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## *EAP Course Evaluations: Suggestions from Monolingual Students*

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### **Abstract**

This paper explores the quality and effectiveness of English for Academic Purposes courses offered to the first year monolingual students at a private University in Bangladesh. Since the majority of students come from Bangla medium, these students are required to complete the EAP programme in their first year of university. The study reflects on the feedback of the EAP courses, which are delivered in the university, from the first year undergraduate students and the data collected from the students' questionnaire and teachers' interviews to be utilized to cater the specific needs required for students' success in academic and professional endeavors. A mixed method has been used to find the strengths and weaknesses of the existing EAP programme so that the areas of the current EAP programme can be discovered and developed. The literature of EAP and the data collected from mixed methods show that there is a great deal of importance to modify the current EAP programme considering students' perceptions and suggestions.

Keywords: EAP Programme, Needs Analysis, EAP Skills

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## Introduction

When it comes to the obstacles faced while providing a definition of English for Academic purposes (EAP), Dudley-Evans and St John (1998:34) define EAP as “any English teaching that relates to a study purpose.” Contrastingly, Gillett (2004: 11) has another description of EAP which quotes “the language and associated skills that students need to undertake study in higher education through the medium in English”. Flowerdew and Peacock (2001:8) state that the purpose of EAP is to assist learners in their “study or research in that language”. Gunning (2009:16) opines “all tertiary English education should fall under the rubric of ESP [English for Specific Purposes]/EAP”. After a gap of some years, Hadley (2015:23) defines EAP as “tertiary level English instructional training that enables learners to improve their language proficiency within higher educational institutions, irrespective of the country within which that instruction takes place.”

As a large number (or a majority) of students in Bangladesh do their schooling in Bangla medium, private universities offer basic English language teaching courses for academic purposes (EAP) for the tertiary students. An elementary course for English is offered in the first semester, which includes constructing basic composition in their writings. They are then offered an Intermediate composition course on English in their second semester, which includes teaching informative essays, with critical emphasis being given on academic writing and editing. The advanced English course offered in the third semester requires students to undertake a research project focused on persuasive and argumentative writing. Both the first and second semester courses remain as a part of prerequisite to the third and last one. The primary goal of these courses is for students to comprehend, use, and construct academic writing efficiently in order to gain control of the writing process in different steps - prewriting, writing and rewriting through a program which mostly involves reading and writing.

All students are required at least two courses, with the first being optional or required only for some based on some criteria, such as test results at their timing of admission in the university. These two or three courses are compulsory for all the students intending on majoring in different departments, aiming to teach the students how English language is to be properly used in an academic environment. Nonetheless, the true picture says something else entirely. Even after completing the elementary and advanced level English courses, my observation of teaching ten years of EAP courses at the university, I learned that they face difficulties with their respective departmental courses, and after their graduation they are clueless as to how these English courses have assisted them both in their academic and professional lives. Even though these courses are created using the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) scheme, they are somehow not working as well as they should. It is becoming clear that the courses are created on the basis of students’ needs ten to twelve years ago. This needs to be rectified, and the perception of the students about the courses reassessed, alongside other variables that should be taken into account, before making them compulsory for the higher-level students.

Experiences are considered the cornerstone of learning, and keeping this in mind, this paper has taken a humanistic approach to discover how the learners’ experiences pave the way towards learning. Humanistic theory allows teachers to facilitate the learning

process by creating an environment in the classroom based on learners' experiences and needs (Douglas,2011).In this approach, learners develop self-awareness in their active learning process derived from social worlds( Grollios, 2016). Therefore, the teaching materials should be related to everyday experiences people encounter (yeasmin and Rahman,n.d.).

To increase the success of the EAP programme, it is crucial to comprehend how it works effectively for the students, and their views on the programme from their own experiences in learning. This is in line with what Rogers (1969:157-164) stated, "When the learners choose their goals, discover learning resources, formulate problems, decide on a course of action, and live with the consequences of each of these choices, then significant learning occurs."

With this in mind, this paper tries to explore the students' experiences' of EAP programme and how the programme works for the students to develop them professionally and academically.

### **Statement of the problem**

Considering that the purpose of this project is to ascertain how monolingual students of a particular English medium university conceive this EAP curriculum, the present research mainly addresses the following two critical questions:

- What are the major pros and cons of the current EAP programme?
- Based on the current context, what are the possible revisions we can make to improve the existing EAP programme?

### **The role of EAP in an EFL/ESL context**

A section of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), known as EAP, seeks to advance communication and academic skills that aid learners to analyze, communicate, and direct research in the particular language (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). Keeping the non-native circumstances in mind, EAP courses aid EFL (English as Foreign Language) students acquire success in a scholastic domain where English is the instrument of teaching (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). EAP is connected with the "communicative skills in English which are required for study purposes in formal educational systems" (Jordan, 1997:1). Its courses are inclined to teach students the formal, scholastic style of the language instead of the traditional and social genres taught by common English courses (Hamp-Lyons, 2001).

Based on benchmarking, and learners' problems in utilizing the language, various important factors are taken into account by most EAP courses. Jordan (1997) declares that multiple variables, like requirements, purpose, method, and other factors or limitations are considered while formulating an EAP curriculum. He (1997:58) posits that an EAP course mainly emphasizes independent study skills consisting of reading cognition, academic writing, cognitive listening and note taking, academic discourse, and reference skills.

Looking at the role of EAP, Flowerdew & Peacock (2001:25) state that it is a course “to cover those educational activities in higher education”, its motive being to help teach and learn the English language needed by the tertiary, postgraduate, and/or staff whose major is not the English language, it being more of a ‘carrier’ subject. Either prior to or during their studies, they require English language and communication skills to access subject knowledge or ‘content’.

White (2004:35) conceptualized the EAP context as a potential market for the students emphasizing the requirement of a combination of consumer demand and production in terms of the education offered by organizations. Teachers are perceived as the service providers while the students are characterized as the consumer classifying the exchange of education between them as process according to this perspective. According to Hyland (2006), the extent of EAP has far exceeded the limits of curriculum planning, testing and assessing, and data designing. Thus, he notes the evolution of an EAP that may focus on the various ways to comprehend and interest learners in a crucial insight of the progressively diverse circumstances and methods of scholastic information. Accordingly, a comprehensive task of EAP is being indicated by Hyland (2006:2) as he opines that EAP provides a grounded framework based on “an understanding of texts and constructions of academic contexts” to meet the demand of academic and professional situations.

Much like nearly all ESL countries, the setting of EAP is analogous in Bangladesh, as English here, despite officially being a foreign language, boasts a position akin to a second language. While the native language plays a major role in daily life, English here is chiefly used in the education system at all levels. The goals of EAP curriculum in this country are to promote students in gaining course expertise and preparing them for their specialized study at the tertiary level. To support the students’ English Language proficiency, the EAP curriculum is designed to facilitate the learning process so that learners develop EAP skills and utilise them in their academic and prefellinal matters. Therefore, the materials used in the curricula should be authentic with an objective to develop communicative skills based on the connection between the language and the context the learners are in (Campbell and Wales, 1970). At the same time, it should be considered that we need to consider “the needs of non-native speakers following an English-medium course and those of native speakers in need of developing communication skills” (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998: 37). It so happens that the communication skills course with the best results was a mixture of the conventional ideas of EAP and the communication skills of the native speakers (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Moreover, as learning needs differ from one student to another, it is vital to analysis the needs of the students because “the activities involved in gathering information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum that will meet the learning needs of a particular group of students” (Brown, 1995, p. 35).

### **Method of study**

To investigate how far the EAP programme at a particular university meets the needs of the students for their academic and professional purposes, both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered. In order to collect data, a structured questionnaire with a likert scale was used because studies can be evaluated more objectively with greater consistency with quantitative research (Mackey & Gass, 2005). A survey

questionnaire was designed for the students who have either graduated from the institution or have already done the courses. The students and alumni are in a closed Facebook group where the Google link of the questionnaire was provided to generate the data. As qualitative data represents the participants’ perceptions and their deep involvement into the research process, (Rao & Woolcock, 2003: 167), I interviewed ten teachers from the same institution, who teach the EAP program. The subjects for the interview were carefully chosen because as either they were the EAP programme coordinators at one point of their teaching careers or they have developed teaching contents/texts books for the EAP programme; therefore, it was thought that they would be able to provide a balanced representation of participants in certain EAP aspects. The interview questions were semi structured. Each of participants was interviewed separately and the responses from the interviews were qualitatively interpreted. The teachers were asked to give their views on pedagogic as well as other organizational aspects of the EAP courses.

### Participants’ characteristics

The participants for quantitative study are both male and female, aged between 19-23 years. They all are either studying at a specific university or have graduated from the institution. The chosen teachers for qualitative study are both male and female, aged between 30 to 58 years old, working at the same tertiary institution. I have chosen two different groups of participants because the EAP programme requires direct involvement of teachers and students and avoiding any of these would have resulted in incomplete findings.

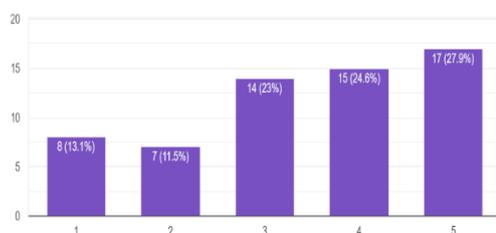
### Research Findings: Quantitative Analysis: findings from students' survey

#### (a)EAP Course Content

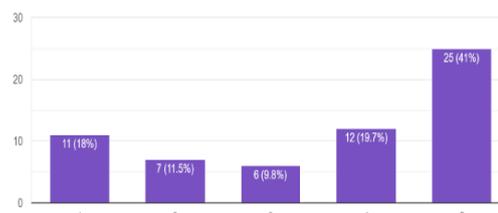
##### Marking Options

- 1-Strongly disagree
- 2- Disagree
- 3-Neutral
- 4- Agree
- 5- Strongly agree

I improved my academic listening and note-taking skills in English in the EAP classes.  
61 responses



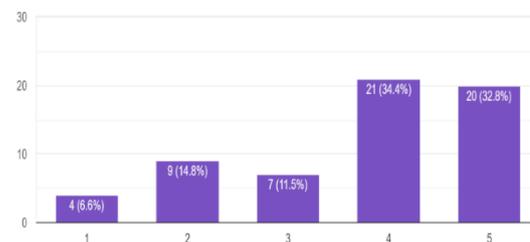
I was provided with sufficient opportunities to practice my academic listening and note-taking skills inside the classroom.  
61 responses



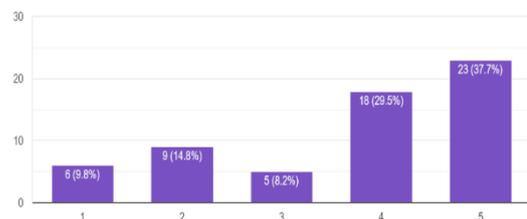
I improved my academic speaking skills in the EAP classes.  
61 responses



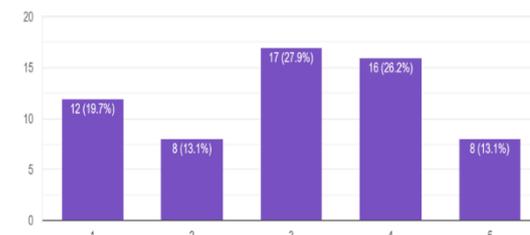
I improved my academic writing skills in the EAP classes.  
61 responses



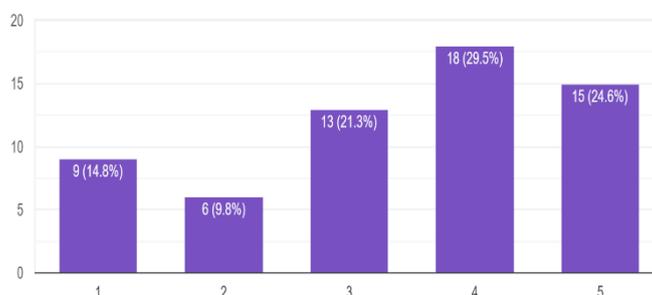
I was provided with sufficient opportunities to practice my academic writing inside and outside the classroom.  
61 responses



I improved my academic vocabulary in EAP classes.  
61 responses



The EAP classes have met my education expectations in general.  
61 responses



This section of data is concerned with the students’ opinions specifically on the EAP course content as a whole. The quantitative amount of student opinions per statement tells us that, on average, about 54% of them agreed and/or strongly agreed with the given statements on different topics. The exceptional cases are where academic writing improvement and practice opportunities for writing were concerned. The data shows that most students specifically agreed with those statements (almost 67%), which shows that the current EAP programme at least has an acceptable level for teaching those aspects. Moving on to the next group, we have approximately 18% of the students who are decidedly ambivalent in their opinion. This raises the implication that they are either not sure whether they learnt something in their classes, or they decided to stay silent since their level did not increase. Again, analysis of the graphs shows that, in the case of speaking and vocabulary the number of people neutral on

topic increased. Finally, the statements were disagreed with by around 28% of the respondents, with an increase in academic speaking and vocabulary being of import.

Overall, the analysis of the compiled data indicates that there are a lot of areas to improve in this section of EAP course content since the positives are only a very slight majority. However, the main focus should be on the academic speaking and vocabulary practice since those are the areas in which the flaws really grab attention.

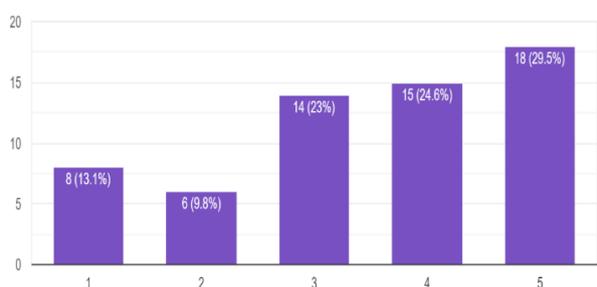
**(b) Learner’s Autonomy**

Marking Options

- 1-Strongly disagree
- 2- Disagree
- 3-Neutral
- 4- Agree
- 5- Strongly agree

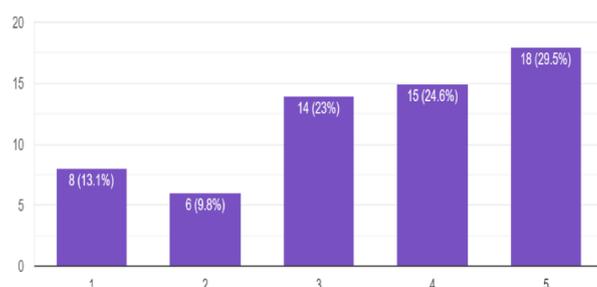
I learned how to plan my learning and study my lessons independently

61 responses



I learned how to plan my learning and study my lessons independently

61 responses



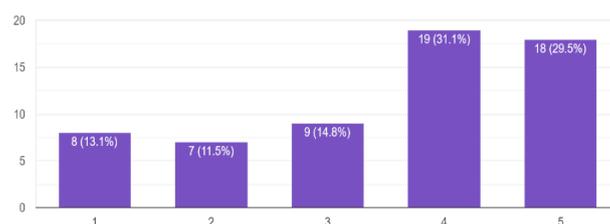
I was provided with enough opportunities to reflect on my learning.

61 responses



The EAP lessons have raised my awareness of skills and strategies that I can use for my language development.

61 responses



After studying all the graphs in this section, one can see that, on a mean, approximately 57% of the students who responded were positive in their opinions regarding the statements concerning their own autonomy in studying and learning. While this indicates that these students are well on their way to studying independently using the methods EAP lessons have taught them, there is a group that remains conflicted when identifying with the statements. This neutral group consists of around 19% of the sample population, and the interesting part is that they mostly

felt conflicted on the topic of planning to learn and study their lessons independently, whereas they were more inclined to either agree or disagree on the others.

In conclusion, after analysing the data from this section, we can say that a slight majority of the sample population consider the EAP programme to be affective in teaching a learner how to study and learn independently, using the different techniques taught in EAP lessons. The rest of the participants' opinions on this matter are in contrast, however, and the amount of students in this group is significant enough to warrant a thorough update of the existing curriculum.

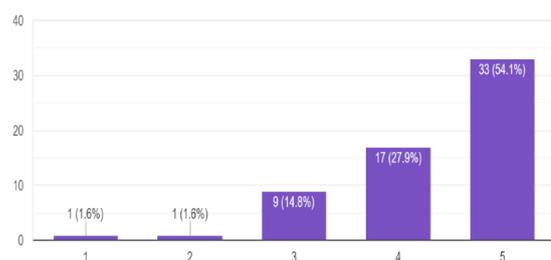
**( c ) Course Materials and Resources**

Marking Options

- 1-Strongly disagree
- 2- Disagree
- 3-Neutral
- 4- Agree
- 5- Strongly agree

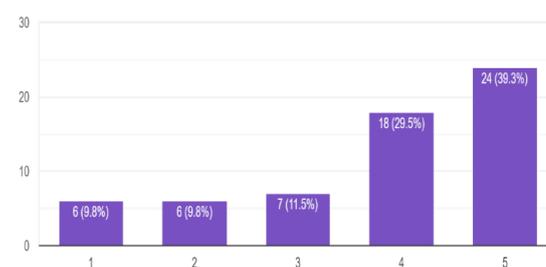
The instructional materials were relevant to the course content.

61 responses



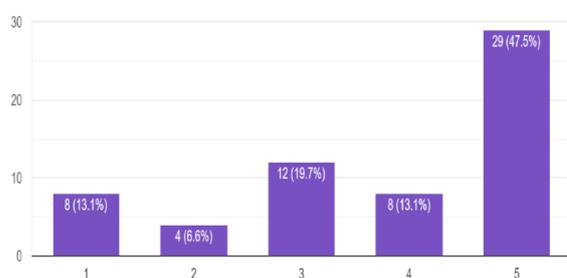
The instructional materials were sufficient.

61 responses



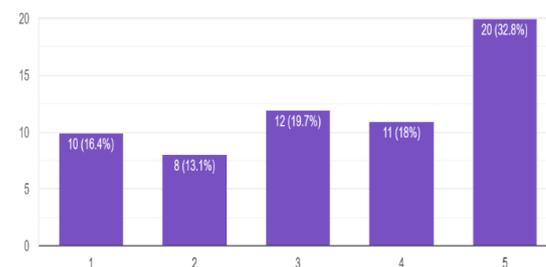
The topics and materials used in the EAP classes were engaging and interesting.

61 responses

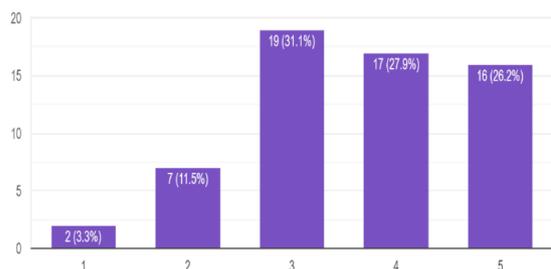


The EAP book used in the EAP classes was engaging and interesting.

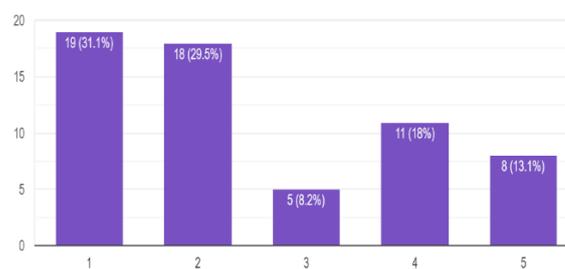
61 responses



The library has enough sources for studying Academic English.  
61 responses



A variety of audio-visual aids (OHP, multimedia, flashcards, video, realia and so on) were used.  
61 responses



The graphs in this section, after being analysed, tells us that, firstly, an average of 57.9% learners responded in a positive way to the statements involving the course materials and resources used in the EAP programme. It also shows the skewed distribution of student opinions on these statements. For example, the statement instructional materials' relevancy was positively agreed by about 82% of the students, but in cases of library resources being available and audio-visual aids being used to supplement them, the agreement rate suddenly drops down to roughly 54.1% and 31.1% respectively. The neutral parties were, on a mean, about 17.5% of the whole population, and here we notice a rather intriguing phenomena. It seems that almost 31.1% of the students were on the fence about the statement regarding resources in the library. This points to the possibility that they might not even have been aware that the library had these tools in the first place, so their confusion caused them to be neutral. Third, the group that disagreed and/or strongly disagreed with statements are the remaining average 24.6%. The number of students disagreeing in general fluctuates wildly as shown in the graphs. Case in point, the graph regarding relevance of instructional materials has the lowest disagreement rate of 3.2%, whereas the EAP books due to being unengaging, received a large increase in disagreeing votes, 29.5%, and this peaked at the statement regarding the usage of audio-visual aids to supplement the lessons, a majority of 60.6%. This directly indicates that the EAP curriculum currently in use is not using any supplementary audio-visual guides to aid students in learning.

In conclusion, the data in this section has several skews that point out a few strong, and several weak points of the EAP programme. The flaws of uninteresting books should be addressed, alongside making sure to make the students aware of the library resources, and the use of multimedia aids should be increased to rectify the problems in this section.

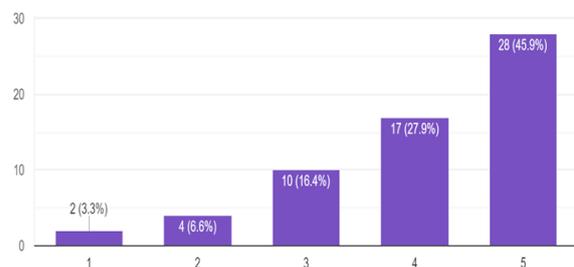
#### (d) Evaluation & Assessment

Marking Options

- 1-Strongly disagree
- 2- Disagree
- 3-Neutral
- 4- Agree
- 5- Strongly agree

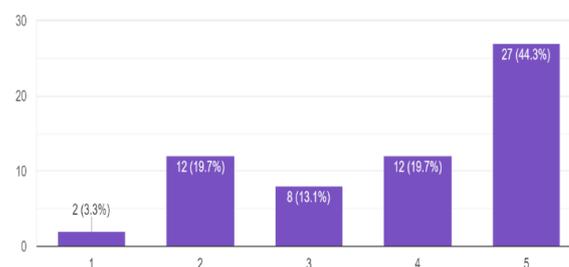
The content of the test tasks is directly linked to the course content and instruction.

61 responses



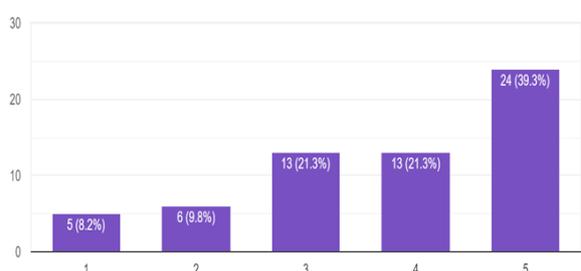
I had enough time to complete the test tasks in the exams.

61 responses



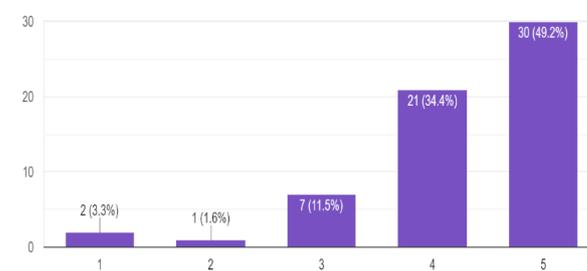
I was provided with sufficient feedback regarding the achievement at the exams

61 responses



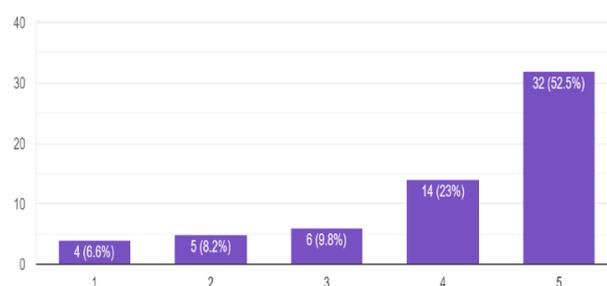
Assessment results were announced in a reasonable time.

61 responses



Assignments and tests were graded fairly and thoroughly.

61 responses



Using the average values of these graphs show that approximately 71.5% of the learners voted positively regarding the statements given. While this is a clear majority there are some noticeable variations between agreements of each statement, such as when the subject of ample feedback is concerned, the data reveals a positive vote of 60.6%, while on the other hand, it jumps to 83.6% when the question of timely assessment results were concerned. The neutral group quantitatively stayed low in this section, with an approximate of 14.4% of the students' decision hanging in the balance, though it should be of minor note that this amount has a peak of 21.3% when sufficient feedback of student exam is concerned. Finally, the group of disagreeing students, remained within a small range, averaging around 14.1%, and slightly peaking on the statement of exam time duration to 23%. It remained its lowest in this section at 4.9% when timely assessment results were handed out.

To summarize, the data in this section had a more positive skew in that it had more positive opinions to the statements provided. However, it should be noted that some more time management lessons could be included and a more patient one on one feedback on exam papers could help students in this part of the EAP programme.

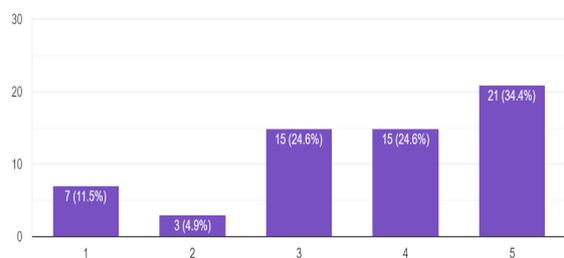
**(e) Learning Process in Classroom**

**Marking Options**

- 1-Strongly disagree
- 2- Disagree
- 3-Neutral
- 4- Agree
- 5- Strongly agree

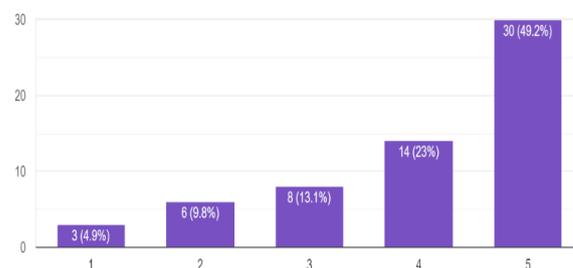
The instructor facilitated the learning process following different learner centered activities in class.

61 responses



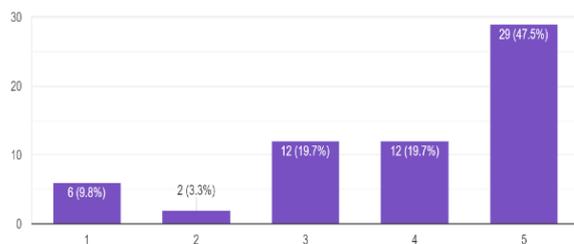
The instructor's discussion was organized in a clear and engaging and engaging way.

61 responses



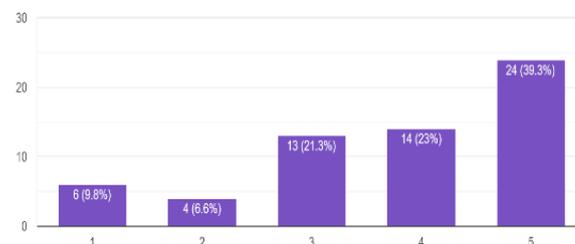
The instructor encouraged and ensured full student participation in class.

61 responses



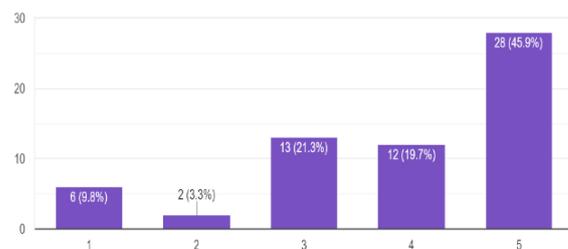
The instructor enhanced the learning process through the experience of the students.

61 responses



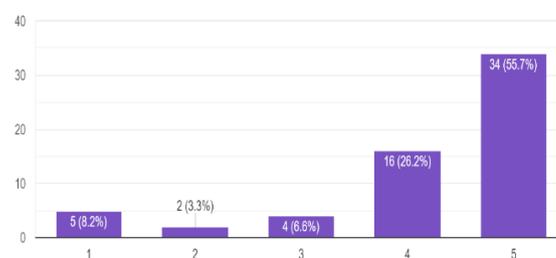
The instructor conducted the classes in an effective and interesting.

61 responses

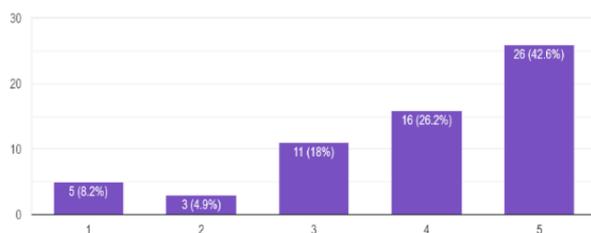


The instructor treated the students fairly and impartially.

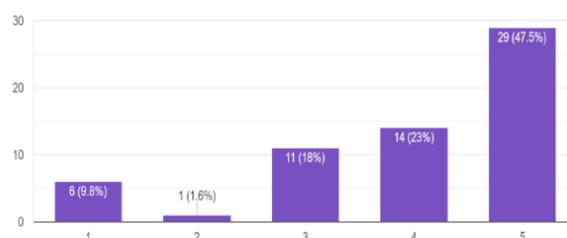
61 responses



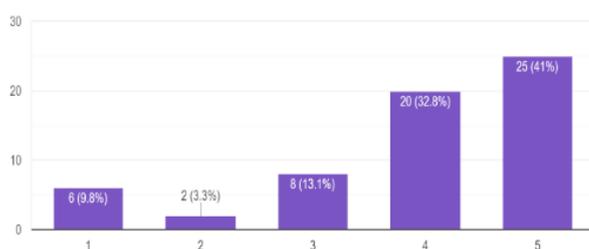
The instructor facilitated the individual and group needs.  
61 responses



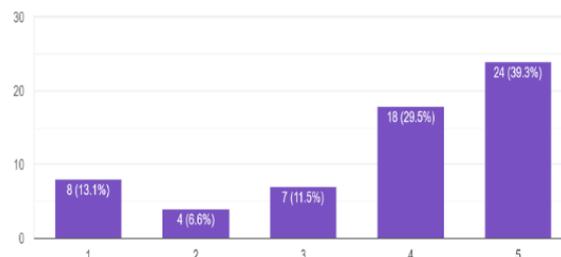
The instructor gave summative and formative feedback to the students about the progress.  
61 responses



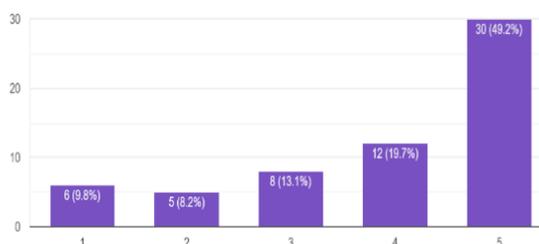
The instructor encouraged critical response that is required in the process of research in classroom.  
61 responses



The classes were well paced with questions and answers session.  
61 responses



The classes were smooth, sequenced and logical.  
61 responses



In this section, by analysing all the graphs, it is clearly observed that the majority of the respondents, roughly 69% on an average, are positive about how the instructor conducted and facilitated the learning process in their respective classroom. These students seem to have a clear idea about the learning progress and the development they experienced in their respective classes. However, it is highly interesting to notice that only an average of 14.6% of the total population opted to disagree and/or strongly disagree that their learning experiences say otherwise which means they were not happy with how they had been catered to through the journey of their EAP programme when they were facilitated by their instructors.

To sum up, it can be said from this quantitative data analysis, a major percentage of total participants believe that the mentors gave their best while facilitating the EAP programme with its aims and objectives to fulfill the learning agenda to serve the learning goals the students aspired, although some revisions to include the remaining students would not go amiss.

## **Qualitative data: findings from the interview**

### **(a) How EAP courses improve students' academic English**

Among the 10 participants, five of them, or around 50% said the EAP programme helps students' academic skill, basic writing skill, prewriting, post writing, planning, fundamental basics, vocabulary and grammar, receptive skills and productive skills to some extent. The rest 50% argued just the other way around. They said it only helps to some extent as teachers are unable to give significant time in one to one case. In addition to that, though the students improve marginally in cases of fluency and coherence in academic writing, the EAP courses are not designed to improve grammar, reading, listening and speaking skills. Besides, most students also lack reading habits, which is necessary to improve academic writing, so their academic English do not improve as much as expected through the programme.

### **(b) Students' communication in English with the instructor**

70% of the total number of teachers said that most of the students are not able to communicate via English effectively with their teachers, mostly because of the students' language barrier. In addition to that, the students feel shy and reluctant, hence they mostly resort to using Bengali to communicate. However, even when they try to use English, they struggle to communicate. As a matter of fact, 30% of the teachers said a few students can communicate, but it takes time for them to learn English for communication because most of the students come from Bangla medium background. The classrooms are an amalgam of different students' ability to communicate in English, where the level of ability fluctuates from student to student.

### **(c) Students facing difficulties in their academic and professional life after doing their EAP programme**

Here, only 20% of the total population said majority of the students don't have difficulties. The rest of the teachers said that the learners face difficulties in their academic and professional lives, which means the programme does not serve its intended purpose. The reasons are varied and critical to look at. One of the crucial reasons, a participant opined, is that the current students' standard of the particular university is not fit for the EAP courses, and in return they lose their CGPA for it. As the weak students continue to face difficulties, two classes per week are not nearly enough to improve their language skills. They need to continue practicing outside the classroom, which requires intrinsic motivation from their side. Time is too little to address all the issues in class and most students do not register what is taught. Besides this, their receptive and productive skills are weak due to lack of practice. Surprisingly enough, one of the respondents stated that he expects majority of the students have difficulties in terms of using English because most students are fundamentally disinclined to actually take part in the real effort to learn and develop the skills, therefore, students are responsible as they forget what they have learned.

**(d) Students' benefits from the strategies taught in the EAP classes**

All of the participants agreed that the students are benefited from the strategies used in the programme. Students develop their vocabulary that has some transfer value, pair work and group work train the learners to communicate effectively, alongside which they are also taught how to use different techniques to approach reading texts and learn how to comprehend various writing prompts in a more organized way. The students develop brainstorming strategies which help them to reduce time in exam hall and in writing essays.

Among the ten teachers, two of them said that the students benefit to a certain degree because they are limited by a tendency to mimic value than try to understand what is taught and discussed in the classroom. To some extent, they benefit since they get exposure to structural components of academic writing, and some practice in the classroom through the means of various exercises. As an example, they learn the basics of how to write a research paper in English.

**(e) Constructive and beneficial feedback given by the teachers**

Around 70% of the teachers said the feedback given by the teachers help students to re-evaluate their own work as it involves using practical strategies, thus, students learn from constructive feedback and then they get to know themselves better based on the flaws pointed out by the teachers.

30% said to some extent the students do benefit from this, but said it depends on them because the students will only be benefited if they take the feedback seriously. However, it is difficult for the instructor to identify each student's strengths and weaknesses due to the large number of students in each class. The students' reluctance to learn is also a major barrier, according to these teachers.

**(f)The strengths of EAP programme**

The findings of my research indicate multi-layered strengths of EAP programme which I believe the majority of the teachers in my field would agree on. Primarily, it familiarizes students with the errors made by them. Not only is EAP a great method for teaching writing structures but also an effective one to improve the reading strategies of students. Structural components of several kinds of Academic Writing becomes easy for students to acquire as it exposes them to the basics of writing a Research paper. It enforces students to explore various areas of the programmes which inserts a fair chance of students adhering to those. The programme stays relevant to the objectives which keeps the writing aligned with the topic. Even, skill related to editing are also taught in the programme. Being a well-organized and structured programme, it helps students to improve individual writing and speaking skills.

**(g)The weaknesses of the EAP courses**

Reading skills are predominantly ignored in the programme. There is a lack of appropriate reading materials. There is a very short period of time which does not suffice to practice reading skills in class which results in low or in most cases no

improvement of reading skills which are essential to develop writing skills. There is no systematic way of teaching vocabulary in this programme. Time duration proves to be insufficient to cover such a big syllabus. There can be fluctuation in the number of students in same class, sometimes the class size is relatively big and sometimes it is relatively small. Therefore, there can be a lack in students' motivation to offer effort and learn. Since, there are too many topics to cover, there appears mental fatigue. Additionally, the syllabus of the programme is not up to the current standard and does not address all issues.

### **(h)Modification of EAP programme**

The programme can work a lot better if a few suggestions could be incorporated. For example, inclusion of tense exercises would work well. A vocabulary learning of handy words is highly recommended. Course length should be reduced and the number of assignments should be lessened also. Adding multiple resources can be a great idea. For reference, it can be a course similar to IELTS training with modules on grammar, vocabulary, listening, reading, speaking etc., On the whole, the course content and the books used for EAP need to be revised.

### **(i)Skills that are not developed in this programme**

80% of the teachers felt that reading, speaking and listening skills are not developed in the existing EAP programme. These skills are as equally important as writing skills but there is too much content and too many writing components in the EAP programme which adversely affects the reading, speaking and listening parts by causing them to be left out in class. There are many assignments and class works involved in the programme outline that does not help learners to develop lexical/lexicon semantic skills, and critical and analytical skills.

20% of the total number of teachers feel that teachers' incompetency and laziness in using methodology are the sole reasons that become constraints in helping the learners to develop skills productively. Along with that, they also believe that, though attempts are made to develop all the skills, their experience says the students are reluctant and not willing to learn.

### **Research implications and conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to analyze the quality of the present EAP program from the students' perspective, using both qualitative and quantitative strategies of data collection methods. From the research problem discussed above, we can conclude that the main focus of the EAP programme is to develop the educational skills and learning strategies that enable learners to use English competently in different academic settings. Learners' needs and styles should be taken into consideration while working on the teaching framework.

Our study outcome suggests that good amount of time and reinforcement is not usually given to develop these academic skills and techniques. The curriculum should target practicing academic and study skills by emphasizing related abilities and techniques that are more synchronized with the students' department. The results here indicate that there's a good need for the development of listening comprehension

skills and note taking approaches, which leads us to the resolution that learners should be supplied with opportunities to prepare these aspects not only in classroom setting but outside as well.

The results however depict that in the context of reading skills, the students require to develop reading tactics that will help them understand academic texts more easily and both extensive and intensive reading tasks are designed to develop these approaches. I tried to remain transparent during the study. About feedback and originality, one of the participants emailed me while conducting this research:

[ I haven't had the opportunity to take your classes, but I hope and pray that this survey will be used to enhance both engagement in class as well as improve how the classes are conducted. I can confidently say that there was a lack of feedback on my mistakes in EAP programme and how I may improve or an explanation of my grades, especially for my (ENG) 103 grade. It'd also be nice to see a change in the (ENG) 105 curriculum requirements where the current students just ask their seniors to provide them with their researches instead of making an effort by themselves, which then leads to insufficient skills of researching and presenting in major courses].

The outcome of this study reveals the need for strategy training, and gives emphasis on study and reflection skills. Learners are encouraged to take the hold of their own learning within the academic environment. Results also imply that learners discourage textbooks. The academic materials for this course should be consistent with the students' requirements. The creation and adaptation of the learning materials must reflect students' needs and discard traditional methods. Materials which "affect the learners by attracting their attention, interest and curiosity; and engage students in 'learner-centered' discovery activities" (Tomlinson, 1998: 11) should be developed. To motivate students' intrinsically in the teaching and learning process, authentic teaching materials should be adapted and altered (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

The suggestions and implications of this study remains varied and critical, which make dealing with the process more time-consuming. Since research methodologies differ depending on the teaching and learning contexts, courses should be taken by the respective departments on methodology to avoid discrepancy. The emphasis should be given for improving the students' English as a whole, rather than making the learning process all about exams. A revised version of 24-week courses could be implemented instead of 12-week courses.

The EAP programme needs further discussion and planning, it is essential that some of the redundant and backdated materials must be removed from the existing curriculum. Inclusion of optimum exposure to academic content and tasks (Grabe & Stoller, 2001) in the classroom activities is of great importance to successfully design a proper EAP course for the EFL students. Extensive listening and reading materials, online learning, independent learning tasks, and scopes for applying learning strategies outside the class should be included in the curriculum rather than keeping it only a classroom based programme.

## Appendix 1

### EAP Course Evaluation Student Questionnaire (EAPCESQ)

This questionnaire aims to find out some information about the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing EAP courses. There are 5 sections and you are kindly requested to circle the number that reflects your opinion. It will take you about 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Thank you!

| Student Name:<br>Class:<br>Date: |    |   | Strongly agree | Agree | No idea | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------------------------|----|---|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| Course Content                   | 1  | I improved my academic listening and note-taking skills in English in the EAP classes.                                      | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
|                                  | 2  | I was provided with sufficient opportunities to practice my academic listening and note-taking skills inside the classroom. | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
|                                  | 3  | I improved my academic speaking skills in the EAP classes.  | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
|                                  | 4  | I improved my academic reading skills in the EAP classes.   | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
|                                  | 5  | I was provided with sufficient opportunities to practice my academic reading skills inside and outside the classroom.       | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
|                                  | 6  | I improved my academic writing skills in the EAP classes.   | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
|                                  | 7  | I was provided with sufficient opportunities to practice my academic writing inside and outside the classroom.              | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
|                                  | 8  | I improved my academic vocabulary in EAP classes.   | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
|                                  | 9  | The EAP classes have met my education expectations in general.  | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
| Independent Learning             | 10 | I learned how to plan my learning and study my lessons independently  | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |
|                                  | 1  | I have improved my study  | 5              | 4     | 3       | 2        | 1                 |

|                                |        |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--------------------------------|--------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|                                | 1      | skills which I use in my academic studies.  |   |   |   |   |   |
|                                | 1<br>2 | I was provided with enough opportunities to reflect on my learning.   | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|                                | 1<br>3 | The EAP lessons have raised my awareness of skills and strategies that I can use for my language development. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Course materials and resources | 1<br>4 | The instructional materials were relevant to the course content.  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|                                | 1<br>5 | The instructional materials were sufficient.  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|                                | 1<br>6 | The topics and materials used in the EAP classes were engaging and interesting.                               | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|                                | 1<br>7 | The EAP book used in the EAP classes was engaging and interesting.  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|                                | 1<br>8 | The library has enough sources for studying Academic English  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|                                | 1<br>9 | A variety of audio-visual aids (OHP, multimedia, flashcards, video, realia and so on) were used.              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Testing and assessment         | 2<br>0 | The content of the test tasks is directly linked to the course content and instruction.                       | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|                                | 2<br>1 | I had enough time to complete the test tasks in the exams.  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|                                | 2<br>2 | I was provided with sufficient feedback regarding the achievement at the exams                                | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|                                | 2<br>3 | Assessment results were announced in a reasonable time.   | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|                                | 2<br>4 | Assignments and tests were graded fairly and thoroughly.  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Academic instruction           | 2<br>5 | The instructor facilitated the learning process following different learner centred activities in class.      | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

|    |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 26 | The instructor's discussion was organized in a clear and engaging way.                   | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 27 | The instructor encouraged and ensured full student participation in class.               | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 28 | The instructor enhanced the learning process through the experience of the students.     | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 29 | The instructor conducted the classes in an effective and interesting way.                | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 30 | The instructor treated the students fairly, impartially, and with respect.               | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 31 | The instructor facilitated individual and group needs.                                   | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 32 | The instructor gave summative and formative feedback to the students about the progress. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 33 | The instructor encouraged research activities in the classroom.                          | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 34 | The classes were well paced with questions and answers session.                          | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 35 | The classes were smooth, sequenced and logical.  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Adapted from: Jordan, 1997 and Richards, 2001

## Appendix 2

### Semi-structured Focus Group Interviews (SFGIs)

Participants: Teachers who are teaching EAP courses

GROUP SIZE: 10

DATE:

|    | Questions  | Notes |
|----|--|-------|
| 1. | Do you believe that the EAP (Eng 102/103/105) course improves students' academic English? If yes, how? If not, Why?  |       |
| 2. | Can the students easily communicate with you in English?   |       |
| 3. | Do you think students have difficulties in their academic and professional life after doing their EAP programme? If yes, why?  |       |
| 4. | Do your students benefit from the strategies taught in the EAP classes while doing assignments and exams? How?   |       |
| 5. | Do you think that the feedback given by the teachers is beneficial and constructive, and helped students to discover their strengths and weaknesses? If not, Why not? If yes, How?                           |       |
| 6. | What are the strengths of the EAP courses?   |       |
| 7. | What are the weaknesses of the EAP courses?  |       |
| 8. | If you are asked to change anything about the EAP programme what would you change?   |       |
| 9. | Which skills, do you think, are not developed in this course? What were the constraints? (time, pace, lack of AVA, class size, teaching methodology, teacher incompetence, too much content, a lot of exams) |       |
| 10 | Do you want to add something else?   |       |

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***Engaging and Motivating Foreign Language Learners with Audiovisual Aids: The Case of French in Selected High Schools in Ghana***

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**Abstract**

The integration of multimedia in language teaching and learning has been a subject of interest to many educators in recent times, as research has shown its impact to be outstanding. In Ghana, French as a foreign language (FFL) is the only foreign language, aside English, which is taught from the early stages of the educational trajectory through to tertiary levels. Studies however confirm that very few of Ghana's populace is fluent in French, despite all measures put in place. This study seeks to explore the use of audiovisual teaching and learning materials in the FFL classroom, whilst exposing the benefits of using videos to motivate FFL learners and develop their communicative competence. An exploratory study is conducted in selected senior high schools in a Ghanaian city. Data is gathered using questionnaires, interview guides and a non-participant observation of an FFL lesson which integrates video as the main instructional material. Although the FFL teachers attest to sometimes using audiovisuals in class, we gather that the integration of videos in the FFL classrooms is almost nonexistent, given some challenges. Despite the setbacks, both teachers and students maintain that videos contribute greatly to motivating and enlivening language lessons. We recommend teachers to develop practical, creative and effective methods of incorporating videos in the FFL classroom. Students are also encouraged to develop self-learning strategies which will drive their personal communicative development. Finally, the Ghana Education Service (GES) is encouraged to develop policies that actively integrate technology in teaching and learning of FFL.

Keywords: Audiovisual learning, Foreign Language Acquisition (FLA), French as a Foreign Language (FFL)

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## Introduction

The past few years have seen interesting technological advancements, some of which have been adopted into the classroom for educational purposes. Research has further revealed how positively impactful these technologies tend to have on language learning and communication development when these tools are well integrated into the language classroom (Hirschsprung, 2005; Williams 2013; Owusu-Mante, 2014). Individuals in the 21st century have direct access to equipment such as mobile phones, laptops, tablets and the like, and with rapid connection to the internet, there is almost no reason to stay in the unknown, so far as knowledge or innovation is concerned. Our study focuses on the use of videos in language instruction, though quite common around the world, but quite unpopular in the Ghanaian educational system with respect to the teaching and learning of foreign languages.

Ghana is an Anglophone country in West Africa which is surrounded by three francophone neighbouring countries (Togo, Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast). As a result of this geographical position, inhabitants in Ghana, especially those living in border towns and capital cities tend to have frequent contact and interactions with citizens of neighbouring francophone countries, usually for commercial, healthcare and educational purposes, just to mention a few. In addition to this, the French language, after English, seems to be the most widely taught foreign language in the Ghanaian educational system and averagely, almost every Ghanaian who benefits from the local educational system should have studied some French in basic and high school. It is however observed that many Ghanaians struggle to effectively communicate in French, and the few who manage to carry out some level of communication are unable to go beyond the basic exchange of pleasantries (Asiedu, 2019). In an attempt to discover the reason for this phenomenon, we seek in this study to examine the teaching methodologies and materials that are employed in French education, specifically in selected secondary schools in Cape Coast, a metropolis and a capital city in the South-western part of Ghana. We specifically examine the presence and frequency of use of videos and audiovisual materials as Teaching and Learning Material (TLM) in teaching French as a Foreign Language (henceforth FFL). The term *video*, referred to in this study mainly represent audiovisual motion pictures that are intended to promote learning in the foreign language classroom. These could be relatively short representations of concepts in the form of cartoons, music clips, animations, short films or extracts of documentaries, including news items, trimmed for classroom application and language instruction (Balogun & Kaaku, 2012). This study also examines the elements of motivation and classroom engagement that instructional videos possibly unravel once they are well integrated in the teaching and learning of foreign languages. The possible challenges of using these TLMs in Ghana are also described further down in this study.

## Background to the study

As mentioned earlier, FFL is a widely studied discipline in the educational system of Ghana, and as such, it is introduced into the educational system from Primary School (PS) and Junior High School (JHS), and serves as one of the main core courses, thus, making it a requirement for entry into the Senior High School (SHS). At the SHS level, FFL becomes an elective course that has to be chosen as part of a bouquet of other courses, depending on a student's major (Csajbok-Twerefou, Chachu, & Viczai,

2014). Cuq (2003) expresses that the major goal for individuals in foreign language acquisition is to be able to obtain the knowledge needed to communicate effectively in the target language. In line with this, teaching and learning French in Ghana aims at developing in students, the knowledge and competences necessary to thrive in a francophone environment whilst communicating in a culturally appropriate manner with other French speakers (Ghana Education Service, 2010). This is validated by the words of the current president of the republic of Ghana, H.E. Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo-Addo in his speech at the 17<sup>th</sup> La Francophonie Summit, 2018, held in Armenia. The president reiterated the importance of learning to communicate in the French language. He states: “Our goal is to live, one day, in a bilingual Ghana, i.e. English and French, together with our own indigenous languages... History tells us that this is the best route to general progress and prosperity” (Akuffo-Addo 2018).

Despite the good intentions of the Ghanaian government with regards to the development of the French language, as well as the emphasis placed on French education by the Ghana Education Service (GES), very few of the students who have studied French in Ghana are able to communicate effectively in the language (Appiah-Thompson, 2015; Asiedu, 2019). We believe this could be as a result of a number of factors, including the methodologies of teaching French in Ghana which do not seem to be meeting the communication needs of learners (Kuupole, De-Souza & Bakah, 2012).

### **Objectives of study**

In this study, our primary aims are to investigate the frequency with which videos are integrated in French as a Foreign Language (FFL) instruction in selected schools. We also seek to report on the challenges in effectively exploiting these videos, as well as the perceptions that teachers and students have concerning the deliberate integration of videos in teaching and learning French in second cycle institutions in Ghana. By so doing, it is our hope that teachers will begin to deliberately include video activities in foreign language education, which can in turn improve the communicative competence of French language learners (Mayer, 2001).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Prior studies such as that of Williams (2013) and Hirschsprung (2005) have confirmed the invaluable role that multimedia plays in foreign language instruction, hinged on a number of theories that explain the effectiveness in integrating multimedia such as audiovisuals in the teaching and learning of foreign languages. In this section of our work, we discuss one main theory which serves as the bedrock to our study –the Cognitive theory of multimedia learning, proposed by the renowned psychologist, Richard Mayer.

### **Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning**

Cognitivists base their studies on mental processes and activities of the brain that are responsible for the acquisition of concepts; and for the purpose of our study, language. For cognitivists, human beings rely on internal mechanisms and mental processes to achieve goals and results related to their learning (Cuq, 2003). In the domain of foreign language acquisition, cognitivists are of the view that learning a

foreign language is a conscious process which involves a great amount of thought processing and reasoning, as against the behaviourists who believe language acquisition to be innate and automatic. We choose to base our work on the cognitive theory for multimedia learning, postulated by Richard Mayer, which stems from the cognitive theory and has a direct relationship to our topic of study.

Mayer (1997, 2001) is of the view that multimedia (and for the purpose of this study, audiovisuals) engage learners in three cognitive processes: selection, organization, and integration. Significant learning occurs when the learner is able to actively select the transmitted information after which the information is later mentally organized by the learner. The learner is therefore able to store and integrate the information acquired in the long-term memory, by means of coherent verbal and visual representations (Mayer, 1997; 2001).

This leads us to the three types of memory stores that Mayer's cognitive theory of multimedia learning proposes - the sensory memory, working memory and the long-term memory. The sensory memory is described as that which receives stimuli and stores information for a short time. When stimuli is processed and mental constructs or "schemas" are formed, the information is then transferred into the working memory. Information is later transferred into the long-term memory after logical mental constructs are formed. This theory postulates that significant learning occurs when the learner processes information with pictures, words and sound, as compared to when learning is done with words alone. Multimedia, such as audiovisuals, therefore help with the formation of strong mental constructs, which are able to transfer concepts from the short-term memory through to long-term memory.

The cognitive theory for multimedia learning stems from three main assumptions. The first being that the human brain has two separate channels for information processing; the auditory and visual channels. The second assumption is that each of these channels (visual and auditory) have a limited capacity and can perform given tasks up to a certain limit. The last assumption is that learning is an active process which includes filtering, selecting, organizing and integrating information based upon prior knowledge. Therefore, hinging on these assumptions, it is safe to deduce that when information is actively learned in the foreign language class with the aid of videos, which include motion pictures, sounds, and sometimes written texts (subtitles), learners are able to recall a great detail of the lesson and eventually store the information in the long-term memory. With lessons that include audiovisuals, learners have the opportunity to store vocabulary, replicate speech acts and even understand some cultural components of the target language. Through multimedia, learners are able to connect verbal representations to visual representations in their working memories and thus store these concepts. In the FFL classroom, if the learner should hear the word *un chien*, (which means *a dog* in English) and sees a visual image of a dog simultaneously, the word *un chien* is represented both visually and verbally and is more likely to be moved to the long-term memory. This cognitive theory is therefore of the notion that the brain selects and organizes multimedia presentation of words, pictures, and auditory information simultaneously to produce strong logical mental constructs, that are easily recalled by the learner (Mayer, 2001).

## Literature review

For our literature review, we focus on the role and importance of integrating videos in language instruction, as represented in some selected articles.

One of the primary purposes of integrating videos in teaching languages is to heighten and arouse the interest of learners in the target language (Jhurree, 2005). Stagnitto (2011) postulates that, videos help to develop positive attitudes among learners as they become well motivated to speak in class, thus, ensuring a high level of classroom engagement. Language learning is often seen as a challenging feat, and so, if learners succeed in developing positive attitudes towards learning the target language, they are more likely to eventually develop the ability to effectively communicate and understand the target language (Stagnitto, 2011).

According to Gilakjani (2012), videos, when integrated into language instruction, help to improve learners' understanding. Williams (2013) also adds that learners are stimulated by rich media content that help them understanding complex topics. Language learners therefore able to associate images with words grasped from the videos and also succeed in identifying the contexts for communication. By so doing, learners are able to increase their memorization and also their ability to code and recover language structures (Mekheimer, 2011; Gilakjani 2012)

Research has also revealed a direct relationship between the frequency of use of video documents and the motivation that learners develop in their quest for effective communication skills in the target language. Studies such as Williams (2013) and Park & Jung (2016) have shown how teachers who frequently use videos in instruction, discover that their students learn a lot more and are well motivated enough to want to pick up new words in the target language.

Finally, Mekheimer (2011) finds that videos allow learners to have a feel of the social settings and cultural practices found in the target language. This heightens classroom engagement, as he explains how video clips deepen the cultural understanding of foreign language learners.

## Research Questions

In the following paragraphs, we seek to respond to the following research questions:

1. How frequently do teachers integrate videos in teaching FFL?
2. What are the challenges associated with the use of these videos in the FFL classroom?
3. What are the perceptions of FFL teachers and learners on the integration of videos in FFL lessons?

## Methodology

This study leans towards the exploratory research approach which allows the researcher to identify and familiarize first-hand with the actual situations on the ground. This approach is however not sufficient enough to draw a fixed conclusion with specific generalizations (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). In this exploratory study, we

also employ the mixed method of data collection with our main research instruments being questionnaires, interview guides and non-participant observation rubrics.

The population of our study is made up of teachers and learners of FFL at the Senior High School (SHS) level in Cape Coast, Ghana. We deliberately sampled two public schools of high repute, with the hope that they would have the tools needed to carry out video-based lessons in FFL. We shall represent the chosen schools by the codes *SHSA* and *SHSB*, for confidentiality purposes. We had to specifically select one FFL class each in these high schools, as FFL does not cut across all disciplines. We therefore worked with 60 students and 7 teachers in both schools, as specified in Table 1 below.

| Name of School | No. of students | No. of teachers |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| SHSA           | 34              | 4               |
| SHSB           | 26              | 3               |
| TOTAL          | 60              | 7               |

**Table 1: Basic demographics**

To gather our data, we first observed (with the help of a video recorder and a non-participant observation guide) as a teacher an FFL class. Here, the main teaching material used for this lesson was a French cartoon, played with the help of a video projector and a laptop. Students filled two types of questionnaires – a pre-lesson questionnaire and a post-lesson questionnaire. Teachers also responded to our interviews and questionnaires.

### **Presentation of results and discussions**

The presentation of results is divided into three different themes in line with our research questions and objectives. First, we gather from students and teachers the frequency of the use of audiovisuals tailored towards the teaching and learning of FFL. We go on to present the challenges that are faced or likely to be faced in the exploitation of audiovisual materials in the FFL classroom and finally their perceptions concerning the active integration of videos for the purposes of French language instruction.

### **Frequency of the use of instructional videos**

To gather data on the types of teaching and learning materials and the frequency at which they were used respectively, we gathered that the teachers mainly relied on text books for instruction. Table 2 shows a clear representation of responses from the students.

| Question  | Response           | No. | %     |
|---|--------------------|-----|-------|
| Which of the following teaching and learning materials do your teachers often use in your French lessons? | French Text books  | 46  | 76.67 |
|   | French Audio files | 1   | 1.67  |
|   | French Video clips | 0   | 0     |
|   | None of the above  | 12  | 20    |
|   | Other              | 1   | 1.67  |
| TOTAL   |                    | 60  | 100   |

**Table 2: Teaching and Learning Materials Used in the FFL classroom**

An analysis of the results in Table 2 justifies our assumption that the presence of audiovisual materials in the FFL classroom is almost absent, as about 76% of our respondent chose the textbook as the most used instructional material. Though we cannot draw a conclusion or generalize the situation, this somewhat confirms our assumption that teaching methods in Ghanaian second cycle institutions are not as diversified as would have been required for a language class. We note that one student chose the option “Other”, to which he or she explains that teachers come to class with lesson notes already prepared.

In order to get a better picture of the situation, we sought to probe further and attempt to be more specific on how often videos were integrated in FFL lessons. Table 3 adequately sums up responses of the students.

| Question  | Response                 | No. | %     |
|---|--------------------------|-----|-------|
| How often do your teachers include videos in their teaching of FFL? | Once a term              | 1   | 1.67  |
|   | Twice a term             | 1   | 1.67  |
|   | Once in an academic year | 0   | 0     |
|   | Once in a while          | 6   | 10    |
|   | Never                    | 52  | 86.67 |
| TOTAL   |                          | 60  | 100   |

**Table 3: Frequency of the use of instructional videos in the FFL classroom (students’ perspective)**

From Table 3, 52 students, being 86.67% of the population report that instructional videos are never used in the FFL classroom by their teachers. This figure is followed closely by 6 students (being 10% of the student population) who report that instructional videos are only used once in a while during FFL instructional periods. We therefore gather that even if instructional videos are used, their presence in the FFL classrooms are almost non-existent.

We found it necessary also to find out from the FFL instructors how often they use instructional videos in the teaching of the French language. Their responses to this question is summarized in Table 4.

| Response     | No. | %     |
|--------------|-----|-------|
| Once a term  | 2   | 28.57 |
| Twice a term | 1   | 14.29 |
| Once a year  | 0   | 0     |
| Never        | 2   | 28.57 |
| Other        | 2   | 28.57 |
| TOTAL        | 7   | 100   |

**Table 4: Frequency of the use of instructional videos in the FFL classroom (teachers' perspective)**

We realize that majority of the teachers we encountered do not use instructional videos as often as we may have desired. The two teachers who responded "other" stated that they include the video clips only once in a while whilst teaching.

Bases on both responses from the teachers and students we encountered, it is safe to say that instructional videos are not used more than twice in a term, where a term, in the Ghanaian educational system is made up of approximately three months in a year. It seems to us that there is a huge gap that needs to be filled with respect to diversifying teaching materials that are used in the FFL classroom. In a foreign language classroom, learners must have the opportunity to learn from real-life situations because the notions that the learner seeks to acquire are linked to communication situations, which are also embedded in the culture of the target language (Balogun & Kaaku, 2012). The adequate integration of audiovisual materials is one of the means by which real-life communication situations can be presented in the FFL classroom.

### **Challenges associated to the use of these instructional videos**

After establishing our assumptions on how rarely videos are integrated in the teaching and learning of FFL at the secondary level, we believe it is ideal now to find out the reasons behind this. In the following paragraphs, we discuss factors that impede the frequent use of instructional videos by teachers of FFL.

The first challenge that was raised by the teachers we encountered was the complaint that instructional video materials were not readily accessible or easy to find. Five out of the seven teachers said it was difficult for them to get access to video clips in French. Only two teachers stated that they easily found instructional videos in French when they needed to. We observed however that internet access in the schools we visited were limited. This may be one explanation as to why they found it difficult accessing videos to teach.

Another challenge raised by the teachers was the seemingly inadequate training they had acquired with respect to integrating video clips in their teaching routines. Five out of the seven teachers indicated that they had benefited from a training session focused on integrating videos in teaching concepts at a point in time, but it seems this training was not sufficient enough to develop in them, the competence, confidence and technological know-how required. Indeed we believe the integration of videos in teaching concepts should be carried out in a professional and organized manner, in order to meet the learning objectives for a given lesson. Some basic training therefore for the teachers be needed to carry out such a task (Hirschsprung, 2005)

The third constraint that was reported by the teachers was the large class sizes that they teach. Indeed, per our observations, the students we encountered struggled greatly with space during the lesson. Due to the large class sizes, students who sat at the back of the class found it very difficult to see the board where the video was being projected and also very difficult to follow the sound adequately. This is a genuine problem which needs to be addressed in order for video-based instructions to take place smoothly.

Furthermore, the teachers also noted that they had inadequate materials to carry out video-based instructions in the FFL classroom. We believe that if some investment is made into acquiring gadgets suitable for audiovisual based instructions, especially in relation to the teaching of foreign languages, much progress will be made.

According to Hirschsprung (2005, p. 38) videos for instructional purposes are not often used in the language class because its exploitation is limited by the constraints of classroom use, and sometimes, classrooms are not adequate enough for this kind of teaching materials. These responses from our interaction with the FFL teachers have confirmed this assertion.

### **Perceptions of FFL students and teachers on video-based instructions**

This section of our work seeks to answer our final research question on the perceptions teachers and students have on the use of video-based FFL lessons. We will discuss students' responses to the pre-lesson questionnaire before we proceeded to reporting perceptions after the video-based lesson. The perceptions of the teachers will then be discussed after.

Before the lesson took place, we first asked the students whether they thought instructional videos should be integrated into the teaching of FFL. 59 out of 60 students responded in the affirmative, being 98.3%. As a follow-up to this question, students were asked to give reasons for their answers. One student out of the 60 stated that he thinks instructional videos should not be used in teaching oral French expressions because public schools lack basic gadgets and the logistics needed in carrying out such tasks. Table 5 however gives a detailed representation of the responses of the 59 students who responded in the affirmative.

| Response   | No.       | %            |
|--|-----------|--------------|
| Better understanding of the lesson                   | 21        | 35           |
| Lessons will be more practical                       | 16        | 26.67        |
| Motivation and confidence to learn and speak French  | 7         | 11.67        |
| Acquisition of vocabulary and correct pronunciations | 15        | 25           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>59</b> | <b>98.3%</b> |

**Table 5: Students' perceptions on why videos should be integrated in the teaching of FFL**

We gather from 35% of our respondents that they hoped to understand a lesson better when videos are included in teaching. Research tends to confirm that indeed, students have better understanding when audiovisuals are included in teaching concepts (Williams, 2013; Stagnitto, 2011; Mekheimer, 2011). For 26.67% of our respondents, they believed that integrating videos in lessons would make the lessons more practical since they get the chance to follow the images, listen to how words are pronounced and also get the opportunity to observe how communication takes place in the target language, given a particular setting. For 25% of our respondents, integrating videos in lessons meant an increased level of vocabulary acquisition, and the guidance to the right ways of pronouncing words in French. Researchers like Mayer (2001) have shown that audiovisual aids offer another means of presenting information to learners, whereby students are more likely to remember information that was acquired with the aid of multimedia. 11.67% of our respondents believed that video-based FFL instructions would increase their interest and motivation to learn the French language, whilst boosting their confidence and desire to speak in class. We tend to agree with this opinion since videos and other audiovisual aids place an interesting and exciting twist to foreign language learning.

As we mentioned earlier, part of our data collection included observing an FFL class where the instructor taught students with a video clip. The following section of our work addresses the perceptions of students after the video-based lesson. Students were therefore asked to indicate how beneficial the lesson was to them and their opinion on the lesson. Table 6 summarizes their responses.

| Response                                | No. | %     |
|---|-----|-------|
| Better understanding of concepts        | 4   | 6.67  |
| Vocabulary acquisition                  | 40  | 66.67 |
| Interesting approach to learning        | 5   | 8.33  |
| Practicality in learning pronunciations | 4   | 6.67  |
| No response                             | 6   | 10    |
| TOTAL                                   | 60  | 100   |

**Table 6: Students' opinions on the integration of videos in FFL instruction (Post-lesson)**

As seen in Table 6, 40 students, representing 66.67% claim to have acquired new vocabulary during the lesson. According to Mayer's cognitive theory of multimedia learning discussed earlier, students are more likely to keep in their long-term memories, concepts and mental representations that are built from a combined presence of words and pictures. Four students were of the view that they had a better understanding of the concepts that were taught. Five of them also found the lesson interesting, whereas four thought the lesson provided a practical approach in learning the pronunciation of French words. We went on to ask the students whether video-based lessons could be a motivating factor to their studies in French, to which all 60 students responded in the affirmative.

Our study on students' perceptions on the active integration of French videos in FFL instruction revealed an overwhelming positive disposition. Among the responses given, most of them aspire to increase their vocabulary in French, increase their level

of confidence to communicate in French as they also hoped to be more motivated to study and excel in FFL.

### **Teachers' perceptions on the integration of videos in FFL instruction**

We sought to gather from the teachers, their opinions on the role that integrating video clips in their teaching practice could play in the FFL classroom. One teacher was of the view that the French language and its rich culture is best taught with the help of audiovisuals. All seven teachers were of the view that videos served as a factor of motivation for students. Five teachers expressed that teaching FFL with video clips was likely to make teaching and learning more interesting and exciting for both parties – students and teachers alike. Five teachers also stated that videos make up for those concepts that are not extensively captured by the textbooks as it presents a practical option to teaching and learning the French language.

We followed up with a more specific question on student motivation, to find out the perceptions of the teachers on this topic. We asked them whether they thought students were more likely to get motivated to learn French, with the integration of video clips in FFL instruction. All seven teachers responded in the affirmative, that video-clips could be great tools of motivation for FFL students. Our interviews with some of the teachers, revealed how they had noticed over their years of experience, that students were highly motivated by videos that are usually adapted for classroom instruction. Garrabet (2012) confirms this notion as he explains how his FFL students were motivated by authentic videos in the classroom. In his study, he notes that students were motivated by the desire to understand a video in French, motivated to learn new concepts, motivated by the change in the method of instruction and also motivated by the learning of French concepts which were situated in context.

The teachers concluded by expressing how they would be ready to learn how to effectively include videos in their teaching of FFL given the right conditions, logistics and facilities.

### **Responses to research questions**

Discussion of our research questions in the preceding paragraphs lead us to the following conclusions with respect to the two schools visited:

With regards to our first question, which is in relation to the frequency of the use of videos in teaching, we can safely conclude that with the schools involved, the use of video clips for instructional purposes in FFL was very rare or almost non-existent.

Concerning our second research question on the challenges involved in actively integrating videos in FFL lessons, we gathered some setbacks including the following: Teachers complained of accessibility of the video clips in French, problems of logistics, large class sizes and inadequate training to carry out video-based instructions in FFL.

We can also safely say that a greater percentage of both FFL teachers and students maintained favourable perceptions towards the integration of instructional French videos in teaching and learning of FFL at the senior high school level. Among the popular opinions of both teachers and students were that video-based language

lessons were likely to increase learner motivation and vocabulary acquisition, as well as classroom engagement and the confidence to speak French better, all of which are key for the development of communication competence in a language.

### **Didactic recommendations and conclusion**

It is no doubt the wealth of impact that audiovisuals have on foreign language acquisition. Some recommendations on the integration of videos in teaching foreign languages in the Ghanaian context are as follows.

We recommend that teachers find creative measures to include videos in their teaching practice. Given that there are many difficulties that are encountered in its effective integration, we believe some active and creative measures can be taken. Foreign language students are also encouraged to develop an interest in audiovisuals themselves and not only depend on classroom practices to learn and speak a language. We believe that when students are actively involved in their linguistic development, they become responsible for their learning in a way that influences their performance positively (Owusu-Mante, 2014). We recommend that institutions that teach languages must actively put measures in place to make the integration of multimedia very favourable for both the teachers and students. On a larger scale, the state, through institutions such as the Ghana Education Service (GES), need to be more abreast with global trends that promote the active learning of foreign languages.

Favouring the integration of audiovisuals in language education, we believe, is one of the many methods that can produce great results in order to change the narrative of students who learn French for so many years, but are not able to speak a word of it.

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*Are High-Proficiency Learners Effective Feedback Providers? A Case Study on  
Online Peer Feedback in L2 Writing*

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**Abstract**

The advancement of technology provides language learners ample opportunity to engage in meaningful communication in the target language without physical and temporal constraints. Previous research on peer feedback in second language (L2) learning revealed a common belief held by practitioners was that providing feedback on written language production related to the learners' abilities in the target language (Yu & Hu, 2016), implying that more capable learners gave more effective feedback compared to less capable learners. However, this is not always the case. Based on empirical studies in language education (e.g., Min, 2005), the purpose of this case study was to help us understand whether feedback training influenced the quality of peer feedback in Chinese as a second language (CSL) writing. Two trained and two untrained high-proficiency CSL learners from Vietnam studying Mandarin Chinese in a university were recruited to participate in this study. The data included participants' compositions, stimulated-recall interviews, and peer feedback. The results of this study suggested that trained learners were more likely than untrained learners to identify a range of problematic issues in writing (e.g., incoherent composition and incorrect grammatical/lexical features) and to perceive collaborative learning more positively, which provided pedagogical implications.

Keywords: Peer Feedback, Peergrade, Chinese as a Second language (CSL), Collaborative Learning

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## Introduction

In past decades, peers giving feedback on each other's work in face-to-face or computer-mediated communication environments has proven useful for enhancing second language (L2) learners' learning experiences and developing learners' critical thinking (Emerson, 2013; Kim, 2015; Novakovich, 2016). During the process of reviewing others' writing, learners employ a number of tactics (e.g., clarifying the intended meaning or making suggestions on problematic issues) to help the feedback receivers revise their work.

Providing accurate or appropriate feedback seems to relate to the learners' abilities in using the target language. As suggested by Liu and Sadler (2003), learners' linguistic resources may be a concerning factor that affects the reliability and specificity of the feedback to improve the quality of the written work. However, the language abilities of L2 learners were not the only factor considered in this present study; this case study focused on learners' explicitly stating how to solve issues arising in L2 writing and making suggestions that their peers may incorporate when revising.

Feedback training plays an important role not only in fostering learners' strategic processes and achievement in the language but also in increasing their confidence in the language (Min, 2005, 2006; Rahimi, 2013; Tsui & Ng, 2000). To review written essays strategically involves an array of global and local processes. A global review requires students to pay attention to the structure and intended meaning of the writing. Learners giving feedback should be able to identify any portion of the writing irrelevant to the main topic. A local review relates to grammar (e.g., subject and verb agreement and verb tenses), word choice (e.g., formal or informal diction), and mechanics (e.g., full stops and commas). Min (2005) suggests the learner be taught to explain the writer's intentions, identify problematic areas, and make specific suggestions for revising the problematic areas.

Some studies not directly related to the effects of training on peer feedback have provided a better understanding of the relationship between types of peer feedback and other factors. Ho's (2015) study examined the effects of peer feedback on students' revisions in face-to-face and computer-mediated communication. Relevant results of that study revealed that feedback training had an impact on types of comments as the participants gave more specific comments (e.g., "a topic sentence is missing in the writing") than unspecific comments (e.g., "use appropriate transitions for your ideas") in the two environments. The majority of the comments was globally oriented. The study also showed that peer feedback implemented in technological resources benefitted students' learning in many ways, helping students facilitate independent learning and enabling them to explore knowledge through using the target language in meaningful situations.

Comparative studies, like Ho's (2015) research, examining the differences in peer feedback in the two learning environments contribute to an understanding of how technology can benefit students' learning from providing feedback. DiGiovanni and Nagaswami (2001) reported their results that online comments were more likely than face-to-face comments to help the participants focus their attention on the required tasks, to help the teachers monitor how the students provided feedback to

their peers, and to support ubiquitous learning that allowed the students to learn the content anytime and anywhere. In addition, using online resources, according to Ho and Savignon (2007), had an impact on learners' affective feelings (e.g., reducing stress when giving feedback online), whereby the learners could express their ideas without worrying about causing embarrassment for their peers. In their study, Li and Li (2018) obtained the results that the Turnitin tool improved not only the quality of the writing but also the feedback strategy. Because of the tool, the participants paid attention to the content of a composition instead of the details of vocabulary and grammar. Although the aforementioned studies did not investigate whether peer feedback skills had something to do with the learners' abilities in the target language, they all placed emphasis on training learners in peer reviewing to enable them to provide effective or valid comments (e.g., Li & Li, 2018). Built upon these studies, this case study analyzed the trained and untrained feedback provided by high-proficiency CSL learners; in other words, this study investigated to what extent trained feedback can be differentiated from untrained feedback in relation to specific and to global (e.g., the ideas of a composition) and local (e.g., vocabulary and grammar) comments.

## **Methodology**

### **Context and Participants**

Four junior-year undergraduate students were randomly chosen from a scheduled class taught by the researcher. They are originally from Vietnam with a mean age of 22.5 years, recruited from a Chinese department in a private university. They had studied Mandarin Chinese for more than three years in Taiwan where Mandarin is an official language. There were two male (Bao and Li) and two female (Mimi and Yuan) students whose proficiency levels in the target language were between level 4 and level 5, between advanced and fluent, in the Test of Chinese as a Foreign Language (TOCFL). Both trained learners, Li and Mimi, received six hours of face-to-face feedback training, whereas the untrained learners, Bao and Yuan, did not receive any feedback training. The students had never participated in online or face-to-face feedback projects or activities.

### **Instrumentation**

The instruments used in this study were the participants' compositions, stimulated-recall interviews, and peer feedback. Three composition tasks contained pictures; each set required the participants to compose 300 words in Chinese by describing what they saw in a picture. To make sense of a given picture, they had to contextualize the picture using appropriate vocabulary, grammar, and other language skills.

A paper-based stimulated-recall interview was adopted to determine the participants' perspectives on giving or receiving feedback. More specifically, this instrument was used to clarify whether the participants understood comments given by their peers and whether the feedback conveyed the intended meaning to their peers. Examples of the questions asked during the interviews included: "Do you understand the comments given by your group members?" "What comments do you give to your peers? Why?" "Can you clarify the comment on this?"

The last instrument was peer feedback provided by the participants. The participants made comments on their peers' compositions; the comments were kept in Peergrade, an online tool, and analyzed.

### Online Tool

Peergrade, developed by a group of researchers (Wind et al., 2017), was employed in this study to collect data. In the teacher/researcher interface, learning tasks that included images and texts were made available to students through their mobile phones, laptops, or desktops. In addition, submission dates for drafting assignments and making peer review comments were set up. As a side note, the rubric questions that guided the participants to review their peers' assignments were tailored made by the researcher.

In the student interface, during the composition stage, the participants were asked to upload their drafts before the deadline; after that, they were asked to provide peer feedback according to the rubric developed by the researcher. The peer comments were available when the participants revised their compositions.

### Procedures

To help two participants provide effective peer comments, six hours of training sessions took place in a face-to-face setting. During the first two-hour session, the participants were informed what this research was about and what they were expected to do. They were also instructed to read and sign an informed consent letter that protected their privacy. The researcher explained and demonstrated how to employ feedback strategies in making comments on compositions. Based on the existing taxonomy of Ho (2015), the strategies could be summarized as having global and local dimensions; the former involved the content and organization of a composition, and the latter related to word choice, grammar, spelling, and mechanics. In the second two-hour session, the participants practiced offering global comments on sample papers (e.g., "Descriptions in the first paragraph is not clearly stated" and "Sentences are not relevant to the picture"). The participants were also told to pay attention to local comments (e.g., word choice and grammar).

In the last two-hour training session was organized to help all the participants employ the learned strategies (e.g., global comments) while using Peergrade, and, more importantly, become familiar with the functions of the platform. Two groups were formed: trained (Li and Mimi) and untrained (Bao and Yuan) learners. The participants were told to complete first drafts of one assignment, to review each other's assignments online, and to revise their drafts in a week and a half. The three assignments took approximately one month to complete.

After completion of the assignments, the stimulated-recall interviews were arranged individually in a face-to-face environment. The participants clarified the intended meaning of the comments they gave their peers as they were requested to comment in the target language. All the participants took part in the interviews in Chinese, each lasting around 40 minutes.

## Data Analysis

Data, including peer comments and compositions, were kept in the online system and were analyzed to identify whether they related to the ideas or rhetorical devices of a composition, grammar, or word choice note that learners' compositions were used to check whether revisions were made appropriately when learners received comments from their peers. Liu and Sadler (2003) and Ho (2015) provided insightful guidelines for organizing the comments according to the functions of evaluation, clarification, suggestion, alteration, response, and other; each function was subdivided into two categories of global and local issues, and each category included revision-oriented and non-revision-oriented comments (e.g., "I think you can start with a general idea about the story rather than the detail in the beginning of the composition" was a suggestion/global/revision-oriented comment). In this study, each type of trained or untrained feedback addressed local and global issues, and each contained specific and unspecific comments (see the results section for examples). The stimulated-recall interview data were first transcribed verbatim and then used to clarify the unclear features.

## Results and Discussion

The results of the peer feedback collected from the cases are reported in this section. Overall, all students were more likely to give local comments than to give global ones, as the local comments (N=35, 71.4%) outnumbered the global comments (N=14, 28.6%; see Table 1). When compared to the untrained group, which accounted for 15 local (30.6%) and 0 global comments, the trained group made more comments, with their respective counts being 20 local (40.8%) and 14 global (28.6%). While the untrained group did not make any global comments, the trained group produced 14 global comments (28.6%).

Table 1. Frequency of trained and untrained comments

| Types      | Trained comments |      |        |      | Untrained comments |      |        |   |
|------------|------------------|------|--------|------|--------------------|------|--------|---|
|            | Local            |      | Global |      | Local              |      | Global |   |
|            | N                | %    | N      | %    | N                  | %    | N      | % |
| Specific   | 17               | 34.7 | 8      | 16.3 | 11                 | 22.4 | 0      | 0 |
| Unspecific | 3                | 6.1  | 6      | 12.3 | 4                  | 8.2  | 0      | 0 |
| Total      | 20               | 40.8 | 14     | 28.6 | 15                 | 30.6 | 0      | 0 |

Although Li and Mimi, the trained learners, gave both local and global comments, their local comments were more specific than their global comments. An example given in Table 2 illustrates that Li specifically pointed out the Chinese characters 遊 and 游 due to the two words sounding exactly the same but having different meanings, as the former refers to "tour" or "travel," while the latter means "swim." However, his global comments did not particularly locate the problematic areas in his peer's writing. In the stimulated-recall interviews, he stated that he used his "gut feeling" and that it was challenging and time-consuming to give specific ideas to improve the writing when he commented "there is room for improvement of the writing."

In Mimi's data, she gave both local and global feedback with unspecific comments. For instance, in a comment about a local issue, she stated, "There are some incorrect

usages of grammar and vocabulary (語法與用字皆有誤) in the first task.” During the interview session, she expressed she was unsure about some linguistic items used by her peer, so she gave an unspecific comment. Instead, she chose parts of the composition she felt confident in understanding and commenting. She also highly valued working with her group member who gave a different point of view on her compositions.

In the untrained group, both learners preferred giving local and specific/unspecific comments; for example, Bao considered the quantifier an unnecessary in a particular context and provided an unspecific comment for his peer, “There are some vocabulary and grammatical errors.” During the interviews, he stated he did not know what comments should be given about the writing. He noticed part of the content given by his peer did not correspond to the picture, but he did not provide any written comments because of a lack of confidence in the target language.

Similar to Bao, Yuan expressed that she did not have any ideas about what to consider while reviewing her peers’ writing; she selected incorrect words, such as a local and specific comment relating to the phrase “house riverside” with clarification function. In addition, although she was aware of incorrect vocabulary, she did not give detailed information because she was not certain in her thinking, and as a result, she gave unspecific comments (“In the second paragraph...”).

Table 2. Examples of trained comments

| Names of students | Trained learners  |   |   |   |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|
|                   | Li  |   | Mimi  |   |
| Overall comments  | Comments involved local (e.g., word choice and punctuation) and global (e.g., overall ideas of the story).  |   | Both local and global comments were given; however, they were not specific.   |   |
| Types             | Local   | Global  | Local   | Global  |
| Specific          | 1.用錯字「遊」，應該是「游」。(You’re using an incorrect Chinese character <i>yóu</i> “swimming”)<br>2.這個句子少了一個逗點。(This sentence is lacking a comma.)<br>3.1.文章結構有問題，都沒有逗點符號。(The structure is problematic because of lacking commas.)<br>4.動態助詞「了」 | 1.第一句話與後面二句話不太有合邏輯。(The first sentence and the following two sentences are not logically written.)<br>2.第三張圖片似乎沒有敘述。(The description of the third picture was missing in your story.) | 1.«脫»的動態助詞有錯誤。(The dynamic auxiliary <i>tuō</i> “take off” is incorrect.)<br>2.«太好了»後面要加上驚嘆號，否則句子結構會有問題。(After <i>tài hǎole</i> “very well,” you need a <i>jīngtànghào</i> “an exclamation mark”; otherwise, the entire sentence is problematic.) | 1.第三句是指目的，所以少了「為了」。(The third sentence lacks the connector <i>wèile</i> “in order to.”) |

|            |  |  |  |  |
|------------|--|--|--|--|
|            | 有問題。(The dynamic auxiliary “le” is incorrect.) |  |  |  |
| Unspecific | N/A  | <p>1. 文章有改善的空間。(There is room for improvement of the writing.)</p> <p>2. 故事內容不太順暢。(The storyline is lacking fluency.)</p> <p>3. 應該可增加一些有趣的故事內容。(You should include some interesting content in your story.)</p> <p>4. 加油! (Keep up the good work!)</p> | 語法與用字皆有誤。(There are some incorrect usages of vocabulary and grammar) | 有些句子太長，很難讀懂。(Some sentences are too long which cause difficulty in understanding of them.) |

Table 3. Examples of untrained comments

| Names of students | Untrained learners  |        |   |        |
|-------------------|---|--------|---|--------|
|                   | Bao   |        | Yuan  |        |
| Overall comments  | Comments were mostly relating to local dimensions (e.g., quantifiers).  |        | Comments were limited to local issues (e.g., misusing the word).  |        |
| Types             | Local   | Global | Local   | Global |
| Specific          | 這個男生走到一個河邊，這個量詞不需要。(The boy came to a [the] river. The quantifier is not necessary [in Chinese].)               | N/A    | 這句話有點不太懂，「房子河邊」是什麼意思。(This part, <i>fángzi hé biān</i> “house riverside,” is not fully understood. What do you mean by that?) | N/A    |
| Non-specific      | 1.詞彙和語法有誤。(There were some vocabulary and grammatical errors.)<br>2. 第三句的語法怪怪的。(The third sentence sounds odd.) | N/A    | 第二段的內容使用了不正確的詞彙。(In the second paragraph, some incorrect vocabulary occurred.)  | N/A    |

## Conclusion

The current investigation observed whether peer feedback instruction had an impact on the quality of feedback by CSL learners via an online platform. The qualitative and quantitative results show that trained learners had a wider repertoire of feedback strategies than untrained learners, as the former were more capable of giving global comments (e.g., detecting illogical thoughts in writing) and more likely to provide specific comments, while the latter were focused merely on local issues, such as grammar and lexis.

The results of this study imply that when learners are instructed to engage in global strategic processes in terms of expressing their ideas coherently, articulating their ideas logically, and giving sufficient examples for an argument. Thus, teachers are encouraged to instruct their students to practice peer feedback inside the classroom, demonstrating the steps of peer reviewing, like identifying and explaining problems in writing, and making specific suggestions to revise the problems.

The limitations of this case study were, first, the small sample size; there were only four students involved in this study; second, students' proficiencies were limited to advanced and fluent levels. The purpose of this study was to examine whether learners' language abilities, as a factor, affected the quality of the feedback given. It would be worthwhile to explore the impact of feedback training on learners of different proficiency levels who may generate global comments like the advanced learners produced. Finally, an online platform is considered a useful tool for teachers to understand how their students acquire the target language as the technology keeps the log files of learners.

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## *A Visual System for Grammar Instruction in Foreign Language Learning*

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### **Abstract**

Complementary to verbal explanations, visual techniques are often implemented in grammar instruction as input enhancement to help learners process information. Highlighting using typographic features can help distinguish the structure in focus from its context, aiding information seeking and drawing attention to important features. Additionally, visual encoding can associate graphical traits with grammar categories to support the recognition of related structures and language patterns. An analysis of current grammar books for German as a foreign language has shown, however, that a combination of multiple encoding techniques representing coexistent grammar categories can be challenging to make sense of. The absence of an overall design strategy within a book generates inconsistent and sometimes conflicting grammar representations, which can lead to misunderstandings and create a hindered and fragmented learning experience. In order to avoid such conflicts, this research presents a visual design approach to grammar instruction that combines both techniques efficiently and introduces a visual system developed for German as a foreign language. In addition to indicating a word's class, similar to Montessori Grammar Symbols, this system uses text appearance and symbols to indicate further grammar features relevant for non-native speakers, such as grammatical gender, case declension, verb tense, etc. By maintaining a consistent visual character, the intent is to foster structure recognition and comparison as well as pattern identification throughout all grammar representations. Initially developed for the German language, this systematic approach of associating grammar categories with visual features could be adapted to create visual systems for other languages.

Keywords: Grammar Instruction, Visual Support, Colour, Highlight, Input Enhancement, Encoding, Visual System, Consistency, Visual Conflicts

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## Introduction

Visual salience can be a helpful tool to organise information for perception and guide learner's attention to the target structure and its important features. The relevance of visual guidance and its influence in the learning process can be explained by the Noticing Hypothesis suggesting that learners intake is derived by the noticed input (Schmidt, 1990). Considering that the explicit use of colour in learning materials is known for enhancing information comprehension and retention (Malamed, 2011), it is tempting to believe that learning must be a natural consequence of the strong visual sensation provoked by colour and that merely adding colour to a given display should increase learning (Rieber, 1994). However, fundamentally, when visual information is meaningful and can be organised in a cognitive framework, it is generally remembered better than verbal information (Dueck, Bower, & Kaplan, 1975).

Input enhancement is a common strategy to create visual salience in the given input involving the use of typographic features such as bolding, underlining, colour or capitalization, to highlight specific linguistic features in the sample sentence. Studies around input enhancement have measured the perceptual efficiency of different visual cues (Simard, 2009) and analysed its effects on learning improvement of specific structures in comparison to other instruction methods (Jourdenais, Ota, Stauffer, Boyson and Doughty, 1995; and Leeman, Arteagoitia, Fridman and Doughty, 1995). Besides highlighting, visual encoding is also an often used technique to increase learners' noticing of features and targets in the input by explicitly indicating different linguistic categories.

This work proposes a discussion around both techniques from a visual design perspective and focuses on the relevance and challenges of maintaining visual consistency and coherence when combining techniques. We are convinced that a consistent representation of linguistic features can aid visual comparisons, recognize recurring language features, and reduce any semantic confusion (Qu & Hullman, 2018). Furthermore, considering that grammar structures are introduced in fragmented sections to learners, we believe a holistic approach to the visual support can increase its consistency throughout sections and play an important role when measuring learning improvement over a long term. Achieving this consistency involves design choices that consider not only the representation of a target structure in a specific lesson, but also how identical, similar, and different structures are shown in the other lessons. When analysing textbooks for grammar instruction of German as a foreign language, we observed how the absence of an overall visual strategy for the different lessons might present conflicting, inconsistent, confusing, and even misleading representations of the language, which could contribute to a fragmented or even hindered learning.

To avoid conflicting representations, we suggest specific design considerations for achieving a consistent visual representation of grammar, and introduce a visual system developed for German as a foreign language. Recognizing that learnability touches usability on many points (Peters, 2014), we believe that bringing the design perspective to the discussion can contribute to improve the potential influence visual support can have in the learning process of a foreign language.

## Visual Systems

The visual system of a learning material is composed of visual features and techniques. The system defines the visual features to be used and how they will be implemented as visual techniques to support learners. They can be specific to a single lesson or have a global approach covering an entire book, and should be considered part of the instructional strategy. In both cases, the aim of visually organizing verbal content is to shift information acquisition to the perceptual system to speed up visual information processing (Malamed, 2011). When effectively implemented, visual features can be easily detected by the brain and can speed up information processing (Ware, 2000).

The field of grammar instruction in foreign language teaching represents simultaneously a big opportunity and a challenge for implementing visual aids. Whereas visuals can be used to emphasize the linguistic target in the given input, make relationships within structures visible, and indicate multiple categories, an inconsistent visual system can leave important information concealed, create visual similarities between non related structures, or create potentially confusing representations of a grammar rule. Therefore it is important to understand the function a certain visual feature has within the system and what aspect of learning it aims to support. Furthermore, it is important to align the visual design with the instructional strategy, since the former can inadvertently interfere with the latter. The visual design choices should take into consideration whether the material provides an instruction focused on form, or if the focus lays on communication with minimal attention to linguistic features. A lesson that involves consciousness-raising tasks, where learners are encouraged to identify linguistic patterns within given examples (Loewen, 2018), can be visually supported by an implicit highlighting of the targets or an explicit colour coding of the linguistic categories. Comparative tasks are however best supported by designs that explicitly address comparison, because if the comparative targets are not accommodated by the design, the viewer might need guidance towards what has to be compared or else they may not even think about comparing them (Gleicher, 2018).

Although there are many different approaches to add visuals in learning materials and the available visual features might vary depending, for example, on the content, the learner, and the learning context or the medium, this work focuses on two of the most commonly used visual techniques: highlighting and encoding.

## Visual techniques

When verbal information is displayed without a given visual direction, the amount of information can be overwhelming and the viewer might focus on the wrong information (Malamed, 2011). Through appropriate **highlighting**, also known as input enhancement, important information can be visually discriminated from its context through preattentive processing (Treisman, 1985), a pop-out effect caused by contrast in its appearance. This pop-out effect is, however, only efficient when the difference between objects is great enough to cause brain cell activity (Wolfe, 2004). This visual contrast is useful to emphasise important features and direct the eyes to elements that should be analysed under the focus of attention, aiding information seeking. Working as a visual cue, the aim of highlighting is to guide attention and ensure that the

highlighted information is perceived. Sometimes language learning materials make use of a double highlight. Often the first discrimination indicates the target structure and the second emphasises an important feature within the structure, such as an inflection or vowel change for example. Common visual features used for that purpose are text colour, underlining, font weight or, in case of multiple highlighting, a combination of those features (see Fig. 1).



Figure 1: Highlighting is a technique used in input enhancement to indicate the target structure within the context. It can be employed once or multiple times.

Although input enhancement through highlighting may have some effect on second language acquisition, its implicit aspect may not make target structures salient enough for learners (Loewen, 2018). When the visual system simply highlights the linguistic target, it might not be clear for some learners which aspect of the highlighted structure they should pay attention to. A study around the influence of input enhancement in noticing reported that although enhanced forms were detected, their relevance and importance was not clear for many learners (White, 1998). It is important therefore to consider the knowledge and skills of the learner to determine if a combination of a more explicit technique is necessary.

Whereas information discrimination is used for guidance, **visual encoding** gains an explicit informative aspect. Also known as information association, encoding associates a visual feature with a category, in a way that all information belonging to this category receives the same visual indication (see Fig. 2). In this case, the visual feature is also a carrier of the primary message.

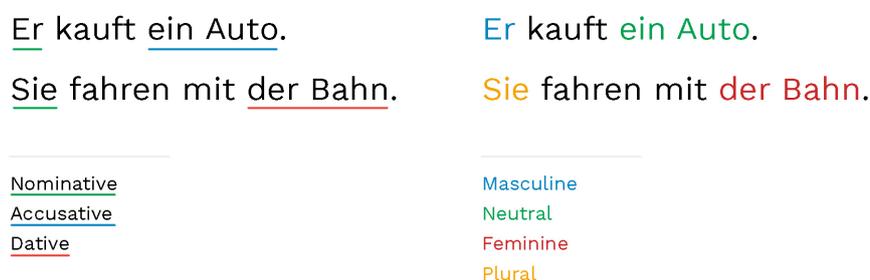


Figure 2: Textbooks for German as a foreign language often use visual encodings to indicate variables of categories such as case and grammatical gender for example.

The aim of visually encoding information is to make categories and relationships visible by following the Gestalt principle of similarity, where objects with similar

appearance tend to be grouped together (Wertheimer, 1938). Therefore, information with similar appearance would be perceived as being part of a group (Ware, 2000) and grouping in turn enhances the meaning of a given graphic when viewers know that similar looking elements are related to each other (Malamed, 2011).

Once learners understand the meaning behind each visual feature they can group information with a common appearance and search for similarities, differences, and patterns across the underlying grammatical categories. Considering that grammar instruction focuses on different structures at a time, learners must rely on their memory in order to recognise and compare information across lessons. When the visual code is consistently used across all segments of an explanation, a visual convention is formed. The benefits of working with conventions is that they maintain a visual unity that can aid learners to recognise previously seen content and identify relationships within the segments. Furthermore, when connections are reinforced they become stronger and more durable (Dirksen, 2016). Thus it is beneficial to ensure that both verbal and visual representation of a grammar structure in a lesson is consistent and coherent to the previous and following lessons.

### **Visual features**

In the same way that a language has its linguistic features organised in categories, so are visual elements classified and arranged in the information visualization field. Also called visual variables, basic graphical features can be organised into distinct groups. Depending on the research and author, this grouping can receive different names. As seen in Figure 3, Ware refers to this group as visual channels or visual encoding variables and so do Chen & Floridi (Ware, 2000; and Chen & Floridi, 2012). Text specific features are also called typographic variables (Parnow & Dörk, 2015).

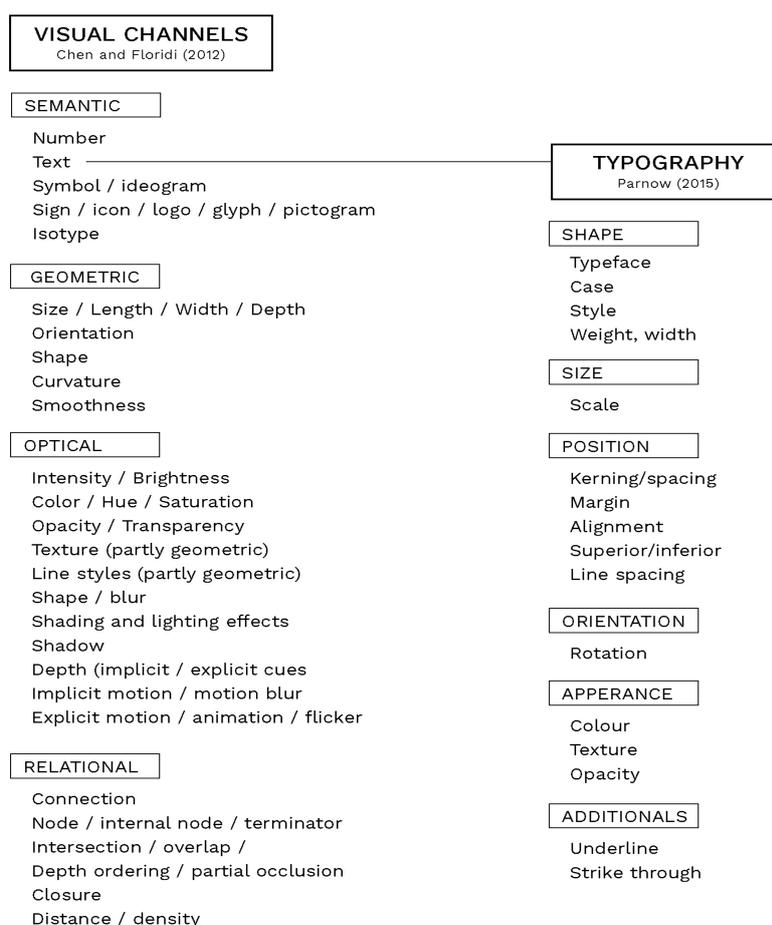


Figure 3: There is a limited set of visual channels and typographic features to be reliably used to encode information.

## Visual Conflicts

Despite the diversity of visual features, our analysis of input enhancement used by didactic materials for German as a foreign language shows that some materials rely almost exclusively on colour for implementing both highlighting and encoding techniques. The dominant use of colour is understandable since the common consensus of perceptual studies that have evaluated the pop-out effect of visual features claims that colour is the most noticeable channel, followed respectively by size, shape and orientation (Borgo, 2013). However, the inflationary use of colour for multiple purposes can generate **conflicting techniques**, since learners might not be able to distinguish if the colour is encoding a grammatical category or if it is simply emphasizing a specific aspect. Consequently, learners may not be able to decode the visual message and search for a grammatical pattern in a highlighted information or perceive encoded information as a simple highlight.

Furthermore, using the same visual feature, for example, colour, to both encode and highlight is problematic because it suggests a grammatical relationship between the highlighted aspect and the encoded information that may not exist (see Fig. 4). Since

encoding grammar features makes categories visible, the viewer becomes aware of the existence of different groups and is encouraged to seek out similarities within similar looking information.

Wo?      in + Dativ      im Haus

Wohin?   in + Akkusativ   ins Haus

Wo? Ich bin zu Hause.

Wohin? Ich gehe nach Hause.



Figure 4: The use of the same visual feature for both highlighting and encoding information leads to visual representations that are in conflict with each other.

One of the challenges of highlighting and encoding information is therefore combining both strategies in a way that they do not interfere with one another's effectiveness. Highlighting works best when the pop-out effect is strong, meaning the contrast between objects should be great enough to be perceived immediately. However, visually encoding categories also creates a contrast in the encoded appearance. Consequently, it is important to carefully choose which visual features to use, so highlighting the information in focus and encoding the existent categories do not create representations with overwhelming visual contrasts.

A further challenge of working with visual codes is to avoid **conflicting encodings** when representing elements of multiple categories. Returning to examples of German as a foreign language, materials often use colour codes for indicating gender and case (see Fig. 5). Although these two categories coexist producing intersections, the visual system can inform only one category at a time, because both visual encodings use colour as the distinguishing feature. The disadvantage is that learners have to constantly switch between colour codes and remain attentive to which association is meant in a given context, making it difficult to visualise the intersections between the represented categories.

Visual encoding when teaching cases:

Er gibt **der Frau** **den Schlüssel**.  
 Sie schickt **den Leuten** **die Einladung**.

Nominative case  
 Dative case  
 Accusative case

Visual encoding when teaching relative pronouns:

Das ist **der Schlüssel**, **den** er **hat**.  
 Die sind **die Leute**, **die** sie **einlädt**.

Gender  
 Case  
 Relative pronoun

Figure 5: When the same set of colours is used in different encodings, a visual relationship is established that may not exist.

The last kind of visual conflict we observed refers to **inconsistent representations** of the same content. The concept of visual consistency relates to whether two views share similar or different encodings and whether they share all, some or none of their data (Munzner, 2014). The same way information with similar appearance tends to be perceived as somehow related, information with different appearance tends to be considered from different groups. Presenting identical or similar content with a different visual system, requires learners to re-learn how to interpret the new visual information in order to understand how to process the verbal one. This inconsistency creates an unnecessary obstacle for recognizing previously seen structures and it is originated by a change in the way information is highlighted or a change in the visual code (see Fig. 6).

Visual representation when teaching cases:

Er kauft ein Auto.  
Sie fahren mit der Bahn.

Nominative  
Accusative  
Dative

Visual representation when teaching active/passive voice:

Die Firma **ruft** Herrn Meier **an**.  
 Nominative                      Accusative  
 Herr Meier **wird** von der Firma **angerufen**.  
 Nominative                      von + Dativ

Highlight

Figure 6: Inconsistent representation of similar structures in textbooks may impede the identification of relationships within structures and the recognition of previously seen content.

## Towards a consistent visual system for grammar instruction

Just as there are multiple instruction strategies in foreign language teaching, there are various approaches to build a visual system. The way visual features are implemented in textbooks and other learning materials is specifically related to the implemented instructional strategy. The availability of these visual features may vary depending on the content, the learning context, the learner, and the medium. Even though there is no single way to represent language features, there are, however, important aspects that should be contemplated when developing a new visual system in order to avoid visual—and ultimately cognitive—conflicts. With the aim of providing support for design considerations, we suggest the following reflections:

- 1. Choosing visual techniques:** Highlighting is the simplest form of input enhancement, it is useful to draw attention to a linguistic target in the input, but it leaves further aspects of the target implicit. Implicit form-focused approaches may not be salient enough for some learners (Lyster, 1998; Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam, 2006) and more problematic structures may need more explicit attention (Spada and Lightbown, 2008). Therefore, instruction strategies that aim to encourage learners to analyse the given input might be better supported by encoding techniques. In addition, the skills and needs of the learner also play a role on whether an explicit and stronger visual support is needed or not.
- 2. Identifying categories:** When working with encodings, it is important to ensure that the primary message can be decoded by the viewer. This can only happen when the associations between visual features and language categories are clear and have an exclusive meaning. In order to facilitate the association process, we suggest to identify all categories that should be encoded before choosing visual features.
- 3. Identifying intersections:** When dealing with multiple categories it is important to identify which categories co-exist and if—and how—their intersections should be visually represented.
- 4. Attributing visual features:** Consider the available options and reflect on which feature could best communicate each linguistic category. When representing category intersections is desired, it might be useful to combine different features such as colour, text style, size, or position.
- 5. Highlighting:** Once all relevant categories have been encoded as visual features, consider how to visually emphasise information that needs to be put into focus at a given time. The visual feature used for highlighting should not be associated with any encoded category, but remain exclusive to indicating the linguistic feature in focus. It should, however, be possible to combine it with the established encodings without interfering with their meanings. A way to test that is to highlight an information when it belongs to an encoded category and when it does not belong to any category.

While they are not readymade instructions to devise a consistent visual system for grammar instructions, these reflections provide practical considerations when approaching this challenge.

## Creating a consistent system with multiple encodings

While reflecting on the aforementioned considerations we questioned the feasibility of a visual system that could accommodate multiple encodings of linguistic categories while maintaining visual consistency and coherence throughout all structure representations. In order to avoid conflicting encodings, such a system would have to ensure that each visual feature has a single exclusive association, meaning the amount of features would have to correspond to the amount of encoded categories. Despite the variety of features, by maintaining a visual unity, such a system could potentially accommodate explicit representations of grammar, fostering recognition and comparison of structures in the sample sentences. This would be a similar visual approach to Montessori Grammar Symbols (Montessori, 1995), in which the visual features colour, shape, and size have been used to represent the different parts of the speech. The main difference is, however, that instead of combining visuals to indicate one category, i.e., word class, the new system would also have to accommodate other German specific categories, relevant for non-native speakers, such as gender, case, and declension. In order to assess if such visual consistency could be achieved, we engaged in developing a new system for German as a foreign language.

The first step was to identify the linguistic features of the German language that are typically explained as a foreign language. For this we analysed and listed all categories and their elements that are often encoded or highlighted by learning materials (see Fig. 7).

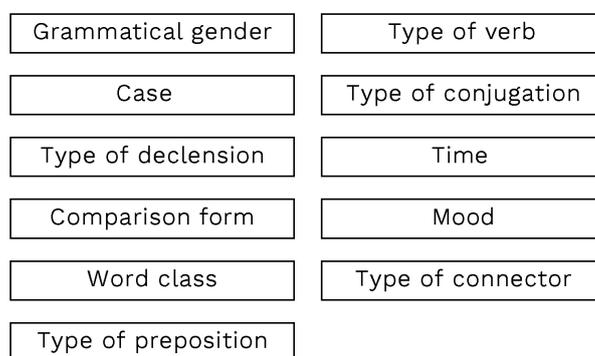


Figure 7: Textbooks focused on grammar instruction use highlighting and encoding techniques to draw learners' attention to these linguistic features.

The next step was to decide which visual features we would work with and then define which would best represent each grammar category. Since the goal of our system was to accommodate multiple categories and enhance important linguistic features, we decided to work with both typographic and graphic variables. In this way the symbol's appearance can provide visual context and create awareness around the classification of the word, and the typographic variables can draw attention to important features in the input without interfering in the sentence readability. Through a juxtaposition of words and symbols, we intend to stimulate learners to search for relationships between visual and verbal information.

When choosing the association between visual features and grammatical structures (i.e., the visual encoding) we took into consideration the specificity of each structure by itself, yet also its relation to other structures and the system as a whole. The process of deciding on the final associations required many experimentations, iterations, and considerations before arriving at a final state as presented here. In the following, we briefly present the final visual design and the considerations that lead to each decision.

The first grammar category introduced to learners of German as a foreign language are the noun's **grammatical gender** and the declension of articles in singular and plural. Although plural is not a gender, it is often represented as a fourth category next to masculine, neutral and feminine, since all genders have the same declension in plural. Indicating a noun's grammatical gender is important because the accompanying article or adjective is not always indicative of its gender. For example, the article "der" indicates that a noun is masculine in the nominative case, and feminine in the dative case. Since colour is the most noticeable channel (Borgo, 2013), and grammatical gender is inherent to the noun, we chose to associate colour to gender to ensure that a noun is consistently associated with the same colour and its influence on the declension of articles, adjectives, and pronouns become visible (see Fig. 8). Considering that colour is perceived as a visual code, verbal content shown with colour have a higher chance to be dual encoded by the brain (Paivio, 1987), and dual coding it in turn could support memorability (Brzezińska, 2009). Besides, word sequences shown with the same color tend to be processed as a whole, contributing to an automatic chunking (Petterssons, 1997). This is an important aspect, considering that learners of a foreign language tend to focus on learning single words instead of meaningful sequences, i.e., chunks (Handwerker & Madlener, 2013). Although colour coding gender is already a common practice, we consider it important to discuss the choice of colours to indicate each grammatical gender. As already pointed by some authors (Wegener, 1995 and Schirrmeyer, 2015) using biological sex to explain grammatical gender is problematic, since in German this association only applies to a limited amount of words (and language-learning textbooks already seem to brim with gender stereotypes). Instead, it is suggested to encourage learners to observe the word's form and suffix, since in most cases, the grammatical gender of a noun originates from its morphology or root (Wegener, 1995). Besides, words such as "das Kind" or "die Person" have a grammatical gender and, yet, do not refer to the social construct of gender. For this and other reasons, we opted for using colours that are not traditionally associated with gender (see Fig. 8).

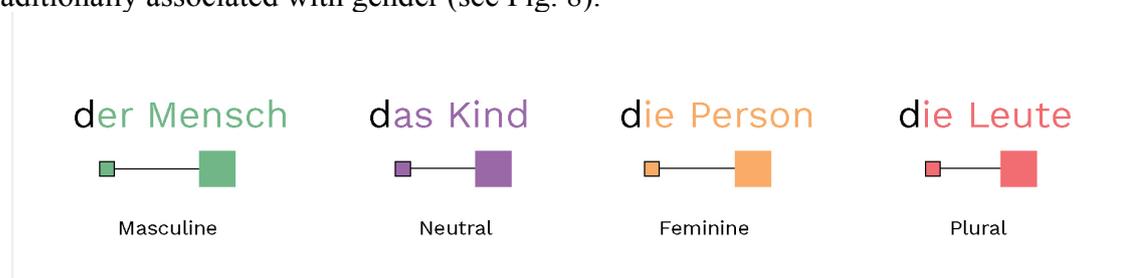


Figure 8: Colour coding indicates the three grammatical genders and plural words.

**Case** is a grammar category that indicates the syntactic function of a complement in a sentence and together with gender, it determines the declination of articles, adjectives, numbers, pronouns and nouns. Similarly to the grammatical gender issue, it is not clear for non-native speakers when to use each case. Thus, learners often learn the

verb or preposition together with its required complement, for example, the preposition “für” requires the accusative case and the preposition “mit” requires the dative case. To indicate the case and help learners remember the different declension patterns, we encoded each case in a unique shape (see Fig. 9). In addition, shape can be easily combined with colour, enabling the system to represent the intersections between case and gender.

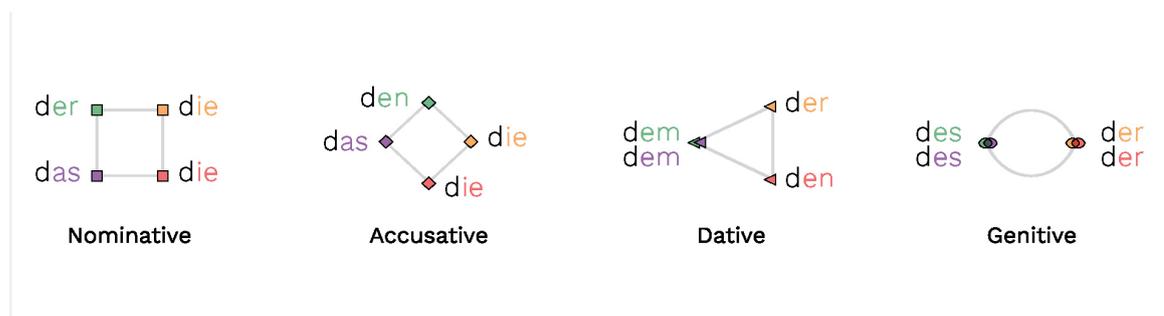


Figure 9: The four cases in German are indicated through a shape, which relates to its declension patterns.

A further specificity from German **declension** is the existence of weak and strong inflections. In our system, the different inflections are represented through the filling in the signs, where a full shape indicates strong inflection and a half-full sign stands for a weak inflection. The following example illustrates how a form-focused representation allows the perception of declension patterns throughout articles and adjectives (see Fig. 10).

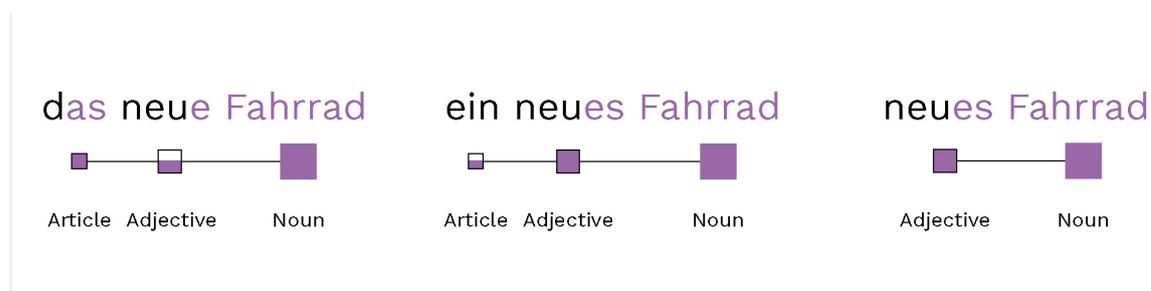


Figure 10: Weak and strong declension of articles and adjectives, with an example of a neutral word in nominative.

The three levels of **comparison** have been associated with the thickness of the sign’s stroke and their inflections have been emphasised through the text in bold (see Fig. 11). In this way we could visually distinguish the gender derivative inflections from the comparison degree derivative inflections.



Figure 11: Adjective in its positive, comparative, and superlative forms.

The first four categories—gender, case, type of declension and comparison form—determined the appearance of articles, adjectives, nouns, and pronouns. Additionally, in order to distinguish the **word classes**, we implemented a three-size scale to the different signs: nouns, pronouns and verbs received the large size, adjectives and adverbs the medium size, and articles, prepositions, particles and connectors the size small (see Fig. 12).

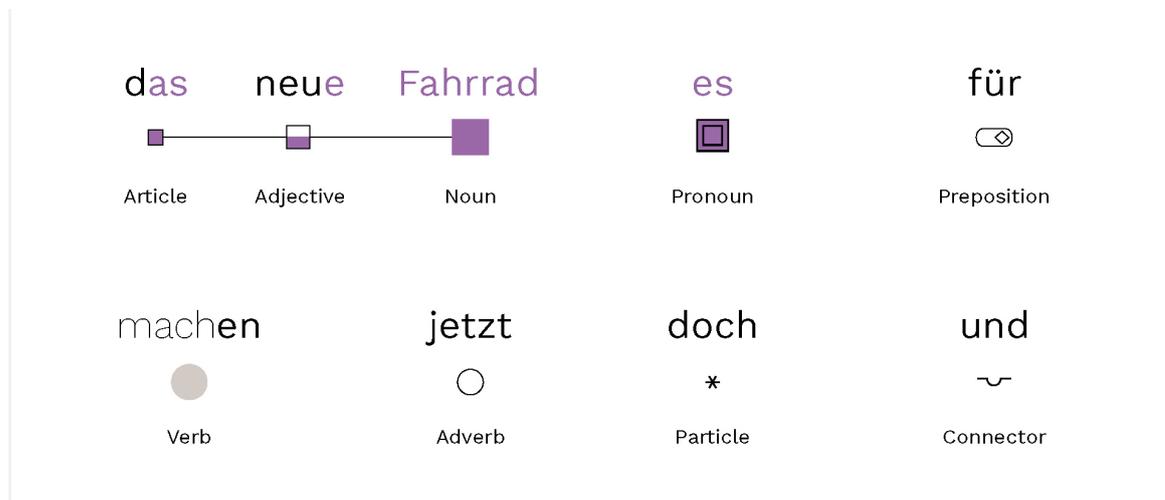


Figure 12: German word classes are distinguished by different symbols that vary in size and complexity according to the various additional grammatical features they need to accommodate or refer to.

German **prepositions** can either demand a specific case as a complement, or they can be a two-way preposition, meaning the case required will depend on the context. The sign for prepositions works as an indicator for the required case, creating a bridge between the determinant structure, i.e., the preposition, and the declined complement (see Fig. 13).

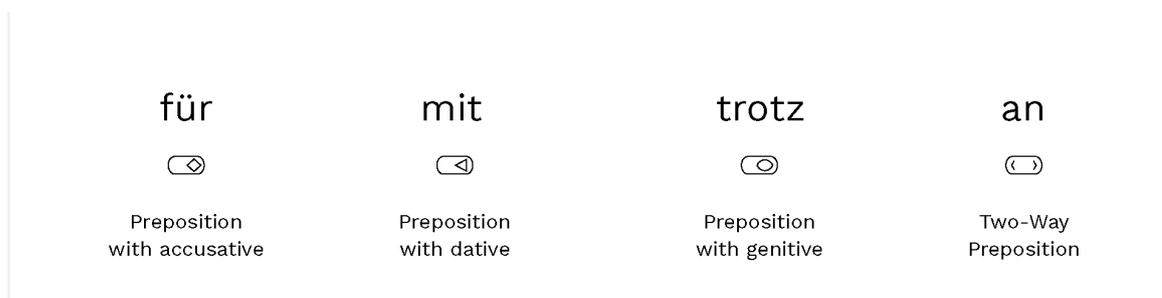


Figure 13: German prepositions and their required case.

**Conjugation** forms another group of multiple categories, whose associations combine and produce intersections. The visual features used to indicate types of verbs and conjugation, time, and mood had to work together and yet be distinguishable. After experimenting with different features, we opted to represent the **type of verb** through the shape of the symbol, the **type of conjugation** through its contour, the **time** through orientation and the different **moods** through a pointer.



Figure 14: Types of verbs and types of conjugation.

As seen in Figure 14, the appearance of the verb's signs aim to imitate their behaviour in the language. The shape indicates whether the verb is a full-verb "Vollverb", a separable verb, a modal verb or an auxiliary verb. The empty middle of modal and auxiliary verbs has as a goal to remind the learner that those verbs need a full verb to complement their meaning. Furthermore, the contour of each shape indicates whether that verb conjugation is regular or irregular. In order to draw attention to the different linguistic features of each verb, i.e., change of vowels and separable prefixes, we opted to leave the verb stem in extra light.

Through the symbol's orientation we intend to conceive the idea of **time**, in a way that a 90 degrees angle stands for a verb in the present and a symbol in 135 degrees indicates that the verb is in the past (see Fig. 15). Since in German the future is built with an auxiliary verb in the present, there is no need to associate a further orientation to it. The last conjugation-related category to encode was **mood**, which we chose to indicate through a pointer attached to the sign that could be easily combined with orientation, or removed in the case of infinitive.



Figure 15: Conjugation of the verb “machen”: the orientation indicates if the verb is in the present or past and the pointer informs whether the verb is in the infinitive, indicative, subjunctive or imperative.

The final category in the system to encode was related to the **type of connector**. As shown in Figure 16, there are three types of connectors that influence the position of the verb in the following subordinate clause. In order to draw attention to the different verb positions, we combined the shape of the connector with the verb position they determine.

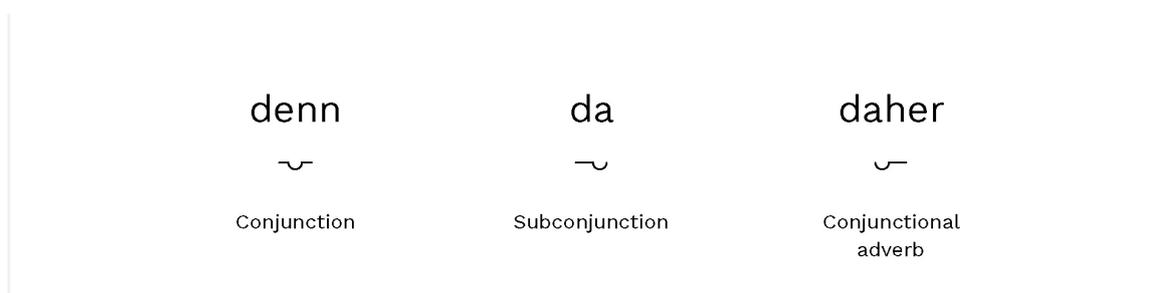


Figure 16: The shape of conjunctions, sub conjunctions, and conjunctive adverbs acts as an indicator of the verb position in the following sentence.

Once all associations in the system have been made, it was time to consider how to discriminate the target structure in a given lesson. We are aware that showing fully encoded sample sentences could be overwhelming and adding an extra visual feature to emphasize the information in focus without creating visual conflicts would be challenging. Therefore, we implemented an **inverted highlighting** to achieve the necessary contrast (see Fig. 17). This means that instead of highlighting the target structure, we opted to partially conceal the contextual information. By showing only the word in focus with all its features and applying a light gray tone to the contextual words, we created enough contrast to guide attention without overwhelming.



Figure 17: In an inverted highlight, the contextual information is partially concealed.

The presented system proposes an alternative visual approach to grammar instruction by combining multiple encodings in order to make the different categories and their intersections visible. Its consistent quality was designed to foster structure recognition and comparison throughout explanations, and aid learners by language pattern identification. We believe that learners with greater need for visual support could benefit from such an explicit grammar encoding. The signs provide visual context and guidance for examining examples, and their appearance could encourage learners to seek meaning in the similarities and differences in the given input.

A sample lesson given to learners has shown that the visual approach could be useful to help intermediate learners mentally organise the seen structures, but complete beginners might need prior or accompanying instructions on how the system works. The presented approach is in the process of being implemented in a textbook and will go under first evaluations soon. Lastly, since each grammar category has an individual association, the encodings could be adapted to other linguistic specificities in order to create a visual system for other languages.

## Conclusion

Two main techniques are commonly utilised to incorporate visual features in input enhancement: highlighting and encoding. We discussed the importance of visual consistency when combining multiple encodings. We commented on visual conflicts observed in textbooks for grammar instruction of German as a foreign language, and

how they could influence the instruction strategy as well as learners' perception of the input. Furthermore, we elaborated practical considerations for the combination of highlighting and encoding techniques, in order to avoid visual conflicts.

Lastly, we introduced a visual system that encodes multiple grammar categories of German as a foreign language and uses inverted highlighting to draw attention to the target structure. Besides achieving consistent representation, the system presents an alternative on how the intersection of different grammar features can be simultaneously represented. We commented on first feedback from learners and suggested a direction for future work.

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***Structuralism Approach to English Teaching as a Means of Solving Cross-Cultural Problems of Russian Students***

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Official Conference Proceedings

**Abstract**

The article deals with language as cultural heritage of nation. Russian students of English when facing lingual phenomena that do not occur in their mother tongue avoid certain typically English lexical units and structures, which impoverish their speech and violate inter-cultural communication. To help students get insights into the inner structure of the units and expose the mechanism of their functioning, we turn to the ideas of Structuralism – Theory of Oppositions – and present the meaning of a unit by means of paradigmatic correlation of lingual forms by which certain functions are expressed. When word-forms are represented in the binary privative opposition framework, it reveals a bundle of differential features (strong features) exposing its categorical properties. By means of gradual opposition framework exposed are the remnants of the extinct dual rank of the category of number in modern English, whose function has since Indo-European period of its development been replaced by simple plural. It is evident that the seme of duality is present in the lexico-semantic structure of certain English lexemes, which expresses the concept of two as contrasted to many. Component analysis helps reveal lexical units containing the seme of duality in their lexico-semantic structure and to study their functioning in speech in the system of modern English. Traces of numerical duality are also found in numerous binary oppositions of grammatical categories and in some fossilized forms. The worked-out series of training exercises might give proper results for students to better understand the mechanisms of the English language operating.

Keywords: Structuralism, Binary Privative Opposition, Gradual Opposition, The Seme of Duality, Modern English, Grammatical Category

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## Introduction

Modern scientists see language as a complicated structure of elements, which forms specific relations. To study and analyze the specific relations and patterns is the main task of structuralism. The essence of structuralism linguistics lies in the supposition that each lingual unit occupies certain place in the integrity of language structure and the task of linguists is to establish its place, function and relation to other elements. Structural linguistics originates from the work of Ferdinand de Saussure “Course in General Linguistics” [12], where he states that language is a system of interconnected units. According to him, a language is made up of arbitrary elements. These elements do not have any individual meaning. It is through the system that these elements derive meaning, being identified within the premises of the structure.

One of the theories of Structuralism is binary opposition. It originated in Saussurean structuralism theory and it consists in the contrasting language units of one level for the purpose of identification of differences between them. It is not a contradictory relation but a structural, complementary one [19]. Paired opposites in language rely upon a relation with adjoining words inside a paradigmatic chain. This highlighted that certain units are in opposition to one another.

## Literature Review

In accord with contemporary theories [1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8], opposition is understood as correlation of forms based on common and differential features. The opposition in linguistic sense is defined as a generalized correlation of lingual forms by means of which a certain function is expressed. Common features serve as the basis of contrast, while differential features immediately express the function in question.

Binarity, which is represented by two opposite elements or processes, which are in constant antagonism, is the initial principle of creation of all systems. It stimulates the development of the system. The binary opposition is a universal means of cognition of the world, which was realized as such in the XX century. According to Ferdinand de Saussure, the binary opposition is the means by which the units of language have value or meaning; each unit is defined in reciprocal determination with another term, as in binary code. Saussure demonstrated that a sign's meaning is derived from its context (syntagmatic dimension) and the group (paradigm) to which it belongs. [10, p. 64]. One of the key methods of Ferdinand de Saussure was syntagmatic and paradigmatic analysis, which defines units syntactically and lexically in accord with their contrast in relation to the other units of the system. A classic example of a binary opposition is the presence-absence dichotomy. It is the contrast between two mutually exclusive terms, such as *on* and *off*... *left* and *right* [16]. “An example of this is that one cannot conceive of 'good' if we do not understand 'evil' ” [10, p. 65].

The system of binary differential signs is used practically in all spheres of structuralism humanitarian research. It was stated that in the description of the picture of the world lies binary opposition, and it has a universal character: life – death, happiness – misfortune, good – bad, the past – the future, here – there. The left part of the opposition is considered to be marked positively, the right one – negatively. Duality of perception of the world around is caused by purely physiological reasons, first of all, that the brain of a man is divided into two hemispheres, that we have two

eyes, two ears, two hands and feet. A.N. Leontiev states in his work “Image of the World,” that “the problem of perception should be raised and developed as a problem of the psychology of the image of the world” [11, p. 252].

### **Methodology**

The key methods of the research are syntagmatic and paradigmatic analyses, which defines units syntactically and lexically in accord with their contrast in relation to the other units of the system.

### **Body. Analytical part**

Grammatical oppositions expose the paradigmatic correlations of grammatical forms in a category. Grammatical morphological opposition reflects the plane of expression (form) and the plane of content (meaning) and may be expressed by, at least, one opposition of forms. A contrastive pair of members forms the binary privative morphological opposition which is based on a morphological differential feature present in its strong member and absent in its weak member. The member in which the feature is present is called the marked or positive member (the left part of the opposition). The member in which the feature is absent is called the unmarked, or negative member (the right part of the opposition). The featuring in question serves as an immediate means of expressing a grammatical meaning [7]. Consider an example of grammatical morphological opposition: *Students* (marked member): *student* (unmarked member).

The grammatical suffix S signifies a morphological differential feature of the category of Number. The meanings differentiated by the opposition of signemic units are referred to as semantic features, or semes. The differences in meanings arise from the interaction between the underlying oppositional sememic marks of the category and the more concrete lexical differences in the semantics of individual words. Differences and oppositions are also marked as the bases of Saussure’s theory of language as a synchronous system of networks held together by distinctive value [7].

Numerous oppositions **of privative binary character** are observed in a regular choice of the forms of most parts of speech and grammar categories. The opposition of correlated forms in a paradigm manifests itself in meaning. Specific types of meaning are found in regular grammatical oppositions of certain grammatical categories, which causes difficulties and incomprehension in communication for Russian students. It is through binary privative opposition that the student learns the intricacy of certain meaning. Consider the ambiguity of the following kindred phrases, which is removed by means of opposition:

**The Superlative Degree** of the Comparison of Adjectives **vs the Elative**: *the most (interesting book)* versus *a most (interesting book)*

**Elative** [adj., Latin *elatus* + English *-ive*; = raised, lifted up] – a term applied to what is also called *Absolute Superlative*, denoting a high or intense degree of a quality, but not excluding that an equal degree may exist in other cases [20]; in the absence of comparison, the Elative conveys the notion of “supreme” – a superlative or intensifier. Compare:

*“The Lord of the King” was the most attractive book for teen-agers at the end of the last millennium (the Superlative: “more than any other (s)” [17].*

*It’s a most exclusive store (very exclusive, not the Superlative, but the Elative).*

*Thank you, you have been most kind to me (= very kind, not kindest).*

To train the opposition pattern “the Superlative vs. the Elative” we have developed an exercise.

**Activity 1.** *Choose the correct variant. Translate the following sentences from English into Russian:*

*She was the most \ most nice to me all the time.*

*It was a most \ the most unhappy incident.*

*The world known artist died in bitterest \ the bitterest poverty.*

*She is a very best \ the very best in the group.*

*Sue was a best \ best \ the best when she was not trying to show off.*

*These tendencies are clearest \the clearest in the Russian Language.*

*She says it’s best \ the best to take no notice but I can’t.*

*I think it is safest\ the safest to cross the river here.*

As we pointed it out, numerous oppositions of privative binary character are observed in a regular choice of the forms of most parts of speech and grammar categories. We subjected to analysis frequently misused morphological forms and revealed a set of grammar forms that causes misunderstanding of Russian students:

**Numerals:** *the second (piece of cake) versus a second (piece of cake)*

Nouns pre-modified by ordinals are used with the definite article: *the first month of the year*. When used with the indefinite article, they lose their numerical meaning and acquire that of a pronoun (another, one more) as in: *a second man entered, then a third*.

**Activity 2.** *Translate the following sentences from Russian into English:*

*Привычка – вторая натура.*

*Наши студенты начинают учить второй язык на втором курсе.*

*Учи, третьей возможности у тебя не будет.*

*Мои друзья и коллеги стали для меня второй семьёй.*

*Боюсь, что вам придётся сдавать экзамен второй раз.*

*Он женился в четвёртый раз и очень успешно.*

*Не хватает девятой страницы.*

*Учёный провёл первый, второй, третий и четвёртый эксперименты, но получил те же результаты.*

**Quantifiers:** *few versus a few; little versus a little*

*A few* is positive and means a small number.

*Few* is negative and means not many.

*A little* is positive and means some, not a lot.

*Little* is negative and means not much, “not enough”.

**Activity 3.** Choose the correct variant. Translate the following sentences from English into Russian:

Could you put it in just few \ a few words?  
 There are still few \ a few things left undone.  
 I don't deny that perhaps Amy took her husband little \ a little too much for granted.  
 He feels rather lonely, he has few \ a few friends in the class.  
 Little \ a little did he know what was in store for him.  
 Addy feels much better now that he already has got few \ a few friends.  
 We need one more player; we are one too few \ a few for this game.  
 The forces were obviously unequal: we were many, they were few \ a few.

**Collective Nouns:** *the family is* versus *the family are*

The meaning of plurality in certain nouns is not marked in any form. They are collective nouns denoting living beings and are singular in form but plural in meaning: *police, gentry, clergy, fowl, cattle, and poultry*. Collective nouns have two categorical meanings: plurality as indivisible whole and plurality of separate beings. That is why the words of this type – *people, family, crew, crowd, parliament, team, jury, government* - can be both singular and plural. In the latter case, they are called *Nouns of Multitude*. The number of the verb-predicate (singular in the first case and plural in the second) indicates the difference in two categorical meanings as well as by personal pronouns.

*The family quarrel* (among themselves).  
*The family quarrels* (with somebody else).  
*The crowd have accepted the decision.*  
*The crowd has parted down the middle like a black curtain.*  
*The crew of the ship was excellent.*  
*The crew have taken their posts.*

**Activity 4.** State whether the nouns in bold type are collective nouns or nouns of multitude. Translate the following sentences from English into Russian:

*My family is now in the country.*  
*It was eleven o'clock before the family were all in bed.*  
*No one had seen him since and the police were searching for him.*  
*The band were changed, and in the gallery already.*  
*Then one by one, the worn out crew were helped on board.*  
*The crew of the ship consists of twenty seamen including the captain and his mate.*  
*Who is your team playing with next week?*  
*The ship's crew were lined up on the upper deck for checkup.*

**Notional Concord:** *five million dollars are* versus *five million dollars is*

Subjects expressed by nouns denoting measure, weight, time, etc., have a singular verb-predicate when the statement is made about the whole amount, not about the units.

*Ten years is a long term.  
Another five minutes goes by.  
Five million dollars is a lot of money.*

**Activity 5.** *Choose the appropriate present-tense verb form:*

*Tea and bread (to be) the best supper.  
Five minutes (to be) not enough for such a job.  
Over ten million dollars (to be) planned to be spent on the project.  
Ten million dollars (to be) a great sum of money.  
Forty years (to have brought) sweeping changes to our life.  
Fifty guineas for a room each week (to be) not an uncommon figure at that time.  
Three metres (to be) not enough for this dress.  
The wedding party (to be forced) to abandon their cars and literally to fight their way into the Old Town Hall on foot.*

**Universal Pronouns:** *Every versus each.*

*Each* denotes choice from a specific, definite group:  
*Each child was given an apple* (=all those children).  
*Every* denotes choice from an endless class of things:  
*Every child likes chocolates* (= all the children).  
*Every* as a rule is not followed by 'of'. It may be followed by 'of' when used emphatically, with exaggeration:  
*Do not believe this letter: every word of it is false.*  
*But: There were 30 words in the dictation and he made a mistake in each of them.*

**Activity 6.** *Translate the following sentences from Russian into English:*

*У каждого города свой характер.  
Мы побывали в пяти городах, и в каждом городе нашли что-то интересное.  
Я спрашивал об этом почти каждый день, и каждый раз он отвечал «Не знаю».  
Каждый водитель должен строго соблюдать правила дорожного движения.  
Каждый водитель, нарушивший правила дорожного движения, наверняка попадет в беду.  
Сестры возвращались из виноградника, каждая из них несла корзину с виноградом.  
Меняйте масло в машине каждые 10000 километров.  
Я помню каждое его слово.*

It is seen from the empiric material that the meaning of the weak member of the privative opposition is more general and abstract as compared with the meaning of the strong member, which is, respectively, more particular and concrete. Due to this difference in meaning, the weak member is used in a wider range of contexts than the strong member is. Thus, the forms *the most (interesting book)*, *the second (piece of cake)*, *few*, *little*, *the family is*, *five million dollars are*, are most common constructions of words. Nevertheless, their opposites will particularize the situation and add accuracy to the statement.

## Findings & Discussion

Another type of opposition is gradual. The gradual opposition is formed by a contrastive group of members, which are distinguished not by the presence or absence of a feature, but by the degree of it. Gradual opposition in morphology is identified as a minor type at the semantic level only. An example of the gradual morphological opposition can be seen in modern English in the category of comparison of adjectives and adverbs: *strong – stronger – strongest; early – earlier – the earliest*.

At the semantic level, gradual opposition might be observed in the specific quantitative meaning of certain English lexemes of notional nominal and functional status, which finds its realization through the component analysis. It shows that in lexico-semantic structure of certain words observed is the seme of quantity, it is inbuilt and revealed in valence, i.e. potential ability of words to be selectively combined in a speech chain [3, p. 110].

In accordance with the key method of Ferdinand de Saussure, syntagmatic and paradigmatic analyses define units syntactically and lexically in contrast to the other units of the system, we will try to reveal lexical units containing the seme of quantity in their lexico-semantic structure and to study their functioning in speech in the system of modern English. Consider, for example, English pronouns of different classes:

Within the group of **Universal pronouns**, several units keep traces of duality:

*Both* vs. *all*: [2 vs. 2+1...]

*Both* = the one and the other; *all* = the complete amount or quantity of [19].

*The police set up barriers at both ends of the street.*

*Will all the girls please stand over there?*

*Both prisoners escaped* vs *All the prisoners escaped*.

***Either* vs. *any*** [2 vs. 2+1...]

*Either*=the one or the other (either of the two mentioned, only if there is indication that there are two objects):

*If you are 'ambidextrous, you can write with either hand.*

*Any* = each one or all members of a group: *Before touching the computer or any of its parts, one needs to read the instructions.*

***Neither* vs. *none*** [2 vs. 2+1...]

*Neither* = not the one or the other:

*Neither of the prisoners escaped.*

*None* = not any of something: *She had inherited none of her mother's beauty.*

Thus, *either* \ *neither* are used when there is a choice of two objects; if there are three or more objects, *any* is used: *either / neither book will do* vs. *any book will do* → *either* vs. *any*; *neither* vs. *none*.

**The subclass of reciprocal pronouns** comprises only two items: *each other* and *one another*. [2 vs. 2+1...]

*They loved each other.*

The pronoun *each other* generally implies that only two persons / non-persons are involved; *one another* is usually preferred where more than two persons are involved.

*They stood silent, in each other's arms.  
They often quarrelled with one another.*

**The subclass of detaching pronouns:** *the other* vs. *another*. [2 vs. 2+1]

*Other* denotes some object different from the one mentioned before. When *other* is used with the definite article or another determiner, it denotes a contrast between:

- two objects: *On weekends I do all my housework on one day, so the other day I am free.*

- two parts of the object: *There is a bookstore on the other side of the road.* The pronoun *another* correlates only with count nouns in the singular: *another cup.* *Another* has two meanings: a) 'a different one':

*Can you pass me another pencil?*

b) 'an additional one'

*Another of the speakers suggested abandoning the project altogether.*

*Is this another of your schemes to make money?*

**Activity 7.** Translate the following sentences from Russian into English:

Какой из этих / двух словарей лучше? Каждый по-своему хорош, один не хуже другого.

Можете взять какую-нибудь из этих книг, они обе интересные. – Да нет, ни одна из них меня не привлекает.

Мы побывали в пяти городах, и в каждом городе нашли что-то интересное. На пляже было много народу: одни капались, другие загорали, другие играли в волейбол.

Несколько человек вернулись в город, другие остались на даче на ночь.

У каждого города свой характер.

Я до сих пор помню его каждое слово, каждый жест.

Я спрашивал об этом почти каждый день, и каждый раз он отвечал «Не знаю».

The grammatical category of number in modern English, which is presented nowadays by singularity and plurality, does keep the prints of the third component of this category – duality [9], the understanding of which is very obscured, and it causes mistakes in the utterance production of Russian students – secondary language personalities of English. In the light of the reasons stated, it is obviously necessary to allocate those forms in the semantic organization of English behind which stands the duality rank of the category of number.

Duality has appeared to be a lexemic number in addition to singular and plural. The pronouns under study have displayed their specific numerical semantics, it is interpreted as referring to precisely two of the entities (objects or persons) acting as a single unit or in unison. It brings us to the idea that the vocabulary of the English language can be represented by the following numeric opposition series: ***Singular: Dual: Plural.***

English word-stock contains a lexico-semantic field united by the seme of duality in the lexico-semantic structure of its words [13]. Illustrative material is taken from the Internet [14, 16, 18, 19, 20, and 21]. Traces of lexemic duality are revealed through Gradual Opposition [2 vs.2+1...] in certain word classes and subclasses of the English vocabulary:

**A couple** (two things or people of the same kind): *We'll have to wait a couple of minutes.*

*If you've gone onto Twitter in the last couple of weeks, you've probably seen this. But in the last couple of years we've become infamous for a couple of things.*

**Twain**

(two; nearly obsolete in common discourse, but used in poetry and burlesque):  
*Never the twain shall meet. TWAIN and TWAIN Direct are application programming interfaces (APIs) and communication protocols that regulate communication between software and digital imaging devices, such as image scanners and digital cameras.*

**Pair** (a single thing made of two similar parts that are joined together):  
*She bought a pair of shoes.  
The company is run by a pair of brothers.*

**Twosome** (two people who work together or spend a lot of time together)  
*It ended up being just a twosome with the third one watching from a chair.  
Those sisters are a constant twosome, going everywhere together...*

**Activity 8.** Translate the following statements from English into Russian.

*In the next couple of years, the hypertext community didn't recognize him either.  
I figured I'd come back in a couple of weeks and talk to the grandmother.  
The rock was split in twain.  
Just clear out, the pair of you!  
They will make a lovely pair dancing together.  
Drug dealers often work in pairs.  
Twosome Necklace: Necklace in 18k gold with two rings linked together. One rounded ring and one squared with the words Amor Vinci Omnia.  
The twosome kept the secret for a month.*

**Invariable plural nouns** that nominate the names of tools or articles of dress consisting of two equal parts, which are joined: *scales, binoculars, pincers, pliers, scales, scissors; pajamas, jeans, shorts, tights, trousers.*

**Adjectives:** *double, dual, twin, binary, twofold, twain* (consisting of two parts):  
*This free binary calculator can add, subtract, multiply, and divide binary values, as well as convert between binary and decimal values.  
The aims of the study are twofold.  
Love is beautiful when you are sharing it with the one who is your twin flame (Valentine Day's greetings).*

**Activity 9.** Translate the following statements from English into Russian.

*Student numbers have expanded twofold in ten years.*

*The price increased twofold last year.*

*In mathematics and digital electronics, a binary number is a number expressed in the base-2 numeral system or binary numeral system, which uses only two symbols: typically "0" (zero) and "1" (one).*

*The office of a clergyman is twofold: public preaching and private influence.*

*His knees doubled up under him.*

*The ewes of this country rarely twin.*

*We were the first twosome out on the golf course this morning.*

*She is the double of her mother.*

*Sales doubled last year.*

**Substantivized adjective: *the latter*** (formal, opposite *former*): the second of the two people or things just mentioned:

*The system brings both financial and environmental benefits, the latter being especially welcome.*

The seme of dual number is found out in the adjective proper *latter* [only before the noun] (formal): being the second of two people or things mentioned or the last in the list just mentioned:

*The latter half of the year was quite calm and measured.*

**Preposition: *between* vs. *among*.** Both prepositions being used alone differ in relation to the number of items: *between* is used with a small number of items – separate and individual:

*The ball went between the player's legs.*

*Between 1914 and 1945, 70 million people died in Europe alone as a result of armed conflict.*

With certain nouns *between* actualizes the seme of duality: *The contrast between two areas.*

*What he said, that all too often, is that we accept the distance between those two ideas. The difference between American football and soccer.*

***Among*** suggests a larger number:

*I was hoping to spot Marcia among the crowd.*

**Activity 10.** Translate the following statements from English into Russian.

*Peter and Steve are students, but the former is doing this last year at college, while the latter is only in his first.*

*What is the difference between an UNCITRAL legislative text and an UNCITRAL non-legislative text?*

*In the Kennedy family two brothers are most famous: John and Robert. The former was US President, while the latter was Attorney General.*

*And, among other things, they're looking for dark matter.*

*It's a story of nations, of ideologies, of territories, and of conflicts among them.*

*Of the two people mentioned, the former is dead, but the latter is still alive.*

*We make a distinction between talking from a diplomatic level and talking at the political level.*

*You can purchase additional storage at any time, and this additional storage is*

*shared among Google Docs, Picasa, Gmail, Blogger and Buzz [22].*

To train the opposition pattern “*between/in-between /among*” we have developed another exercise.

**Activity 11.** *Choose a suitable word: between / in-between / among.*

*And they go back and forth ----- this hive and the arena, via this tube.*

*And my weekly audience at that time was ----- 200 to 300 million people.*

*I tend to find myself in the spaces ----- .*

*To do so, click the Rate and select your rating (----- one and five stars).*

*And what they found was a series of mutations in a gene called SPR, which is responsible for producing serotonin, ----- other things.*

*In these times, there is no ----- .*

*And so this informs, ----- other things, of course, a treatment for bone marrow transplant, which he undertakes.*

*That's where you can find Sam, the DP, - -----?*

## Conclusions

English at Russian Universities is studied by linguistic disciplines, which have either a practical or a theoretical purpose. A practical discipline is aimed at practical mastery of the language, while a theoretical discipline pursues analytical aims: to gain insights into the inner structures of language and expose the mechanism of their functioning. To process a theoretical description of language systems, i.e. to scientifically analyze and define grammatical, lexical and phonological categories, requires cognitive analysis on the part of the student. The theoretical basis of language supports the student's language acquisition and helps develop his \ her linguistic and cognitive skills. The involvement of Opposition Theory to identify differential components in the lexical and semantic structure of some lexemes of the English language contributes to the students' awareness of typically English constructions that they do not have in their native language. The system of exercises developed on the basis of modern empirical material will provide reliable consolidation of both theoretical and practical aspects of the English language by Russian students – secondary linguistic personalities of English national culture.

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***Tectonics and Technical Language***  
***Development of and Research on a Language-Sensitive Learning Design on Plate***  
***Tectonics***

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**Abstract**

Results of international studies such as PISA and PIRLS indicate that there is a substantial correlation between language competencies, socio-economic background, and knowledge. At secondary schools, language requirements increase due to a higher level of technical language. As a result, access to subject-related learning becomes more difficult, especially for pupils with low socio-economic status or a migration biography. To give these groups of pupils equal educational opportunities, a learning design for language-sensitive teaching in the Geography classroom was developed. Research and development aspects were intertwined within the framework of design-based research. Firstly, design-frameworks were developed based on the current state of research and then transferred to a six-hour teaching unit on plate tectonics for middle school pupils, which was accompanied by research. The results of the first cycle (N=135) led to a re-design and a second cycle (N=185). To evaluate the language-sensitive unit empirically, the treatment was contrasted with a control group in a pre-post-follow-up design. Both groups covered the same content in the same period. Knowledge, technical language, and motivational aspects were measured. Learning gain scores were evaluated for validity and differences between the two groups. The results show that the experimental group has significantly higher learning gains (Cohen's  $d$  post-pre = .51) regarding geographical knowledge and technical language.

Keywords: Technical Language, School Academic Language, Subject-Related Language Learning, Geography Teaching, Language-Sensitive Lessons, Design-Based Research

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## 1 Introduction

A glance at the current state of research suggests that language competence is a central premise for educational success. Following the so-called "PISA shock" (2000) and the comparatively weak results of students from some industrial countries, a series of additional language support measures such as extra language lessons were introduced (Mullis et al., 2016a, 2016b; OECD, 2019). What remains despite these efforts are difficulties in understanding the subjects. Educational research has explored the possible reasons. It has shown that each subject has specific language requirements and that these are aggravating factors in learning. Particularly in mathematics education, but also in physics, biology, and history, the correlation between language and subject competence has been widely documented (Handro, 2018; Härtig, 2010; Höttecke et al., 2017; Paetsch et al., 2015; Prediger & Hein, 2017; Schmiemann, 2011). As a further consequence, scientists and teachers developed and implemented language promotion measures in the form of language-sensitive subject teaching in mathematics, physics, and some social sciences. Studies show positive effects of language-sensitive teaching units on knowledge and technical language competences of children (Prediger & Zindel, 2017; Scheuer et al., 2010; Schmölder-Eibinger, 2013; Wessel, 2015). Language-sensitive geography teaching understands language requirements in geography lessons as a learning object and as key to getting access to geographical knowledge. Criteria for language-sensitive geography teaching and empirical studies on its effectiveness, however, are lacking. The presented research project focuses on this research gap and explores two research questions:

- (1) What are the design criteria of language-sensitive geography teaching?
- (2) How effective is language-sensitive geography teaching compared to geography teaching without language-sensitivity regarding the acquisition of geographical knowledge and technical language?

The following paper firstly outlines the central methodological foundations. It then sets out the main findings of the project. The design criteria for language-sensitive geography teaching will be displayed, and insights into the effectiveness of language-sensitive geography teaching are given.

## 2 Methodology

Based on fundamental considerations of our research design in the context of design-based research, the sampling of our research project, as well as aspects of the data collection, will be described below.

### 2.1 Research frame

Methodically we approached the research questions set out above with design-based research (Bakker, 2018; McKenney & Reeves, 2019). It means that the two issues of (1) what language-sensitive geography teaching looks like and (2) how effective it is, are intertwined. We firstly developed design criteria for language-sensitive geography lessons based on the current state of research in cooperation with practice experts. The design criteria were then applied in a teaching unit, which is the subject of our study. The study was conducted in two design cycles. The knowledge gained in cycle I led to design cycle II, also consisting of conception, implementation of the teaching unit, data collection, and evaluation. Finally, the aim was to develop transferable

standards for language-sensitive geography teaching, an empirically tested teaching unit, and findings on its effectiveness and its requirements for success (Figure 1).

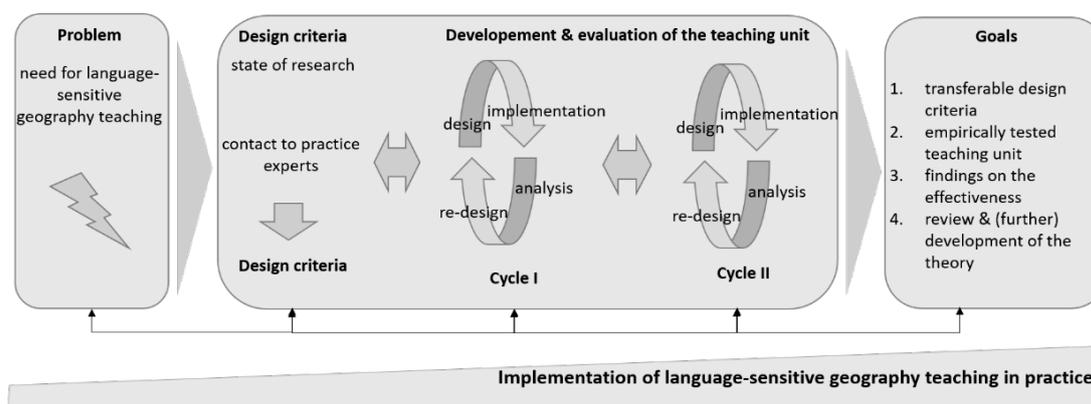


Figure 1: Overview of the research design

## 2.2 Sample

The required sample size was calculated with G\*Power (Faul et al., 2007). A one-sided t-test for independent samples with the desired medium effect size of Cohen's  $d = .40$ , an  $\alpha$  error of  $.05$ , and a power of  $.80$  resulted in a sample size of 156 per design cycle. Thus a total of 320 students from twelve classes and six Berlin secondary schools took part in the study; the allocation of courses to experimental or control groups was randomized per school. To create a meaningful sample of the target population, namely 7<sup>th</sup> graders, schools from different catchment areas in Berlin were selected. The example shows heterogeneity considering the first languages of the children, their socio-economic backgrounds, and their performances. The data presented in the following refer to the second design cycle,  $N = 185$ ; the improved teaching unit and the enhanced survey instruments were used.

## 2.3 Data collection

The data collection was carried out in a pre-post-follow-up design. The data presented in the following focus on the pre-post comparison. We developed two teaching units, one experimental and one control group. Each received six lessons on the topic of the Earth's shell structure and plate tectonics but differed in the degree of language sensitivity. The experimental group received language-sensitive geography lessons, whereas control group I did not. Furthermore, a second control group was established to test whether learning gains could be achieved only by repeating the surveys (Figure 2). However, there were no significant learning gains in control group II; thus, it was left out in the second cycle.

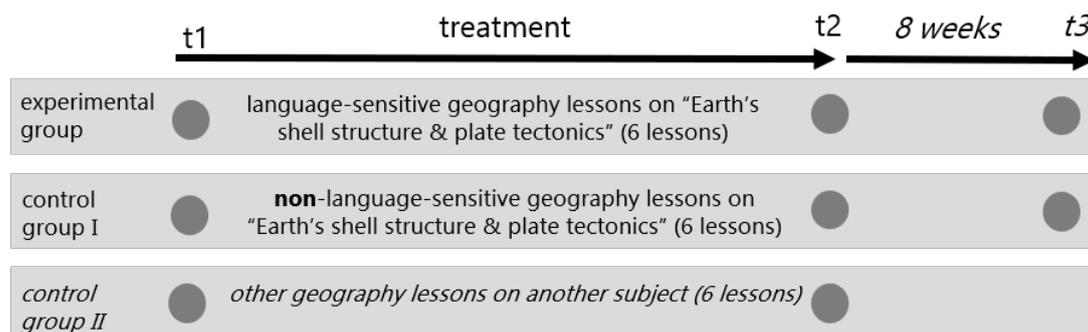


Figure 2: Research process per design cycle

The measurements focused on the two target variables knowledge and technical language, as well as the self-assessment of the students. Geographical knowledge on the subject of the Earth's shell structure and plate tectonics was assessed using a self-developed test (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .79$ ). The test aimed to be linguistically easily accessible. The target variable technical language was operationalized through two different survey instruments in order to address different facets of technical language. The C-test (Grotjahn et al., 2002), on the one hand, is a select type of gap test, which is primarily used in language acquisition research. We adapted the test for our research purpose using geographical texts about the above topic. The reliability turned out to be very good (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .96$ ). In the profile analysis (Grießhaber, 2016), on the other hand, the participants were asked to write a text about the formation of the Alps, given a sequence of images. The texts were then evaluated with regard to various surface characteristics (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .82$ ). Moreover, the self-assessment of the students' geographical knowledge and technical language competence was assessed on a five-level Likert scale. The items are based on large-scale school achievement studies (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .92$ ).

### 3 Findings

In the following, the initial results of the research project are set out. On the one hand, we give insight into the developed design criteria. On the other hand, we focus on the first results concerning the effectiveness of language-sensitive geography lessons.

#### 3.1 Design-criteria

The design criteria were derived from the current state of research in a variety of neighboring research areas. We do not claim that the criteria are complete and they can be prioritized differently depending on the student's needs. Nevertheless, the following criteria turned out to be useful and good to operationalize in our research project. The effectiveness of the criteria was tested via the language-sensitive geography teaching unit (see Chapter 3.2).

##### 1. Good geography teaching as a basis

The main goal of language-sensitive geography lessons is to give all pupils the best possible access to geography. Thus, the basis of language-sensitive geography teaching needs to be "good" geography teaching. Although there is not only one way to teach geography, there is a broad consensus that good geography teaching is based on a moderate constructivist understanding of learning (Rempfler, 2018a). Moreover,

proper geography lessons include incorporating different geographical methods and the basic concepts of geography (Fögele, 2016; Rempfler, 2018b). The treatment adheres to the essential criterion of "good" geography lessons.

## 2. Scaffolding

Various empirical studies in educational research and second language didactics suggest that scaffolding has high effectiveness for language and subject learning in the classroom (Barricelli, 2015; Götze, 2018; Prediger & Zindel, 2017). Scaffolding is based on Vygotskij's "zone of proximal development" (Cole & Vygotskij, 1979). According to Vygotskij, learning is best stimulated when the aim is slightly above the current performance level. In order to reach the next level, scaffolds are offered and then gradually withdrawn. The treatment contains scaffolds on a linguistic level, for example, to relieve reading and writing on the one hand and to stimulate the corresponding learning process on the other.

## 3. Networking of representations

Especially in didactics of mathematics and in second language didactics, the networking of representations is considered to be fruitful for subject and language learning (Beese et al., 2014; Gibbons & Cummins, 2002; Wessel, 2015). The aim is to use different forms of representation to present the same content. The networking of the forms is one key to understanding. The language-sensitive teaching unit includes various forms of representations and offers to connect them.

## 4. Inclusion of the first language

Second language didactics point out the necessity of including the first language in subject learning. Although teachers cannot manage every language in their classroom, it is possible to consider the first language of the students as a potentially useful resource (Gogolin, 1994; Marx, 2014; Riegger et al., 2017). The students participating in the study were invited to use their first language if they felt it would be helpful for them.

### 3.2 Treatment effects

The teaching unit based on the criteria was examined, testing a set of specific hypotheses. Next, we outline our three main hypotheses and our evaluation strategy.

Following the logic that knowledge gain is only possible if one understands the information provided linguistically, it seems plausible that the experimental group (EG) should have higher increases in knowledge than the control group (CG). Since technical language is explicitly addressed in the experimental group, but not in the control group, we also expected advantages for the experimental group in the gain of technical language. Furthermore, we assumed changes in self-assessment in the experimental group since the self-assessment of the participants is an explicit part of the language-sensitive treatment (Table 1).

Table 1: Statistical hypotheses for pre-post-difference  $\Delta$ 

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Effects $H_1$ KnowledgeTest<br>$(\text{mean}(EG_{t_2}) - \text{mean}(EG_{t_1})) / ((s(EG_{t_2}) + s(EG_{t_1}) / 2)) >$<br>$(\text{mean}(CG_{t_2}) - \text{mean}(CG_{t_1})) / ((s(CG_{t_2}) + s(CG_{t_1}) / 2))$      | Effects $H_0$ KnowledgeTest<br>$(\text{mean}(EG_{t_2}) - \text{mean}(EG_{t_1})) / ((s(EG_{t_2}) + s(EG_{t_1}) / 2)) \leq$<br>$(\text{mean}(CG_{t_2}) - \text{mean}(CG_{t_1})) / ((s(CG_{t_2}) + s(CG_{t_1}) / 2))$     |
| Effects $H_1$ TechnicalLanguage<br>$(\text{mean}(EG_{t_2}) - \text{mean}(EG_{t_1})) / ((s(EG_{t_2}) + s(EG_{t_1}) / 2)) >$<br>$(\text{mean}(CG_{t_2}) - \text{mean}(CG_{t_1})) / ((s(CG_{t_2}) + s(CG_{t_1}) / 2))$  | Effects $H_0$ TechnicalLanguage<br>$(\text{mean}(EG_{t_2}) - \text{mean}(EG_{t_1})) / ((s(EG_{t_2}) + s(EG_{t_1}) / 2)) \leq$<br>$(\text{mean}(CG_{t_2}) - \text{mean}(CG_{t_1})) / ((s(CG_{t_2}) + s(CG_{t_1}) / 2))$ |
| Effects $H_1$ Self-assessment<br>$(\text{mean}(EG_{t_2}) - \text{mean}(EG_{t_1})) / ((s(EG_{t_2}) + s(EG_{t_1}) / 2)) \neq$<br>$(\text{mean}(CG_{t_2}) - \text{mean}(CG_{t_1})) / ((s(CG_{t_2}) + s(CG_{t_1}) / 2))$ | Effects $H_0$ Self-assessment<br>$(\text{mean}(EG_{t_2}) - \text{mean}(EG_{t_1})) / ((s(EG_{t_2}) + s(EG_{t_1}) / 2)) =$<br>$(\text{mean}(CG_{t_2}) - \text{mean}(CG_{t_1})) / ((s(CG_{t_2}) + s(CG_{t_1}) / 2))$      |

Notes:

$H_1$ : statistical alternative

$H_0$ : null hypotheses

m: mean

s: standard deviation

$t_1$ : pre-measurement

$t_2$ : post-measurement

To test the hypotheses, we defined a change score  $\Delta$  as Cohen's d for independent samples subtracting the change in the experimental group minus the change in the control group. Therefore, a positive  $\Delta$  indicates higher relative gains (or smaller losses) in support of the treatment.

Group differences  $\Delta$  for the pre-post-differences were thus compared by Cohen's  $d_{\text{emp}}$  and an associated critical d-value ( $d_{\text{crit}}$ ). We chose a power ( $\beta-1$ ) of  $\geq 80\%$  and a significance level of  $\alpha < .05$ . If  $d_{\text{emp}} \geq d_{\text{crit}}$ , the statistical alternative hypothesis is accepted with 80% certainty, and the null hypothesis is rejected with 95% certainty.

Regarding higher learning gains, we find significant advantages for knowledge and technical language in the experimental group. These findings support the alternative hypotheses. For the self-assessment, no significant group differences were found; the alternative hypothesis is rejected (Table 2).  $\Delta d_{\text{crit}}$  was computed with G\*Power (Faul et al., 2007) in a sensitivity analysis for independent groups t-tests (one-sided for every test score except for self-assessment, which was two-sided). This evaluation strategy of planned contrasts is more efficient and specific than other statistical procedures and contributes this way to the statistical validity (Hager, 2004).

Table 2: Treatment effects for four test scores  $\Delta t_2-t_1$  ( $\alpha = .05$ ,  $\beta-1 = .80$ )

| test             | $\Delta d_{crit}$ | $\Delta d_{emp}$ | $\Delta d_{emp} \geq \Delta d_{crit}$ | EG/CG | N  | $\Delta M_{t_2-t_1}$ | SD    | $t_{crit}$ | df  |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|-------|----|----------------------|-------|------------|-----|
| knowledge        | 0.40              | 0.51             | yes                                   | EG    | 88 | 0.12                 | 0.11  | 1.66       | 156 |
|                  |                   |                  |                                       | CG    | 69 | 0.06                 | 0.11  |            |     |
| C-test           | 0.40              | 0.51             | yes                                   | EG    | 88 | 0.34                 | 0.31  | 1.66       | 156 |
|                  |                   |                  |                                       | CG    | 69 | 0.19                 | 0.30  |            |     |
| profile analysis | 0.40              | 0.51             | yes                                   | EG    | 88 | 6.24                 | 10.66 | 1.66       | 156 |
|                  |                   |                  |                                       | CG    | 70 | 0.27                 | 12.60 |            |     |
| self-assessment  | .45               | -0.28            | no                                    | EG    | 88 | -0.12                | 0.45  | 1.98       | 155 |
|                  |                   |                  |                                       | CG    | 69 | 0.00                 | 0.40  |            |     |

#### 4 Conclusion

On the one hand, our research aimed to look at what design criteria language-sensitive geography lessons could have. The four principles we adopted from the current state of research and worked with were useful in our project. On the other hand, we demonstrated the effectiveness of language-sensitive geography teaching in a specific age group for a specific geographical subdomain. In this setting, the experimental group shows clear advantages over the control group in terms of both knowledge and technical language. In contrast, no significant changes could be found for the self-assessment. In other words: all students know more after the lessons than before and, students of the experimental group know more than their peers in the control group.

For both research questions, the design-based research framework can be an advantageous approach for other age groups and geographical subdomains, primarily through the iteration and the formative evaluation. Also, the close cooperation with teachers throughout the research process was fruitful. The survey instruments we developed and adapted are suitable in their validity and reliability for measuring the target variables. Throughout the design cycles, the instruments were optimized so that they can be used for further research.

##### 4.1 Limitations

One limitation is the sample size. We chose a significance level of .05 and a power of .80 being able to detect effects higher than half a standard deviation but not smaller effects. Another aspect is that, although the design criteria worked in our setting, it remains questionable how exactly the criteria operate in other contexts, for example, on a different topic or different age groups. Design-based research examines entire designs and ultimately cannot filter out isolated factors that could explain the success or failure of an intervention. This paper focuses on the pre-post comparison of the data; calculations, including the follow-up-tests, are still to come.

##### 4.2 Prospects

According to our research, language-sensitive geography teaching is key to giving students better access to knowledge and technical language. However, there are still

many questions to answer. For instance, further research on the changes in self-assessment should be done, especially in conjunction with the development of knowledge and language skills. In the case of interpreting the findings considering the self-assessment, we face difficulties. For now, we cannot say that the self-assessment of one or both groups has improved or worsened. It can be said that the experimental group assesses its skills as lower than before the treatment. One interpretation could be that the participants overestimated their abilities in the first assessment. After the treatment, which focuses on linguistic difficulties, the self-assessment could have become more realistic. It could also mean that the participants' self-assessment decreased because they felt overwhelmed by the treatment. In the analyses presented here, the entire sample of cycle II was considered. It might also be useful to examine various reference groups, separated by gender and reading literacy, to investigate differential effects depending on the group. Moreover, calculations on the stability of the effects including the third measurement time are required.

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*Attitudinal Evaluation of Accents from the Expanding Circle: A Saudi Perspective*

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Official Conference Proceedings**Abstract**

This study quantitatively examines attitudes held by Saudis towards three accents from the Expanding Circle (Kachru, 1985; 1992) varieties of English. By means of verbal-guise technique experimentation (see Garrett, 2010; McKenzie, 2010), stimuli of Spanish, Chinese and Saudi accents of English were employed to elicit attitudinal data from 84 Saudi respondents via an online questionnaire. The results of this study suggest that the accents under investigation were perceived in a non-discriminatory manner. Confirmed by the ANOVA test, the results revealed a similar and quite neutral attitude towards the accents. While researchers usually find an attitudinal distinction between solidarity and status (Zahn & Hopper, 1985), the findings of the present study suggest an absence of such a distinction when evaluating the accents. This was further considered as a sign of the existence of attitudinal ambivalence and social-desirability bias. On this note, another important revelation of the study is the potential role of international education in raising linguistic tolerance as evidenced by a chi-square test of independence for age and educational level of the respondents. Finally, this study contributes to the ‘sociolinguistic theory’ (Garrett, 2001, p. 630; McKenzie, 2010, p. 38) relevant to the Saudi community by attempting to discover language prejudices, and paves the way to establish a framework of language attitudes research on English varieties, or even, other languages in the Saudi context.

Keywords: Language Attitudes, Saudis, Accents, Verbal-Guise, VGT, Expanding Circle

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## Introduction

Language is not to be solely studied. Speakers and hearers of language are also central to the wide scope of language research. One of the subfields of such research is the study of people's language attitudes (henceforth, LA). LA is the term used to refer to the perceptions and ideologies held about speech styles and the performers of them. In other words, it is 'the social evaluation of speech styles' (Dragojevic & Giles, 2014, p. 91). On this note, it has been repeatedly found that linguistic productions and cues (e.g. accent) are frequently stereotypically evaluated (Cavallaro & Chin, 2009, p. 143; Crystal, 2010, p. 23; Giles & Coupland, 1991, p. 58; Giles & Bradac, 1994, p. 4260). This paper aims to investigate if such evaluations would be made by Saudis towards accented-varieties of English from around the globe.

Past research on Saudis' attitudes towards English could be classified under two themes: 1) pedagogy and 2) functionality. The former probably motivates most researchers in the area. In this kind of research, researchers focus on the sufficiency of English teaching and learning methods (e.g. Alfarwan, 2019; Aljumah, 2012; Alqahtani, Bhaskar, Vadakalur Elumalai, & Abumelha, 2018; Mehmood, 2019) and the teacher's accent and competence (e.g. Alotaibi, 2018; Alseweed & Daif-Allah, 2012; Alseweed, 2012). The focus of the second theme is measuring Saudis' attitudes towards the English language at a macro level. In other words, researchers examine English's influence and value in the Saudi context (see Faruk, 2014 for a review). The present study combines elements from both themes as it seeks to explore attitudes towards English accents and is also educationally-oriented in its findings and conclusions.

## Background

In light of English being a global language (Crystal, 2012), English regularly varies. As such, various classifications of English varieties have been proposed (Schneider, 2011, p. 29). World Englishes (henceforth, WE), popularised by Braj Kachru (1985; 1992), is the most popular classification which encompasses all existing spoken English varieties in the world (Schneider, 2011, p. 29). Other models of WE have also been conceptualised (e.g. McArthur, 1987). However, as argued by Jenkins (2009, p. 18), Kachru's model of World Englishes is the most illustrative portrayal of the current varieties of English (see Figure 1).

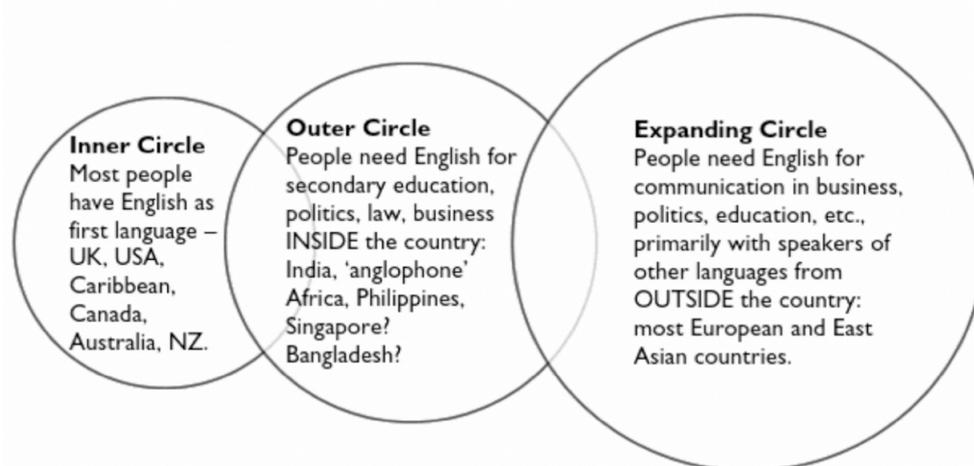


Figure 1: Kachru's three-circles model.  
Reproduced from Melchers and Shaw (2011, p. 8)

The model is also incorporated and cited very frequently in the literature. Therefore, it was adopted as a conceptual framework for the varieties under investigation in the present study.

The model consists of an 'Inner Circle' (henceforth, IC), an 'Outer Circle' (henceforth, OC) and an 'Expanding Circle' (henceforth, EC) each including certain countries and varieties of the respective category. Past attitudinal research has dealt with varieties from all the categories. For instance, some early papers discussing attitudes and usages regarding WE varieties are found in Greenbaum (1985). As such, most attitudinal research on English accents focuses mainly on IC varieties (Beinhoff, 2013, p. 29) (see Garrett, 2010 for a review).

### **Purpose of the study and the research questions**

Research on WE varieties and the attitudes towards them is still needed (Bhatia, 2020, p. 631), particularly, on EC varieties (Rezaei, Khosravizadeh, & Mottaghi, 2019, p. 55). For instance, some researchers (e.g. Al-Dosari, 2011; Almegren, 2017; 2018) have pointed out that there is a dearth of research that includes Saudis' perceptions of WE. Additionally, Seoane (2016, pp. 1-2) argues that researching WE can reveal 'wealth of information' in various fields of enquiry. Consequently, the present study aims to address such gaps by eliciting Saudis' attitudes towards three Expanding-Circle accents of English (henceforth, ECAE), namely, Spanish, Chinese and Saudi. In other words, the study will explore, analyse, compare and explain attitudinal patterns expressed by the respondents. Hence, two research questions are developed in which the study will attempt to address:

1. What are Saudis' attitudinal evaluations of three ECAE (Spanish, Chinese and Saudi)?
2. What are the implications that can stem from Saudis' evaluation of ECAE?

### **Methodology**

The elicitation of attitudes in this study relied on an indirect approach (see Garrett, 2010; McKenzie, 2010 for a review of the approach). The respondents were asked to rate accented-speakers of English on a measurement scale. Further, as recommended

by Preston (1999; 1989), a question on the geographic distribution of each variety was included. The methodological paradigm of this study was essentially quantitative which seeks to investigate and measure attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of Saudis in relation to ECAE. As such, several research instruments were used including: 1) an online questionnaire, 2) a rating task using the semantic-differential scale 3) the verbal-guise technique (henceforth, VGT) and speech stimuli of the accents under investigation, all of which are discussed respectively in the following.

### **The questionnaire**

An online questionnaire was used as it has been a powerful tool in attitudinal research (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 6). It contained three (sub)sections for the rating of each accent (and the representative speaker) and was displayed in both English and Arabic. This was done to 1) increase the accuracy of responses, 2) to increase the sample size, 3) to minimise misunderstanding of the questionnaire items and 4) to make the task easy, quick and straightforward. Following Garrett's (2010, p. 56) recommendation, the rating scale used in the questionnaire was semantic-differential scale (see below) rather than Likert scales (i.e. the extent of agreement of the respondent with a statement). The semantic-differential scale can 'elicit snap judgements and minimise opportunities for mental processing, thus reducing the possibilities for the social desirability' bias (Garrett, 2010, p. 56). Hence, it is 'considered to have good reliability and validity' (Garrett, Coupland, & Williams, 2003, p. 65). More importantly, it helps to obtain positive and negative evaluations (Henerson, Morris, & Fitz-Gibbon, 1987, p. 89) which are essential data for LA research. An identification task for each accent was also included in the questionnaire as a multiple-choice question. Each respondent had to choose whether the speaker is from the Far East, Middle East, Europe, Africa or Latin America.

### **The verbal-guise technique**

The questionnaire was also used as the means in which the VGT experiment was conducted. The VGT was one of the salient tools used in the collection of data for the study. It is a modification of the original matched-guise technique (henceforth, MGT) which was devised by Lambert and his associates in their pioneering study on the attitudes of people in Montreal, Canada towards English and French (see Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, & Fillenbaum, 1960). In MGT experiments, a single speaker is employed to mimic the language varieties (e.g. accents) under investigation in audio-recordings deceiving listeners that those recordings are of different speakers (Garrett, 2007, p. 117). On the other hand, in VGT experiments, each recording is provided by a relatively representative speaker of the studied language variety. The respondents are, then, asked to rate the speakers on a number of traits. In essence, VGT and MGT constitute the indirect design in which, as Fasold (1984, p. 149) points out, the respondent is prevented from knowing that his or her LA were being investigated. Consequently, collecting biased responses can be avoided. It is also suggested to use different speakers when examining varieties with 'global differences' (Drager, 2018, p. 63) such as EC varieties. To sum up, the indirect design was adopted in this study by utilising VGT rather than MGT.

For a successful utilisation of the VGT, some traits had to be selected to be included in the evaluation task. The traits used in LA research are usually classified under two

evaluative dimensions: ‘solidarity’ and ‘status’ (Beinhoff, 2013, p. 25). A solidarity trait refers to ‘feelings of attachment and belonging’ (Kircher & Fox, 2019, p. 3) which instigate ‘[a] vital social meaning [...] [that] represent[s] the social group with which one identifies’ (Ryan, Giles, & Sebastian, 1982, p. 9). Conversely, a status trait represents ‘social status or power’ (Ryan et al., 1982, p. 8). These dimensions have been validated after Zahn and Hopper (1985) found that the traits used in lots of LA studies belong to similar categories. Also, it is recommended to use traits from previous studies when investigating LA (Garrett, 2010, p. 56). Thus, ten traits used in earlier research (e.g. Hiraga, 2005; Ladegaard, 1998; McKenzie, 2008; Sykes, 2011) were included in the task (see Table 1).

| Solidarity traits |           |          | Status traits |           |              |
|-------------------|-----------|----------|---------------|-----------|--------------|
| Unfriendly        | 1 2 3 4 5 | Friendly | Unintelligent | 1 2 3 4 5 | Intelligent  |
| Impolite          | 1 2 3 4 5 | Polite   | Poor          | 1 2 3 4 5 | Wealthy      |
| Dishonest         | 1 2 3 4 5 | Honest   | Uneducated    | 1 2 3 4 5 | Educated     |
| Selfish           | 1 2 3 4 5 | Selfless | Unconfident   | 1 2 3 4 5 | Confident    |
| Unhumorous        | 1 2 3 4 5 | Humorous | Lazy          | 1 2 3 4 5 | Hard-working |

Table 1: The evaluation traits on a semantic-differential scale.

### The speech stimuli

The speech stimuli used in the VGT were adapted from Swan and Smith’s (2001) work ‘Learner English’. Swan and Smith collected recordings of multiple accented speakers of English. The recordings suited the purpose of the study as they 1) contain EC varieties, 2) are controlled in terms of sex and content and 3) their sound quality is clear and high. Moreover, some of these recordings, ‘can be taken as *broadly representative of a whole group*’ (Swan & Smith, 2001, p. ix, emphasis added). In each recording, the speaker narrates a story and improvises a completion to it based on pictures. It should be added that narrating a picture story can provide a controlled and ‘relatively realistic sample’ of speech (Rossiter, Derwing, & Jones, 2008, p. 325). Furthermore, it is suggested to control the sex and the content when using stimuli to research LA (Carranza, 1982, p. 82; Schilling, 2013, p. 105). Thus, all the speakers were chosen to be males who narrate a generic, neutral and bias-free story. To minimise any bias effects, the recordings were modified by removing the parts wherein the speaker mentions his country, education and occupation. The recordings were then, uploaded into a private playlist on Soundcloud website and a link for each recording was provided where relevant in the questionnaire. The script and translation for each recording were also provided. All in all, the recordings have demonstrated potential usefulness for attitudes elicitation in the study.

### Respondents

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the study’s respondents ( $N = 84$ ). As the research questions imply, identifying as Saudi was the most important sampling criterion. Unlike other LA studies on Saudis, the recruited respondents were not categorised as English learners or teachers as this was not necessary for the purpose of the study.

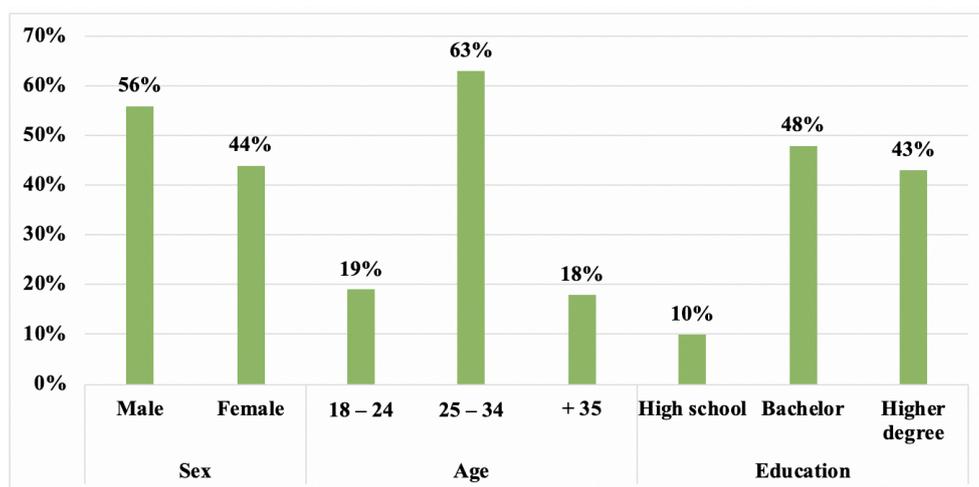


Figure 2: Demographic data of respondents.

87 responses were initially collected from which three responses were excluded because one was not from a Saudi respondent, one was not included in the analysed categories of the education variable and another was duplicated. Sampling was conducted through my personal network via a snowball technique (i.e. friend of a friend). Thus, a nationality question was used as an inclusion/exclusion technique in the questionnaire to ensure that the respondent is Saudi. Finally, the questionnaire was distributed via mobile text messages.

### Data Analysis

The collected responses were coded and entered into SPSS (version 25) to perform statistical analyses. The mean scores (i.e. averages) for all scale ratings were calculated to show the patterns of the results. Moreover, as usually recommended in statistical analysis (O'Leary, 2010, p. 238), measures of dispersion of the standard deviations were also calculated. Additionally, overall calculations of correct/incorrect answers in the identification task were performed. In terms of the traits used for evaluation, data manipulation was conducted on all the rating scores of the traits as separate variables by computing (i.e. transforming) them into two new variables classified as Solidarity and Status. This was done to obtain more comprehensive and illustrative overall evaluations. This is also a common practice in similar research (e.g. Carrie, 2017; Coupland & Bishop, 2007; Stewart, Ryan, & Giles, 1985). In short, the transformed variables are the mean scores of the combined mean scores for the evaluated traits within each evaluative dimension.

Inferential data analyses were also applied to the data set. First, it was necessary to confirm normal distribution of the data, and thus, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality was performed on each of the scores of Solidarity and Status with each social variable of the respondent (e.g. sex) under investigation. The results showed – with few exceptions – no significant skewness or kurtosis in the distribution of the data. This was a prerequisite for parametric tests (e.g. ANOVA) (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012, p. 489). Second, the chi-square test of independence was conducted to investigate associations between the variables. Finally, the analysis of variance (henceforth, ANOVA) was also performed since it is consistently used in VGT studies (McKenzie, 2010, p. 97). Hence, one-way ANOVA test was computed to assess significant differences in the mean scores of the ratings. In sum, several

statistical techniques were incorporated to better illustrate the results and to allow for comparisons with the literature.

## Results and analysis

This section will present the results of the study. First, the results related to the accent identification task are outlined. Then, the attitudes towards the three ECAE are discussed.

### The accent identification task

As Figure 3 shows, there are higher percentages of correct identification of the studied accents.

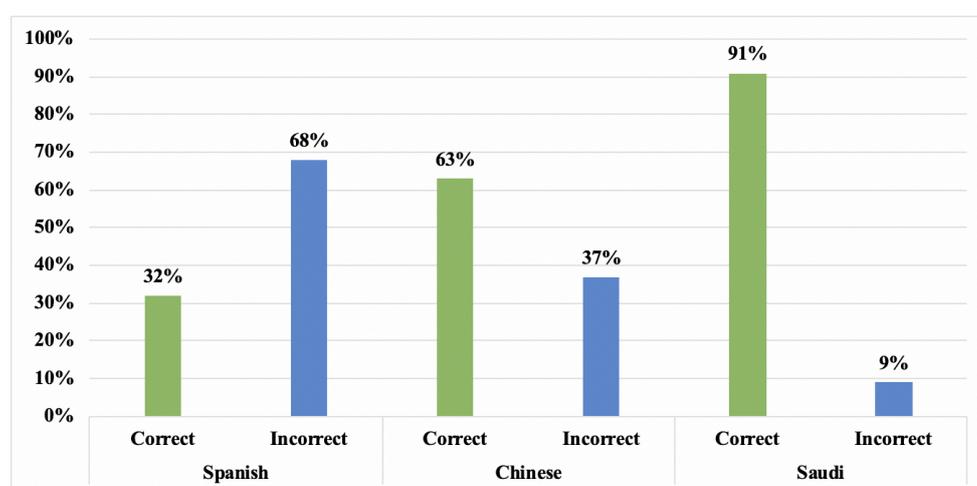


Figure 3: Correct identification of the geographic origin of the accent ( $N = 84$ ).

The highest identified accent was the Saudi accent with a correctness proportion of (91%) followed by the Chinese accent (63%). The Spanish accent (32%) was correctly identified less often than the other accents. Furthermore, a chi-square test of independence was computed to statistically test the relationship between the correctness of identification and the social characteristics of the respondents. Table 2 compares the results and illustrates the statistical significance noted for each accent under investigation.

| Accent         | Social (grouping) variable of respondent |                                  |  |
|----------------|--|----------------------------------|--|
|                | Sex                                      | Age                              | Education                              |
| <b>Spanish</b> |  |                                  |  |
|                | Chi-square test result ( $\chi^2$ )      | $\chi^2(1) = .003$<br>$p = .960$ | $\chi^2(2) = 8.857$<br>$p = .012^*$    |
| <b>Chinese</b> |  |                                  |  |
|                | Chi-square test result ( $\chi^2$ )      | $\chi^2(1) = .025$<br>$p = .875$ | $\chi^2(2) = 12.56$<br>$p = .002^{**}$ |
| <b>Saudi</b>   |  |                                  |  |
|                | Chi-square test result ( $\chi^2$ )      | $\chi^2(1) = 1.30$<br>$p = .254$ | $\chi^2(2) = 2.35$<br>$p = .309$       |

\* = significant at 0.05 level.

\*\* = significant at 0.01 level.

Table 2: Results of the chi-square test of independence of correctness of identification by the social variable of respondents ( $N = 84$ ).

As can be seen from the table, statistical significance was noted in the identification of the Spanish and Chinese accents within the age variable. Moreover, a statistical significance was found in the results of the Chinese accent identification among the respondents' levels of education (see below for details). In conclusion, the demographics of the respondents appear to be related to the results obtained from the task.

The chi-square test results indicate that some sub-groups of respondents were correctly identifying the accents more significantly than others. To determine those sub-groups, calculations were performed within the results of the following accents and sub-groups: (Spanish accent by age), (Chinese accent by age) and (Chinese accent by education). These are illustrated in Figure 4.

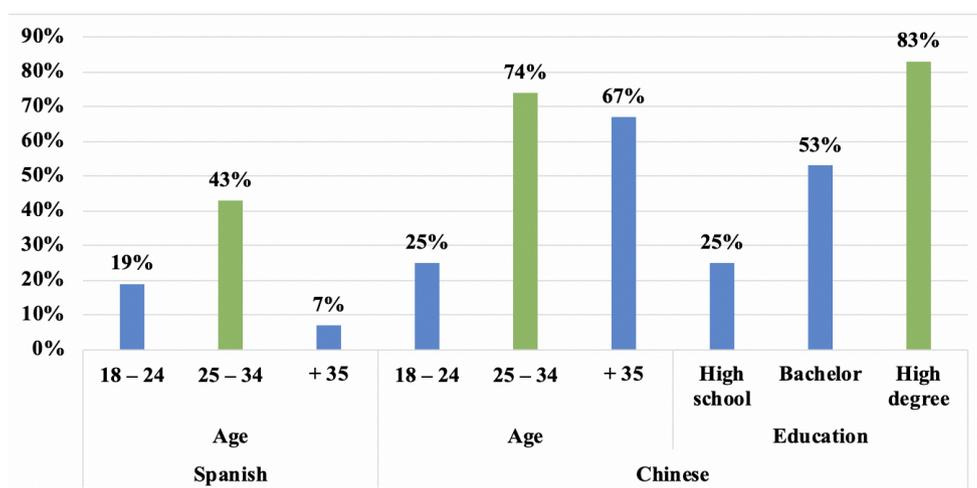


Figure 4: Correct identification within sub-groups of statistically-significant social variables of respondents.

From the figure, respondents who are 25 – 34 were better than others at identifying both the Spanish (43%) and Chinese (74%) accents. In addition, respondents who hold higher educational qualification (e.g. Masters or PhD) were correctly identifying the Chinese accent (83%) more often than others. Therefore, factors of age and education of the respondents could be seen to have a relationship with the ability to

correctly identify some of the studied accents in this study. Hence, it is possible that exposure to English is related to these results. This is because 85,508<sup>1</sup> Saudi study abroad in the US, the UK and Australia respectively (Ministry of Education, 2019) which would allow interaction with not only other international students but also English-speaking residents who come from various areas of the world. More specifically, this takes place with accented-speakers in English language courses.

### Attitudes towards ECAE

In the section, the attitudes and evaluations of the accents (and the speakers) will be presented. The overall ratings of the studied accents appeared to be very similar and quite neutral. Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations for all three accents in terms of the solidarity and status dimensions.

| Accent  | Solidarity |      | Status |      |
|---------|------------|------|--------|------|
|         | Mean       | SD   | Mean   | SD   |
| Spanish | 3.52       | .805 | 3.26   | .826 |
| Chinese | 3.43       | .794 | 3.21   | .854 |
| Saudi   | 3.49       | .794 | 3.14   | .767 |

Table 3: Overall attitudes towards the accents ( $N = 84$ ; 1 = low rating on the trait; 5 = high rating on the trait; SD = standard deviation).

Generally, slightly higher ratings for the Spanish accent can be noticed on both dimensions whereas the Saudi accent received the lowest rating in terms of status. Nevertheless, it is not possible to determine the respondents' favourability of the accents. Consequently, the positive/negative evaluation is considered limited in the present study. To further test differences in the evaluation of the accents, using the social variables of the respondents as factor variables, a one-way ANOVA test was conducted on the rating scores of the accents. No statistical significance was noted, and again, the lack of attitudinal difference was confirmed. This may be seen as 'attitudinal ambivalence' (Maio & Haddock, 2010, p. 34) considering the consistency of the neutral ratings found in the evaluation of all the accents. This is also similar to past research where Saudis have shown attitudinal neutrality towards some English accents (e.g. Alghofaili & Elyas, 2017; Almegren, 2018).

### Discussion

Some findings of this study appeared to show a relationship between the identifiability of the studied accents and the age and education of the respondents. This was evidenced by a chi-square test of independence that showed statistical significance. Further, the Saudi respondents in this study did not express negative attitudes towards the EC-accented speakers. As a result, acceptance of the studied ECAE could be inferred. That is, the findings could indicate some sort of tolerance and open-mindedness in regards to different speech styles of English. This can be further interpreted as an indication of the role of international education in raising tolerance towards the varieties of English. This is because it was argued that exposure to English (and the fact that many Saudis study abroad) was deemed relevant to

<sup>1</sup> The last available census lacks the proportion of Saudis studying in Canada which, until May 2018, used to be one of the main destinations for Saudi students who study abroad.

the findings of the study. It is also possible to conclude that English accents have relatively less stigma in the Saudi context because English is usually an L2 (i.e. second language) to Saudis. This is in line with Schiffman's (1996, p. 58) argument that ideas about language (e.g. attitudes) are acquired alongside with the acquisition of the language itself. Giles and Ryan (1982, p. 208) also note that the stereotypes attached to speech styles develop from early childhood.

Another point to be made is that it could be argued that the social identity of the speakers in the study was manifested by the linguistic production. This is because language can represent a social identity of the speaker (Edwards, 1999, pp. 101-102) even if it is a non-native variety (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010, p. 219). Accent, in particular, is key in forming the social identity of the speaker (Achirri, 2017, p. 6; Beinhoff, 2013, p. 102; Levis, 2005, p. 375; Setter & Jenkins, 2005, p. 5).

There was a lack of attitudinal distinction between solidarity and status in the evaluation of the accents in the present study. This was confirmed by a one-way ANOVA test on the ratings of the accents on the two evaluative dimensions. This is a rather unusual finding since a distinction in how speakers are evaluated is usually found in LA research (see Zahn & Hopper, 1985). However, this finding is consistent with the findings of Kircher and Fox (2019)<sup>2</sup> who investigated attitudes towards Multicultural London English (MLE). They, too, admitted that their finding was unusual (p. 10). This probably needs to be explored further by researchers to re-evaluate the dimensions in language attitudes measurement. After all, 'attitudes change over time' (Maio & Haddock, 2010, p.4) which may require new measurement considerations of attitudes.

Despite the precautions followed in the study's design, the results may have been affected by social-desirability bias that 'make[s] the respondent *look good*' (Paulhus, 1991, p. 17, emphasis added). In fact, Cook & Selltiz (1964, p. 39) concluded that people usually report their attitudes in a way that makes them 'well-adjusted, unprejudiced, rational, open-minded and democratic'. Social-desirability bias increases whenever the elicited attitudes are towards groups known by a particular religion, race or ethnicity (Garrett et al., 2003, p. 23). The EC varieties in the present study can be seen as ethnically or geographically distinctive and, as explained earlier, have been correctly identified. This could further indicate bias in the results. Admittedly, such bias can be a serious flaw in research data, especially, when investigating people's behaviour (Börger, 2012, p. 53). Nonetheless, the impact of biased responses would not be deemed significant in the present study as the collected responses represented feelings and emotions rather than behavioural outcomes.

'All studies have limitations' (Brause, 2000, p. 108) and the present study is no exception. The first limitation is about the difficulty of attitudes measurement. Not only that measuring attitudes is 'extremely difficult' (Burns, Matthews, & Nolan-Conroy, 2004, p. 186), it is almost impossible to exactly determine how many respondents hold a particular attitude (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 289). Though statistical analyses and tests were used in the study, categorising attitudes can still be difficult. This was manifested in the possibly-biased responses in the VGT task. Secondly, although it is agreed that thirty is the minimum sufficient sample size for statistical

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<sup>2</sup> Kircher and Fox (2019) conducted a factor analysis test rather than ANOVA test.

analysis of the data (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 101), a larger sample would have been more appropriate. Moreover, due to the nature of this work, the investigated variables were also limited in terms of the accents and the social variables of the respondents.

## Conclusion

The motivation for this study was the argument of the inevitability of language attitudes. According to Mahboob and Elyas (2014, p. 128), English in Saudi Arabia 'is loaded with political, religious, social, and economic overtones and is a topic of heated debate'. Hence, this study contributes to our understating of people's perceptions of different speech styles. In particular, the study sought to investigate Saudis' attitudes towards three English accents from around the world. As far as I have been able to determine, this is the first LA work that combines the Spanish, Chinese and the Saudi accents of English as attitude objects and Saudis as a study population. This selection of accents and population was an attempt to move into the perceived exterior side of the English language and its speakers. Nevertheless, this exteriority assumption is in contrast with the views of many scholars (e.g. Clayton, 2018, p. 67) who consider EC varieties to be evolving and emerging as language varieties on their own.

With regards to attitudes towards WE varieties, some potential research areas that need further research have been identified. First, since this study only focuses on Saudis' attitudes towards EC accents, further research may include varieties from the IC, OC or both. While Almegren (2018) does this by examining Saudis' attitudes towards Malaysian, Filipino, Indian, Scottish, and British English speakers, the rest of the varieties and speakers should be studied and compared. Other population different from Saudis can also be included in future work to investigate and compare attitudes within various communities. For example, Chien (2018) studied and compared the attitudes of both Taiwanese and British respondents towards a number of varieties from all the three circles (i.e. IC, OC and EC). A further study, for example, can assess differences (or similarities) of the attitudes of Saudis and nationals of neighbouring countries. Another project may add a qualitative paradigm to the investigation by examining factors behind the elicited attitudes. If the 'paradigmatic crack' (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 46) was avoided, the qualitative paradigm can increase the level of confidence in the findings.

The present study can be seen as an interdisciplinary enquiry as it relies on theories and methods from various fields such as social psychology, linguistics and sociology. As a result, this can make the findings relevant in many contexts. For example, it was found that the attitudes towards the studied EC accents were neutral and unprejudiced. This was argued to be influenced by international education. Therefore, linguists and educators can actually work together to minimise language prejudices and inequalities. Another finding was the association between the identifiability of some of the accents under investigation and the age and education of the Saudi respondents. This was interpreted as an outcome of the familiarity of and the exposure to English worldwide and in educational institutions. Again, the role of education seems salient in the findings of this study.

Researching LA contributes in building the ‘sociolinguistic theory’ (Garrett, 2001, p. 630; McKenzie, 2010, p. 38). That is, LA can help in detecting ‘the roots of purism’ by determining who, based on the linguistic production, enjoys power and has the high status in (or to) a community (Evans, 2005, p. 242). This way specialists can help in ‘educating the public’ about language prejudice, inequality and discrimination (Lindemann, 2005, p. 210). Furthermore, this study paves the way for more attitudinal work that involves other English varieties, or even, other languages in Saudi Arabia. This may be beneficial in developing the understanding of ‘intergroup communication’ (Carranza, 1982, p. 63). For instance, the results of the study indicated that the potential communication with the accented speakers led to correct identification of the accents. Also, the attitudes towards the accents were not negative. This can provide insights into the study of the social aspect of language relevant to English.

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## *Developing Relationships in an Online Environment*

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### **Abstract**

Relationship building is one of the main goals for engaging students in online learning environments and are seen as the foundation of online learning design (Ames, 2020; Cummings, 2020). Although this is not a new topic of examination, it is a topic that is evolving on an ongoing basis. This article will explain and show examples of various tools and techniques that can improve social presence in an online environment. Some specific tools and ideas that will be shared include: varying options for discussion/reflection other than traditional discussion boards, creating a “home base” to encourage students to answer each other’s questions, enhancing human presence and student participation during online lessons, creating a type professional learning community to analyze each other’s teaching videos during internships.

Keywords: Online Teaching, Online Learning, Learning Community, Online Engagement

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## **Developing Relationships in an Online Environment**

Scheduled to go live during the summer of 2019, the faculty at Georgia College completed the conversion of our academically successful but financially inviable face-to-face MAT in Special Education program into a 100% asynchronous online program. The track record of success of programs that move from face-to-face to online is tenuous at best. Research indicates that a large number of new online faculty have a low level of understanding of the way online learners learn (Bawa, 2016). Many times, face-to-face faculty attempt teach or design online courses with minimal knowledge the pedagogical aspects of online teaching and learning. Consequently they work under the assumption that methods for maintaining active engagement in face-to-face environments will work equally well online. Videoing the lectures and classroom activities that took place in our face-to-face classroom sessions would not have the same effect as being in the classroom in person. Online learning does have many advantages over face-to-face instruction. For example, with online instruction, time constraints are gone. With online teaching, professors can provide direct instruction in short segments, avoiding long lessons that often lose student attention. In online courses, I provide instruction using series of 10 minute screencasts, online resources, field-based practice and written and verbal reflections. The lack of time constraints allow our students to work during a time that is free from distractions and gives them the choice of the amount of content that they choose to cover in one sitting.

Despite knowledge of the advantages of online instruction, we realized the need to maintain the relationships that were so key to the academic success of our face-to-face program. We wanted to avoid the stereotypical image of the isolated online learner interacting only with a video of a virtual professor. Our challenge was to create face-to-face types relationships with the instructors and with each other in an online environment.

Finding ways to entrench something as volatile as “sense of belonging” is a formattable task in an online environment, however, here are six strategies to try.

### **Adopt a Mentor-Led Cohort Model**

One of the aspects of our face-to-face program that made it successful was our cohort-based, mentor-led model of teacher preparation. Being cohort-based, our teacher students took all of their special education courses as a group. The cohort was also assigned a mentor leader, this mentor leader would teach at least one course to the cohort to the semester as well as supervise their internships to insure that there was a consistent connection between the college classroom and performance in the field. The first decision we made in our online conversion was to keep the mentor-led cohort model. We currently have two cohorts of students. Each cohort takes all of their special education classes as a cohort. Each cohort is also assigned to a mentor leader, the mentor leader will be with them throughout their journey in the program teaching them at least one class per semester and ends out serving as their “go to” person in times of need as well as times of celebration. This type of relationship with a faculty member enhances communication with all faculty. Also, retaining the cohort model, students were able to form relationships with each other and maintain contact

in and out of class and make themselves available to each other and supportive of each other.

### **Host a Visible Real-Time Orientation**

Many of our MAT students are pursuing their second career, or are current paraprofessionals or provisional teachers. They often have not been in a student in years and are intimidated at the thought of masters level work. Studies show that online courses have a 10% to 20% higher withdrawal rate than face-to-face courses with students reporting feeling isolated and overwhelmed (Jaggers, 2011; Bawa, 2016). The first days in any new setting inform every subsequent experience. Feeling welcome and greeted are the first steps to building community and a sense of belonging. This is especially true at the beginning of an online program. We begin our program with a synchronous orientation that is recorded and posted on Basecamp for later viewing. During this orientation, all of our of our professors participate. We explain the navigation of our online platform and basecamp, review ethical expectations, and introduce them to their fellow cohort members. This humanization of professors and fellow students puts most students at ease and enforces the importance of continuing communication and community.

### **Create an Outside Communication Platform**

We created a space outside of our learning management system to maintain ongoing communication between students and faculty and among students themselves. In our MAT program, we use the *Basecamp* app for this purpose. In Basecamp, students and faculty can post messages to the group or select members of the group. The app is also phone compatible, so students can be alerted on their phones when posts are made. Faculty use the app to post course related matters such as reminders or clarifications. Faculty and students can also post non-course related information such as registration, job openings, university events or cohort celebrations. The most impactful use of Basecamp is that if a student has a question about a class, they can post the question and either a professor or a fellow student can answer the question in a timely manner. Having students take ownership of each other's questions is helpful for both students and professors. As a professor, not having my email inbox flooded with the same question or news of the same non-functioning link is certainly helpful to my productivity.

### **Create Classes Structured for Collaborative Learning**

Another strategy we used to facilitate online relationships is to have the students working together in small groups. In Dow (2008) participants indicated that continued interactions and structured collaborative activities increased both the quality and quantity of student engagement. It is difficult to maintain engagement and communication among a cohort of 25 without the rising of leaders who talk for the group. The purpose in creating smaller groups is to ensure active engagement and communication with all students. Therefore we often have small group discussion boards set up so that the student cannot view the post of others until they have posted themselves. This way, everyone gets to state their opinion without copying the ideas of others or trying to side with the majority opinion. Within their small group, they

can form deeper relationships within their group. One specific small group project involves a Lesson Study where students observe videos of each other's teaching and rate each other's practice within the context of one of the CEC's High Leverage Practices. With all the students being new teachers, I avoid having peers rate overall teaching effectiveness. The evaluation of lessons within the specific context of a selected High Leverage Practice avoids any situation of "the blind lead the blind" and promotes the implementation of evidence-based practices.

### **Maintain Ongoing Faculty Visibility**

According to Bawa (2016), online learners tend to communicate with professors after problems have occurred rather than seeking clarification before problems. I can't tell you how many times, beginning students start their email by saying "I hate to bother you, but" followed by a legitimate question seeking clarification before a problem exists. Faculty need to be visible to our online students so that they know your humanity and that you have their best interest. For online faculty, the term "visible" means seeing our faces as well as hearing our voices. I post a video introduction to myself and the course in the announcements tab as students log in to any class at any point in the program. By the end of the program, students know me and know how to navigate the course but I still post a video usually telling a story of my experience with the course content. To maintain being seen, I also schedule video-based office hours and conferences and often show myself in the corner of my screencasts as I am presenting information. Being able to see faces also allows the utilization of smiles and facial expressions that communicate in way that are often missed or misinterpreted in writing or voice.

### **Maintain Ongoing Student Visibility**

Students need to be visible to each other. Students being able to see and interact with fellow students usually helps them realize that the other students have the similar insecurities and can be seen as members of the same team. In an attempt to make students visible to each other, we use the Flipgrid app to have video discussion boards. Many of our students were familiar with Flipgrid and were able to help each other. In addition, the Flipgrid app is user friendly on phones. When I compare the student engagement in traditional written discussion board versus video-based discussion boards, students are much more likely to spend time viewing, rather than reading, the posts of others and responding to those posts. At the beginning of the program, many students are very scripted and rehearsed in their video discussions, by the end of the first course, students are able to be themselves and feel comfortable sharing ideas in a less than perfect, more human, manner.

### **Conclusion**

At Georgia College, we overcame the obstacles associated with the move from face-to-face to online programming. The result was a successful close-knit learning community of students and faculty that supported each other not only academically but also in multiple aspects of life. As educators, we know that the creation of community increases the likelihood of student success whether it is in an online environment or a face-to face environment (Wehler, 2018). Our primary goal in the

design goal for our newly online MAT program was to maintain the student and faculty relationships of our face-to-face program while changing the format to online with the goal of creating an atmosphere of active student engagement with each other, the faculty, and the course content. Through being actively engaged, students know whether they are progressing through the course in an efficient manner. This increased awareness of expectations and continuous feedback from multiple sources contributes to our ultimate goal of greater student success.

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*Actual English for Hospitality Industry from Foreign Hotel Guests in Thailand:  
A Case Study of Ayutthaya Province*

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**Abstract**

Effective and appropriate communication in the hospitality industry needs more than language knowledge. This study aims to 1) explore the needs of conversational English of front office staff in Ayutthaya Province, Thailand; and 2) analyze the expressions spoken by foreign tourists in Ayutthaya. To discover the needs of English language learning, the questionnaire has been used with 32 front office staff who have worked as the receptionists from 7 months to 15 years. The questionnaire comprises two essential skills for conversation: listening and speaking. It revealed that the needs of listening skill under the topic of Requesting General Service was at the highest ( $X=4.4$ ,  $S.D.=0.8$ ); while the most needs of speaking skill was with Apologizing and Expressing Condolences ( $X=4.4$ ,  $S.D.=0.7$ ). Furthermore, the structured interview questions were designed in accordance with the highest needs of Requesting General Service. It was then used with 35 foreign tourists who travel on their own currently travelling in Ayutthaya province. The results showed the actual frequently used expressions which later grouped and rearranged. Finally, they were utilized as examples in the English language manual in order to let front office staff feel familiar with the actual expressions in hotels. Therefore, the front office staff should improve their speaking and Listening skills the most in order to send effective messages to their foreign guests. The data from the findings could improve the front office staff in Thailand by helping them develop English for communication in the hospitality industry.

Keywords: Front Office Staff, Foreign Guests, Communication Skill, Actual Expressions

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## Introduction

The use of English language skills in the present world is necessary and inevitable since the skills of the English language are not merely educational tools but also an imperative language. English language is used to communicate and taught around the world than any other language. Therefore, it can be considered as a universal language that can be communicated all over the world especially in the present situation that the influence of globalization are continuous and increasing. Currently, the growth of modern transport and technology has narrowed the world. Many countries focus on English language as another official language because it is a universal language for communication, trading and cultural exchange, traveling, further education in the higher level and running various types of business which English is required as a medium. Therefore, English language plays a very important role for people in various professions especially in the hotel business which requires universal language to communicate and have good command of the English language to welcome foreigners who come to travel and receive services for overnight stays in hotels. As a sequence, people with good English will have a great advantage, an opportunity to be employed and encouraged to promote their duties to the higher position as well.

The hotel business is directly related to the tourism business as it is a place to welcome and facilitate the provision of accommodation services for tourists, it is therefore necessary to develop and improve the quality to satisfy the customers who use the service. One of the factors related to the service quality of the hotel business is the hotel staff which is in addition to having the potential of both the service and be expertise in performing duties in responsible positions, their English language skills are also essential in serving foreign customers because effective communication will create a good impression on customers including a good image for the organization, especially the front desk staff of the hotel, which is the service section. However, the English language proficiency of the hotel front desk remains a problem in communicating with foreign customers that affects the service to be inefficient as it should be. English for front office is an important tool in creating a good image for the hotel. Hotel staff therefore have a requirement to converse in English in accordance with objectives and content of hotel business establishments to be used in the situation as efficiently as it should be. In order to meet such requirement, the researcher therefore studied the details of the English language required by hotel business entrepreneurs in depth by exploring the aspects of the conversation that entrepreneurs require the most so the researcher will use the results of the study to determine the use of English for conversation and the course content appropriate for the receptionist in the future.

In addition, this is considered the integration of training content with the real situation from the establishment in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya province to contribute, create the maximum benefit of curriculum and instructional content and to build a good relationship between the University and hotel establishments as well. In this regard, the researcher was interested in studying the conversational English language requirement of hotel front desk staff in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya province.

## **Problems in Using English Language**

Viboolphant (2005) points out the barriers towards communication and the causes of communication failure in business occur when the person receiving the information has failed to understand what has been said – this results in sender breakdown, method breakdown, and recipient breakdown. Scott (1986) adds that these communication barriers happen due to misunderstandings or sometimes from being ignored by the listener. These barriers of information are from understanding, listening, and the acceptance of the listener. Speakers should know how to structure their sentences to make them easy to understand – this is so that the audience will be interested.

Davidoff (1994) points out that barriers create communication breakdowns – these barriers are either from verbal or non-verbal communication. People who work closely with clients must have a high ability to convey messages or else the content will be lost. Problems from language efficiency are the root of these problems. Language barriers and individual differences also cause problems with communication. Language barriers arise when people with different dialects communicate such as French to English and English to French. The sentence structures are different between the languages and the compositions of the verbs are different, which may lead to major miscommunications between parties. “Our vocabularies may be inadequate or our level of skill with language may simply be inadequate to express some of our deeper and subtler thoughts” (Sigband and Bell, 1994).

From the above definitions of communication barriers, we can see that certain barriers lead to failure of communication between the speaker and the listener. Due to problems stated in this paper, the focus of this research was on the levels of the English of the staff in boutique hotels as well as the problems they face. Minimization of communication barriers is the key to giving good service to foreign guests because effective communication is an important tool for people to succeed in their careers. According to Timm and Stead (1996), 90% of people who are professionals in the workforce need to communicate well for an organization to develop

Listening is considered the most important out of all the communication skills because according to Burns and Joyce (1977), 45% of routine communication comes from listening where 30% is from speaking, 16% from reading, and an additional 9% from writing.

## **The specific area of hospitality industry**

Blue and Harun (2003, pp 73 - 91) who studied the sophisticated English language used in hotel in order to develop a suitable English training program for hotel staff, found that English in the hospitality should integrate general English and hospitality English. They specified 2 types of hospitality English: English for specific hospitality purposes – ESHP and English for general hospitality purposes – EGHP. The ESHP deals directly with the hotel work functions such as check-in, check-out, and hotel enquiry, while the EGHP deals with general conversation which may not be related to the hotel functions. To use English language for communication in hotels, the staff has to consider interpersonal relations and cross-cultural situations as well. Moreover,

the body language has an important role in hotel communication as the staff has to use all the skills of communication to impress guests and to operate their job successfully.

### **English for specific purpose**

ESP as a main theory of this study, at first was developed by the inspiration of creating the language for communication in specific careers Mackay and Mouthford (1978). It has been developed for a long time and has been expanded the specific areas according to the changing of world situations. Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1980) stated that the requirement of teaching ESP was established from at least 2 factors; the requirement for language learning in limited time and the requirement for the communication in specific area. There was no need for learners to learn the language as a whole but to choose what was needed for use in working situations or in a specific area. Hutchinson and Waters (1994) and Richards (1998) also focused on the characteristics of the ESP curriculum which emphasized that the development of the curriculum should consider the language needed for specific purposes, the selection of language skills, functions and language forms which are required to be used in specific situations.

### **Objectives**

#### **This study aims to**

1. To explore the needs of conversational English of Front office Staff in Ayutthaya.
2. To analyze the expressions spoken by foreign hotel guests in Ayutthaya.

### **Materials and Methods**

#### **Participants**

The participants of the study were 32 front office staff who have worked as the receptionists from 7 months to 15 years and 35 foreign hotel guests who travel on their own currently travelling in Ayutthaya province.

#### **Procedures and Instruments**

There are two phases in this study. The first phase includes exploring the needs of conversational English of front office staff in Ayutthaya, Thailand. The 32 front office staff are purposively selected. Data is collected via questionnaires consisting of personal information and levels of needs in English conversation. The statistical analysis used comprises mean, percentage and standard deviation. The second phase is collecting the actual expressions spoken in the hotel by foreign hotel guests through structured interviews. Each interview includes 8 questions that ask foreigners to give details about how they say during room reservation, checking in and out, hotel facilities, complaints and delayed services, room cancelation, helping the luggage, asking for tourist attractions and asking for directions. The 35 foreign hotel guests traveling in Ayutthaya are conveniently sampled. The data collected is categorized and then grammatically checked by a university English language instructor. The results are presented and treated qualitatively.

## Findings

The data presented below are the collected from the respondents.

There are two parts of data

1. needs to use listening skills are shown in table 1
2. actual english expressions from foreign hotel guests are shown in the table 2-9

### Front office staffs' needs to use listening skill

The summary of the use of needs to use listening skills consists of Listening for services, Listening for complaints, Listening for taking note, Conversation on the telephone and General conversation. The top three needs to use listening skill were Listening for services ( $\bar{x} = 4.38$  and  $SD = 0.97$ ); Listening for complaints ( $\bar{x} = 4.28$  and  $SD = 0.85$ ); General conversation ( $\bar{x} = 4.28$  and  $SD = 0.81$ ); and Conversation on the telephone ( $\bar{x} = 4.25$  and  $SD = 0.76$ ). While the least needs to use listening skill was Listening for taking note ( $\bar{x} = 3.94$  and  $SD = 0.88$ ); as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Level of Needs to Use Listening Skill

| No. | Needs to Use Listening Skill  | Statistics  |             |                |      |
|-----|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|------|
|     |                               | Mean        | SD          | Level          | Rank |
| 1.  | Listening for services        | 4.38        | 0.97        | highest        | 1    |
| 2.  | Listening for complaints      | 4.28        | 0.85        | highest        | 2    |
| 3.  | Listening for taking note     | 3.94        | 0.88        | high           | 4    |
| 4.  | Conversation on the telephone | 4.25        | 0.76        | highest        | 3    |
| 5.  | General conversation          | 4.28        | 0.81        | highest        | 2    |
|     | <b>Overall</b>                | <b>4.23</b> | <b>0.85</b> | <b>highest</b> |      |

### English Expressions spoken in the hotel by foreign tourists

The following tables from 2 to 9 show the data collected from foreign hotel guests. The topics include 8 situations taking place inside the hotels which are Room Reservation, Check in and Check out, Room Cancellation, Hotel Facilities, Complain about Delayed Service, Helping the Luggage, Asking for Tourist Attraction and Asking for Direction. The collected data was categorized in groups and checked language accuracy by a university English instructor. Each table represents each situation as follows:

**Table 2: Room Reservation**

| Room Reservation                         |
|--|
| Could / Can I book a room?               |
| Could / Can I have a room?               |
| Can I reserve a room for tonight?        |
| Can I have a room?                       |
| Do you have an available room?           |
| Do you have a room for tonight?          |
| Are there any available rooms for me?    |
| Is there a room available?               |
| What rooms are available?                |
| I / We would like to book a room for ... |

I / We would like to have a room for ...  
I / We would like to reserve a room for ...

**Table 3: Check in and Check out**

**Check in and Check out**

I'm ... I have a reservation.  
 I'm Mr. ..., I made a reservation by ...  
 I have a reservation under the name of ...  
 Check in under (name).  
 I would like to check in.  
 I need to check in.  
 I'd like to check in, please  
 I want to check in at 1 pm.  
 Check in, please.  
 Can I check in right now?  
 I need to check out.  
 I would like to check out.  
Here's the key, we are ready to leave.

**Table 4: Room Cancellation**

**Room Cancellation**

Sorry, I can't make it. I need to cancel the reservation.  
 I'm sorry, my plan was cancelled and I want to cancel my reservation.  
 Sorry, I would like to cancel my room (reservation).  
 Sorry for the trouble but I would like to cancel the reservation?  
 I'm sorry, I have to cancel the reservation.  
 We do not need the room for tonight.  
 I don't need the room anymore. I would like to cancel the reservation.  
 We need to cancel the reservation.  
 I am unable to be there. Please cancel the reservation.  
 I apologize for the inconvenience but I need to cancel the reservation.  
 I have an emergency and I need to cancel my booking.  
 Unfortunately, I have to cancel the reservation.  
 I don't need the room anymore.  
 I don't need the room anymore, I'd like to cancel the reservation.  
 Can I cancel the reservation?  
Can I cancel the reservation and get a refund?

**Table 5: Hotel Facilities**

**Hotel Facilities**

Is there an air conditioning?  
 Do you have a fitness center?  
 Do you have fitness service?  
 What are the conditions to use the gym?  
 What facilities do you have?  
 Where is the swimming pool located?

Where is the location of the facilities?  
 May I know where the swimming pool is?  
I ask for the fitness center, spa and massage services.

**Table 6: Complain about Delayed Service**

**Complain about Delayed Service**

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Can you speed it up a little?  
 Can I say something about the service here?  
 Can I talk to the manager (boss)?  
 Can I talk to the manager for the delayed service?  
 Can you do it faster please?  
 Do you have any problem with my order?  
 Is there a reason it is taking so long?  
 What happened?  
 Why is the service late?  
 Why is it delayed? Can I have my money back?  
 What went wrong?  
 How can I complain?  
 Why does it take too long?  
 I would like to complain about the problem.  
 Excuse me, I have been waiting for a long time. How much longer do I need to wait?  
 Sorry, we need it now.  
 I'm unhappy about this or that and I'd like to complain.  
 I am really sorry, but I am a bit disappointed about the delay, can you make a commercial gesture?  
 The service was a little bit long delay.  
 I'm not happy with the service. I want to complain.  
 I'm not OK with the service.  
 I should complain this service.

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**Table 7: Helping the Luggage**

**Helping the Luggage**

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Could you take my luggage up to the room?  
 Can someone help me with my luggage?  
 Can you please take that bag?  
 Can I have somebody to help me bring my luggage?  
 Do you want to help me with my luggage? It is too heavy.  
 These are my bags. Please help me move them to my room.  
 I have a lot of luggage, can you help me out?  
 I want help from a bellboy to carry my luggage.  
 I would like some assistance with my suitcase.

---

**Table 8: Asking for Tourist Attraction****Asking for Tourist Attraction**


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Could you please recommend the places that I can visit in Ayutthaya?  
 Can you show me the main attraction on the map?  
 Can you give me some information and show how to get to the attraction?  
 Can you tell me more about Ayutthaya?  
 Can you suggest me any Ayutthaya tourist attractions?  
 Can you recommend any good place in Ayutthaya?  
 Can I have a suggestion for better experience?  
 Can you tell me about Ayutthaya?  
 Do you have a guide for visiting temples?  
 Do you know a nice place to visit in Ayutthaya?  
 Do you have any suggestions for the best thing to see here?  
 What do you recommend?  
 What are the main attractions that I should visit in Ayutthaya?  
 Which one is the best temple to visit today?  
 Which temples should I visit?  
 Which ones are the closest to my hotel? / What type of place is it?  
 Where should I visit?  
 Where is the best place to go in Ayutthaya?  
 I would like to know where the tourist destinations are and how to go there.

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**Table 9: Asking for Direction****Asking for Directions**


---

Could /Can you please tell me the way to the temple?  
 Could/ Can you show me the way for going to ...?  
 How can I go there?  
 Can you bring me here?  
 Can you help me reach ...?  
 May I have the directions to ...?  
 Do you know where it is located?  
 Do you know where I can find ... ?  
 Do you know how to get to ...?  
 How can I get to ... attraction?  
 How to provide transportation?  
 How do I get to the temples?  
 How can I go to ...?  
 I am looking for.... . Could you explain to me the way to get there?  
 I'm looking for this place. Would you happen to know how I could get there?  
 I'm lost. I need to find (place).

---

**Discussions and Conclusion**

English is a medium of communication in several industries, especially tourism and hospitality. The hotel front office staff need skills to get things done with foreign hotel guests. When talking and listening to foreign hotel staff, staff need an ability to

listen, understand the context, and so on. After distributing the questionnaires to the front office staff, they have completed their levels of needs in listening for services, complaints, general conversation, taking notes and conversation on the telephone. It shows that listening for service is at the highest ( $x = 4.38$ ;  $SD = 0.97$ ) which conforms to the study by Ravipreet S. Sohi (1997) that listening skill is highly important for salesperson or workers in related fields e.g. hospitality. The effective listening made by hotel front office staff will build the customers' trust and lead to mutual cooperation. Additionally, the overall needs to use listening skills ranks the highest ( $x = 4.23$ ;  $SD = 0.85$ ) which represents the necessity of acquiring listening skills. This result is similar to the previous research of Judi Brownell (1994) that says effective listening is one of the essential tools for the hospitality industry.

Although most of the hotels have organized in-house English language training there are still problems in communicating with foreign hotel guests due to the fact that there is a variety of staff's listening and speaking abilities, guests' accents, grammar accuracy, and so on. To be able to familiarize with these varieties, the researchers design a structured interview to collect English expressions spoken by foreign hotel guests based on situations in the hotel such as room reservation, check in and out, room cancellation, hotel facilities, complaint about delayed service, helping the luggage, asking for tourist attractions and asking for directions. It reveals that there is a slight difference in terms of forming a question in the structure of affirmative e.g. "I need to wait?" instead of "Do I need to wait?"; the use of article *a* and *the*; and word omission such as "swimming pool?" instead of "Where is the swimming pool?". The greatest benefit in collecting data of actual English expressions is that the hotel front office staff will be able to learn English through the variety of expressions in the mentioned situations that take place in the hotel because having a collection of actual expressions spoken by foreign hotel guests is an essential tool in preparing staff to be ready to provide hotel services resulting in increasing guests' satisfaction, hotel trust and country's reputation.

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## ***Correlation Between Interlanguage and Internalization in SLA***

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### **Abstract**

Interlanguage is the type of language or linguistic system used by second- and foreign-language learners who are in the process of learning a target language. Interlanguage is dynamic and permeable as it serves as a bridge between L1 and L2 when learners lack knowledge and fine mastery of rules. They refine certain rules and obtain new ones. (Study.com, 18 June 2018). Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis paved the way for Interlanguage theory in describing L2 learners' errors in the acquisition process of L2 (El khereshah 2015). Interlanguage changes all the time but can become fossilized language when the learners do not have the opportunity to improve. It is important for teachers to understand this and also to see interlanguage as a series of learning steps. The theory of Internalization put forward by Vygotsky suggests that an individual is able to observe and internalize the ideas and processes of their surroundings as they partake in social interaction defined as, "new ways of thinking" (Duchesne, S., & McMaugh, A., 2016). The continuous transformation of social meanings into private meanings and private meanings into social ones partly explains the richness and complexity of the second language learning processes (2013 Azarola). This is why the internalization area can widen the scope to illustrate the errors of the learners and minimize them. Through the usage of secondary information, internet and personal observation, as one of the processes of the qualitative research method would implicate better learning strategies and more progressed learners.

**Keywords:** Correlation: is a mutual relationship or connection between two or more things. Interlanguage: is the type of language or linguistic system used by second- and foreign-language learners who are in the process of learning a target language. Internalization: is the process of making something internal, with more specific meanings in various fields.

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## Introduction

### Interlanguage

Interlanguage is “An interim system of second language learners (L2), which has some features of the first language (L1) and second language (L2) plus some that are independent of the L1 and L2” (Yule 2010). Interlanguage is the type of language (or linguistic system) used by second- and foreign language learners who are in the process of learning a target language. An interlanguage, is always unique to a particular individual and is by definition never anyone's first language, as it is partially a product of a different language that the speaker already knows. Interlanguage typically contains elements of the speaker's original language and is often heavily influenced by L1 and interference from this may make it seem perfectly logical to the learner, although it is incorrect. It is important for instructors to understand this and also to see interlanguage as a series of learning steps as they can give appropriate feedback after checking out their students work. The influence of first language (L1) in the learning of second language (L2) has witnessed an intense debate during the past years, resulting in the prevalence of Error Analysis (EA) over Contrastive Analysis (CA). A great number of empirical studies indicated that neither L1 nor L2 was always responsible for learners' errors (Bailey et al. 1974; Krashen et al. 1978, Larsen-Freeman, 2003). CA and EA paved the way for Interlanguage theory (IL) in describing L2 learners' errors in the acquisition process of L2. IL, which has been in vogue for the last years, has witnessed huge criticism by different researchers and linguists from various L1 backgrounds. They all came to state that there are many points in this theory which are not clear (El Kheresheh 2015).

At the very beginning of second language learning, learners may have some ideas of what the foreign language is like, and how it works and according to these ideas they produce utterances, some of which may be correct, and others which may be wrong. As learners gain more knowledge about the language and its rules, they may come up with new and better ideas of how it works. The interlanguage is viewed as a separate linguistic system, clearly different from both the learner's ‘native language’ (NL) and the ‘target language’ (TL) being learned, but linked to both of them by interlingual identifications in the perception of the learner. Interlanguage proclaims the developing of ideas of how the other language works and produced by second- and foreign- language learners who are in the process of learning a language.

Before interlanguage hypothesis rose to prominence, the principal theory of second-language development was the Contrastive Analysis. This theory assumed that learners' errors were caused by the difference between their first language and their second language. Contrastive analysts had asserted that the second-language learner's language was shaped solely by transfer from the native language. Therefore a good contrastive analysis of the NL and the TL could accurately predict all the difficulties that learner would encounter in trying to learn the TL. These claims were made on logical grounds and almost always supported only by reference to anecdotal evidence. Thus, in the late 1950s and the 1960s, there were virtually not systematic attempts to observe learner language and to document scientifically the way in which learner language developed, or to independently and objectively verify the strong claims of the contrastive analysis hypothesis that language transfer was the sole process shaping

learner language. Lado (1957: 72), in an influential statement, explicitly characterized the predictions of contrastive analysts as statements that should be viewed as hypothetical until they could be validated by reference to ‘the actual speech of students’.

Corder (1967, 1981) was the first and most persuasive scholar to develop an alternative framework: the idea that second-language learners do not begin with their native language, but rather with a universal ‘built-in syllabus’ that guides them in the systematic development of their own linguistic system, or ‘transitional competence.’ Corder also pointed out that the native language often serves as a positive resource for second-language acquisition, facilitating the learning of TL features that resemble features of the NL. He argued that second-language learners’ errors were evidence of the idiosyncratic linguistic system that they were building and so were valuable data for research into the nature of the built-in syllabus. Corder called for research involving the analysis of learner errors gathered longitudinally, proposed a framework for eliciting and analyzing those errors, and posed the goal as one of characterizing the built-in syllabus and the transitional competence of second-language learners. Errors may include; borrowing patterns from the mother tongue, extending patterns from the target language to express meanings or even misusing words and grammar rules.

Steve Krashen (1981 - 1982) then proposed the Monitor Model in the Interlanguage Hypothesis. The Monitor Model initially relied heavily on the work of a group of researchers (the creative constructionists) who claimed that there was no evidence at all of native language transfer in the morpheme accuracy rates of child second-language learners; thus, the contrastive analysts had got it all wrong, at least as far as children were concerned. Where the Interlanguage Hypothesis accords a central role to native language transfer, the Monitor Model does not. The Monitor Model suggests that when second-language learners, adult or children, acquire a second language unconsciously, there will be no evidence of native language transfer; it is only when they consciously learn a second language that transfer effects appear. The study of the role of universal grammar in the process of second-language acquisition similarly has tended to downplay the role of native language transfer in that process.

One of the contributions of the Interlanguage Hypothesis to the field of second-language acquisition in the early 1990s is, thus, a historically rooted, research-based, and theoretically motivated framework for the study of second-language acquisition, which can easily account for both role of native-language transfer and of universal grammar in shaping interlanguage.

The significance of interlanguage theory lies in the fact that it is the first attempt to take into account the possibility of learner conscious attempts to control their learning. It was this view that initiated an expansion of research into psychological processes in interlanguage development whose aim was to determine what learners do in order to help facilitate their own learning, i.e. which learning strategies they employ (Griffiths & Parr, 2001). This linguistic system encompasses not just phonology, morphology, and syntax, but also the lexical, pragmatic, and discourse levels of the interlanguage. The interlanguage system is clearly not simply the native language morphological and syntactic system relexified with target language vocabulary; that is, it is not the morphological and syntactic system that would have

been evidenced had the learner tried to express those meanings in his or her native language. But also it has pragmatic outlook which is the study of the ways in which non-native speakers acquire, comprehend, and use linguistic patterns (or speech acts) in a second language.

Interlanguage fossilization is a phenomenon of second language acquisition (SLA) in which second language learners develop and retain a linguistic system, or interlanguage, that is self-contained and different from both the learner's first language and the target language. This linguistic system has been variously called interlanguage, approximate system idiosyncratic dialects, or transitional dialects. Selinker suggests that the most important distinguishing factor related to second language acquisition is the phenomenon of fossilization. However, both his explanation that "fossilizable linguistic phenomena are linguistic items, rules, and subsystems which speakers of a particular native language will tend to keep in their interlanguage relative to a particular target language, no matter what the age of the learner or amount of explanation or instruction he receives in the target language". This hypothesis on interlanguage fossilization is contradicting the basic understanding of the human capacity to learn. The concept of fossilization in SLA research is so intrinsically related to interlanguage that Selinker considers it to be a fundamental phenomenon of all SLA and not just adult learners. Fossilization has such wide recognition that it has been entered in the "Random House Dictionary of the English Language (1987)". Interlanguage can fossilize, or cease developing, in any of its developmental stages. Its rules are claimed to be shaped by several factors, including: L1 transfer, transfer of training, strategies of L2 learning (e.g. simplification), strategies of L2 communication, and overgeneralization of the target language patterns. Selinker (1970) noted that most L2 learners fail to reach target language competence. That is, they stop learning when their internalized rule system contains rules different from those of the target language. This is referred to as 'fossilization'. Scovel (1988), like Selinker, argued that the causes of phonological fossilization are neurolinguistics in nature and related to the process of cerebral lateralization, which is completed at puberty. But there is certainly disagreement among interlanguage researchers as to both the inevitability of fossilization and relatedly the causes of fossilization.

### **Internalization**

Internalization is a social perspective to teaching and learning a second language in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) utilizes the notion of internalization to capture both the social origin of learning—even in private settings—and the non-mechanistic or simplistic quality of the processes involved in learning and communicating in new languages (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Lantolf & Poehner, 2008). Research on internalization explains how the social plane is the starting point to construct new meanings when we learn a second language. When learning a new language, our social communicative activity is the origin for noticing and understanding words and phrases. These words and phrases, which we encounter in oral and written discourse, are then transformed into personal meanings; and at the same time, our personal meanings are again transformed into social communication. This continuous transformation of social meanings into private meanings and private meanings into social ones partly explains the richness and complexity of the second language learning processes. Interaction contributes to second language

acquisition. Interaction refers to communication between individuals, particularly when they are negotiating meaning in order to prevent a breakdown in communication (Ellis, 1999). Research on interaction is conducted within the framework of the Interactive Hypothesis, which states that conversational interaction "facilitates language acquisition because it connects input [what learners hear and read]; internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention; and output [what learners produce] in productive ways" (Long, 1996, pp. 451-452). Interaction provides learners with opportunities to receive comprehensible input and feedback (Gass, 1997; Long, 1996; Pica, 1994) as well as to make changes in their own linguistic output (Swain, 1995). This allows learners to "notice the gap" (Schmidt & Frota, 1986, p. 311) between their command of the language and correct, or target-like, use of the language.

The process of internalization starts with learning what the norms are, and then the individual goes through a process of understanding why they are of value or why they make sense, until finally they accept the norm as their own viewpoint. Internalized norms are said to be part of an individual's personality and may be exhibited by one's moral actions. However, there can also be a distinction between internal commitment to a norm and what one exhibits externally. George Herbert Mead illustrates, through the constructs of mind, society and self, the manner in which an individual's internalizations are affected by external norms. One thing that may affect what an individual internalizes are role models. Role models often speed up the process of socialization and encourages the speed of internalization as if someone an individual respects is seen to endorse a particular set of norms, the individual is more likely to be prepared to accept, and so internalize, those norms. This is called the process of identification. Internalization helps one define who they are and create their own identity and values within a society that has already created a norm set of values and practices for them. From a pedagogical point of view, in second language teaching, research on the internalization of second languages is thought to be the key to understanding learning processes from a sociocultural perspective. Consequently, understanding and promoting internalization is the key to properly organizing adequate teaching efforts in classroom settings (Lantolf, 2003). This is the basis for a conceptual approach to teaching languages (Negueruela, 2003). The category of internalization reaches the field of SLA from the field of social psychology, specifically sociocultural theory (Wertsch, 1985; Lantolf, 2000). Internalization is a psychological construct that articulates the connection between the world outside us—our external bodily experiences in the contexts in which we live—and the world inside us—our internal experiences, that is, our self-conscious awareness. According to Vygotsky (1930/1978), internalization processes originate socially in concrete human activities and are culturally mediated by semiotic tools, primordially language. Internalization is not immediate and mechanical but mediated and transformative.

Describing and understanding the specific connection between our social speech and our inner order and its critical role in learning a second language is the goal of research on internalization in SLA. This connection is not direct or simple. As learners of new languages, many of us have experienced how the social context provides a rich source of experiences for communicating with others. We hear new words, notice new sounds, and try using phrases that we just heard or read. However, we also experience that it is not only about noticing language features and using them to communicate in a social setting. Some features of languages are not easily noticed and used. Second language teachers, and sometimes even friends who communicate

in the second language better than we do, often give us feedback about language features that we keep using incorrectly, mistakes we make with pronunciation, and phrases we keep forgetting when we write. The connection between what we learn in social settings and what we take away and use in different contexts, what we internalize and take with us, is not simple and direct.

The link between social interaction and personal intra-action is fluid, transformative, and necessary from a learning/teaching perspective. In the L2 classroom, promoting developmental transformation is based on mindfully engaging with concepts as tools of the mind in meaningful pedagogical tasks. Pedagogical tasks that promote mindfully engaging with concepts are the critical element to transform interaction into intra-action (Azarola 2015). In order to explore these ideas we first review Vygotsky's proposal on social interaction and development as the basis to understand a sociocultural take on L2 classroom interaction. Then, we explain the learning and development dialectic, the zone of proximal development in Vygotskian theory, and the notion of internalization. Finally, we focus on three areas where interaction and intra-action meet from a Sociocultural Theory perspective (SCT), an SCT perspective: gestures as meaning-making resources with both a social and a private function, interaction and social speech as the basis for dynamic assessment, and conceptual categories of meaning as psychological tools to be transformed by L2 learners when properly guided by teachers. It is proposed that a SCT take on interaction leading to intra-action should focus on development as conscious awareness through internalizing conceptual categories. In this context, introducing meaning-based conceptual categories, exploring the gesture-speech interface, and dialectically connecting teaching and assessment is critical for researchers and practitioners who intend to foster development in the L2 classroom.

## **Conclusion**

The correlation between interlanguage and internalization can be compared to the relation between route and rate in SLA. The route is the development of the language acquisition, i.e. the nature of the stages all learners go through when acquiring the second language (L2). This route remains largely independent of both the learner's mother tongue (L1) and the context of learning (e.g. whether instructed in a classroom or acquired naturally by exposure). The rate of the learning process is the speed at which learners are learning the L2, and the outcome of the learning process, i.e. how proficient learners become, or both. Both speed of learning and range of outcomes are highly variable from learner to learner as some do much better and much more quickly than others. If we could see interlanguage as the route which is reflected in the developmental process of the learner till reaching the proficiency competence of the target language. While internalization is mirrored as the rate in which the implementations of language is activated within social communicative environment resulting the enhancement of learners manifesting the individual differences.

To demonstrate the idea, if for instance learners at their primarily phase of L2 learning use overgeneralization to express themselves in a social situation (interlanguage), the teacher in an attempt to convey the correct usage of the language in a similar situation would present a video acted by native speakers and ask the learners to listen and watch sensibly. Then the learners would be asked to act the

same situation using the language in the video. Meanwhile the teacher would observe their performances and take remarks and give comments.

When the students watch the video and listen to the language of the native speakers, they will internalize the norms of meaning introduced through the phonological aspect (hearing), the syntactic aspect (structure of sentences) as well as the gestures in the video would accelerate the meanings to get them internalized in the memory of the learners (input). The native speakers are representing the role models to the learners because they are using the adequate language that should be used in a similar situation. Acting the scene by the learners will authenticate how each and every learner internalized the norms of meaning they learnt and produce them in his/ her own way (output).

Accordingly, the teacher should practically be able to specify the problems of interlanguage and internalization of the learners whether in grammar, sentence structure, pronunciation, pragmatic or vocabulary; this leads to constructing the learning materials for those learners upon their actual needs. Specifying the problem leads to choose the reliable learning strategy for the learning imperfection. Selecting the interactive learning method using social situations is the best strategy for improving the acquisition of L2 (internalization). Following the procedures of introducing new materials (e.g.in social situations), monitoring learners' performances, identifying the defects (errors) and designing an improvement scheme, should lead to the development of learners L2 acquisition (interlanguage). The interlanguage is proved to be permeable and dynamic not static, the development that will occur in the learners' second language can be measured through assessing the output of the learner (internalization) in a specific area of knowledge to ascertain the development.

The learning materials should vary in shape and content to include social communication activities not just books, because the social plane is the starting point to construct new meanings, they are the origin for noticing and understanding phrases and words. Beside, following the advice of Krashen in creating a relaxing atmosphere in class to enhance and boost the conscious of learners to interact, perform and use the learnt language freely. Teachers can reach this relaxing atmosphere through inspiring the self-confidence of the learners via individual guidance and constant motivation while monitoring the interlanguage upgrading of the second language.

Involving the students in social activities and social interactions with each other in group or pair work reveal the commitment of the internal norms externally to judge them linguistically by the teacher. Conversational interaction facilitates the language acquisition because it connects inputs and outputs, it also helps in providing learners with comprehensible feedback and aids in improving learners' linguistic competence while noticing the gap between the learners command of the language and the correct target use of it. This is why the SCT (Sociocultural Theory perspective) focusing on the three areas of interaction; the gestures, the social speech and the conceptual categories of meaning, is considered an effective tool for the second language learning, because this interaction eventually leads to the intra-action of the language hitting the target goal of the SLA process.

The problem of Fossilization which is ‘freezing’ the transition between the native language and the target language should be remediated when occurred. Many scholars analyzed the cause of fossilization into personal and general factors. General factors related to the individual differences among learners, their cognitive capabilities, the manner in which people perceive, conceptualize, organize, and recall information. Each person is considered a more or less consistent mode of cognitive functioning. Attitudes and motivation, Schumann (1978) lists ‘attitude’ as a social factor on a par with variables such as ‘size of learning group’, and ‘motivation’ as an affective factor alongside ‘culture shock’. Gardner and Lambert (1972) define ‘motivation’ in terms of the L2 learner’s overall goal or orientation, and ‘attitude’ as the persistence shown by the learner in striving for a goal. Personality, one of the intuitively appealing hypotheses that has been investigated, as extroverted learners learn more rapidly and are more successful than introverted learners. It has been suggested that extroverted learners will find it easier to make contact with other users of the L2 and therefore will obtain more input. Personal factors are represented in group dynamics, anxiety and competitiveness in which some classroom learners make overt comparisons of themselves with other learners. In another kind of comparison, learners calculate how they are progressing against their expectations. Often these comparisons result in emotive responses to the language-learning experience. Competitiveness may be manifested in a desire to out-do other language learners by shouting out answers in class, or by racing through examinations to be the first to finish. However, once group dynamics transfers at the negative direction, students will feel apprehensive and shameful (Manqiu Qian & Zhihong Xiao 2010).

The more the teachers investigate and explore the social and psychological areas of learning to visualize new zones and widen their scope of knowledge, the more they will be able to conduct their classes effectively and contribute to the progress of their students in acquiring and accelerating the second language.

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