speaking growth. Much of this

research has been largely concerned with detecting student issues and perspectives rather than investigating systematic educational interventions. Existing study tends to emphasize learners' affective and cognitive constraints (e.g., nervousness, lack of confidence, limited exposure) or isolated method use, without exploring how oral communication techniques are explicitly and systematically embedded inside actual classroom instruction.

This study fills in a very important gap by looking into how teachers use certain oral communication techniques in real classrooms, like paraphrasing, circumlocution, and changing the way students talk to each other. This study is different from others because it looks at strategy use in the classroom and is based on sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Walqui, 2006) and communicative competence (Cheung, 2014; Oliver et al., 2005). It does this by looking at how teaching strategies can help students improve their speaking skills. This study makes a useful and useful-to-teachers addition to the field of EFL speaking instruction in Indonesia by looking at how teacher-mediated strategy instruction affects students' spoken performance.

The contribution of this study is threefold. First, it adds to the limited body of classroom-based research at the secondary level in EFL contexts, a tier often underrepresented in empirical studies that focus on tertiary education. Second, by adopting a dual-perspective approach, this research highlights the dynamic interplay between learners' speaking challenges and teachers' adaptive strategies. Third, it offers practical implications for curriculum developers, teacher educators, and policymakers in designing more responsive and context-sensitive approaches to speaking instruction. This aligns with the call for a more nuanced understanding of how language pedagogy can be localized to address specific sociolinguistic realities.

In the broader discourse of applied linguistics, this paper contributes to reimagining the speaking classroom not merely as a space for linguistic output but as a pedagogical site shaped by interactional, affective, and institutional forces. Addressing speaking-related challenges early is vital for vocational English education, where communicative competence is a gateway to employability and social mobility. Hence, this research provides empirical data and pedagogical insight that may inform more equitable and effective teaching practices in the secondary school EFL classroom. This study has two research questions:
(1) What are the challenges faced by secondary students in English-speaking classrooms?
(2) How do English teachers address these challenges through their classroom practices?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Complexity of Teaching Speaking in EFL Contexts

Teaching speaking in EFL is widely recognized as a complex task due to the real-time nature of oral communication. Learners are required to activate multiple linguistic subsystems including vocabulary, syntax, and pronunciation while also attending to interactional norms and social context. Unlike writing, speaking provides no time for planning or revision, which increases the demand for fluency and accuracy. Sociocultural theory emphasizes that learning occurs through social interaction and mediated activities (Vygotsky, 1978). This means that speaking development in EFL classrooms must be supported by opportunities

for authentic interaction and scaffolded dialogue. Adolescent learners face additional difficulties due to their developmental stage, which influences cognitive processing and emotional regulation (Ahmed et al., 2015).

Despite curricular intentions to promote communicative competence, speaking is often overlooked in favor of reading and writing, particularly in systems dominated by high-stakes testing. When oral skills are excluded from formal assessments, they tend to be marginalized in daily instruction (Cheung, 2014; Oliver et al., 2005). Productive skills such as speaking require consistent exposure to comprehensible input and regular practice with meaningful output and feedback, but such conditions are rarely met in rigid, exam-driven systems (Burns, 1998).

Pedagogical Approaches and Task Design

Many EFL classrooms continue to rely on traditional methodologies such as substitution drills and scripted dialogues. These approaches tend to focus on linguistic accuracy at the expense of communicative competence. Such methods limit learners' ability to develop interactional skills (Străchinaru, 2025). In contrast, communicative methodologies such as task-based language teaching (TBLT) have been shown to promote real-life language use and learner engagement (Ellis, 2003; Willis & Willis, 2007). These approaches align with sociocultural theory by embedding learning in meaningful social contexts.

Communicative tasks such as storytelling, simulations, and problem-solving help build learners' fluency and confidence by allowing them to use the language in context. These tasks lower learners' anxiety and promote greater willingness to communicate (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Strong, 2013). When supported with scaffolding, such as modeling and structured guidance, these activities become effective platforms for oral language development.

Student-Related Challenges in the Speaking Classroom

Affective variables play a crucial role in shaping learners' oral participation. Foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) explains how fear of negative evaluation can inhibit learners' willingness to speak (Horwitz et al., 1986). This is particularly common among adolescent learners who are highly sensitive to peer perception. Emotional variables such as enjoyment, self-confidence, and perceived competence directly influence learners' willingness to communicate (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Without a positive emotional climate, even capable students may remain silent during speaking tasks.

To reduce anxiety and foster engagement, low-anxiety classrooms are essential (Young, 1991). Scaffolding techniques such as visual aids, modeling, and structured collaboration can help learners manage complex speaking tasks (Walqui, 2006), combined with a flipped learning instructional strategy (Herda et al., 2025; Santhanasamy & Yunus, 2022). These strategies are consistent with sociocultural theory, which views learning as a socially mediated process. Learners also face difficulties in vocabulary retrieval, pronunciation, and syntactic formation, which disrupt fluency. This is often referred to as receptive–productive imbalance, where students understand input but struggle to produce language spontaneously (Gass & Mackey, 2006). Fluency can only develop through frequent,

supported output and meaningful communicative interaction (Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 1988).

Sociocultural and Institutional Constraints

The classroom environment and broader institutional structures also shape how speaking is approached. In many contexts, teacher-centered instruction dominates classroom discourse, limiting student agency and reducing speaking opportunities. Traditional classroom norms often prioritize correctness over communication, which discourages students from experimenting with language (Taylor, 1983). Students in such classrooms may fear embarrassment or punishment if they make errors while speaking.

Sociocultural theory highlights the importance of interaction and mediation in language learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Classrooms that minimize student talk deprive learners of the experiences necessary for language growth. Furthermore, when speaking is excluded from formal assessment, both teachers and students may view it as non-essential. This phenomenon is known as the washback effect, where assessment shapes instructional priorities (Muñoz & Álvarez, 2010). Dialogic teaching, which emphasizes extended student talk and shared meaning-making, is essential for integrating speaking into daily instruction (Lyle, 2008).

Teacher Strategies and the Role of Agency

Teachers play a key role in enabling or constraining the development of speaking skills. When teachers adopt communicative methodologies such as TBLT, they provide students with structured opportunities to use language in authentic and purposeful ways (Ellis, 2003). These tasks promote negotiation of meaning and collaborative engagement, which build fluency and confidence. Creating a psychologically safe classroom is equally important. Supportive feedback and gradual release of responsibility encourage students to take risks and participate actively (Walqui, 2006; Young, 1991).

Teachers' beliefs and experiences, also known as teacher cognition, significantly influence their pedagogical decisions. Teacher cognition is the interaction of knowledge, beliefs, and experience that shapes classroom practice (Borg, 2003). Reflective teaching helps educators align their practices with research-based principles and adapt to learner needs (Shavelson & Stern, 1981). Supporting teacher agency through professional development and collaboration is essential for fostering adaptive and inclusive speaking instruction.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methods to explore the challenges faced by secondary school students in English-speaking classrooms and the strategies employed by their teachers to address these challenges. A mixed-method design is advantageous, as it allows for data triangulation, offering a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative component involves a survey administered to secondary school students, while the qualitative component includes an interview with the teacher. This design allows for collecting both statistical data on student experiences and in-depth insights

into the teacher's pedagogical practices, providing a holistic view of the teaching and learning process (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Participants

The participants in this study include 91 secondary school students and one English teacher from a secondary school in Gresik, East Java, Indonesia. The students were randomly selected from grades 10 to 12, aged between 15 and 17. The selection aimed to represent a broad spectrum of academic backgrounds and English proficiency levels. According to (Mackey & Gass, 2022), selecting a diverse sample of participants ensures that the study can capture a variety of perspectives, which is crucial for understanding the complexity of language learning challenges. The teacher, who has over five years of teaching experience, was chosen for their extensive involvement in teaching English speaking skills at the secondary level. Their first-hand knowledge of classroom practices makes them an ideal participant to offer insights into addressing challenges in teaching English speaking skills (Borg, 2015).

Table 1
Gender and Age of Students

Gender		Age (Years Old)	
Male	39 Students	< 15	2 Students
		15 - 16	26 Students
Female	52 Students	17 - 18	60 Students
		> 18	3 Students
Total: 91 Students			

Data Collection Methods

Student Questionnaire

The researchers developed the student questionnaire used in this study and validated it with experts to ensure its accuracy and relevance. It consisted of 23 closed-ended items on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree,” to identify the challenges students experience in English-speaking classes. Based on current theories and research in second language learning, the items were created to capture important factors affecting speaking ability, such as anxiety, vocabulary, and practice opportunities. Expert judgment was employed to assess the content validity of the questionnaire. It was administered electronically via Google Forms and completed anonymously to encourage honest responses. The questionnaire was an essential part of the research procedure since it was the primary quantitative tool for gathering data on students' assessments of their speaking difficulties and the frequency with which they used various oral communication tactics. It comprehensively understood common patterns, affective factors, and linguistic problems among 91 secondary school students. To ensure clarity and validity, the questionnaire was carefully modified from Alrasheedi’s (2020). and revised in response to expert feedback from EFL educators and academics to fit with the context of the study. A

pilot test was conducted with a small group of students who shared comparable characteristics to the target responders. This helped to identify any ambiguous language or potentially misleading elements. Minor changes were made to aid comprehension, such as using basic, age-appropriate language and offering brief explanations or examples as needed. The questionnaire was also conducted in a guided session, which allowed the researcher or teacher to clarify any doubts in real time, ensuring that all respondents understood the items before responding. This technique improved both the dependability of the obtained data and the legitimacy of the students' responses. In this way, the questionnaire can be accessed through this link https://forms.gle/wXGooXEkEiwcGdBP6

Teacher Interview

In addition to the student questionnaire, qualitative data were obtained through an in-depth, face-to-face interview with the English teacher. The interview employed a semi-structured format, enabling the researcher to explore the teacher's pedagogical experiences and strategies for addressing challenges in speaking instruction (Syam et al., 2023). The interview was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, the teacher's native language, to facilitate ease of expression and reduce the potential for miscommunication. Employing the participant's first language in qualitative interviews is a widely accepted practice, particularly in educational research, as it allows for greater depth, authenticity, and nuance in participant responses (Ruslin et al., 2022). The interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participant's informed consent. Guiding topics included common obstacles encountered in the speaking classroom, techniques for reducing learner anxiety and promoting participation, the role of corrective feedback in developing speaking proficiency, and strategies for engaging students across varying levels of oral competence. The transcribed data provided rich, contextualized insights that complemented and extended the findings derived from the quantitative questionnaire responses.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

The data obtained from the student questionnaire, which employed a five-point Likert scale, were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, specifically mean and standard deviation, to identify the central tendencies and variations in students' responses. The analysis was conducted using SPSS Version 25. This approach enabled the researcher to capture patterns in learners' perceptions regarding their challenges in English-speaking classrooms. The use of mean and standard deviation in Likert-scale analysis is widely recognized in educational research as a valid method for interpreting response trends (Boone & Boone, 2012).

Qualitative Analysis

For the qualitative data from the teacher interview, thematic analysis was employed. This approach involves reviewing the interview transcript, coding relevant excerpts, and identifying recurring themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Khokhar et al., 2020), related to the teacher's strategies for addressing challenges in speaking classrooms. Thematic analysis allows for a deeper understanding of the teacher's practical steps to improve students' speaking skills (Dawadi, 2020). In conducting thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke, (2006) highlighted that the process of coding involved some stages: 1) Familiarization with the Data, 2) Generating Initial Codes, 3) Searching for Themes, 4) Reviewing Themes, 5) Defining and Naming Themes, 6) Writing the Report:. the researchers carried out this analysis independently to ensure reliability and validity, with discrepancies discussed and resolved to reach a consensus. Using multiple researchers in the coding process enhances the trustworthiness of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were paramount in this study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the study. All participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. The students were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential. The teacher was also informed that participation would not affect their professional standing. These ethical safeguards ensured that the study adhered to established research standards.

FINDINGS

Affective Barriers and Learner Confidence

The survey data revealed significant affective barriers that students encounter while speaking English. Specifically, item A1 yielded a mean score of 2.91 (SD = 0.91), which indicates that students generally lack self-confidence when using English. This finding suggests that many students struggle with their belief in their ability to speak the language, impacting their overall engagement in speaking activities.

Table 2
Affective Barrier & Learner's Confidence

Code	Items	Mean Score	Standard Deviation (SD)
A1	I feel confident when speaking English	2.91	0.91
A2	I am afraid of making mistakes when speaking English	3.68	1.03
A3	I feel nervous speaking English in front of a group	3.54	1.19
A4	I feel embarrassed when speaking English in front of my classmates	3.08	1.07

Further analysis of the survey data highlighted the students' fear of making mistakes. Item A2 received a higher mean score of 3.68 (SD = 1.03), pointing to a widespread apprehension

about error in communication. This fear often hinders students from taking risks or attempting to speak, which is essential for language learning.

Anxiety surrounding public speaking was also a significant concern. The item A3 had a mean score of 3.54 (SD = 1.19), while A4 received a mean score of 3.08 (SD = 1.07). These findings further illustrate that speaking in front of peers, especially in a classroom environment, generates significant discomfort, which is often related to concerns over judgment and self-perception.

The teacher's perspective confirmed these findings, stating, *"Students who struggle are often the ones who have already underestimated themselves. Even when they are encouraged in class, they still believe that English is too difficult and that they will never be able to master it."* This reinforces the idea that students' lack of self-efficacy and deeply ingrained fear of failure contribute substantially to their reluctance to engage in English speaking activities.

Linguistic Limitations and Classroom Practices

Linguistic limitations were a significant barrier to students' speaking fluency. The survey data indicated that L1 had the highest mean score (Mean = 4.09; SD = 1.01), highlighting students' common struggle due to inadequate vocabulary. A limited lexicon makes it difficult for students to express themselves freely, which in turn affects their ability to engage in meaningful conversations in English.

Table 3
Linguistic Limitations

Code	Items	Mean Score	Standard Deviation (SD)
L1	My limited vocabulary affects my ability to speak English	4.09	1.01
L2	I often struggle to find the right word when speaking English	3.63	0.98
L3	I struggle to pronounce English words correctly	3.49	1.00
L4	I translate from my first language when speaking English	2.92	1.09
L5	I need more opportunities to practice speaking in class	4.20	0.95

In addition to vocabulary limitations, students also reported word choice and pronunciation challenges. The L2 scored a mean of 3.63 (SD = 0.98), and the item L3 had a mean of 3.49 (SD = 1.00). These linguistic challenges further compound students' difficulties with speaking, leading to pauses or reliance on their first language for translation, which interferes with their fluency.

Moreover, many students admitted to translating from their first language when speaking English, as evidenced by the item L4 (Mean = 2.92; SD = 1.09). This behavior indicates limited automaticity in language use, as students are still dependent on their native language structures and vocabulary, slowing down their English communication.

The teacher explained their approach to addressing these issues, saying, *"In the first stage, we focus on building vocabulary… Then, they practice pre-prepared dialogues… Once students master these, they create their own conversations."* Although this method appears effective in scaffolding students' learning, the data revealed that students still desire more opportunities

to practice speaking. The item L5 scored a high mean of 4.20 (SD = 0.95), signaling that students need more speaking practice within the classroom context.

Environmental and Socio-Cultural Influences

Environmental and socio-cultural factors also played a significant role in shaping students' speaking difficulties. The teacher observed that students' motivation to speak English remains moderate to low, stating, *"The desire to speak English still needs to be continuously encouraged."* This suggests that students' interest in speaking English is not always intrinsic but may be influenced by external factors such as peer influence, teacher encouragement, and the socio-cultural context in which they live.

The teacher further noted the impact of rural living on students' exposure to English, saying, *"We are in a rural area where the culture greatly influences their interests… the podcasts they listen to, the* YouTube *videos they watch… these impact their English proficiency."* This indicates that the limited access to authentic English content outside of the classroom inhibits students' ability to immerse themselves in the language and practice outside school hours, which is essential for language acquisition.

Additionally, the teacher highlighted the lack of parental support for English learning, which they viewed as a significant challenge: *"Very few parents support their children's English proficiency… this becomes a significant challenge."* The absence of this support further compounds the challenges students face in their learning journey, as it limits their exposure to English outside the classroom and reduces their motivation to continue learning. The school environment itself also posed barriers to learning. The teacher mentioned, *"The school environment has not yet developed a culture of daily English usage… we've tried several times to establish this, but it has not yet been successful."* Despite efforts to create an English-speaking culture within the school, these attempts have yet to yield tangible results, contributing to the lack of a language-rich environment crucial for fostering speaking proficiency.

DISCUSSION

This study explored the challenges that secondary-level students face in speaking English, and the findings reveal a complex interplay of affective, linguistic, and contextual variables. Among the most salient barriers identified were affective factors such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence. Student responses showed a widespread reluctance to speak in front of others, primarily driven by apprehension about being judged or corrected. These findings align with the conceptual framework of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986), which posits that emotional barriers can significantly hinder language performance, particularly in oral communication. The results further support the view of MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012), who argue that anxiety impacts not only the quantity but also the quality of speech production by interfering with working memory and attention during communicative tasks. In adolescence, a developmental stage characterized by heightened self-awareness and peer sensitivity, such barriers can be particularly acute and enduring.

The teacher's observations corroborate these findings, emphasizing that many students *"underestimate themselves"* even when provided with encouragement. This insight

resonates with Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, which emphasizes that individuals' belief in their ability to perform a task is a key determinant of actual performance. Students who perceive English as inherently difficult are less likely to take communicative risks, even in supportive classroom settings. Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis similarly argues that when learners are anxious or unmotivated, their emotional state acts as a barrier that limits input processing and inhibits output. The persistence of such negative belief's points to the importance of explicitly addressing students' affective needs in the classroom, not as peripheral concerns, but as foundational to the success of any speaking-oriented instruction.

Alongside these psychological constraints, the study identified several linguistic challenges that impede students' oral proficiency. Vocabulary limitations were particularly prominent, with students reporting frequent difficulty retrieving words and expressing ideas fluently. These issues are consistent with findings by Gass and Mackey (2006), who explain that real-time language production draws heavily on automatic lexical and grammatical processing, which many learners have not yet developed. The reliance on translation from the first language further indicates limited internalization of English structures and suggests that students have not yet achieved the level of automatization necessary for fluent speech. Though often underestimated, pronunciation difficulties also emerged as a recurring concern, affecting students' confidence and willingness to participate. Szyszka (2011) emphasizes that pronunciation problems—particularly when left unaddressed—reduce intelligibility and contribute to social anxiety and perceived incompetence. When combined with emotional insecurities, these linguistic constraints form a cycle in which hesitation, silence, and avoidance become normalized behaviors in the speaking classroom.

The pedagogical approach described by the teacher—progressing from vocabulary-building to controlled dialogue and eventually to free production—reflects an attempt to scaffold student learning in a manageable way. This method is grounded in the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky, particularly the Zone of Proximal Development concept, which holds that learners benefit from tasks beyond their current competence when provided with appropriate support (Panhwar et al., 2016). However, despite the structured instruction design, students still strongly needed more speaking opportunities. The high mean score for the item L5 indicates that the current instructional time allocated to oral practice is insufficient. Wood (2001) contends that speaking fluency does not emerge automatically from general language exposure but must be systematically cultivated through purposeful, contextualized, and frequent activities. The students expressed desire for more practice should not be seen as a simple request for more time, but as a call for greater access to meaningful communicative experiences that align with their real needs as language users.

The influence of environmental and socio-cultural factors further compounds the difficulties students face. The teacher's comment that *"the desire to speak English still needs to be encouraged"* highlights that learners' motivation is not always intrinsic but often shaped by external conditions such as peer dynamics, community values, and perceived utility of English. Darvin and Norton (2015) argue that language learning is inextricably linked to identity, and that learners' investment in the target language depends on whether they see it as relevant to their lives and future aspirations. In rural settings, where English is rarely

used outside the classroom, students may struggle to find authentic purposes for speaking and may not view it as socially or culturally meaningful. The teacher noted that the lack of exposure to English-language media further restricts learners' access to input and models of spoken discourse. These findings echo the work of Reinders and Benson (2017), who emphasize that successful language development depends not only on instruction but also on the presence of a language-rich environment that supports autonomous learning.

Parental support also emerged as a significant variable influencing learners' speaking development. The teacher noted that only a small proportion of parents actively support their children's efforts to learn English, which can undermine motivation and reinforce the idea that English is not a priority. Taylor (1983) maintains that learners' orientation toward language is heavily influenced by their immediate social context, including familial attitudes and expectations. School-based instruction can become isolated without encouragement or reinforcement at home, limiting its impact. Compounding this challenge is the institutional context: the teacher reported that the school has not yet cultivated a culture of English usage, despite repeated efforts. This suggests that individual teacher efforts, however well-intentioned, may not be sufficient without institutional alignment. Creating a sustained culture of spoken English requires a coordinated strategy that involves school leadership, curricular reform, and community outreach.

The implications of these findings are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, they affirm that speaking is not merely a linguistic activity but a socially and emotionally embedded practice that must be approached holistically. Pedagogically, the study underscores the need for classrooms that are linguistically rich, emotionally safe, and contextually relevant. Teachers must be equipped to design communicative tasks that are cognitively appropriate, affectively sensitive, and socially engaging (Ellis, 2003). In particular, task-based language teaching offers a promising framework for integrating fluency development with meaningful interaction (Alasal, 2025), provided that learners are given sufficient time, feedback, and opportunities to reflect on their performance.

From a practical standpoint, school administrators and policy-makers must take steps to support teachers in creating environments that promote speaking. This includes increasing the time allocated to oral skills in the curriculum, providing professional development in communicative language teaching, and integrating speaking into assessment systems. As Kılıçkaya (2016) has argued, the marginalization of speaking in high-stakes examinations is one of the primary reasons it receives less attention in classrooms. Moreover, efforts should be made to extend English use beyond the classroom, through extracurricular programs, digital tools, and partnerships with families. In rural settings, especially, access to English-language media and opportunities for informal communication can make a crucial difference. Addressing these systemic challenges requires pedagogical innovation and institutional commitment to language development as a holistic process.

In summary, this study highlights that the ability to speak English confidently and fluently is shaped by a dynamic set of factors beyond grammar and vocabulary. Affective readiness, linguistic competence, classroom experience, and broader socio-cultural contexts influence learners' willingness and ability to speak. Addressing these challenges calls for an

integrated approach that empowers both learners and teachers to navigate the complexities of language use in meaningful, supported, and sustained ways. The development of speaking skills, particularly in EFL contexts-is not a technical problem to be solved, but a human endeavor to be understood and nurtured.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the challenges encountered by secondary-level students in learning to speak English. The findings showed that emotional, linguistic, and contextual factors were closely connected in shaping students' speaking difficulties. Many students reported anxiety, fear of judgment, and low confidence, which discouraged them from participating in spoken activities. These emotional barriers were often linked to limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and reliance on translating from the first language, all of which interfered with fluency and clarity. External conditions such as lack of English exposure outside the classroom, limited parental involvement, and minimal institutional support further hindered their progress. Despite these difficulties, students showed a strong desire to improve their speaking skills, suggesting that motivation is a vital factor in language development. Effective teaching should therefore combine emotional support, meaningful communication tasks, and consistent speaking practice. Schools and teachers are encouraged to create more immersive environments using authentic materials and digital tools. Although limited by its focus on a single school and self-reported data, this study offers useful insights for similar educational contexts. Future research should include broader school settings and long-term observation to better understand how speaking ability can be improved over time.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix 1.

The interview protocol of 10 open-ended questions aimed at extracting comprehensive insights from secondary school English teachers concerning students' difficulties and progress in speaking English. The inquiries addressed fundamental aspects like evaluation methodologies, motivating and environmental factors, classroom engagements, and techniques to alleviate nervousness and enhance oral communication. The questions were designed to permit flexible responses while adhering to the study's objectives, ensuring the depth and usefulness of the obtained data. Before the interviews, the procedure was evaluated by language education specialists to guarantee clarity, suitability, and conformity with the research objectives. The following are the interview questions.

1. What are secondary school students' main challenges when speaking English?
2. How do you assess the English-speaking skills of your students in the classroom?
3. In your experience, what specific factors (e.g., motivation, language proficiency, classroom environment) most affect students' ability to speak English confidently?
4. How often do you provide opportunities for students to practice speaking English during class? Could you describe the types of activities you use?
5. Do you observe any differences in how students engage with speaking English depending on their grade or age? If so, what are they?
6. What strategies or methods have you found to be effective in helping students overcome their fear of speaking English?
7. Are there any common mistakes students make when speaking English that you feel are difficult to correct?
8. How does peer interaction improve students' speaking skills, and how do you encourage this in your classroom?
9. How do you address students' lack of confidence or anxiety when speaking in English, especially in group or public settings?
10. In your opinion, what additional support or resources would benefit both students and teachers to improve English speaking skills in secondary education?

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Research Article

Fostering Learner Autonomy in EFL Classroom: The Impact of New Learning Guidelines and Relational Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

Learner autonomy is a critical outcome in EFL education, yet the mechanisms through which instructional frameworks and educator behavior influence autonomous learning remain underexplored. This study investigates the impact of the New Learning Guidelines, a structured pedagogical framework, on the development of learner autonomy among undergraduate EFL students. Employing an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, the study involved 539 students categorized into positive (n = 78) and negative (n = 462) attitudinal groups. The quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires, and qualitative data were collected via semi-structured interviews. Quantitative findings revealed that students with positive attitudes demonstrated substantial gains in goal setting, strategic planning, and self-monitoring, whereas those with negative attitudes showed limited improvement from structure alone. Thematic analysis underscored the role of relational scaffolding, emotionally responsive, supportive teacher-student interactions as a critical factor in fostering autonomy among disengaged learners. These findings challenge deficit-based perspective on learner motivation and advance autonomy theory by emphasizing its socio-relational dimension. The study suggests EFL educators may integrate clear instructional guidelines with affective and relational pedagogies to address diverse learner dispositions. Practically, the findings underscore the need for teacher training programs to integrate relational strategies with structural management to promote learner autonomy effectively.

Keywords: *Learner Autonomy, Structured Learning Guidelines, Relational Pedagogy*

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INTRODUCTION

Learner autonomy has become a central focus in educational research, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, where independent language practice, self-regulation, and intrinsic motivation are crucial for sustained learning success (Benson, 2007; Palfreyman, 2003; Smith, 2007). Globally, EFL learners face challenges such as limited exposure to authentic language environments, curriculum rigidity, and passive learning cultures, making autonomy development urgent and complex (Alrabai, 2021; Tuan, 2021). Autonomous learners are those who can set meaningful goals, monitor their progress, and take responsibility for their learning. However, fostering such autonomy, especially among students with negative learning attitudes, remains a persistent challenge for educators.

"From compliance to autonomy: Can NLG truly empower EFL learners"

At an earlier stage of this study, a formatted New Learning Guidelines (NLG) was implemented to address students' disengagement and passivity in an English as a Foreign Language classroom (Eppendi, 2022). The intervention clearly outlined learning expectations, responsibilities and consequences. Results indicated significant behavioral changes students previously characteristised as reluctant, unmotivated and unaccountable. They began to display greater discipline, responsibility and adherence to academic demands (Mcfarland et al., 2008; Tanol et al., 2010; Thompson & Webber, 2010; Young, 2008). More recently studies affirm that structured, and autonomy-supportive teaching foster learner engagement and behavioral regulation in EFL setting (Alrabai, 2021; Han, 2021a; Liu & Li, 2023a; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2021a). These findings support (Shindler, 2010) view that effective communicated roles and consistent routine can lay the foundation for developing learner autonomy.

Nevertheless, the extent to which these observed behavioral advances as deeper forms of autonomous learning remains uncertain. While improved discipline and engagement are often celebrated, they may mask underlying passivity without internalized motivation or agency. Although students showed greater compliance and discipline, it is unclear if they also developed the capacity fir initiative, self-regulation, or goal-directed learning. Prior studies have shown that structured behavioral interventions may result in surface-level conformity without fostering autonomous engagement (Marzuki et al., 2023; Wiraningsih & Santosa, 2020). Recent research thus calls for more attention to socio-cultural and motivational dimensions in autonomy development (Ismail et al., 2023). According to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985b) autonomy emerges from internalized goals supported by environment that fulfil the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Relational pedagogy reinforces this view, highlighting the role of trust, empathy, and teacher responsiveness in promoting learner agency (Noddings, 2005; Ushioda, 2015).

Despite this growing recognition, there remains limited understanding of how learners with differing attitudinal dispositions internalize structured autonomy-supportive interventions. Few empirical studies have explored the relational conditions under which

structures foster autonomy. Furthermore, much literature frames disengaged learners as deficient rather than relationally underserved. This research addresses these gaps by examining how the NLG framework influences autonomy development among both positively and negatively predisposed EFL students, while also foregrounding relational scaffolding as a novel theoretical lens in autonomy research.

Unlike, the previous studies that focused on behavioral compliance, this study examines whether the New Learning Guidelines (NLG) can foster deeper autonomy across both positively and negatively predisposed EFL learners. This question holds theoretical and practical significance for the EFL community, offering potential contributions to classroom practice, curriculum design, and teacher training. Accordingly, this study was guided by the following questions:

(1) how do positively and negatively disposed EFL students differ in their perceptions and internalization of autonomy-related behaviors under the NLG framework?
(2) how do emotionally supportive teacher-students' interactions within the NLG contribute to fostering learner autonomy, particularly among students with negative dispositions?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learner Autonomy in EFL Context

Learner autonomy has gained prominence in English as Foreign Language (EFL) research because it promotes lifelong learning, goal-setting, self-monitoring, and intrinsic motivation (Benson, 2007, 2013; Little, 1991; Smith, 2007). Autonomous learners are characterised by their ability to take charge of their learning processes, making decisions and reflecting on their progress independently. In EFL contexts, where linguistic input is limited, autonomy is crucial in ensuring sustained engagement and success. However, promoting autonomy remains pedagogically complex, especially for students with negative attitudes, low motivation, or culturally conditioned deference to authority (Lamb, 2017; Palfreyman, 2003).

Globally, EFL learners encounter structural and cultural barriers such as teacher-centred practices, exam-oriented curricula, and limited authentic exposure (Agustina et al., 2022). These issues hinder the development of autonomy despite educational policy shifts promoting student agency. Recent scholarship has advocated for more situated, socially-mediated models of autonomy that consider learner identity, motivation, and classroom interactions(Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Ushioda, 2015).

New Learning Guidelines and Behavioral Intervention

Eppendi (2022) introduced the New Learning Guidelines (NLG), a redesigned contract-based intervention to create a more structured, transparent, and accountable classroom culture to address persistent behavioral issues among EFL students. The intervention responded to chronic lateness, absenteeism, dishonesty, and a passive attitude toward English learning. The original learning contract, standard in Indonesian universities, often legitimised low engagement due to vague expectations and focus on cognitive outcomes. In contrast, the NLG balances cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions through a revised rubric, behaviour scoring, and consistent rules on attendance and integrity.

In its initial implementation, Eppendi (2022) students resisted the new framework, but gradually appreciated its fairness in recognising effort and integrity alongside academic achievement. Including affective and behavioural dimensions contributed to a more respectful and focused learning environment. The firm consequences for dishonesty, such as failing grades, consistently enforced. Over two semesters, the intervention reduced misconduct and shifted students' attitudes, from avoidance to accountability and reflective engagement. These outcomes provided the empirical foundation for the current study, which moves beyond behavioural change to examine whether the NLG foster deeper, sustainable learner autonomy.

Self-Determination Theory and Relational Pedagogy

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) posits that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are basic psychological needs that must be met to foster intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2017). When learners perceive their learning environment as supportive of choice and emotional connection, they are more likely to internalise goals and engage meaningfully. In EFL classrooms, however, autonomy is often narrowly defined as self-direction and choice, overlooking the relational contexts in which agency develops (Ushioda, 2015).

Relational pedagogy broadens the understanding of autonomy by emphasising the emotional and interpersonal dimensions of teaching (Noddings, 2005; Cornelius-White, 2007). Trust, empathy, and responsiveness form the bedrock of learner engagement, especially for students who struggle with self-belief or prior disengagement (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). Recent studies have introduced terms such as "relational autonomy" and "affective scaffolding" to describe the role of teacher-student interactions in sustaining motivation (Amerstorfer, 2020; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021).

METHOD

Research design and context

In this study, the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was applied to investigate whether the New Learning Guidelines (NLG) influenced learner autonomy among EFL undergraduates. The quantitative phase identified patterns of behavioural and attitudinal difference, followed by a qualitative phase that explored how students internalized the structure and relational support. This design was appropriate as it provided both a comprehensive measurable analysis of autonomy-related effects and a nuanced understanding of learner's subjective experiences, particularly among those with differing attitudes towards EFL learning (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Participants

The sample consisted of a total of 539 undergraduate students enrolled in EFL courses across departments including Law, Management, Education, Economics, Engineering and Agriculture. Prior to data collection, participants were orally informed about the purpose, procedure, and confidentially of the research, and their voluntary consent was obtained and

documented through recorded verbal agreement. The study utilized a total population sampling that is effective in program evaluation when the group is formed (Ary et al., 2019)

The participants were recruited from face-to-face and blended learning format between 2021 and 2024. A psychometric procedure in language educational research, participants were categorized into positive and negative attitudinal groups using their responses to a pre-intervention questionnaire measuring motivational and desired-related constructs (Dörnyei, 2007). Students who scored above the established mean were classified as positive attitude groups (n=78), while those scoring below were placed in the negative attitude group (n= 462). This imbalance was not a result of sampling bias but rather a reflection of the actual distribution of learner attitudes within the total sample. It reveals a predominance of negative dispositions toward English learning in the studied context, which adds further significance to the need for pedagogical interventions such as the New Learning Guidelines (NLG) framework.

Data collection

The quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on the constructs of the New Learning Guidelines (NLG) framework. It employed of a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) and included five latent constructs: Motivation, Desire, Structural Freedom, Metacognitive Awareness, and Belief (Nguyen & Habók, 2020), representing cognitive and affective dimensions of learner autonomy (Benson, 2007; Little, 1991). The instrument was piloted to ensure validity and reliability, and revised for clarity and contextual relevance. The final version demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha exceeding accepted thresholds (Ary et al., 2019). Students' academic achievement was also assessed pre- and post-test scores at the beginning and end of the semester. These standardised tests provided objective indicators to support the self-reported autonomy data. The combination of cognitive outcomes and self-perceptions strengthened the analysis of how structured influenced autonomy development.

For the qualitative phase, semi-structured interview guidelines were used to explore students' perceptions of the NLG. After analysing the questionnaire data, participants were purposively selected from both attitudinal groups. Maximum variation sampling ensured a diversity of perspectives (Mackey & Gass, 2015). Interviews were conducted face-to-face, recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and thematically analysed using an inductive approach. Emphasis was placed on identifying recurring patterns that revealed deeper insight into students' responses to the NLG framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Dörnyei, 2007).

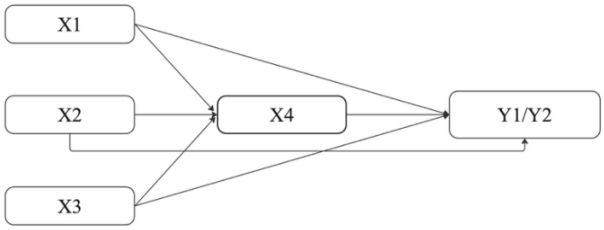
Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using path analysis to examine direct and indirect effects among learner autonomy construct. (Hair et al., 2019). Before modelling, assumptions of normality, multicollinearity, and model fit were tested. Separate structural models were constructed for positive and negative attitudinal groups, following two-lane path analysis and ANCOVA procedures as detailed in the analytic documentation.

Data from semi-structure interviews were analysed using reflexive analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), identifying patterns of structured behavioral engagement, emotional support, and participatory ownership. Emergent codes were organised into themes reflecting shared and contrasting learner experience under the NLG framework. Both data strands were integrated with quantitative results to provide a comprehensive account of how structure and relational dynamics shape learner autonomy.

Figure 1

Schema Path Analysis.



Based on the Two-Lane Path Analysis Model illustrated above, the following structural equations can be derived:

$$Y = \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + e_1$$

FINDINGS

RQ1: Differing Perceptions of Autonomy among Positively and Negatively Disposed Students

To address the first research question, we examined how students with positive and negative dispositions differed in their perceptions of autonomy-related constructs under the New Learning Guidelines (NLG) framework. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for five key constructs: Motivation, Desire, Freedom, Metacognitive Awareness, and Belief.

Table 1

Descriptive Data on New Learning Guidelines and Student Perceptions

New Learning Guidelines	Attitude	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Standard Deviation
Motivation	Positive	14.9	13	16	0.97
	Negative	11.7	8	16	1.46
Desire	Positive	14.3	14	15	0.44
	Negative	9.57	8	14	1.25
Freedom	Positive	14.1	13	15	0.74
	Negative	9.03	8	16	2.16
Metacognitive	Positive	14.1	13	15	0.76
	Negative	9.02	8	15	1.81
Belief	Positive	16.0	16	16	0.00
	Negative	16.0	16	16	0.00

These descriptive data reveal clear distinctions between groups. Students with positive attitudes reported substantially higher mean scores across all constructs, particularly Motivation and Desire, and exhibited lower variability, suggesting a more consistent and favorable perception of autonomy-supportive behaviors. In contrast, students with negative dispositions reported lower means and higher variability, especially in Freedom and Metacognitive Awareness, indicating weaker and more inconsistent engagement with NLG principles.

Of note, the Belief construct showed no variance across both groups (M = 16.0, SD = 0.00), indicating a uniformly high perceived value of English learning—possibly shaped by socio-cultural expectations. Due to this ceiling effect, Belief was excluded from subsequent modeling and explored further through qualitative data.

RQ1: Patterns of Autonomy Internalization: A Comparison by Disposition

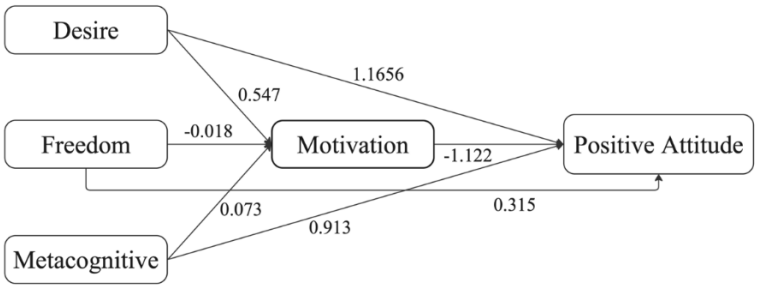
To further examine how students internalized autonomy-related behaviors under the NLG framework, we conducted path analyses for both attitudinal groups. The following subsections present the results of the structural modeling for each group.

Positive Attitude Group

Figure 2 illustrates the two-lane path analysis model for students with positive attitudinal dispositions. It displays the direct and indirect relationships among desire, freedom, metacognitive awareness, motivation, and their influence on learner autonomy under the NLG framework.

Figure 2

Two-Lane Path Analysis for Positive Attitude Group



The model revealed that Desire had a significant positive effect on Motivation (β = 0.547, p = 0.032), indicating that intrinsic desire substantially drove academic engagement. In contrast, Freedom (β = -0.018, p = 0.908) and Metacognitive Awareness (β = 0.073, p = 0.631) had minimal effects on Motivation, suggesting that structural flexibility and self-regulatory strategies alone were not decisive in activating motivation for this group.

Interestingly, Motivation exerted a negative direct effect on students' Positive Attitude (β = -1.122, p = 0.146), possibly indicating emotional costs of high achievement orientation within a structured setting. However, Desire (β = 1.656), Freedom (β = 0.315),

and Metacognitive Awareness (β = 0.913) positively influenced attitudes, reinforcing that affective engagement was bolstered by intrinsic goals and strategic support.

Table 2
Hypothesis Testing Results of the Student's Positive Attitude

Hypothesis	B	Standard Path Coefficient B	Sig
H_1: Desire → Motivation	0.547	0.250	0.032
H_2: Freedom → Motivation	-0.018	-0.013	0.908
H_3: Metacognitive → Motivation	0.73	0.57	0.631
H_4: Desire → Student's Positive	1.656	0.117	0.334
H_5: Freedom → Student's Positive	0.315	0.37	0.754
H_6: Metacognitive → Student's Positive	0.913	0.110	0.363
H_7: Motivation → Student's Positive	-1.122	-0.174	0.146

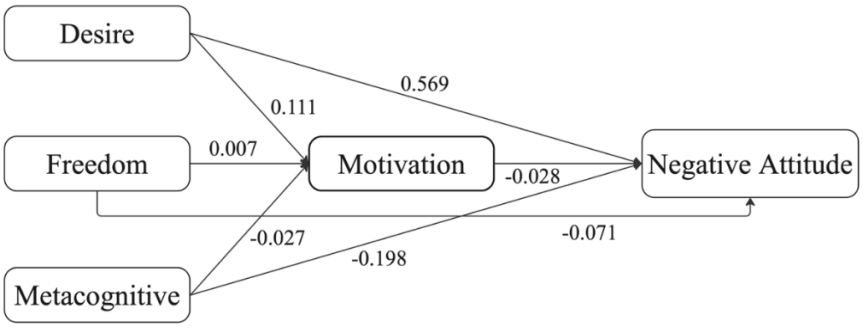
The comparison of results for the hypotheses testing the direct influence of two variables on student outcomes (N = 539) reveals significant findings. The analysis indicates the hypothesis concerning the effect of desire on motivation is supported ($p < 0.005$). Specifically, desire positively influences motivation (β = 0.547, sig = 0.032), suggesting that an increase in a student's desire leads to a corresponding increase in their motivation to learn. This relationship demonstrates a strong positive effect. In contrast, the freedom variable shows a negative effect on motivation (β = -0.018, sig = 0.908). This negative relationship indicates that as students experience greater freedom, their motivation to learn decreases. This result is counterintuitive, suggesting an inverse relationship between freedom and motivation. On the other hand, the metacognitive variable has a positive effect on motivation (β = 0.24, sig = 0.631), which implies that greater metacognitive awareness leads to increased motivation in learning.

Further analysis of variable influencing positive attitude towards learning reveals additional insights. The desire variable positively impacts student positivity (β = 1.656, sig = 0.334), implying that students with higher levels of desire exhibit more positive learning attitude. Similarly, the freedom variable also positively influences student positivity (β = 0.315, sig = 0.754), inferring that greater freedom is associated with a more positive attitude in students. The metacognitive variable continues to show a positive effect on student positivity (β = 0.913, sig = 0.363), suggesting that enhanced metacognitive abilities contribute to a more positive learning disposition. Interestingly, motivation has a negative effect on student positivity (β = -1.122, sig = 0.146), indicating that higher motivation may paradoxically lead to lower student positivity, which is an unexpected result regarding an inverse relationship. For a complete summary of hypothesis testing results (see Table 2).

Negative Attitude Group

Figure 3 presents the two-lane path analysis model for students with negative attitudinal dispositions. It depicts the direct and indirect effects of desire, freedom, metacognitive awareness, and motivation on learner autonomy within the NLG framework.

Figure 3
Two-Lane Path Analysis for Negative Attitude Group.



For the negative attitude group, the path analysis revealed weaker and more inconsistent relationships among the constructs of Desire, Freedom, Metacognitive Awareness, Motivation, and Negative Attitude. Desire exerted a small but statistically significant positive effect on Motivation (β = 0.111), indicating that even among disengaged learners, a degree of internal desire could stimulate motivational responses. However, the effects of Freedom (β = 0.007) and Metacognitive Awareness (β = -0.027) on Motivation were negligible and statistically insignificant, suggesting that structural autonomy and cognitive strategies had little bearing on motivational levels in this group. With respect to student outcomes, Desire again showed a small positive direct effect on Negative Attitude (β = 0.569), which may imply that some students with negative dispositions still recognized the relevance of goal orientation, even if their affective orientation toward English learning remained unfavorable. In contrast, Freedom (β = -0.071), Metacognitive Awareness (β = -0.198), and Motivation (β = -0.028) all showed weak and negative associations with Negative Attitude, yet none reached statistical significance. These results suggest that for disengaged learners, structural or cognitive interventions alone are insufficient in influencing motivational or attitudinal outcomes. The limited explanatory power of these variables reinforces the need for relational and affective scaffolding to support learners who lack intrinsic engagement.

Table 3
Hypothesis Testing Results of Student's Negative Attitude

Hypothesis	B	Standard Path Coefficient B	Sig
H_1: Desire → Motivation	0.111	0.094	0.044
H_2: Freedom → Motivation	0.007	0.010	0.832
H_3: Metacognitive → Motivation	-0.027	-0.34	0.467
H_4: Desire → Student's Negative	0.569	0.263	0.006
H_5: Freedom → Student's Negative	-0.071	-0.348	0.550
H_6: Metacognitive → Student's Negative	-0.198	-0.065	0.165
H_7: Motivation → Student's Negative	-0.028	-0.007	0.874

The hypothesis testing the direct influence of two variables on student outcomes (N = 539) was rejected ($p < 0.005$). The desire variable positively influences motivation (β = 0.111, sig = 0.044), indicating that increased student desire leads to higher motivation. In contrast, freedom has an insignificant positive effect on motivation (β = 0.007, sig = 0.832),

and metacognition has a negative effect (β = -0.027, sig = 0.467). Regarding negative student outcomes, desire positively influences negative students (β = 0.569, sig = 0.006), while freedom (β = -0.071, sig = 0.550), metacognition (β = -0.198, sig = 0.165), and motivation (β = -0.028, sig = 0.874) show negative, but statistically insignificant effects. Positive path coefficients (β) indicate a positive relationship between variables like desire, freedom, and metacognition with motivation and negative student behaviors. Negative coefficients suggest the opposite, with higher desire, freedom, or metacognition linked to lower motivation and negative behaviors.

RQ2: The Role of Emotionally Supportive Interactions in Autonomy Development

Interview data highlighted the central role of emotional support in shaping learner autonomy, particularly for students with negative dispositions. Students described the classroom as emotionally safe, nonjudgmental, and responsive to their concerns.

> Excerpt 1# Student 67
> *"He treated us like real learners… he was on our side, not just grading us."*

> Excerpt 2# Student 134
> *"We felt like we could ask anything… he would listen without judging*

Among students with negative dispositions, emotional support was particularly transformative.

> Excerpt 3# Student 453
> *"He often said, 'No human being is stupid, only lazy'... He did not care about our background; he focused on how much progress we had made."*

> Excerpt 4# Student 276
> *"What really motivated us was how different this lecturer was from what we experienced before."*

These findings illustrate how affective dimensions of instruction—such as empathy, affirmation, and respectful dialogue—were essential to initiating motivation among disengaged learners. These excerpts collectively inform how emotionally supportive interactions served as a catalyst for re-engagement among students who might otherwise remain detached from the learning process. Students consistently emphasized the instructor's humanizing approach—treating them as capable learners rather than passive recipients of instruction. For disengaged learners, such as Student 453, the lecturer's focus on individual progress over background or past performance helped dismantle internalized beliefs of inadequacy. This shift in perception created a sense of possibility, enabling learners to reframe their academic identity. The trust and openness described by Student 134 reveal that emotional availability was not incidental but foundational to fostering risk-taking and self-expression. The affective contrast described by Student 276—between the current instructor and prior learning experiences—highlights the transformational potential of relational pedagogy. These findings support the view that, particularly for students with negative dispositions, autonomy does not emerge solely from cognitive or structural interventions, but from emotionally attuned teaching that affirms student worth and creates a space of psychological safety.

RQ2: Teacher Scaffolding and Emotional Climate in the NLG Classroom

Instructor consistency and participatory classroom culture were key components of the emotional climate. Students appreciated clear behavioral expectations and the instructor's modeling of discipline:

> Excerpt 5# Student 28
> *"The lecturer was never once late… this consistency motivated us."*

Even less motivated students acknowledged the value of this structure:

> Excerpt 6# Student 412
> *"We never saw the lecturer come late… it made us more disciplined, even if we weren't excited about the guidelines themselves."*

Participatory scaffolding further supported autonomy:

> Excerpt 7# Student 48
> *"He constantly asked, 'Do you have some ideas we could use?' Once our ideas were used, we were more excited and participated more."*

> Excerpt 8# Student 215
> *"He would say, 'It is all right. I am here. Just you give it a go.'"*

Such relational scaffolding expanded students' sense of ownership, reduced fear of failure, and promoted self-directed learning. The lecturer's consistent invitation for students to contribute ideas and shape learning activities reflected a deliberate shift in classroom power dynamics—from instructor-centered to learner-inclusive. This participatory culture not only validated students' voices but also fostered a sense of shared responsibility for the learning process. As Student 48 noted, the integration of their suggestions into actual classroom practice increased their enthusiasm and engagement, reinforcing the principle of co-design embedded in the NLG framework.

Moreover, the instructor's affirming stance, as seen in Student 215's reflection— "Just you give it a go"—created a low-risk environment in which students felt psychologically safe to experiment, make mistakes, and grow. This reassurance lowered the affective filter, especially for students who were initially hesitant or had previously experienced punitive or high-pressure learning environments. Over time, this emotional safety translated into increased confidence and initiative, two foundational elements of learner autonomy.

Notably, even students with negative initial dispositions began to re-evaluate their role in the learning process when exposed to this relational scaffolding. Although they may not have immediately demonstrated high motivation or active engagement, their responses revealed an emerging sense of being seen, heard, and supported. These findings suggest that emotional climate—characterized by consistency, openness, and encouragement—is not merely a backdrop to instruction but an active driver of learner transformation. Within the NLG framework, such an affective environment complements structural clarity, forming a dual pathway toward the cultivation of autonomous, resilient learners.

In relation to autonomy trajectories of negatively disposed students, several students with negative dispositions experienced gradual shifts in motivation and classroom engagement due to emotionally supportive interactions. Although quantitative results showed only modest improvements, qualitative accounts revealed emotional and behavioral turning points:

> Excerpt 9# Student 397
> *"He asked what we thought about how to improve the class… it felt like we mattered."*

These small but meaningful shifts suggest that autonomy among negatively disposed students may develop incrementally, beginning with emotional trust and inclusive dialogue, and later extending to more active participation.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The explanatory sequential design helped contextualize the differential impact of the NLG on learner autonomy. Quantitative findings showed consistently higher levels of Motivation, Desire, Freedom, and Metacognitive Awareness among positively disposed students, pointing to strong internalization of autonomy-supportive behaviors. Qualitative data confirmed these students perceived NLG as clear, structured, and empowering.

In contrast, students with negative dispositions showed weaker internalization of autonomy-related behaviors. Quantitative modeling revealed inconsistent or non-significant relationships. However, interview data indicated that emotionally responsive teaching created psychological safety, enabling a gradual emergence of engagement and learner responsibility. These findings suggest that for autonomy to develop equitably across dispositions, pedagogical design must balance structural clarity with emotional responsiveness.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the impact of the New Learning Guidelines (NLG) framework on learner autonomy in EFL classrooms, revealing clear differences between students with positive and negative attitudes towards English learning. Quantitative findings showed that positively inclined students perceived the NLG as supportive in setting clear goals, planning strategically, and monitoring progress core dimensions of autonomy (Benson, 2013; Lengkanawati, 2017; Little, 1991). These findings align with Shindler's (2010) emphasis on structural clarity and behavioural expectations as catalysts for responsible learning, resonating with the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) notion of competence (Deci & Ryan, 1985a; R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2000b). This is consistent with the descriptive analysis, which indicated higher mean scores for motivation, desire, and metacognitive awareness among positively inclined students, with lower variability suggesting stable autonomy-supportive attitudes.

Qualitative analysis identified three key motivational themes: *Structured Behavioural Clarity*, *Perceived Emotional Support*, and *Participatory Learning Ownership*. These interacted

with students' attitudes toward English learning. For positively inclined learners, the NLG structure was viewed as empowering, offering control, fairness, and predictability while satisfying SDT's needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy through clear expectations and participatory practices. Students expressed feeling empowered when their ideas were acknowledged and supported, and encouraged to take risks. In contrast, students with negative dispositions were less responsive to structure alone and more influenced by relational dynamics. Emotional support from lecturers, demonstrated through availability, consistent feedback, and respectful treatment, played a critical role in motivating these students. They described feeling more engaged when "seen" and treated with empathy, which cultivated psychological safety. These relational experiences were interpreted as relational scaffolding, a form of interpersonal support that facilitates learner agency. This reinforces relational pedagogy's emphasis on trust and emotional attunement (Cornelius-White, 2007; Noddings, 2005), and highlights the often-overlooked SDT need for relatedness. These themes were coded inductively from recurring narratives during interviews, illustrating that learner autonomy results from the dynamic interplay between pedagogical clarity, emotional connection, and learner disposition.

The current research also reconfirms the significance of rapport between teachers and students, emotional awareness, and relational proficiency in establishing engagement and autonomy in EFL environments (Wang et al., 2022). The dynamic model of motivation developed by (Ushioda, 2015) also points to the role that the emotion-related aspects of the teaching practice can play in defining the agency of learners and their persistence over time. Taken together, these observations and considerations indicate that in the case of disengaged learners, relational, as opposed to structural, scaffolding can be regarded as a missing key to the initiation of autonomous learning. This interpretation is also enhanced by qualitative insights generated by interviewing students. Learners, especially those with harmful biases, always brought up that their teacher needs to apply consistency, accessibility, and motivation to ensure that they learn well. This interpretation is also enhanced by qualitative insights generated by interviewing students. Learners, especially those with harmful biases, always brought up that their teacher needs to apply consistency, accessibility, and motivation to ensure that they learn well. Such conclusions refute the prevalent deficit approach in the EFL research industry that usually defines disengaged learners as lowly motivated or unable to be independent (Alrabai, 2021; Han, 2021b; H. Liu & Li, 2023a), and further support Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), in which teacher emotional presence functions as a form of scaffolding that enables students to operate beyond their current independent capacities (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

Thematic analysis revealed that although students with differing attitudes shared the same learning environment, they responded differently to identical pedagogical strategies. Path analysis confirmed this divergence: desire significantly predicted motivation among positively inclined students but had only marginal effects on disengaged ones. Students with positive attitudes valued the clarity of learning steps, fairness of expectations, and enhanced self-monitoring fostered by the NLG framework. They also felt empowered when invited to contribute ideas and supported by the lecturer's consistent presence. In contrast, students

with negative attitudes were less responsive to structure and more influenced by the lecturer's emotional attunement. Expressions such as being "seen," "treated equally," and "supported when struggling" highlighted emotional safety as essential for their engagement. This was reflected in the weak and statistically insignificant associations among disengaged students, particularly between freedom, metacognitive awareness, and motivation. These contrasting patterns suggest that autonomy is not solely a product of structure or personality, but is co-constructed through relational dynamics embedded in teacher-student interaction, in line with sociocultural theory and Vygotskyan pedagogy (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

Instead, the data suggests that disengaged learners can develop autonomy when they feel emotionally supported and respected within the learning environment. This aligns with research showing that relationally attuned teaching practices, including empathy, trust, and dialogic engagement, can re-engage marginalised learners and foster intrinsic motivation (Janah & Cahyono, 2022; Li, 2023; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020; Ushioda, 2015).

The statistical findings further reinforce these themes. Desire emerged as a significant predictor of motivation, confirming with the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985b; R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2000a), emphasizing the importance of internalised goals in fostering autonomous behaviour. This relationship was especially evident in the positive-attitude group, where desire showed a strong positive effect on motivation, unlike in the negative group where effects were minimal. However, the weak or inconsistent effects of structural freedom and metacognitive awareness on motivation raise critical questions about how autonomy functions in complex learning environments. While traditional autonomy frameworks posit that learner control and self-regulation enhance motivation (Benson, 2013; Little, 1991), our results suggest that autonomy cannot be sustained through structural provisions alone. Particularly for disengaged learners, the absence of relational support, such as empathetic teacher-student interactions, can diminish the motivational potential of freedom (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019; Li, 2023). These findings underscore the need to reconceptualise autonomy not merely as individual agency but as relationally situated and contextually mediated (Ushioda, 2015), requiring both affective attunement and pedagogical scaffolding within learners' ZPD for optimal development.

A significant contribution of this study is the emergence of relational scaffolding, which is the idea that affective and interpersonal support from educators plays a vital role in the development of learner autonomy. While many autonomy frameworks emphasise individual regulation, such as goal-setting, planning, and monitoring (Benson, 2013; Little, 1991), the findings demonstrate that autonomy is also socially co-constructed within emotionally safe classroom environments. This perspective aligns with socio-relational models of language learning (Amerstorfer, 2020; Toohey, 2007) and is increasingly supported by empirical evidence showing that autonomy develops not only from within the learner but also through dynamic interactions with responsive and supportive teachers (Gao, 2021; Pusey & Nanni, 2022). When examined through the lens of complex dynamic systems theory (CDST), autonomy is best understood as a context-sensitive, interactional process shaped by teacher-student relationships and the broader classroom ecology (Thao

& Thuy, 2024; Ushioda, 2015), and this view is reinforced when relational scaffolding is positioned as both a fulfilment of SDT's relatedness need and as a mediational tool in sociocultural theory.

These results carry strong implications that extend beyond the Indonesian EFL context. In the global EFL context, relational scaffolding may constitute a potent pedagogic approach, especially where the learners experience affective and motivational issues. Heightening of emotionally responsive learning environments can prove more universally advantageous than strictly organisational interventions particularly in under-resourced or linguistically heterogeneous settings. Autonomy-building models dependent on such relational interaction have the capacity to develop self-regulation, engagement, and resilience across a range of culture and institutional set-ups.

This study examined how structured learning guidelines, particularly the New Learning Guidelines (NLG) framework, shape learner autonomy in EFL classrooms, with attention to the moderating role of students' attitudinal dispositions. Findings indicate that while structural clarity supported autonomy for positively disposed students, relational scaffolding through emotionally attuned and responsive teacher interactions was critical for engaging learners with negative attitudes. The explanatory mixed-methods design allowed deeper insight into why the structural clarity of NLG worked for some but not others, as the quantitative and qualitative data both revealed this attitudinal divide. These results suggest that autonomy is not solely a product of instructional design but is co-constructed through relational dynamics. This finding underscores the importance of teacher autonomy, as educators who exercised professional discretion to respond to students' emotional needs were more effective in fostering autonomous learning. For institutions and policymakers, the findings advocate for professional development that equips teachers with structural planning and relational competence. In broader EFL contexts, especially those marked by disengagement or diversity, relational scaffolding may be a scalable and culturally responsive strategy to enhance learner motivation, agency, and long-term engagement.

This study calls for a re-evaluation of how learner motivation and autonomy are conceptualised within EFL settings. Rather than treating these as fixed traits or student deficits, the findings underscore the importance of context, relational dynamics, and pedagogy in shaping autonomous learning (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020; Ushioda, 2015). The New Learning Guidelines (NLG) provided behavioural clarity that effectively enhanced engagement among students with positive attitudes, but this structure alone was insufficient for learners with negative dispositions. Thematic analysis revealed that emotional responsiveness, relational scaffolding, and participatory teaching enabled these learners to internalise goals, take initiative, and assume ownership of their learning. This supports the view that autonomy is co-constructed in interactional and affective spaces (Amerstorfer, 2020; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021), consistent with the relational pedagogy advocated by (Toohey, 2007) and the socio-emotional framing of Self-Determination Theory, in which autonomy, competence, and relatedness must be jointly satisfied (Ryan & Deci, 2017. Teachers who engage in autonomy-supportive teaching, combining structure with encouragement and choice, have been shown to enhance learner engagement and internal

motivation (Reeve, 2016), while flipped and dialogic classroom models have similarly promoted learner ownership in EFL settings (Tsai, 2019).

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. The uniform responses on the belief construct may suggest a ceiling effect caused by cultural norms or social desirability, rather than actual learner conviction. Additionally, some observed behavioural gains may reflect general academic diligence rather than a direct outcome of the NLG intervention. Methodologically, the study was conducted within a single institutional setting and relied on self-reported data, which, although useful for capturing internal learner perspectives, may not reflect the full behavioural complexity of classroom autonomy. Nevertheless, the sequential mixed-methods design provided interpretive depth by connecting statistical trends with the students. Future research should integrate triangulated data sources such as teacher interviews, classroom observations, or longitudinal analysis to deepen understanding of how pedagogical structure and emotional support interact to foster enduring learner autonomy in EFL contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study challenges the dominant view of learner autonomy as an isolated, self-regulated skill, showing by that autonomy is relationally situated and emotionally mediated (Ushioda, 2015). Based on explanatory sequential mixed-methods findings, it introduces relational scaffolding, teacher provided emotional and interpersonal support that enables learners to engage meaningfully with structured frameworks, in line with autonomy as learner responsibility (Holec, 1981). While the NLG supported goal-setting, planning, and self-monitoring for positively inclined students (Benson, 2013; Little, 1991), they were inadequate for students negatively disposed learners without empathetic teacher interactions (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019; H. Liu & Li, 2023b). Thus, relational scaffolding emerges as essential for structural autonomy, reframing it from an individual trait to a socially co-constructed process (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2021b; Son & Hai, 2023). The findings offer significant implications for EFL pedagogy and teacher education. Educators need both instructional clarity and relational competencies such as emotional atonement, responsiveness, and trust-building to foster inclusive and empowering learning environments (Noddings, 2005; Reeve, 2016). Teacher preparation programmes should embed relational pedagogy , and institutional policies should promote emotionally literate, and autonomy-supportive teaching. This study calls for a paradigm shift : from viewing disengaged learners as deficient to recognising autonomy emerging from supportive, and humanised instructional contexts.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

We declare that there is no conflict of interest in the conduct and publication of this study. Although the research received institutional funding, the funding body had no role in the study design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, or decision to publish the results.

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Research Article

The Challenges and Best Practices of English Language Teaching in Indonesian Secondary School: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

This systematic literature review of seventy-one studies provides a comprehensive overview of English language teaching in Indonesian senior and vocational high schools over the last 10 years. Using the Publish or Perish (PoP) tool, a systematic search was conducted through Google Scholar and CrossRef. The study identified three main themes: current trends, challenges encountered by teachers and students, and best practices. Most of the studies were qualitative and published in SINTA-indexed journals. The result highlighted several challenges, including barriers to teaching and learning, Inadequate infrastructure, concerns about student well-being, and low student motivation and engagement. Meanwhile, best practices include continuous teacher development, student-centered approaches, technology integration, language skill development, and support from schools and families. Tailoring sustainable implementation to the local context has the potential to improve teaching quality. The study highlights the need for coordinated collaboration among policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to ensure the effective implementation of the proposed recommendations.

Keywords: *ELT, challenges, best practices, secondary school*

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has shown considerable progress in English language teaching through government involvement in teacher professional development, the development of the curriculum, and the implementation of English as the medium of instruction in several schools (Daud, 2024). In schools, English helps students connect with the external world, obtain information, and enhance their communication abilities (Nasrullah et al., 2021). Boy Jon et al. (2021) emphasize that Indonesians mainly learn English to communicate globally, building intercultural connections and expanding interaction in the international community.

Despite the development of English language teaching in Indonesia, educators continue to face challenges such as time constraints, low student motivation, limited resources, frequent curriculum changes, and inadequate support and facilities (Adam et al., 2021; Boy Jon et al., 2021; Febtiningsih et al., 2021; Nanda & Azmy, 2020; Saefurrohman et al., 2024). Collectively, these challenges show the complexity of creating an effective learning environment. To address such challenges, English language teaching should incorporate best practices, such as engaging interactive methods, encouraging active student participation, applying technology to enhance motivation, and offering the necessary support to students (Purtanto et al., 2023; Sari, 2021).

"Challenges and best practices shape the landscape of English language teaching in Indonesian secondary schools."

Previous research on English language teaching in Indonesian secondary schools has tended to examine challenges and best practices separately. Adam et al., (2021) and Febtiningsih et al., (2021) have specifically pointed out the challenges that teachers encounter when teaching writing skills, such as limited time and inadequate teaching methods. Conversely, certain research highlights curriculum reform, teacher training, and technological integration as essential strategies for enhancing learning quality (Saefurrohman et al., 2024). Andriyono (2020), strategies based on cooperative learning have shown effectiveness in enhancing student motivation and participation. Moreover, authentic materials are regarded as having the potential to boost engagement among both teachers and students (Daud, 2024; Semara Putra et al., 2022).

Existing research predominantly consists of individual case studies that tend to address isolated aspects of English language teaching. To date, there is a lack of comprehensive investigations that holistically examine both the challenges and the corresponding solutions across senior high schools and vocational institutions. This identified gap provides the rationale for conducting a systematic literature review (SLR) that maps current trends, recurring challenges, and effective teaching practices in both senior high schools and vocational schools. By synthesizing findings from a wide range of studies, this SLR seeks to show effective pedagogical strategies while also identifying areas that remain underexplored. To achieve this objective, this paper explored three key questions:

(1) How has the research landscape on English language teaching in Indonesian secondary schools evolved?

(2) What challenges are reported in the literature regarding English language teaching in Indonesian secondary schools?
(3) What strategies and best practices are documented for improving English teaching outcomes in this context?

METHOD

Research design

This research employed a systematic literature review (SLR), a rigorous and structured method for collecting, critically evaluating, synthesizing, and presenting empirical evidence from multiple studies addressing a specific research question or topic (Pati & Lorusso, 2018; Ubale & Jadhav, 2021). This study employed qualitative synthesis approach to the findings, patterns, and gaps in the analyzed articles. The researchers did not use meta-analysis and bibliometrics in this study due to the significant variation in design, methodology, and reporting methods contained in most of the reviewed literature. A qualitative synthesis approach was chosen to capture in depth the conceptual and practical contributions offered by each study, as well as to identify patterns and gaps in research in the context of English language teaching in senior and vocational high schools. This approach ensures a greater degree of reliability and accuracy in the findings (Pati & Lorusso, 2018).

The review process followed three key stages: planning, conducting, and reporting (Basri et al., 2023). In the planning stage, research questions were formulated, and a review protocol was developed to guide the process. This protocol outlined the databases to be used, the inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the steps for data extraction and analysis, ensuring a systematic and focused approach. During the conducting stage, a structured search was carried out using the Publish or Perish tool with Google Scholar and CrossRef as data sources. Studies were screened based on relevance to English Language Teaching in Indonesian secondary schools, publication within the past 10 years, peer-reviewed status, and SINTA accreditation. Duplicate and ineligible studies were excluded, and relevant data were extracted from the remaining literature. In the final stage, findings were reported through a thematic synthesis of the selected studies. Patterns and key themes were identified and organized to show both effective teaching practices and recurring challenges in the field. This stage provided a clear summary of the current state of research and offered insights to support further study and practical improvements in secondary ELT in Indonesia.

Search strategy

A systematic search using Google Scholar and CrossRef as data sources was carried out using the Publish or Perish (PoP) tool. PoP was selected for its ability to organize searches, extract metadata, and streamline data management. Google Scholar provides comprehensive access to periodicals, dissertations, and books. CrossRef ensures credible and accurate references by providing verified metadata with DOIs.

The search terms included: *English Language Teaching*, *ELT*, *best practice*, *effective teaching*, *Indonesia*, *secondary school*, and *senior high school* to identify best practices. Meanwhile, keywords used to explore challenges included *English Language Teaching*, *ELT*, *challenges*, *difficulties*, *barriers*, *Indonesia, secondary school,* and *senior high school*.

The relevant literature was systematically screened based on clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria established before the review process. The following table presents the criteria used:

Table 1.
Criteria for Selecting Relevant Studies

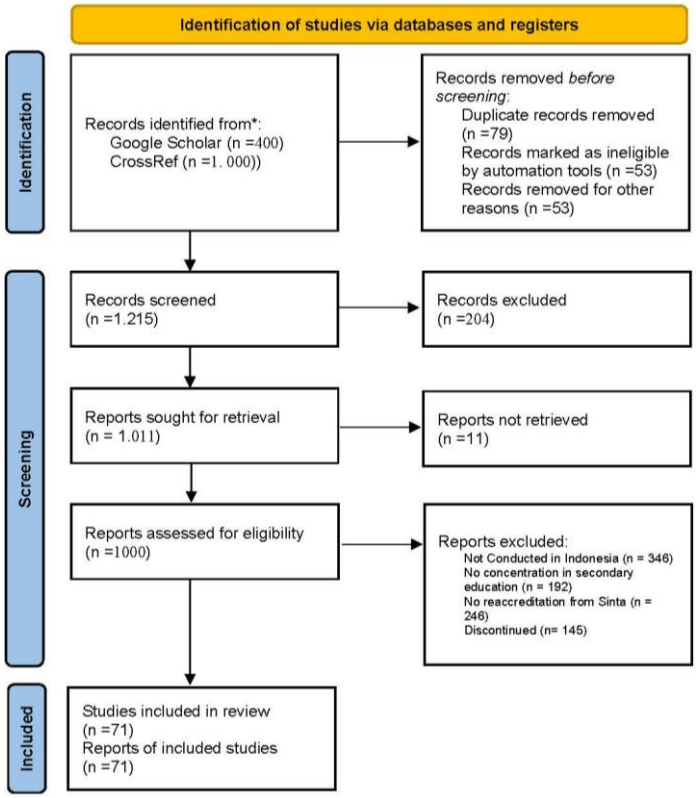
Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Peer-reviewed articles only	Non-peer-reviewed sources
Studies conducted in Indonesia	Studies were not conducted in Indonesia
Published within the last 10 years	Studies published more than 10 years ago
Focus on secondary education, specifically Senior High School and Vocational High School	Studies focusing on primary, junior high school, or higher education levels

Data collection

Data collection was conducted using the Publish or Perish (PoP) tool, with Google Scholar and CrossRef serving as primary sources. Once gathered, the data were extracted into spreadsheets by reviewing abstracts and filtering studies based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. Relevant information was systematically compiled using a standardized extraction form within the spreadsheet, ensuring consistency and accuracy. The extracted data included key details such as author names, publication year, research methodology, school level, and findings related to challenges and best practices in English language teaching at secondary schools in Indonesia. Additionally, studies were categorized according to their accreditation level in the SINTA database, ranging from SINTA 1 to SINTA 6.

From both databases, a total of 1,400 journal articles were identified—400 from Google Scholar and 1,000 from CrossRef. Before filtering, several records were removed based on predefined criteria, including 79 duplicate entries, 53 records marked as ineligible by automated tools, and 53 others excluded for various reasons. After this initial screening, 1,215 records remained for further processing, though 204 were later excluded from analysis. Subsequently, 1,011 reports were reviewed for potential inclusion, but only 11 were deemed suitable for evaluation. During the final screening phase, additional exclusions were made: 346 reports were removed because the studies were conducted outside Indonesia, 192 because they did not focus on high school education, 246 due to a lack of SINTA accreditation, and 145 because the studies had been discontinued. Ultimately, 71 newly identified studies were included in the final analysis. The process of extracting and screening can be further illustrated using the following flowchart:

Figure 1.
PRISMA flow diagram of the paper screening process



Data Analysis

This study analyzed seventy-one scholarly papers, selected through inclusion and exclusion criteria, using a qualitative thematic analysis approach as proposed by (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which consists of six systematic phases: familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. . This process aimed to identify recurring patterns in the challenges and best practices in English language teaching in secondary schools in Indonesia.

(1) Familiarization with the Data

Each article was read thoroughly to gain a deep understanding of essential details for example the author's name, year of publication, research method, level of education studied, and findings related to ELT strategies and challenges. Notes were taken to highlight preliminary observations.

(2) Generating Initial Codes

Key information on teaching approaches, student learning strategies, and barriers faced by teachers and students was systematically coded. This information was organized into a data extraction table using a spreadsheet to ensure consistency and support further analysis.

(3) Searching for Themes

The generated codes were then examined and grouped into potential themes. Codes with similar meanings or focus were clustered together to explore recurring patterns across the dataset.

(4) Reviewing Themes
Themes were reviewed based on coded quotations and the entire dataset. At this stage, adjustments were made to ensure that each theme was distinguishable and sufficiently supported by evidence. A thematic mapping was done as a visual representation of the structure and connections of the themes.

(5) Defining and Naming Themes
A continuous process of analysis was employed to finalize the scope and content of the themes. Themes were clearly defined and named based on the core ideas they represented. As a result, three major themes were identified regarding current trends, four themes related to challenges, and five themes describing best practices in secondary ELT in Indonesia.

(6) Producing the Report
The final stage involved synthesizing the themes into a narrative discussion, comparing and integrating findings across studies within each theme. The analysis explored the effectiveness of various strategies and the context of their implementation. Thematic descriptions were supported by appropriate citations from the literature to enhance credibility and strengthen the arguments.

FINDINGS

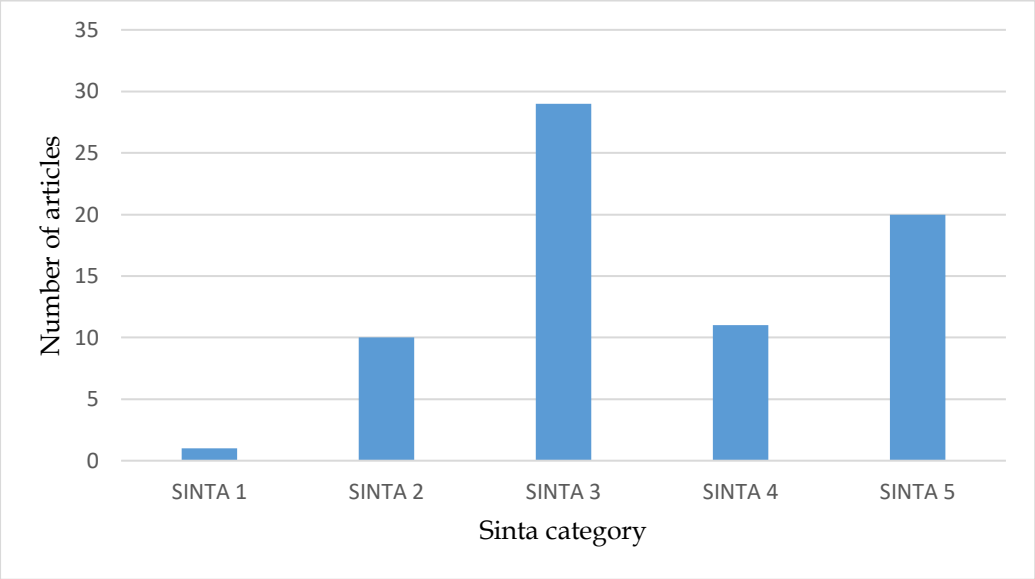
A total of seventy-one scholarly papers met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed in this review. The analysis focused on trends in English language teaching research in Indonesian secondary schools, including journal accreditation (SINTA), publication years, research methods, and education levels involved. Two major themes emerged: challenges and best practices. The challenges were categorized into teaching and learning issues, access and infrastructure limitations, student well-being and development, and student motivation and engagement. Meanwhile, best practices included teacher professional development, student-centered and active learning, technology-enhanced instruction, language skill development, and parental or institutional support.

Trends in Research on English Language Teaching in Indonesian Secondary Schools

Distribution of Sinta Accredited Journal

As shown in Figure 2, seventy-one scholarly papers were selected for inclusion in this SLR. Based on the accreditation level, 1 article was published in a SINTA 1-accredited journal, and 10 articles were published in SINTA 2 journals. Most of the literature, 29 articles, was from SINTA 3-accredited journals. Furthermore, there were 10 articles published in SINTA 4 journals, and 20 articles in SINTA 5 journals. This data provides an overview of the distribution of literature based on journal accreditation level within the scope of the reviewed research.

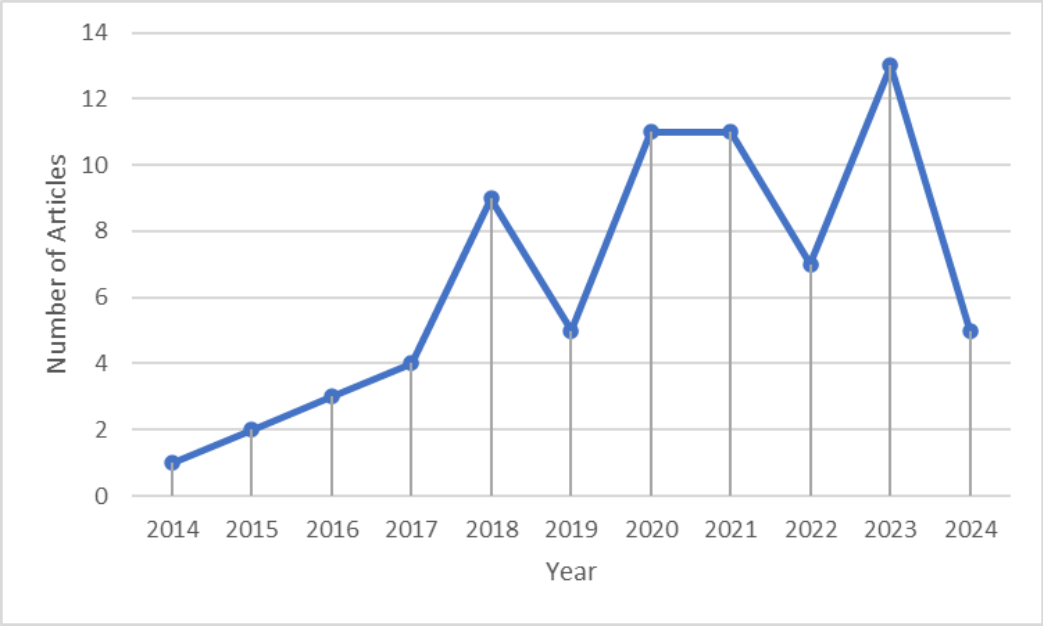
Figure 2.
Chart of The Journal Accreditation of The Selected Literature



Distribution of Research by Year

The distribution of research relating to challenges and best practices in English language teaching at the secondary school level in Indonesia from 2014 to 2024 is shown in Figure 3.

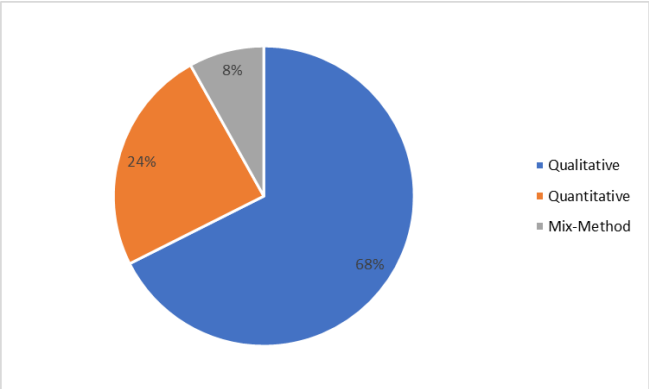
Figure 3.
Number of Studies by Year



Research Methodologies Applied in The Studies

Figure 4 presents the distribution of research methods employed in the analysed studies. The figure illustrates that the qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches are represented in varying proportions among the types of research analysed in this research. Qualitative research dominated with a percentage of 68%, followed by quantitative research with 24% and mixed methods with 8%. Methods used include classroom action research (CAR), research and development (R&D), and comparative studies in the qualitative research category. Meanwhile, the quantitative research category includes survey methods, pre-experimental methods, and quasi-experimental methods.

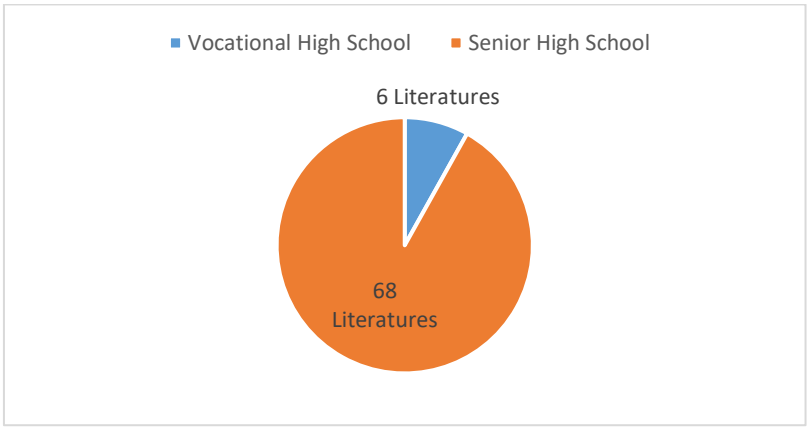
Figure 4.
Research Methods Distribution



The Education Level of The Sample Involved in The Literature

Figure 5 illustrates that the majority of analyzed literature (68) used samples from senior high schools, indicating a dominant research focus on this group. In contrast, only six studies involved vocational high school students, highlighting a significant gap in research at this level. This disparity may stem from factors such as accessibility, data availability, and differences in curriculum and educational approaches.

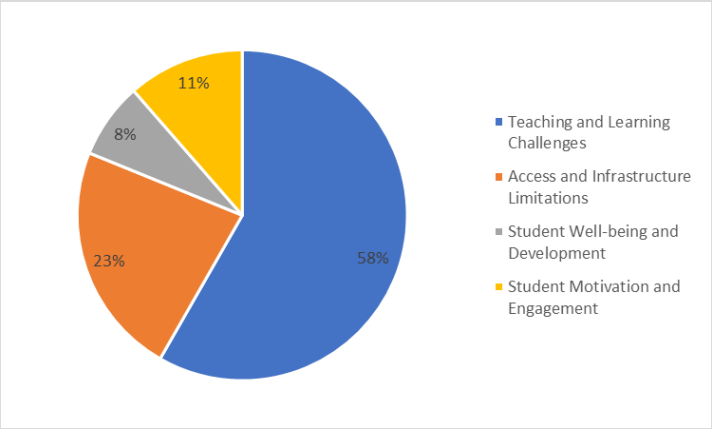
Figure 5.
Comparison of The Number of Literature Between Senior High School and Vocational High School



Challenges

The second research question focused on identifying the major challenges encountered by teachers in teaching English in secondary schools. Based on the analysis of the selected literature, the primary challenges can be classified into several categories: teaching and learning challenges (58%), access and infrastructure limitations (23%), student well-being and development (8%), and student motivation and engagement (11%).

Figure 6.
Distribution Number of Challenges



Teaching and Learning Challenges

The most prevalent challenges in English language teaching pertain to the teaching and learning aspects. The primary challenges encountered by students include vocabulary limitations, inadequate grammatical understanding, and a lack of proficiency in sentence structure. Variations in students' abilities, a paucity of fundamental knowledge, and a dearth of motivation, evidenced by a failure to complete assignments and exams, further compound the difficulties faced by students. Along with pedagogues encounter a number of challenges, including insufficient training, difficulties in classroom management, particularly in the integrated teaching of language skills, an excess of work, and insufficient time to deliver material thoroughly. Furthermore, the absence of administrative support and the dearth of effective strategies to address students' varied learning styles pose significant challenges. These challenges are interconnected, exerting a detrimental influence on the quality of teaching and the attainment of English learning outcomes within the classroom environment.

Access and Infrastructure Limitation

A total of 23% of the literature indicated that limited infrastructure and access are the main challenges in English language teaching (ELT). The challenges confronting learners and educators pertain to the inadequacy of educational facilities, the paucity of internet connectivity, and the dearth of essential devices such as smartphones or laptops. The issue of digital competence is a significant challenge in the educational sector, impacting both

students and educators. This challenge delays the effective integration of technology as an educational resource. Educators frequently possess limited experience in the domain of information and communication technology (ICT), which often leads to suboptimal utilization of digital methodologies in educational settings. Funding and teaching resource limitations must be considered when improving education infrastructure. These challenges have a detrimental effect on learning effectiveness, thus necessitating the development of new strategies to overcome these obstacles and enhance education.

Student Well-being and Development

Around 8% of the report, students' readiness to learn is significantly impacted by their well-being. Participation and focus in English language teaching might be hampered by a lack of confidence, anxiety about making mistakes, and exhaustion from workload and time limits. To raise the standard of learning, supportive learning settings and anxiety-reduction techniques are required.

Student Motivation and Engagement

The analysis revealed that a total of 11% of the literature highlighted a lack of motivation and engagement on the part of students concerning English language teaching. Factors including motivation, the presence of boredom, attention-seeking behaviour, and distractions from the media have all been posited as contributing factors to this lack of active participation. The development of more interactive and engaging methodologies has been demonstrated to have a positive effect on student engagement in the learning process.

Best Practices

Question three is about strategies and best practices for improving English language teaching outcomes. The literature provides insight into effective approaches to English language teaching in Indonesian secondary schools. The analysis identified five main thematic categories of best practices.

Table 2.
Thematic Categories and Best Practice Strategies in English Language Teaching

No.	Thematic Category	Best Practice Strategies	Focus Area	Source
1	Teacher Professional Development and Classroom Management	- Effective Teacher Competency - Management Talk - Engaging Classroom Management	Teacher Quality & Learning Climate	(Jati et al., 2019; Restu et al., 2018; Saleh, 2023)
2	Student-Centered and Active Learning Approaches	- Cooperative Learning - Project-Based Learning - TBLT	Student Engagement & Active Learning	(Hima et al., 2021; Irambona & Kumaidi, 2015; Mu'ammalatun & Wahyuni, 2024; Widayani et al., 2024)

		- Discovery Learning		
3	Technology-Enhanced Language Learning	- Mobile Apps (Quizlet) - YouTube - Google Sites - Nearpod	Technology Integration in ELT	(Inharjanto & Leovani, 2022; Prayogi & Wulandari, 2021; Suharti et al., 2023; Wanda Dian Paramesti Fortuna Dewi et al., 2023)
4	Skill Development in Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Vocabulary	- Oral Feedback - HoPALM - Intuitive-Imitative Pronunciation - Multimedia for Writing - Repetition & Paraphrasing	Language Skills Improvement	(Irawan & Salija, 2017; Saleh, 2023; Sauramanda et al., 2021; Tsuraya, 2020; Uray Siti Annisa Ravi Ardha et al., 2021)
5	Parental and Institutional Support in the Learning Environment	- Institutional Digital Support - Parent Collaboration	Learning Environment & External Support	(Hildianti & Rahayu, 2024)

Teacher Professional Development and Classroom Management

This theme's strategies show how crucial it is to enhance teachers' competencies through ongoing professional development as well as the incorporation of information and communication technology (ICT) into the classroom. To create a more dynamic learning environment that is responsive to the requirements of students, it also requires the use of interactive communication and preventive, corrective, engaging, and successful classroom management techniques. A total of six studies discuss this theme in depth, demonstrating the consistent importance of this approach in improving the quality of English language teaching at the secondary school level.

Student-centered Learning Approaches and Active Learning

The approach emphasizes using authentic materials, such as animated films and visual-audio resources, to enhance student engagement. This theme is presented in seventeen of the literatures, making it the most frequently identified approach in this study, indicating a strong focus on active and student-centered learning strategies in English language teaching in secondary schools. Collaboration and communication skills are developed through role-playing, group projects, and discussion exercises. To promote reflective, participatory, and student-centered learning, techniques including project-based learning, TBLT, substantial reading, and CSR are also used.

Technology Enhanced Language Learning, Reading, Writing

The use of technology in English language learning includes the use of interactive learning tools and effective ICT integration to increase student engagement in the classroom. Applications like Google Sites, Nearpod, YouTube, Quizlet, WhatsApp Group, and animated movies are used to implement the blended learning approach. To make the learning environment more dynamic and participatory, quiz-based collaborative learning methods (QCLS) are also employed. This theme was pointed out in twelve articles found in the literature.

Speaking and Vocabulary Skill Development

The fourteen literatures in this research discuss strategies for developing language skills through a variety of approaches. Language skill development strategies use various approaches to improve language skills. Reducing challenges in online English teaching ensures accessibility and engagement in digital-based learning. The utilization of verbal feedback in conjunction with the HoPALM methodology has been demonstrated to facilitate the refinement of students' receptive skills. Scientific approaches with cooperative learning and integrated listening skills improve understanding and language use. An intuitive approach allows students to internalize phonetic aspects more naturally, and multimedia-based teaching improves writing. Skimming and scanning in reading help develop language skills. Repetition and paraphrasing help comprehension and expression, while grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods provide a structural basis for more systematic language learning. This approach fosters comprehensive language skills and deep understanding.

Parent and Institutional Support in the Learning Environment

This theme indicates that the presence of parental support, institutional support for digital education, and parental collaboration for learning participation are all significant factors in this regard. Research has demonstrated that active parental participation is associated with enhanced student motivation to learn and their capacity to overcome learning challenges, both in online and offline contexts.

DISCUSSION

This systematic review reveals a maturing yet uneven field of English language teaching (ELT) research in Indonesian secondary schools. While the growing body of literature reflects increased academic attention to pedagogical challenges and innovations, the findings raise concerns about representational imbalance, methodological insularity, and contextual misalignment that constrain the field's transformative potential.

One key concern is the persistent overrepresentation of senior high schools as research sites. Despite the national government's push for expanded vocational education, only a small subset of studies addresses English instruction in vocational high schools (Akmal et al., 2021; Asmin, 2019). This skewed focus reflects deeper structural inequities in educational research that prioritize academic-track students while neglecting the linguistic needs and

socio-professional realities of vocational learners. Such omission is problematic, as vocational students often require English for specific purposes (ESP), and overlooking their contexts leaves critical pedagogical and policy gaps.

In terms of research design, the dominance of qualitative methods, comprising sixty-eight percent of the studies, continues to shape how ELT is theorized and interpreted (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Pati & Lorusso, 2018). While these approaches yield valuable insights into classroom dynamics and teacher beliefs, the lack of rigorous mixed-methods or longitudinal designs limits the capacity to generate robust causal inferences or inform scalable interventions. Moreover, the limited use of experimental methods reflects an overreliance on descriptive or subjective findings, with limited engagement in testing or evaluating programmatic outcomes. Without triangulated evidence, current research may perpetuate rather than challenge ineffective teaching paradigms.

Furthermore, challenges in teaching and learning remain the most pressing and consistently reported issues. Students frequently face foundational deficits in vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure(Akmal et al., 2021; Damayanti et al., 2023; Jati et al., 2019). These challenges are exacerbated by large class sizes and undifferentiated instruction that fails to account for learners' diverse readiness levels. From a systemic perspective, these pedagogical constraints are not simply the result of individual teacher shortcomings but are embedded in broader curriculum policies and professional development models that emphasize content delivery over pedagogical flexibility (Fadhliyah et al., 2020; Puspasari et al., 2023; Rasyid et al., 2023). The literature points to a gap between curriculum intent and instructional feasibility, a mismatch that contributes to superficial learning and low proficiency outcomes.

Moreover, teachers report structural constraints that undermine instructional innovation. Overburdened workloads, frequent policy shifts, and minimal institutional support discourage experimentation and reflection (Hidayat et al., 2021; Triyogo & Hamdan, 2018). These findings point to a system that emphasizes teacher compliance over professional agency, limiting the uptake of evidence-based practices even when they are known and accessible. The repeated mention of time constraints, inadequate training, and vague instructional guidelines suggests that reform initiatives remain technocratic rather than developmental in orientation.

In addition, infrastructure-related challenges add another layer of complexity. Although there is increasing emphasis on digital tools in ELT, many schools lack basic internet connectivity and access to devices, particularly in rural or underfunded settings (Dima et al., 2021; Irambona & Kumaidi, 2015; Kurniawan, 2014). This paradox advocating for tech integration amid digital exclusion reflects a broader policy disconnect that favors innovation rhetoric without resolving foundational inequities. Additionally, limited digital literacy among teachers further impedes effective integration (Agustin et al., 2023; Inharjanto & Leovani, 2022). These issues highlight a need to move beyond tool adoption toward systemic digital capacity building.

Related to student motivation and emotional readiness, findings show they remain under-theorized in the reviewed literature. While eleventh percent of studies reference engagement and anxiety issues, few examine the sociocultural and affective dimensions of

language learning in depth (Astuti et al., 2022; Ginting & Kuswandono, 2020; Rohmawati et al., 2023). In many classrooms, performative assessment cultures and monologic instruction discourage risk-taking and self-expression. Without pedagogical approaches that prioritize student voice, autonomy, and emotional safety, motivation-enhancing interventions may have limited efficacy. Additionally, research tends to pathologize disengagement as a student deficiency rather than interrogating classroom practices or systemic stressors that contribute to such outcomes.

Despite these limitations, literature identifies a range of promising practices. Professional development programs that foster teacher reflection, improve classroom management, and encourage student-centered approaches demonstrate measurable impacts on classroom dynamics and student achievement (Restu et al., 2018; Saleh, 2023). However, the sustainability of such programs remains uncertain without institutional commitment to continuous mentoring, follow-up, and school-based learning communities.

Active learning approaches such as project-based learning and TBLT have been widely acknowledged in recent research for enhancing students' ability to work together and engage in real-world language application (Mu'ammalatun & Wahyuni, 2024; Widayani et al., 2024). Yet their scalability is contingent on class size, instructional time, and teacher preparation. When implemented without adequate support, these approaches risk becoming more formalities rather than transformative practices.

Technology use in ELT continues to expand, with tools like Google Sites, Nearpod, and YouTube fostering interactive, multimodal learning (Prayogi & Wulandari, 2021; Suharti et al., 2023). Despite growing interest in educational technology, research often prioritizes tool implementation over critical evaluation of digital pedagogy and its effects on learners. There is a tendency to assume that engagement equals learning, which underscores the need for research that interrogates not only what tools are used, but also how and why they are effective.

The literature also documents effective strategies for developing discrete language skills. Practices such as intuitive pronunciation modeling, oral feedback, multimedia writing instruction, and vocabulary repetition have shown promise in improving proficiency (Irawan & Salija, 2017; Sauramanda et al., 2021). However, few studies offer evidence of long-term retention or integration of these skills across modalities. There remains a lack of research on how these micro-strategies contribute to holistic communicative competence or academic literacy.

Finally, family and institutional support emerged as essential, though underutilized, factors in student success. Parental involvement in language learning remains peripheral in both policy and practice, despite evidence linking it to improved motivation and resilience (Hildianti & Rahayu, 2024). Institutional support often stops at policy rhetoric without enabling mechanisms such as ICT access, teacher collaboration time, or targeted resource allocation. Without deliberate efforts to bridge school-home divides, the broader ecosystem of support for language learners remains fragmented.

In summary, the findings of this review point to a field characterized by theoretical richness but constrained in its methodological and systemic approaches. To move forward, ELT research in Indonesia must expand its focus beyond urban, academic schools; adopt

diverse and rigorous methods; and critically engage with the systemic barriers that limit teaching and learning. The next wave of research should interrogate not only what works, but also for whom, under what conditions, and with what long-term effects.

CONCLUSION

English language teaching at the secondary school level in Indonesia encounters a range of multifaceted challenges, as literature in various studies. Recent research indicates an increasing academic focus on English language teaching in secondary schools in Indonesia, peaking in 2013. Most studies were published in SINTA-indexed journals, indicating a growing interest in mid-level publications. Qualitative research, especially classroom-based studies, mostly focused on senior high school students, while vocational schools received less attention. Further studies of a range of multifaceted challenges encountered in English teaching, including issues related to learning and teaching processes, limited access and infrastructure, student well-being and development, and low levels of motivation and engagement. In response, several effective strategies have been identified and implemented, such as continuous teacher professional development, effective classroom management, student-centered active learning approaches, the integration of technology, focused instruction on core language skills, and support from parents and school stakeholders in creating a positive learning environment. Research remains uneven, with vocational schools largely overlooked. Future studies should include diverse learners and consider cultural factors shaping language acquisition. Understanding both barriers and effective strategies is key to improving ELT quality and longevity. These findings point to the need for broader, more coordinated reform. Teacher development should be ongoing and collaborative, not limited to one-time training. Technology use must be paired with fair access and a clear instructional purpose to avoid deepening existing gaps. Understanding challenges and best practices will support long-term improvements in the quality and sustainability of English language teaching in Indonesian secondary schools.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Review Article

Trends, Challenges, and Benefits of the Flipped Classroom Model in EFL Context: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the trends, challenges, and benefits of Flipped Classroom (FC) instruction within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting. Instructional techniques in the EFL environment have been attempting to transition from a teacher-centered to a student-centered approach. The advances in educational technology have enabled EFL educators to contemplate the FC model to achieve their educational aims. This study examined the current literature on the FC approach within the EFL setting and offers instructional recommendations for EFL trainers. This report synthesizes global quantitative and qualitative studies on flipped learning within the EFL context. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) was utilized for selection, screening, and reporting objectives. This study investigated scholarly articles published within the last ten years (2014-2024), culminating in the inclusion of eighty-eight articles for comprehensive analytical examination. There has been a heightened prevalence of FC in the EFL context since 2020. The analysis indicated that the majority of studies on FC within the EFL environment concentrated on students' language competencies, engagement, and academic performance. To enhance the evidence base and facilitate wider, context-aware adoption, future research should investigate under-explored domains, diversify methodologies (longitudinal and comprehensive qualitative designs).

Keywords: *Flipped classroom, EFL, systematic literature review, PRISMA, language learning*

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INTRODUCTION

The flipped classroom (henceforth FC) concept has evolved as a revolutionary educational strategy that reverses the teaching and learning process in conventional classroom dynamics (Lundin et al., 2018; Stöhr & Adawi, 2018). In the FC model, learners initially access new content via online resources, such as explanation videos or texts related to the course subject, at their own leisure, prior to attending class, so that in the class, they can focus on participating in practical applications, discussions, and problem-solving exercises. Whereas in the traditional model, educators present material during class sessions, then students undertake practice and assignments autonomously, typically from home. Various studies have significantly informed that the FC model has revolutionized traditional educational methods by inverting the standard dynamics of instruction and learning, which has demonstrated its advantages.

The FC is a technology-enhanced teaching strategy that has gained popularity in recent years. This model creates a more interactive and engaging classroom environment since it allows students to work together to apply what they have learned and discuss it with their classmates and educators. In other words, it fosters a more student-centric and interactive learning atmosphere in EFL classrooms (Keskin, 2023a; McLaughlin et al., 2014; Tan et al., 2015). The incorporation of technology in EFL classes has transformed teacher-centered instruction into a more interactive, student-centered, and communicative approach. Therefore, the FC model has attracted widespread attention and interest from EFL practitioners and researchers, and is regarded as a promising pedagogical approach to increase learning outcomes (Z. Li & Li, 2022a).

"In the FC model, learners initially access new content via online resources, such as explanation videos or texts related to the course subject, at their own leisure, prior to attending class"

In the past decade, the implementation of the FC has been recorded in diverse educational settings and nations, indicating its increasing prevalence (Kostka & Marshall, 2018). Prior research across various disciplines has demonstrated its efficacy in enhancing student performance and retention (F. Zhang et al., 2024; Q. Zhang et al., 2021). The FC approach enhances the language skills of EFL learners, including writing, reading, speaking, grammar, and listening (Samiei & Ebadi, 2021). Y.-N. Huang & Hong (2016) indicated that the FC model has a favorable, significant, and rapid effect on the information and communication technology (ICT) of experimental groups. The FC has been shown to foster learner engagement and augment their motivation for learning. Furthermore, Meta-analyses indicate that FCs positively impact students' academic performance (Q. Zhang et al., 2021).

Even though the FC model has some benefits, it also has certain issues, the biggest of which is that educators as well as learners need to get used to this new way of teaching. Research has shown that there are problems with implementation, such as students not being ready and not having access to technology (Wang, 2017). Mehring (2016) noticed that the majority of EFL instructors were reluctant to implement FCs due to the increased effort

compared to conventional classes. The EFL educators expressed concerns about the FC model. They asserted that students' access to technology and technical proficiency may be restricted, potentially leading to complications in the learning process (G. Lee & Wallace, 2017). Furthermore, it was determined to be hazardous to depend on student assuming responsibility for their own learning.

The increasing number of studies on the usefulness of the FC model in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting requires a thorough literature review to integrate current research and highlight gaps, trends, and overall effectiveness (Fung et al., 2021; Rahmatika et al., 2024). One of the main reasons for doing a thorough literature review is to bring together all of the current research on the FC in EFL settings. A thorough study that combines these results can show the similarities in effective implementation strategies and the problems that arise, making it easier to understand the best ways to do things and the potential challenges that come with implementing FCs (Arslan, 2020). Moreover, current research suggests that although the FC approach often enhances engagement and academic achievement among EFL learners, significant variations in student experiences exist across different contexts (Li & Li, 2022a). Moreover, a comprehensive literature review facilitates the identification of trends in flipped EFL education and establishes a basis for future empirical research (Linling & Abdullah, 2023).

This systematic literature review (SLR) aims to synthesize existing research on the implementation and results of FCs in the English as a Foreign Language context. There are two research questions that lead this SLR:

(1) What are the trends in research on FCs in the EFL context?
(2) What challenges and benefits are reported in the reviewed articles?
This review aims to add to the growing body of research on FCs and give EFL teachers, curriculum designers, and researchers who want to improve how foreign languages are taught some useful information.

METHOD

Research Method

This systematic literature review (SLR) looked into the FC model in the context of EFL. It focused on research trends and both the benefits and challenges that have been reported. To ensure a transparent and replicable review process, the review followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines (Moher et al., 2009). This SLR has four parts:

Identification Phase

The primary database utilized for this review was the SCOPUS database. The selection of SCOPUS was based on its extensive repository of peer-reviewed articles across various fields, including education and linguistics, thereby providing a robust platform for sourcing relevant literature in the context of EFL. The literature search was conducted using the

following Boolean search string within the Title, Abstract, and Keywords (TITLE-ABS-KEY) fields:

("flipped classroom" OR "flipped learning" OR "flipped model") AND (EFL OR "English for foreign language" OR "English as foreign language").

The articles were subsequently evaluated against the inclusion and exclusion criteria to confirm their alignment with the framework required for the evaluation, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1.
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for this SLR

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
a. Articles published between 2014 and 2024	a. Conference paper, book chapter, review, conference paper, errata, editorial, book
b. Journal articles	b. Article in press for journal publication
c. Articles focused on the implementation of the FC model specifically within the EFL context	c. Articles that are not published in the English language
d. Articles with Gold open access type (full paper is available)	d. Non-empirical works and review articles

Screening Phase

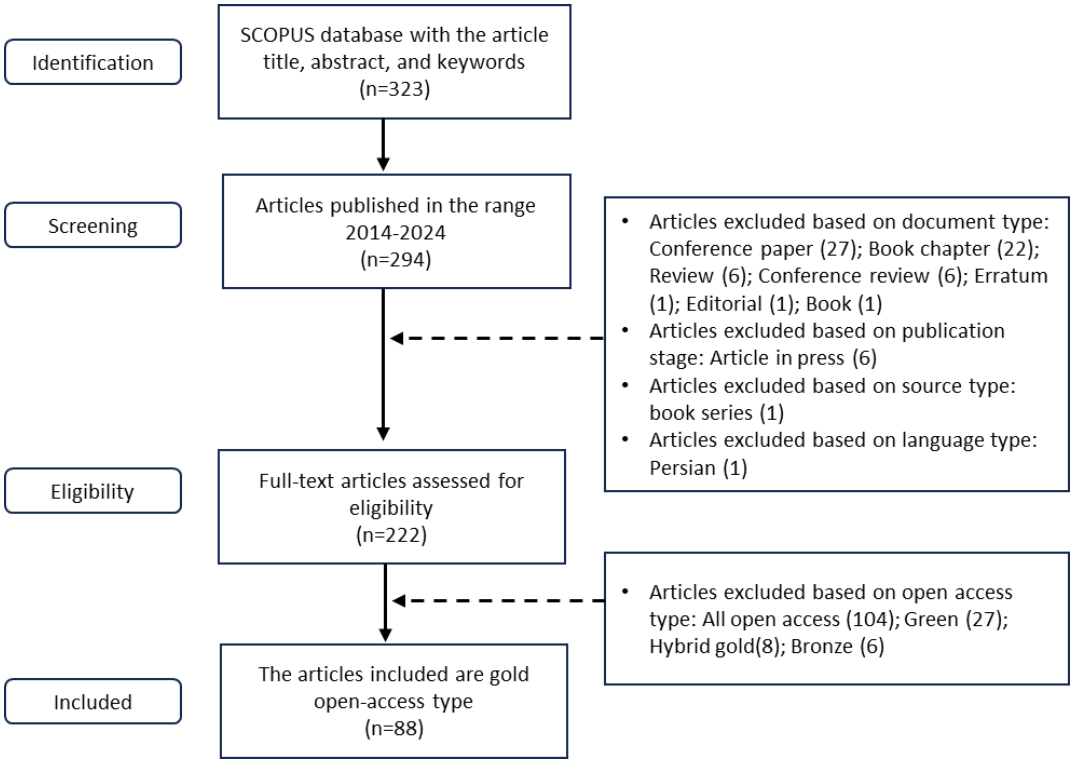
The screening phase involved two stages. The first stage excluded articles published outside the 2014-2024 period, and non-peer-reviewed articles (such as proceedings, book chapters, books, etc.), including only articles published in journals. Furthermore, articles not in English were also excluded. The next stage was to check and ensure that the submitted articles truly focused on the implementation of the FC model in an EFL context, contained empirical data, and that the full text articles are available.

Eligibility Phase

During this phase, the articles were reviewed and assessed for their eligibility. The articles must conform to the inclusion and exclusion criteria outlined in Table 1. The downloaded text was eligible, and restricted articles were omitted. The selection of articles must be aligned to address the research questions. Consequently, both inclusion and exclusion criteria were essential in the formulation of high-quality research.

Figure 1.

Flowchart of screening and selection procedure (Moher et al., 2009)



Inclusion Phase

In the final inclusion phase, all full-text articles that passed the eligibility assessment were included in the systematic review. Of the 222 articles, 134 were excluded because they were not open access or the full text was unavailable. The remaining 88 journal articles met all established criteria, published between 2014 and 2024, were empirical research on the implementation of FCs in EFL contexts, English-language, and accessible, and were therefore included in the qualitative synthesis. These 88 studies formed the evidence base for our analysis of the effects of FCs on teaching and learning in EFL environments. The details are summarized from the searching process using the PRISMA flow chart in Figure 1.

FINDINGS

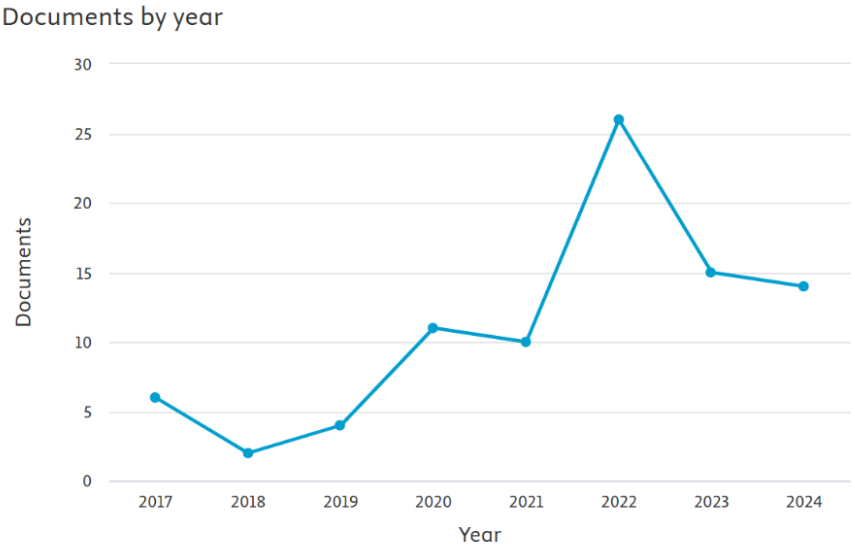
The Trends in Research of the FC Model in the EFL Context

In addressing RQ1, the authors analyzed subcategories including the annual distribution of studies, the geographical distribution of the nations in which the studies were done, the research methodologies employed, and the focused aspect of the studies. This section provides descriptions for each category.

Distribution of the Studies by Years

Figure 2 shows that research related to the FC model published in SCOPUS began in 2017.

Figure 2.
The number of articles by year

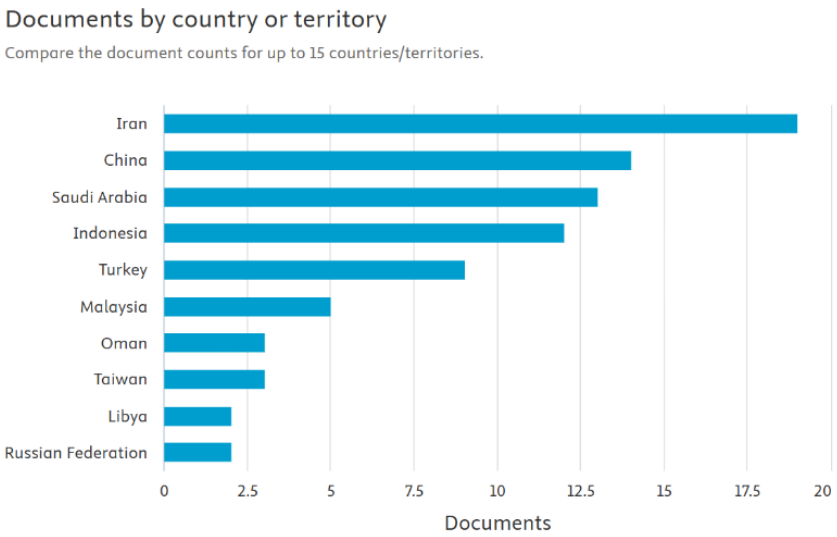


The distribution of research on FCs in EFL contexts shows a significant upward trend over time. The lowest point in the number of publications was in 2018 (2 studies), although there was little research on this topic between 2017 and 2019, there was a fairly steady increase starting in 2021. A significant spike occurred in 2022, which also saw the peak number of publications, with 26 studies. This indicates that around this year, following the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an increase in research interest in this topic. After this peak, the number of publications decreased slightly in 2023 (15 studies) and 2024 (14 studies), but remained higher than in previous years, indicating continued interest in the topic. Overall, this upward trend reflects the growing research focus on FC implementation in EFL settings over the past ten years.

Distribution by Countries

Figure 3 indicates that the majority of studies on FCs in EFL contexts originated from authors in Iran (19 publications), followed by China (14) and Saudi Arabia (13). The first three countries excel in research output, indicative of their growing investment and interest in novel EFL teaching methodologies. Moreover, notable contributions emerged from Indonesia (12 papers) and Turkey (9 papers), reflecting vigorous academic involvement in EFL research, especially in tailoring blended learning approaches to regional educational requirements. Countries like Malaysia (5 papers) and Oman (3 papers) also surfaced, indicating a regional dedication to investigating flipped learning methodologies. Nonetheless, there remain a limited number of nations with publications addressing FCs in EFL contexts. This indicates that the implementation of FC models in EFL environments has not progressed uniformly across nations.

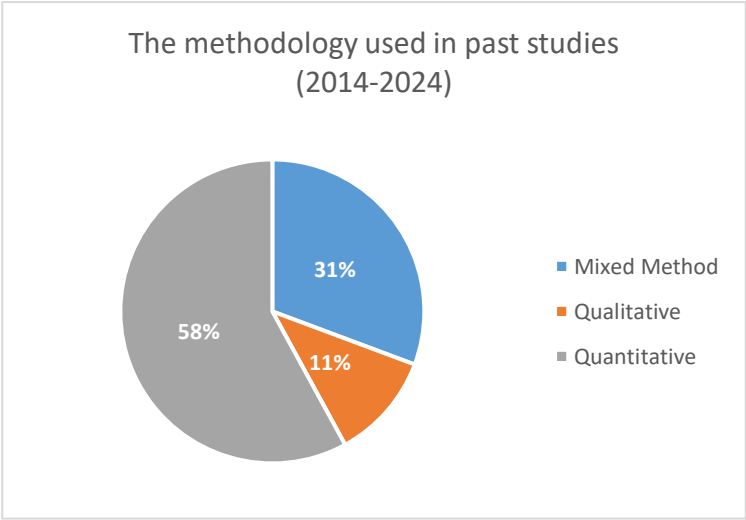
Figure 3.
The countries where the article published



The Research Methodology in the Reviewed Articles

The distribution of research methods used in flipped-classroom studies between 2014 and 2024 is depicted in Figure 4. Quantitative designs predominate, comprising 58% of the analyzed studies. Mixed-method approaches account for the second biggest proportion at 31%, indicating a tendency towards the integration of quantitative data with qualitative insights. Qualitative research constitutes merely 11% of the total, suggesting that comprehensive, non-numeric investigations of flipped-classroom phenomena are still quite uncommon.

Figure 4.
Research methods used in the reviewed article



The Focused Aspects in the Reviewed Articles

The examined publications encompassed a variety of facets pertaining to the FC in EFL settings. Based on Table 2, the predominant focus of investigation was students' writing performance, featured in 16 research studies, indicating a significant interest in the impact of flipped learning on productive language abilities. This was succeeded by students' engagement/performance (10 studies) and students' motivation (8 studies), underscoring the significance of behavioral and affective reactions to flipped learning contexts. Additional significant areas of focus encompassed learners' perspectives on the efficacy of the flipped model (7 studies), reading comprehension (7 studies), speaking performance (6 studies), and self-regulated learning (6 studies), highlighting the cognitive and metacognitive development facilitated by flipped instruction. Topics that were investigated less frequently were spoken English performance (4 studies), learner autonomy (3 studies), and learning self-efficacy (2 studies). Factors like as intercultural sensitivity, problem-solving, vocabulary retention, instructor expertise, and active engagement were mentioned only once, suggesting potential deficiencies or nascent areas for future investigation within the FC and EFL context.

Table 2.
The Focused Aspects in Reviewed Articles

Aspect	*Frequency*	*Article*
Self-regulated learning	7	(Samadi et al., 2024; Zhong, 2024); (Alkhalaf, 2023);(Y. Wang, 2023); (M. Öztürk & Çakıroğlu, 2021);(Izadpanah, 2022); (Nicholes, 2020)
Speaking competence/performance	6	(Zhong, 2024); (Pan et al., 2022); (A Roohani & Etemadfar, 2021); (Yoon & Kim, 2022); (Abdullah et al., 2019); (Abdullah et al., 2020)
Students writing performance	16	(Muluk & Dahliana, 2024); (Khosravi et al., 2023); (Alpat & Görgülü, 2024); (Mohammad & Khan, 2023); (Maharani et al., 2023); (Zhao & Yang, 2023); (Syarifuddin & Husnawadi, 2022); (Sengul et al., 2022); (Yoon & Kim, 2022); (Ali Roohani & Rad, 2022); (Shooli et al., 2022); (Afrilyasanti et al., 2017); (Ekmekci, 2017); (Ginting, 2018); (H.-W. Huang et al., 2024); (Kanwal, 2024)
EFL learners' perspectives on the efficacy of the flipped learning model.	7	(Jamshed et al., 2024); (Keskin, 2023b); (Maharani et al., 2023); (Mahmood & Mohammadzadeh, 2022); (F. Li, 2022); (Butt, 2014); (Yan et al., 2024)

Aspect	*Frequency*	*Article*
Students' listening skills/performance	5	(Heredia-Arboleda et al., 2024); (Birova et al., 2023); (Ebadi et al., 2022);(Qiu & Luo, 2022); (Etemadfar et al., 2020)
Learners' motivation	8	(Aldaghri, 2024; Kantamas, 2023; Liu et al., 2023); (Pan et al., 2022); (Jeong, 2021); (Josifović-Elezović, 2022); (Yaşar & Polat, 2021); (B. Lee, 2017)
Grammar	6	(Aldaghri, 2024); (Alkhalaf, 2023); (Rad, 2021); (Noroozi et al., 2020); (Alolaywi & Alkhalaf, 2024); (Suranakkharin, 2017)
Learners' engagement	8	(Liu et al., 2023); (Pang, 2022); (Z. Li & Li, 2022a); (Ravandpour, 2022); (Pasaribu & Wulandari, 2021); (Josifović-Elezović, 2022); (Yaşar & Polat, 2021); (Nicholes, 2020)
Students' achievements/performance	10	(Alzahrani, 2022; Baltaci, 2022; Bin-Hady & Hazaea, 2022; Kantamas, 2023; Zheng & Lee, 2023); (Hajebi, 2020); (Yaşar & Polat, 2021); (Alnuhayt, 2018); (Teng, 2017); (Yavuz & Ozdemir, 2019)
Critical thinking	5	(Alpat & Görgülü, 2024); (Pang, 2022); (Ravandpour, 2022); (Etemadfar et al., 2020); (Yulian, 2021)
Students' perspective/ attitudes	7	(Gasmi & Al Nadabi, 2023); (Jeong, 2021); (Josifović-Elezović, 2022); (Huynh & Nguyen, 2019); (Afrilyasanti et al., 2017); (Zainuddin, 2017); (Alnuhayt, 2018)
Reading comprehension	9	(Yalew & Filate, 2024); (AlManafi et al., 2023); (Y. Wang, 2023); (Quadir et al., 2022); (Uran, 2022); (Samiei & Ebadi, 2021); (Maharsi et al., 2021); (Yulian, 2021); (Khonamri et al., 2020)
Students' oral English performance	4	(Fischer & Yang, 2022); (E Solimani et al., 2019); (Yaroslavova et al., 2020); (Martínez, 2020)
Active participation	1	(Ebadi et al., 2022)
EFL learners' autonomy	3	(Izadpanah, 2022); (Ravandpour, 2022); (Aprianto et al., 2020)
Teacher knowledge and efficacy	1	(M. Zhang & Fang, 2022)

Aspect	*Frequency*	*Article*
Strategies and challenges of FC	1	(Al-Naabi, 2022)
Learning self-efficacy	2	(Luo & Gan, 2022); (B. Lee, 2017)
Intercultural sensitivity (ICS) and intercultural effectiveness (ICE)	1	(Khabir et al., 2022)
Vocabulary recall and retention	1	(Soltanabadi et al., 2021)
Problem solving	1	(Khonamri et al., 2020)

Challenges & Benefits of the FC Model in EFL Context

To address RQ2, the researchers identified and analyzed the following subcategories: the challenges and benefits of the FC method within the EFL environment. The subsequent section provides a detailed description of the subcategories.

The challenges reported from the reviewed article

The comprehensive literature review revealed numerous significant issues related to the application of the FC methodology in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting. These issues are varied and encompass educational, technical, and learner-related dimensions. It can be seen in Table 3 that an often-mentioned issue is the lack of access to digital material, unstable internet connectivity, and technology-related problems (n = 16). Numerous studies highlighted the substantial impact of technology infrastructure on the efficacy of FC implementation, particularly in developing contexts where dependable internet connection and sufficient digital tools are often lacking. A restricted duration of class time (n = 15) constituted a significant obstacle. Numerous studies indicate that although flipped classrooms facilitate enhanced active learning in class, educators frequently have time limitations in addressing all essential material and effectively engaging every student. A persistent issue is the deficiency of experience, resources, and readiness in executing the FC model (n = 15). Numerous instructors are unacquainted with the flipped approach, lacking the requisite pedagogical training and institutional support to shift from conventional teaching approaches.

Table 3
Challenges reported in reviewed articles

Challenges	Frequency	Articles
Unfamiliarity with The FC model as a teaching method/limited preparation	10	(H.-W. Huang et al., 2024); (Kanwal, 2024); (Liu et al., 2023); (Zheng & Lee, 2023); AlManafi et al., 2023); (Bin-Hady & Hazaea, 2022); (Kantamas,

Challenges	Frequency	Articles
		2023); (Mahmood & Mohammadzadeh, 2022); (Uran, 2022); (Teng, 2017)
Limited class time	15	(H.-W. Huang et al., 2024); (Y. Wang, 2023); (Syarifuddin & Husnawadi, 2022); (Sengul et al., 2022); (Pang, 2022); (Uran, 2022); (Al-Naabi, 2022); (F. Li, 2022); (Sengul et al., 2022); (Pang, 2022); (Uran, 2022); (M. Zhang & Fang, 2022); (Al-Naabi, 2022); (Yaşar & Polat, 2021); (Huynh & Nguyen, 2019); (B. Lee, 2017)
Students' low/difficulties in self-regulation/self-directed learning	7	(Samiei & Ebadi, 2021); (Jamshed et al., 2024); (Ha, 2024); (Alkhalaf, 2023); (Fischer & Yang, 2022); (Uran, 2022); (Jeong, 2021); (M. Öztürk & Çakıroğlu, 2021)
Students' low motivation	8	(Muluk & Dahliana, 2024); (Jamshed et al., 2024); (Kanwal, 2024); (Liu et al., 2023); (Kantamas, 2023); (Quadir et al., 2022); (Quadir et al., 2022); (Syarifuddin & Husnawadi, 2022)
Time management issues	13	(Muluk & Dahliana, 2024); Gasmi & Al Nadabi, 2023); (Birova et al., 2023); (Izadpanah, 2022); (Sengul et al., 2022); (Pang, 2022); (M. Zhang & Fang, 2022); (Al-Naabi, 2022); (Pang, 2022); (M. Zhang & Fang, 2022); (Al-Naabi, 2022); (M. Öztürk & Çakıroğlu, 2021); (Maharsi et al., 2021); (Butt, 2014)
Different students' behaviors and abilities	9	(Muluk & Dahliana, 2024); Gasmi & Al Nadabi, 2023); (Mohammad & Khan, 2023); (Maharani et al., 2023); (Zhao & Yang, 2023); (Ebadi et al., 2022); (Quadir et al., 2022); (Syarifuddin & Husnawadi, 2022); (Teng, 2017)
Lack of expertise/resources/and preparation in implementing the FC	15	(Jamshed et al., 2024); (Fischer & Yang, 2022); (Ebadi et al., 2022); (M. Zhang & Fang, 2022); (Al-Naabi, 2022); (Uran, 2022); (M. Zhang & Fang, 2022); (Ravandpour, 2022); (Al-Naabi, 2022); (Pasaribu & Wulandari, 2021); (Josifović-Elezović, 2022); (Maharsi et al., 2021); (Butt, 2014); (B. Lee, 2017); (Suranakkharin, 2017)
Heavy workload of learning	6	(Ha, 2024); (Keskin, 2023b); (Z. Li & Li, 2022b); (Uran, 2022); (Etemadfar et al., 2020); (A Roohani & Etemadfar, 2021)
Distraction from social media hinders students	1	(Ha, 2024)

Challenges	Frequency	Articles
from engaging with the recorded materials		
Lack of access to digital media; unstable internet connection/ technology issue	16	(Heredia-Arboleda et al., 2024); (Gasmi & Al Nadabi, 2023); (AlManafi et al., 2023); (Birova et al., 2023); (Mahmood & Mohammadzadeh, 2022); (Z. Li & Li, 2022b); (Uran, 2022); (Sengul et al., 2022); (Mahmood & Mohammadzadeh, 2022); (Z. Li & Li, 2022b); (Uran, 2022); (Baltaci, 2022); (Soltanabadi et al., 2021); (Khonamri et al., 2020); (Yavuz & Ozdemir, 2019); (B. Lee, 2017); (Alnuhayt, 2018); (Ginting, 2018)
Levels of technology skill among students	4	(Aldaghri, 2024); (M. Zhang & Fang, 2022); (Luo & Gan, 2022); (Sengul et al., 2022);
Challenges in appropriate assessment criteria	2	(F. Li, 2022); (Pang, 2022)

The benefits reported from the reviewed article

The comprehensive literature review identified numerous advantages linked to the widespread use of the FC model in EFL settings. These advantages encompass linguistic, cognitive, emotional, and intercultural areas. As shown in Table 3, a commonly cited benefit is the positive effect on students' writing performance (n = 13). Multiple studies have shown that students in FC environments exhibit enhanced writing skills, organization, and coherence as a result of greater exposure to linguistic input and increased opportunity for practice. The improvement of English language skills and performance (n = 13) was a commonly acknowledged advantage. Students allegedly enhanced various skills, including grammar, vocabulary, and overall fluency, due to the blended approach of FC and its focus on active involvement with learning resources.

Table 4.
The benefits reported in the reviewed articles

Benefits	Frequency	Article
Enhance grammar skill	6	(Alolaywi & Alkhalaf, 2024); (Mohammad & Khan, 2023); (Alkhalaf, 2023); (Rad, 2021); (Noroozi et al., 2020); (Suranakkharin, 2017)
Positive impact on students' writing performance	13	(H.-W. Huang et al., 2024); (Muluk & Dahliana, 2024); (Kanwal, 2024); (Khosravi et al., 2023); (Alpat & Görgülü, 2024); (Mohammad & Khan, 2023); (Zhao & Yang, 2023); (Yoon &

Benefits	Frequency	Article
		Kim, 2022); (Ali Roohani & Rad, 2022); (Shooli et al., 2022); (Afrilyasanti et al., 2017); (Ekmekci, 2017); (Ginting, 2018)
Enhance students' engagement	12	(H.-W. Huang et al., 2024); (Samadi et al., 2024); (Aldaghri, 2024); (Ebadi et al., 2022); (Ravandpour, 2022); (M. Öztürk & Çakıroğlu, 2021); (Pasaribu & Wulandari, 2021); (Josifović-Elezović, 2022); (Yulian, 2021); (Yaşar & Polat, 2021); (Zainuddin, 2017); (Alnuhayt, 2018)
Promotes flexibility and accessibility	2	(Ha, 2024); (Kantamas, 2023); (Zhao & Yang, 2023)
Enhancing students' listening skill	5	(Heredia-Arboleda et al., 2024); (Birova et al., 2023); (Etemadfar et al., 2020); (Martínez, 2020); (Yaroslavova et al., 2020)
Enhance academic passion, motivation and responsibility	6	(Liu et al., 2023); (Kantamas, 2023); (Pan et al., 2022); (Jeong, 2021);Josifović-Elezović, 2022); (B. Lee, 2017)
Enhance english language proficiency/performance	13	(Zheng & Lee, 2023); (Bin-Hady & Hazaea, 2022); (Kantamas, 2023); (Fischer & Yang, 2022); (Alzahrani, 2022); (Mahmood & Mohammadzadeh, 2022); (Al-Naabi, 2022); (F. Li, 2022); (M. Öztürk & Çakıroğlu, 2021); (Hajebi, 2020); (Yaşar & Polat, 2021); (Alnuhayt, 2018); (Teng, 2017)
Enhance critical thinking, problem solving, autonomy	10	(Alpat & Görgülü, 2024); (Keskin, 2023b); (Ravandpour, 2022); (Josifović-Elezović, 2022); (Etemadfar et al., 2020); (Yulian, 2021); (Yavuz & Ozdemir, 2019); (Aprianto et al., 2020); (Zainuddin, 2017); (Samadi et al., 2024)
Improvement in Reading comprehension/performance	4	(Y. Wang, 2023); (Uran, 2022); (Samiei & Ebadi, 2021); (Khonamri et al., 2020)

Benefits	Frequency	Article
Improved vocabulary	4	(Ebadi et al., 2022); (Ali Roohani & Rad, 2022); (Soltanabadi et al., 2021); (Yaroslavova et al., 2020)
Improvement in intercultural sensitivity (ICS) and intercultural effectiveness (ICE)	1	(Khabir et al., 2022)
Enhance speaking performance	5	(Pan et al., 2022); (A Roohani & Etemadfar, 2021); (Yoon & Kim, 2022); (Elahe Solimani et al., n.d.); (Abdullah et al., 2020)

A significant advantage is increased student involvement (n = 12), as students demonstrated more participation, concentration, and motivation throughout lessons. This is intricately associated with the augmentation of academic enthusiasm, drive, and accountability (n = 6), highlighting the significance of FC in fostering learner autonomy and proactive learning behaviors. The evaluation indicated that FC fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and autonomy (n = 10), since students must independently analyze knowledge prior to class and apply their comprehension through collaborative assignments during class.

Further language-related enhancements encompass grammar proficiency (n=6), auditory skills (n = 5), reading comprehension/performance (n = 4), speaking proficiency (n = 4), and vocabulary acquisition (n= 4). These improvements are frequently ascribed to the multimodal and recurrent exposure to linguistic information offered by pre-class materials. Furthermore, the FC technique was determined to enhance flexibility and accessibility in learning (n= 2), enabling students to progress at their own pace and review content as required. Certain research emphasized enhancements in intercultural sensitivity (ICS) and intercultural effectiveness (ICE) (n= 2), especially within varied or multinational educational contexts.

The review indicates that the FC approach possesses significant pedagogical merit in EFL instruction, promoting language development, learner autonomy, motivation, and crucial abilities vital for academic achievement.

DISCUSSION

This review reveals that FC research in EFL contexts has increased substantially since 2017, peaking with 26 publications in 2022 before settling at 15 in 2023 and 14 in early 2024 (Figure 2). The surge in publications in 2022 likely reflects increased attention from researchers and academics to technology-based FC pedagogy, a result of the global shift to online and hybrid instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic (Linling & Abdullah, 2023; Rahmatika et al., 2024). The increasing number of publications indicates continued interest in the implementation of the FC model. As Kostka & Marshall stated that in the past decade, the

implementation of the FC has been recorded in diverse educational settings and nations, indicating its increasing prevalence (Kostka & Marshall, 2018).

Despite its global emergence, the geographic distribution of articles related to this FC model research appears uneven (Figure 3). Over 50% originate from Iran (19), China (14), and Saudi Arabia (13). While other regions are barely represented. This concentration raises important concerns regarding the transferability and contextual adaptability of the FC model. This lack of representation is alarming, particularly given that most successful flipped classroom implementations documented in more developed contexts may not be readily accessible or transferable to areas with distinct sociocultural dynamics and infrastructural conditions (Hung, 2017). Successful implementations in developed regions may not be easily applicable to low-resourced settings, necessitating tailored strategies (Ying & Ayub, 2022).

Methodologically, based on a review of the selected articles, quantitative designs dominate (58%), with mixed methods (31%) and qualitative studies (11%). While quantitative metrics provide clear measures of learning achievement, a deeper understanding of the implementation process of this learning model is still needed because measurable outcomes often fail to capture the nuanced, process-oriented dimensions of FC implementation (Creswell & Clark, 2017). There is a clear necessity for additional qualitative and longitudinal research to investigate the dynamics of teacher-student interactions, the growth of learner autonomy, and the long-term sustainability of flipped classroom practices. This corresponds with the literature's call for more interpretive and contextually aware methodologies in educational research (Yin, 2018).

The thematic focus of previous studies shows a clear gap, with writing skills being the most researched aspect (16 studies), followed by enhancing engagement (10 studies) and enhancing motivation (8 studies). Other aspects, however, receive less attention. This emphasis on productive skills and psychological implications indicates that researchers are mostly exploring elements that closely correspond with the concepts of active learning, a fundamental component of flipped classroom pedagogies as delineated by Bergmann & Sams (2016). Moreover, empirical research indicates that although FC can yield significant benefits in writing, the potential improvements in reading, listening, and speaking skills should not be disregarded. Some studies show that students who take part in flipped classrooms (FC) can do better on both receptive and productive tasks, with a focus on how their language skills improve in a variety of ways (Ebadi et al., 2022; Heredia-Arboleda et al., 2024; Martínez, 2020; Qiu & Luo, 2022). These findings affirm the need for more integrated research methodologies that can simultaneously assess several language skills, rather than treating writing as an isolated focus.

Challenges reported in the literature center on technological and logistical barriers: unstable internet access and limited digital resources (16 studies), inadequate instructor preparation (15 studies), limited class time (15 studies), and student self-regulation difficulties (7 studies). These findings confirm previous claims that the mere use of technology instruments does not ensure the successful execution of FC. The efficacy of this

pedagogical paradigm is contingent upon systemic support, comprehensive professional development for educators, and the use of deliberate scaffolding tactics that enhance learning (Mehring, 2016; Yaraghi & Shafiee, 2018). Öztürk indicates that although EFL teachers showed enthusiasm for incorporating autonomous learning concepts into their pedagogical practices, their actual implementation was affected by various extrinsic variables, such as inadequate training and lack of institutional support (Öztürk, 2019). The findings underscore the need for a more supportive educational framework that might enhance teachers' abilities to effectively promote learner autonomy within the FC model. Moreover, the difficulties surrounding self-regulated learning underscore this larger issue of readiness among students to manage their learning independently. Recent research has revealed significant problems that students encounter while trying to manage their own learning in flipped classrooms. Öztürk & Çakıroğlu (2021) assert that the appropriate application of self-regulated learning strategies, including self-evaluation, organization, and assistance-seeking, in flipped EFL classrooms is crucial for improving language abilities.

Despite its challenges, the benefits of FC in EFL contexts have been demonstrated. Beneficial results encompass advancements in writing skills (13 studies), general linguistic proficiency (13 studies), and student engagement (12 studies), in addition to improved critical thinking, problem-solving, and learner autonomy (10 studies). These findings support theoretical frameworks that highlight active and experiential learning (Abdullah et al., 2019), wherein students are intellectually involved in the construction and application of information. The FC model seems to promote a more customized interactive educational setting that corresponds with 21st-century learning competencies (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012).

These results underscore the potential of the FC model to foster active, student-centered learning and develop productive skills and higher-order capacities. However, without a wider range of methodologies and contexts, these promising results may overestimate the applicability of FC across the spectrum of EFL environments.

CONCLUSION

This SLR has mapped a decade (2014–2024) of research on FC model implementation in EFL contexts, revealing both clear strengths and critical gaps. The number of publications has steadily remained up, reaching its highest point in 2022 when the pandemic forced educational institutions to switch to hybrid learning. Research on the FC model in EFL settings is mostly done in Iran, China, and Saudi Arabia. Quantitative and mixed methods studies are the most common, and they mostly look at writing skills, student engagement, and motivation. Empirical research consistently demonstrates the FC model's potential to enhance EFL learners' proficiency, autonomy, and classroom interaction. However, there are still a number of problems that make it hard to scale up, such as limited technology, instructors who are not ready, and students who have trouble regulating themselves. Also, the observed gains are not long-lasting because there has not been enough longitudinal and qualitative research. To strengthen the evidence base and support broader, context-responsive adoption, further studies should examine the model's flexibility within various

educational frameworks, emphasize longitudinal and qualitative analyses, and concentrate on comprehensive skill development to guarantee the FC model's efficacy and equity across all EFL contexts.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest reported by the authors

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Research and Innovation in Applied Linguistics-Electronic Journal (RIAL-EJ) is a scholarly publication that follows a rigorous double-blind review process and offers mentoring to authors. It serves as a platform for disseminating cutting-edge research and innovative practices in the field of Applied Linguistics. The journal specifically focuses on publishing high-quality articles, including research papers, reviews, book reviews, and perspective pieces, with a particular emphasis on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and vocational English education.

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