Volume 11 , Number 1, March 2025

e-ISSN 2715-0895
p-ISSN 2442-790X

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THE GRADUATE PROGRAM
IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDIES

SANATA DHARMA UNIVERSITY

Vol. 11, No. 1, March 2025

Indonesian Journal of English Language Studies

ISSN 2442-790X

Indonesian Journal of English Language Studies
©2025 Sanata Dharma University
p-ISSN 2442-790X (Printed)
ISSN 2175-0895 (Online)

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Students' Perception of the Role of Collaborative Learning in Promoting Language Mediation Skill in Translation Course

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https://doi.org/10.24071/ijels.v11i1.9635
received 26 August 2024; accepted 19 February 2025

ABSTRACT
Collaborative learning has been applied in language learning. One part of language teaching is translation, a language mediation skill involving the transfer of meaning from one language to another. Past literature has revealed that although collaborative learning gives many advantages to students in the translation class, there is still limited research discussing the potential effects of collaborative learning on students' translation skills as language mediation. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the students' perception of collaborative learning's potential effects in enhancing language mediation skills. A questionnaire consisting of some close-ended and open-ended questions was distributed to 62 participants who were fourth-year students of the English Education Program at Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Indonesia. The data analysis indicated that students gave moderately to highly positive responses on the impacts of collaborative learning on their translation. The research revealed that collaborative learning considerably impacted students' translation competence, especially in extra-linguistic, strategic, and bilingual competence.

Keywords: challenges, collaborative learning, students' perception, translation competence, translation course

INTRODUCTION

Collaborative learning has become a common approach that is used in language learning, including translation courses. Researching collaborative learning implementation among 30 novice translation students in translating journalistic texts from English to Arabic and vice versa, Hussein and Salih (2018) suggest that collaborative learning has positive impacts on students' vocabulary. In line with this, Popova, Almazova, Anosova, and Dashkina (2019) confirm that collaborative learning helps translation students deal with difficult words better as they discuss them in groups.

Moreover, collaborative learning has also assisted master's students in achieving a higher competence level in translation skills (Al-Shehari, 2017). In his research, Al-Shehari (2017) assigned his students to collaboratively translate Wikipedia from English to Arabic. Consistent with Al-Shehari's findings, Adlan, Hamzah, and Anwar (2020) demonstrate that using collaborative translation significantly enhanced students' translation skills. The results from the translation test involving 49 students revealed that those who learned through collaborative translation outperformed their peers who were taught using traditional methods (Adlan, Hamzah, & Anwar, 2020).

Confirming the contribution of collaborative learning to students' translation skills, Bayraktar Ozer and Hastürkoğlu (2020) confirm that collaborative learning significantly

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improves students' translation skills. Their study revealed significant translation test score differences between 30 students taught using conventional training methods and 30 students taught using collaborative learning. Similarly, Mosleh's research (2020) suggests that students in the English-to-Arabic translation course demonstrated significant improvements after being exposed to collaborative learning. Both the qualitative and quantitative data in her research indicated participants' a high level of participant agreement with positive statements about the impact of collaborative learning.

Although there are many studies investigating the benefits of collaborative learning in translation, there is limited research that focuses on students' perceptions of how collaborative learning may foster students' language mediation skills in translation. As translation is not simply "re-languaging" of texts (Liddicoat, 2016, p. 3; Qizi et al., 2020, p. 179; Pace, 2023), it is a complex process and hence requires complex skills. It involves a language mediation process that requires more than just transferring semantic meaning from one language to another. In fact, not only does it convey the language, but a translator also needs to transmit the culture. Therefore, it is crucial to examine how different teaching approaches may assist the development of the fifth skill, including collaborative learning.

Although collaborative learning has been shown to successfully help students achieve their goals (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012; Ghavifekr, 2020), some students seem to prefer individual learning. By conducting this study, hopefully, there will be answers to the question: What are students' perceptions of collaborative learning's potential effects in enhancing language mediation skills?

The findings of the study are expected to provide some insights into collaborative learning and language mediation, helping instructors and students maximize the use of collaborative learning in language learning, especially in translation courses.

Collaborative learning

Collaborative learning has been broadly implemented in academic fields. It is used largely in schools and universities (Bach & Thiel, 2024). Collaborative learning is widely implemented across various educational levels and settings (Karim, Antoni, & Oktarina, 2024), from "preschool through graduate school and adult training programs" (Johnson & Johnson, 2009, p. 365). Collaborative learning is an approach involving teamwork between students and even teachers (Goodsell, Maher, Tinto, Smith, & MacGregor, 1992; Nisa, Isnaini, Utami, & Islahudin, 2023), allowing students to exchange knowledge from various perspectives (Junus & Andula, 2020). Students usually work together in a group that consists of two or more members to solve problems, find some understanding, or produce something. Those activities relate to the zone of proximal development (ZPD) term where the development of someone can be affected by collaborating with others (Vygotsky, 1978, as in John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). In addition, collaborative learning can be defined as a form of sociocultural approach that signals the relation between "social and individual processes" in constructing knowledge (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p.191).

Further, some experts distinguish between collaborative and cooperative learning, but others consider the two as interchangeable or that the latter is a part of collaborative learning. Yang (2023a) asserts that collaborative and cooperative learning have different origins and intertwined paths of development, resulting in distinct features while sharing many similarities. Millis and Cottell put collaborative and cooperative learning on a continuum from most structured (cooperative) to least structured (collaborative). Meanwhile, Cuseo (1992 in Barkley et al., 2005) believes that cooperative learning is a category under collaborative learning. However, arguing that collaborative and cooperative learning are synonymous, Jacobs (2015) defines the two as student-centered approaches of which the methods may vary to facilitate student-student interaction. As for the interest of the current study, collaborative learning is defined as an approach involving student teamwork to produce something. In this context, the

teamwork product is translation work. This study views collaborative and cooperative learning as synonymous, thus not differentiating between the two.

Advantages and disadvantages of collaborative learning

Many educational practitioners use collaborative learning to enhance students' participation in class. Through it, students can develop their confidence in expressing ideas (Kholid, Utamie, & Hastomo, 2022; Chrismaretta & Abrar, 2024; Hasrianti et al., 2024), learn how to respect different opinions, and recognize "the limitations of their point of view" (Goodsell et al. 1992, p.29). This idea is supported by Laal and Ghodsi (2012), who state that in collaborative learning, students learn to respect their peers' abilities and contributions. Weinberger and Shonfeld's (2018) respondents believed that collaborative learning teaches them how to deal with responsibility and compromise with others' opinions. Collaborative learning also assists students in improving their interpersonal skills (Kholid, Utamie, & Hastomo, 2022; Chrismaretta & Abrar, 2024; Hasrianti et al., 2024). Laal, Naseri, Laal, and Khattami-Kemanshahi (2013) point out that the main advantage of using collaborative learning is to elaborate social interaction skills. This interpersonal skill may support the students to appreciate differences and other people's abilities.

Collaborative learning also helps students improve their cognitive development skills. Studies indicate that collaborative learning develops students' metacognitive skills (Ramdani et al., 2022; Ferreira, Zabolotna, & Lee, 2024; Gangmei, 2024). In addition, Cullen, Kullman, and Wild (2013) discover that collaborative learning highly supports the development of metacognitive skills of ESL teachers through activities such as planning for task fulfillment and autonomous learning in a group. Bhowmik (2016) also finds that students were highly motivated to learn mathematics if they used collaborative learning. Moreover, 70% of the students agreed that collaborative learning helped them in solving mathematics tasks. Similarly, Wahyurianto and Sylvia (2024) reveal that collaborative learning motivates students as it reduces their anxiety and enhances their willingness to participate actively in a reading comprehension class. Furthermore, the students indicated that collaborative learning improved their reading comprehension skills.

Although it gives many benefits, collaborative learning has some disadvantages. Students may be frustrated since they have to work with people they do not know very well (Lane, 2016; Yang, 2023b). It is also pointed out that the members who do not contribute to group work may cause frustration. Barros (2011) and Yang (2023b) said that some students find it difficult to work with others since some members prefer to work individually. Furthermore, El Masah (2018) and Yang (2023b) mentioned that applying collaborative learning might cause some problems in grading as it may be difficult to determine each student's contribution to a group. The main problem in collaborative learning is the existence of free riders. Dyrud (2011) and Strong and Anderson (1998), as in El Masah (2018), defined free riders as group members who have "less than a fair contribution" to the task (p.1). The existence of free riders tends to impede the team's outcome.

Translation as language mediation

Colina and Lafford (2018) state that translation as language mediation refers to "various types of cross-linguistic activities that involve the transfer of meaning from one language to another—provides for a much more promising interaction" (p.2). They pointed out that translation enables a larger involvement between translation studies and language teaching. They regarded it as "a fifth skill" after reading, writing, listening, and speaking (p.2). Murtisari (2020) also says that translation is considered a mediation skill "rather than just an activity of finding verbal equivalence across languages" (p.159).

Translation competence

There is some knowledge that a translator should have when translating the source language. According to PACTE (2003) as in Albir (2017), there are six translation competencies. They are bilingual, extralinguistic, strategic, psycho-physiological, instrumental competence, and competence of translation knowledge. Bilingual competence deals with grammatical and lexical components. Extralinguistic competence relates to the source and target culture knowledge. In other words, it deals with the competence to translate the source language into the target language according to the context. Meanwhile, the competence of translation knowledge comprises the competence of a translator in translating a source language based on the target readers. Strategic competence copes with a translator's skill in facing and solving problems during the translation process. The psycho-physiological competence includes emotion, confidence, and motivation during the translation. Then, the instrumental competence deals with the knowledge to use the resources and technologies, such as all kinds of dictionaries, encyclopedias, and books.

Collaborative learning in translation

One study field that utilizes collaborative learning is translation. Barros (2011) states that "[t]ranslation is increasingly becoming a team activity" (p.55). Therefore, collaborative learning is used in the translation process to help translators convey the meaning. Moreover, collaborative learning gives some advantages in translation skills. Collaborative learning allows students to develop interpersonal competence, among other competencies in translation, such as "communicative and textual competence in at least two languages and cultures, cultural and intercultural competence" (Kelly, 2005 as in Barros, 2011, p.43). In some research, collaborative learning assisted students in their bilingual competence, especially in improving and expanding their vocabulary (Hussein & Salih, 2018; Popova, Almazona, Anosova & Dashkina, 2019).

Al-Shehari (2017) finds that collaborative learning helps students achieve a higher competence level in translation skills. His study showed that working as an editing team for other groups and a translation team highly developed their translation skills since they had to translate and also edit the translation works of other groups. In her research, Rieger (2016) states that applying collaborative learning in translation is almost always better than using individual translation. The result of her research showed that her students got better in bilingual competence, especially in grammatical accuracy. She also stated that her students improved in using metaphors and playing with words when translating texts. Moreover, she discovered that collaborative learning assisted students' competence in translation knowledge. Students were able to translate texts by considering the purpose of the translated text and the target readers. Research conducted by Klimkowski (2006) shows that group work encouraged the students' competence and gave them a positive psychological environment during the translation process. In other words, it assisted students in improving their psychophysiological competence.

Zainudin and Awal (2012) found that collaborative learning enables students to have a discussion where they can share their views, ideas, knowledge, and experiences with their group mates while translating. Having the same result as Zainudin and Awal (2012), Roskosa and Rupniece's findings (2016) also revealed that translating in groups facilitates the students to share their opinions. However, they also found that collaborative learning had some drawbacks for students, such as concentration problems.

Another study by Gaballo (2008) shows that collaborative learning in translation enables students to learn different strategies from their friends. Students can observe their friends' strategies and reflect on and compare them with their own. Hussein and Salih (2018) reveal another benefit of collaborative learning in a translation class. The result of their findings revealed that 66% of the participants saw that collaborative learning helped them to consider the text more carefully.

Adlan, Hamzah, and Anwar (2020) suggest that implementing collaborative translation improves students' translation skills. Their study, which involved a translation assessment of 49 students, demonstrated that participants who engaged in collaboration performed better than those taught using conventional methods (Adlan, Hamzah, & Anwar, 2020). Bayraktar Ozer and Hastürkoğlu (2020) offer further validation of the positive impact of collaborative learning on students' translation proficiency. Their research indicates that collaborative learning significantly enhances students' translation skills. The study identified significant differences in translation test scores between two groups: 30 students taught using traditional training methods and 30 students taught using collaborative learning. Mosleh (2020) similarly argues that students in an English-to-Arabic translation class exhibited significant progress following their exposure to collaborative learning. The study's qualitative and quantitative findings reveal a high level of participant agreement with positive statements regarding the impact of collaborative learning.

METHOD

Context of the study

This descriptive quantitative study aimed to investigate students' perception of collaborative learning's potential effects in enhancing language mediation skills. In this study, the translation class refers to an Interlingual Communication course where a collaborative learning approach is used. The Interlingual Communication subject is offered to third-year students in the second semester. The classes are usually conducted in medium-sized classrooms consisting of 20-24 students per class. The proficiency levels of the students range from intermediate to advanced levels, with most in the upper-intermediate category.

In the class, students mostly work in groups of three or four to finish translation tasks. They have the freedom to decide whom to work with and how they will manage the group work. The only limitation set in the syllabus is that every student needs to contribute to the group work, and students need to discuss the final work as a whole group, although they assign a particular part to a particular person.

The research question pursued in this study is: What are students' perceptions of collaborative learning's potential effects in enhancing language mediation skills?

Use of terms

This study applied the principal terms of collaborative learning and translation competence. Collaborative learning refers to "joint intellectual effort by students" (Goodsell, Maher, Tinto, Smith, and MacGregor, 1992, p. 11), where students work in a group. Meanwhile, language mediation skills refer to six competencies that a translator should have when translating a text. They are bilingual, extralinguistic, strategic, psycho-physiological, instrumental competence, and competence of translation knowledge.

Participants of the Study

Sixty two (62) English Language Education program students participated in this research. These students were fourth-year students of the English Language Education Program at Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana who have taken the Interlingual Communication course.

Data collection

A questionnaire comprising open-ended and close-ended questions was distributed to the participants to collect the data. The questionnaire consisted of Part I and Part II. Part I included 6 close-ended sections, each corresponding to one translation competence, with a different number of questions in each section. The close-ended items used the Likert scale with *always*, *often*, *sometimes*, *rarely*, and *never* options. The second part included two Likert statements regarding group work, each followed by an open-ended question. Participants could answer the open-ended questions in either Bahasa Indonesia or English.

The questionnaire items were adapted from existing research on translation skills and collaborative learning and were subsequently contextualized to fit the research setting. Question formulation also involved consultation with a translation lecturer for validation. Once the questions were finalized, the questionnaire underwent a piloting phase. Several English Department students of Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, who were not part of the study but shared similar characteristics with the participants, were asked to complete the questionnaire. This step ensures the accuracy and appropriateness of the data collection process in the actual survey.

Data analysis

The results of students' responses were coded and logged into Microsoft Excel program. For the Likert scale in the close-ended section, each frequency has a different value: a score of 4 for *always* responses, 3 for *often* responses, 2 for *sometimes* responses, 1 for *rarely* responses, and 0 for *never* responses. Then, for the open-ended section, students' responses were categorized into some sub-themes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the results of the present study. It highlights two aspects, which are the students' perception of collaborative learning in their translation skills and their perception of collaborative learning in the translation class. The translation competence will be categorized into six different kinds: bilingual, extralinguistic, strategic, psycho-physiological, and instrumental types of competence. The details of the findings are discussed below.

Students' perception of collaborative learning on their translation competence

The students' responses to the Likert statements show that most of them had low to moderately positive attitudes towards collaborative learning. The Likert scale was divided into five frequencies, namely *always*, *often*, *sometimes*, *rarely*, and *never*. Each frequency has a different value: a score of 4 for *always* responses, 3 for *often* responses, 2 for *sometimes* responses, 1 for *rarely* responses, and 0 for *never* responses. Then, the value would be categorized into three levels, namely low (below 60%), moderately high (60 - 67.5%), and high (above 67.5%), based on the total percentage of *always* and *often* responses.

A. Students' perception towards collaborative learning to bilingual competence

Bilingual competence deals with the grammatical and lexical components. As Table 1 shows, the students had moderately to highly positive attitudes towards collaborative learning in enhancing their bilingual competence. They perceived that collaborative learning had considerable impacts on grammar. They believed it helped them to apply grammar more accurately (62.9%, always = 11.3% and often 51.6%). This supports Rieger's (2016) finding that collaborative learning helps students increase their grammar accuracy. Moreover, she also stated that by applying collaborative learning, students gained lexical improvement in terms of using metaphors. In the present study, the largest area of improvement was in deciding more natural words while translating (83.8%, always = 16.1% and often 67.7%). Another area that improved with a high impact was that the students became more aware of nuances of words when they were translating a text (70.9%, always = 16.1% and often 54.8%). Students might increase their bilingual competence because collaborative learning gives them the opportunity to share their opinions and thoughts and to get some alternative answers so that they can decide the best answer for their translation.

Table 1. The result of students' perception of collaborative learning to bilingual competence

Questionnaire item	Bilingual competence Percentage						Mean
	always	often	sometimes	rarely	never	always and often	
Q1 - I learned how to apply grammar more accurately while translating texts in group work.	11.3	51.6	33.9	3.2	0.0	62.9	2.71
Q2 - I learned how to decide on more natural word choice while translating texts in group work.	16.1	67.7	16.1	0.0	0.0	83.8	3
Q3 - I learned how to decide on more appropriate grammar choice while translating texts in group work.	14.5	53.2	30.6	1.6	0.0	67.7	2.81
Q4 - Group work improved my awareness of nuances of words while translating texts *(misal konotasi makna dan makna-makna yang lain yang lebih halus/tidak kentara).*	16.1	54,8	25.8	3.2	0.0	70.9	2.84
Q5 - I learned how to paraphrase more effectively while translating in group work.	21.0	43.5	29.0	4.8	1.6	64.5	2.77
Mean							2.83

B. Students' perception towards collaborative learning to extralinguistic competence

Another type of translation competence that the students believed they have improved by applying collaborative learning was extralinguistic competence. This ability relates to a translator's competence to render the source language into the target language appropriate to the context. As presented in Table 2 below, the students had a highly positive attitude with most of them responding favourably to the role of collaborative learning in this area. Collaborative learning was seen to have the most considerable impact on students' context-related extralinguistic skills, which consist of three areas. Firstly, the majority of the students (77.5 %, always = 21/0%, and often = 56.5 %) reported that collaborative learning assisted them in transferring the meaning to the target text based on the appropriate context. This seems possible since students were able to discuss with their group mates while they were translating the text. Secondly, students showed a very positive attitude to collaborative learning in considering the context more thoughtfully (75.8%, always = 25.8%, and often = 50.0%). This finding's percentage is bigger than the previous study, which was conducted by Hussein and Salih (2018) with only 66% of the students who considered that collaborative learning enabled them to consider the context more carefully. Thirdly, the students also believed that collaborative learning had a significant influence in assisting them to transfer the meaning to the target text based on the appropriate context (77.5%, always = 21.0%, and often = 56.5%). This could happen because students were able to discuss with their group members to examine the context of the text through collaborative learning, and it would be easier for them to transfer the source text.

Table 2. The result of students' perception of collaborative learning to extralinguistic competence

Questionnaire item	Extra linguistic competence Percentage (%)						Mean
	always	often	sometimes	rarely	never	always and often	
Q1 - Group work enabled me to consider the context more carefully while translating.	25.8	50.0	17.7	6.5	0.0	75.8	2.95
Q2 - I learned how to interpret the source text's meaning based on the appropriate context while translating in group work.	16.1	54.8	27.4	1.6	0.0	70.9	2.85
Q3 - I learned how to transfer the meaning to the target text based on the appropriate context while translating in group work.	21.0	56.5	17.7	4.8	0.0	77.5	2.94
Q4 - I learned how to translate cultural concepts from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL) in group work.	17.7	50.0	30.6	1.6	0.0	67.7	2.84
Q5 - I learned how to translate texts based on the genre of the text in group work.	22.6	46.8	27.4	1.6	1.6	69.4	2.87
Mean							2.89

C. Students' perception of collaborative learning to the competence of translation

As demonstrated in Table 3, the students had moderately to highly positive responses to collaborative learning in the competence of translation. This skill refers to the ability of a translator to translate the source language based on the target readers. In this study, collaborative learning was believed to support students in considering the target readers while translating a text. As can be seen in Table 3 below, there is a high tendency to favour the aspect, with most of the students showing a positive attitude (69.3%, always = 29.0 and often = 40.3%). Furthermore, they also reported being able to learn about how to communicate with the target reader through collaborative learning (64.5%, always = 12.9% and often = 51.6%). This suggests collaborative learning allowed the students to discuss more about how to translate their texts according to the target reader.

Table 3. The result of students' perception of collaborative learning to competence in translation

Questionnaire item	Competence of translation Percentage (%)						Mean
	always	often	sometimes	rarely	never	always and often	
Q1 - I learned how to translate texts by considering the target readers in group work.	29.0	40.3	22.6	6.5	1.6	69.3	2.89
Q2 - I learned how to communicate more with the target reader through translating in group work.	12.9	51.6	30.6	3.2	1.6	64.5	2.71
Mean							2,80

D. Students' perception towards collaborative learning to strategic competence

As presented in Table 4, the students tended to have moderately to highly positive views towards collaborative learning in relation to their strategic competence. Strategic competence constitutes a translator's skill in facing and solving problems during the translation process. As many as 69.3% of the students (always = 29.0% and often = 40.3%) showed positive views of collaborative learning, which could contribute to evaluating the quality of the translation result. The students could check their translations with each other's and it helped them to get the best translation result. It correlates with the previous study by Zainudin and Awal (2012) which stated that collaborative learning could give students chances to examine members' mistakes while translating the text.

The majority of the students (75.8%, always =22.6, and often = 53.3%) showed a highly positive view towards collaborative learning for allowing them to solve the translation problems together. Here, working in a group seemed to give students opportunities to learn about different translation strategies from their group mates. The students also realized that collaborative learning aided them in translating more quickly (69.3%, always = 29.0%, and often = 40.3%). By using collaborative learning, students can divide the work so that it will be more efficient than translating a text individually. Furthermore, students agreed that collaborative learning could help them identify translation problems (71%, always = 24.2%, and often 46.8%). It could happen because in a group they have to work together, and automatically they will share everything, including problems and difficulties. The study overall also demonstrated moderately high positive views towards collaborative learning in assisting students to mediate the ST (64.5%, always = 14.5% and often 50.0%). It relates to Zainudin and Awal's finding (2012) that collaborative learning facilitated students to understand the ST better.

Table 4. The result of students' perception towards collaborative learning to strategic competence

Questionnaire item	Strategic Competence Percentage (%) always	often	sometimes	rarely	never	always and often	Mean
Q1 - I learned how to find a more effective method to translate while translating in group work.	19.4	48.4	25.8	3.2	3.2	67.8	2.77
Q2 - Group work helped me in learning different strategies of translating.	27.4	38.7	32.3	0.0	1.6	66.1	2.90
Q3 - I learned how to mediate the source text meaning into the target text while translating in group work.	14.5	50.0	30.6	4.8	0.0	64.5	2.74
Q4 - Group work helped me to translate more quickly.	30.6	35.5	29.0	3.2	1.6	66.1	2.90
Q5 - I learned how to evaluate the quality of the translation result while translating in group work.	29.0	40.3	27.4	3.2	0.0	69.3	2.95
Q6 - I learned how to identify translation problems while translating in group work.	24.2	46.8	27.4	1.6	0.0	71	2.94
Q7 - I learned how to solve translation problems while translating in group work.	22.6	53.2	24.2	0.0	0.0	75.8	2.98
Mean							2.88

E. Students' perception towards collaborative learning to psycho-physiological competence

As shown in Table 5, the students tended to give low to moderately high positive feedback to collaborative learning in students' psycho-physiological competence. This competence relates to students' confidence, emotion, and motivation during translation. Students tended to have low positive responses to collaborative learning in increasing students' concentration (40.3%, always = 12.9%, and often 27.4%). This seems to support Roskosa and Rupniece's (2016) finding that collaborative learning gave some drawbacks during the translation process, including concentration problems. Students might not be able to concentrate on translating the text in a group since they have some distractions, such as the noise in the group. Furthermore, only 58% of the students (16.1% = always, 41.9% = often) saw that collaborative learning assisted them in increasing students' confidence. However, students tended to respond highly positively to questions 2 and 3 (Q2 & Q3). Here they believed translating a text in a group assisted them to be more analytical and critical.

Table 5. The result of students' perception of collaborative learning to psycho-physiological competence

Questionnaire item	Psycho-physiological competence Percentage (%) always	often	sometimes	rarely	never	always and often	Mean
Q1 - Group work increased my self confidence in translating.	16.1	41.9	35.5	4.8	1.6	58	2.66
Q2 - Translating through group work helped me to be more analytical.	22.6	53.2	19.4	3.2	1.6	75.8	2.92
Q3 - Translating through group work helped me to be more critical.	24.2	46.8	24.2	4.8	0.0	71	2.90
Q4 - Group work increased my concentration in translating.	12.9	27.4	48.4	9.7	1.6	40.3	2.40
Mean							2.72

F. Students' perception of collaborative learning to instrumental competence

As presented in Table 6 below, the students reported low to moderately high positive beliefs in collaboration for instrumental competence, which deals with knowledge to use resources and technologies such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, and internet research engines. The students tended to give a low positive view that collaborative learning helped them use the internet more optimally (58.1%, always = 19.4% and often 38.7%). In addition, Table 6 also illustrates that collaborative learning reportedly had less considerable impacts on the students in using machine translation (54.9%, 21.0% = always, and 33.9% = often). Here, as the students were required to give a more accurate rendering of texts, students might not have been attracted to using machine translation. However, students showed a highly positive attitude to collaborative learning in assisting them to utilize dictionaries more optimally (72.6%). They perceived that dictionaries were important helping tools in the translation and in applying collaborative learning. Here, for instance, students could take part in looking up the meaning of various words so they might learn more about vocabulary. In addition, when having dictionaries, they can also compare different definitions of a word.

Table 6. The result of students' perception of collaborative learning to instrumental competence

Questionnaire item	Instrumental Competence Percentage (%) always	often	sometimes	rarely	never	always and often	Mean
Q1 - I learned how to use dictionaries more optimally while translating.	25.8	46.8	24.2	3.2	0.0	72.6	2.95

Q2 - I learned how to use machine translation more optimally while translating in group work.	21.0	33.9	32.3	11.3	1.6	54.9	2.61
Q3 - I learned how to use the internet more optimally to do research for translating in group work.	19.4	38.7	33.9	4.8	3.2	58.1	2.66
Mean							2,74

Students' perception of collaborative learning in translation class

To get more information on students' perception of collaborative learning in translation class, two additional Likert statements were given, each with an accompanying open-ended question. The details of the findings are explained below.

A. Do you think group work improved your translation skills?

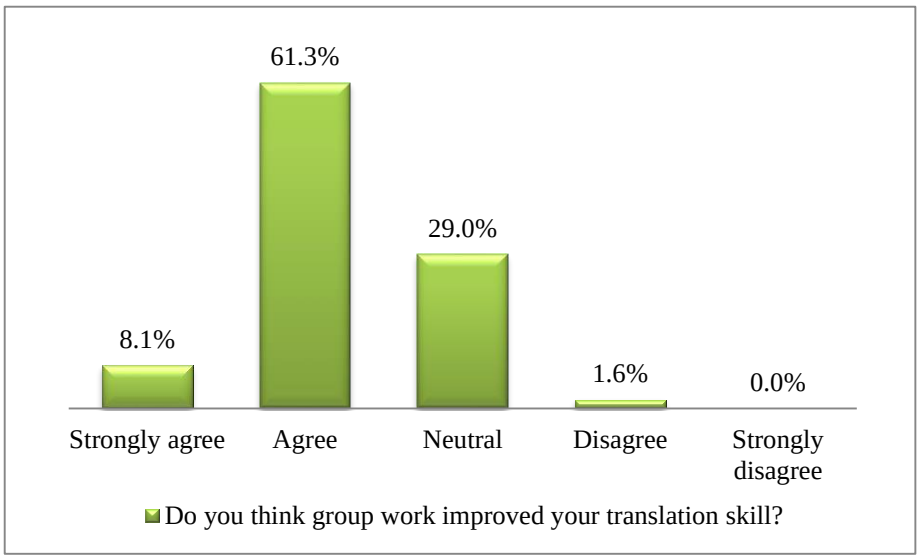


Figure 1. Percentages of students' responses to the question of whether collaborative learning improved their translation skill

As shown in Figure 1, most of the students showed positive responses on the effect of collaborative learning on their translation skills. The majority of the students agreed (69.4%, strongly agree = 8.1%, agree = 61.3%) that collaborative learning improved their translation skills. Meanwhile, only one student (1.6%) disagreed that collaborative learning enhanced their translation competence. This student (Student 1), who had a moderately high GPA, said that collaborative learning tended to have a low impact on his translation skills. He thought that it was difficult to translate in a group since everyone would have different views on the meaning of words. Regardless of this, Table 7 presents the reasons why 69.4% of the students think collaborative learning improved their translation skills.

Table 7. Students' positive responses to collaborative learning to translation skill

Positive responses on collaborative learning in translation skills	Percentage
Sharing ideas, opinions, knowledge, and experiences	27.4%
Help students evaluate the quality of the translation result	8.1%

Help students to be more critical while translating the text	8.1%
Improve students' knowledge and skills in using vocabulary	6.5%
Learning different strategies for translating	6.5%
Mediating the source text meaning to the target text	3.2%
Assist students in being more aware of the context of the text	3.2%
Help students solve and identify translation problems	1.6%
Lower students' anxiety	1.6%
Learning how to apply grammar more accurately	1.6%
Miscellaneous	16.1%

As shown in Table 7, the students had various reasons why collaborative learning improved their translation competence. Four themes gained the highest percentages. The most favourite answer (27.4 %) was that collaborative learning helped to share the students' ideas, opinions, knowledge, and experiences. The second most common response was that translating in groups helped them to evaluate the quality of the translation result (8.1%) and assisted them in being more critical while translating the text (8.1%). The next common reason was that collaborative learning improved students' knowledge and skills of using vocabulary while translating the text (6.5%) and allowed them to learn different strategies of translation.

Collaborative learning enabled students to share their ideas, opinions, knowledge, and experiences while translating

The students, regardless of their GPAs, reported that applying collaborative learning allowed them to share their opinions, thoughts, knowledge, and experiences, which were helpful for working on their translation. Student 4, who had a high GPA, said that collaborative learning enabled her to share opinions with her group members and get the best solutions for their translation. Meanwhile, Student 14, who had a moderately high GPA, stated she could share opinions to find the appropriate translation with her group members. Student 62, who had an average GPA, also saw that working in a group was helpful for her. She could share her ideas and views with her group members since sometimes she was not sure about her own translation. This is relevant to the previous research conducted by Zainudin and Awal (2012) and Roskosa and Rupniece (2016). The results of their studies showed that collaborative learning enabled their participants to exchange ideas and share opinions and knowledge.

Collaborative learning assisted students in evaluating the quality of the translation result.

Collaborative learning was also reported to enhance strategic competence (see Table 4). Student 10, who had a moderate GPA, said that collaborative learning in the translation course helped her check others' work. In addition, Student 54, with a high GPA, stated that if students did the translation individually, they would get confused, so it would be better to do the translation in a group so that they could share opinions and evaluate each other's work if there were some mistakes. This finding is in line with Zainudin and Awal's study (2012), which shows that collaborative learning gives chances to correct members' mistakes.

Collaborative learning helped students to be more critical while translating the text

As shown in Table 7, 8.1% of the students believed that collaborative learning assisted them to be more critical while translating a text. Student 6, who had a high GPA, said that when translating in a group, her critical thinking increased. Like Student 6, Student 7, who also had a high GPA, believed that group work assisted her in thinking critically, especially in evaluating word choices that were appropriate to the context.

Collaborative learning improves students' knowledge and skills in using vocabulary

Collaborative learning also improves the students' knowledge and skills of using vocabulary (6.5 %). Student 43 with an average GPA, said that collaborative learning enabled him to get new knowledge, such as new words that he did not know before. Students tended to believe that they had improved their skills in using vocabulary in a group while translating since each student has different abilities. The students with higher skills, who might have more advanced vocabulary, could share with their members so that they can learn together and their vocabularies increased. Student 31 with a high GPA, also said that group work was really helpful because he could learn from other members in terms of strategies, grammar, and vocabulary. Similar research by Hussein & Salih (2018) and Popova, Almazona, Anosova & Dashkina (2019) also showed that collaborative learning improves and expands students' vocabulary.

B. Do you think group work should be implemented in the translation course?

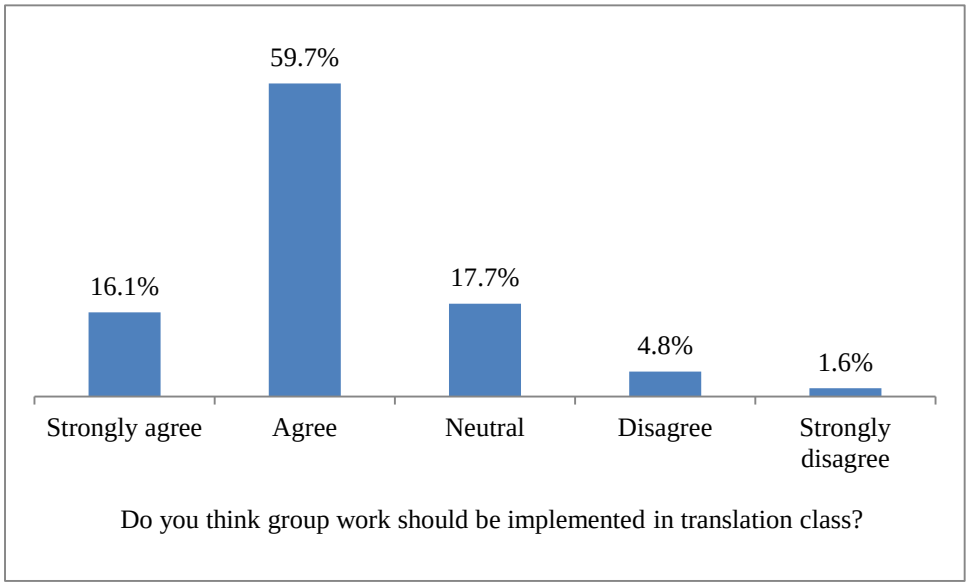


Figure 2. Percentages of students' responses to the question of whether collaborative learning should be implemented in the translation class

As shown in Figure 2, 75.8 % of the students (16.1% = strongly agree, and 59.7% = agree) agreed that collaborative learning should be applied in the translation class. Only 6,4% of the students (4 out of 62) disagreed with it (4.8% = disagree, 1.6% = strongly disagree). Three students who had an average GPA (student 1, 46, and 52) and one student with a high GPA (student 58) gave negative responses regarding collaborative learning in a translation class. Student 1 thought that students would not translate the text effectively in a group. Meanwhile, Student 46 saw that collaborative learning would not be optimal when every student had different translation strategies. On the other hand, student 52 believed that if she worked with the same members all the time, it would not work. Student 58 thought that collaboration may be implemented in a translation class but as an intermezzo, not the main activity. However, the majority of the students gave positive responses to collaborative learning in a translation course. It was relevant to Hussein and Salih (2018) that collaborative learning was one of the most important methods that can be applied in a translation class. There were various reasons that students gave for why collaborative learning should be implemented in the translation course, as Table 8 shows below (see Table 8).

Table 8. Categories for the students' responses to collaborative learning in the translation course

Categories	Percentage
Sharing ideas, opinions, knowledge, and experiences	24.2%
Learning different strategies for translating	8.1%
Help students translate more quickly	6.5%
Evaluate the quality of the translation result	4.8%
Consider the context more carefully while translating	3.2%
Ease students' work	3.2%
Assist students in analyzing the word choice	3.2%
Improve students' knowledge and skills in using vocabulary	3.2%
Increasing students' confidence in translation	3.2%
Lower students' anxiety	1.6%
Help to identify and solve translation problems	1.6%
Miscellaneous	21.0%

Based on Table 8, the students tended to give the same responses as those to the previous question. Here, there were four big categories of students' responses to collaborative learning. The first category, which had the biggest percentage, was sharing ideas, opinions, knowledge, and experiences (24.2%). Some students thought that collaborative learning provided a discussion where they could share their different views, which was helpful for their translation results. The second category was learning different strategies (8.1%). Students who had an average up to a high GPA saw that collaborative learning enabled them to observe their friends' translation strategies, which might be different and could be useful for their translating process later. The findings were relevant to Gaballo's finding (2008), which reported that students benefited from collaborative work in translation by learning from their friends through "reflect[ing] with them on translation strategies and be[ing] aware of different approaches to the same text" (p.3).

The third category was collaborative learning, which helped the students to translate more quickly. Some students who had an average to high GPA saw that collaborative learning enabled them to translate the text faster. Student 55 said that translating in a group helped her learn different perspectives from her friends and assisted her in saving time while translating. Having the same thoughts as student 55, student 21, who had a high GPA, also stated that applying collaborative learning in a translation course helped her to translate a text faster.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to investigate the students' perception of the effects of collaborative learning in promoting translation competence. In general, the students had positive beliefs towards group work in doing their translation tasks. The students showed moderately to highly positive responses to collaborative learning in enhancing their bilingual, extralinguistic, and strategic competencies. Students showed their highest positive responses to collaborative learning on the extralinguistic and strategic competence. Here, for instance, translating in a group enabled them to consider the context and learn different translation strategies from their group members. However, the students tend to give less positive answers towards collaborative learning regarding their instrumental and psycho-physiological competence.

Overall, students believed that collaborative work may enhance their translation skills and, therefore, should be implemented in translation courses. Regarding these, the findings also found that students appreciated the opportunity to share their ideas, opinions, knowledge, and experiences while translating in a group. It also reportedly enabled students to evaluate the quality of translation results. Furthermore, the study also indicated that collaborative learning allowed students to learn different translation strategies while translating in a group. Learning different strategies from their peers could help students to translate the source text effectively.

However, there were some negative aspects mentioned about collaborative learning, for instance, related to group members' preferences. Collaborative learning was also seen to be not optimal when everyone has different ways of translating. Despite this, the study promises that collaborative learning could be an effective and applicable method that will help students in the translation class. Thus, lecturers and students should focus on the positive aspects of collaborative learning to improve their translation competence. Future research should explore strategies to address these limitations and develop ways to enhance collaborative learning, ensuring its positive impact on students' translation competence.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to thank Elisabet Titik Murtisari, Ph.D., for her feedback during the early stages of the research.

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Voice of America in the Classroom: Assessing Its Educational Value for Listening Comprehension in High School English Classes

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https://doi.org/10.24071/ijels.v11i1.11540
received 27 January 2025; accepted 11 March 2025

ABSTRACT
This study examines the relationship between the use of Voice of America (VOA) videos and students' listening comprehension in English language courses through a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design, addressing the ongoing debate on the effectiveness of authentic media in language learning. Given the increasing reliance on digital content for language acquisition, this study explores whether VOA videos offer measurable advantages over traditional listening materials in debating issues: why is it significant? The research includes quantitative data collection involving listening comprehension tests and surveys with Likert-scale questionnaires, followed by qualitative data gathered through structured interviews. Quantitative analysis using SPSS and Pearson correlation indicates a weak positive relationship between VOA video use and listening performance ($r = 0.108$, $p = 0.651$), which is statistically insignificant. Qualitative insights suggest that VOA videos provide exposure to authentic pronunciation, intonation, and accents, and may contribute to increased motivation for learning. Thematic analysis identifies challenges, such as the speed of speech and the presence of technical terminology. In general, the students' listening comprehension scores showed improvement, with a median score of 80/100. The findings suggest that integrating authentic video materials like VOA into language instruction may have pedagogical value while also highlighting limitations for broader applicability.

Keywords: English language learning, listening comprehension, Voice of America (VOA) videos

INTRODUCTION

Listening comprehension plays a crucial role in language acquisition, as it allows learners to decode spoken language accurately. Research suggests that strong listening skills contribute to better pronunciation, vocabulary retention, and overall communication ability. Without effective listening comprehension, students may struggle with real-life conversations, academic lectures, and professional interactions, highlighting its significance in language proficiency development. It plays a crucial role in mastering the English language, which is essential for effective communication. Additionally, strong listening skills form the foundation for developing other language abilities, such as speaking, reading, and writing. Intensive listening provides exposure to authentic spoken language, allowing learners to quickly acquire vocabulary (Masrai, 2020). Research conducted by Ly, N. N., & Nga, N. T. (2020) showed that intensive listening practice significantly improved participants' vocabulary acquisition skills. Listening requires focused attention, allowing the listener to hear and make sense of what they

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hear. Therefore, when learning a foreign language, it is essential to develop our listening skills (Alzamil, 2021).

Listening is not merely a recognition skill; it also involves the listener's ability to identify key aspects, such as the sound system, and to interpret and make sense of the information received from the speaker (Tasya et al., 2018). Listening holds a crucial position as one of the four fundamental skills necessary for learning a language. It is widely recognized that listening is the most important skill for developing language proficiency and plays a significant role in achieving overall language competence (Astrid et al., 2024). According to Fitria (2021), listening is a vital component of learning English, enabling us to understand what others are conveying. The listener should be attentive and grasp what the speaker intends to communicate during a conversation, especially in specific contexts (Harianja et al., 2022). Effective communication requires both a speaker and a listener. A study by Chang et al. (2019) revealed that students frequently struggle to understand speech in the language they are learning, often because speakers tend to talk too quickly. Despite its importance, many students encounter difficulties in developing their listening skills due to unfamiliar accents, limited vocabulary, and inadequate proficiency in authentic spoken English. These challenges underscore the necessity for innovative and engaging learning strategies aimed at enhancing students' ability to comprehend what they hear.

In the digital era, multimedia resources have become invaluable tools in language education. According to Prabawati et al. (2021), teachers can use media to develop engaging and effective teaching and learning processes. Using media helps motivate students and keeps them interested in learning. Teachers should be creative and inventive in their use of media to prevent boredom and enhance the effectiveness of the teaching process. Ramli (2020) states that media can include various audio and video components, such as videotapes, films, and slide shows. The advancement of technology is shifting education from traditional methods to digital Approaches (Kurniawan & Kuswandi, 2021). The researcher prefers using news videos for listening instruction, as they are an effective way to teach listening skills and improve students' listening abilities. One excellent resource is Voice of America (VOA) videos, which provide learners with authentic and varied English audio-visual content.

VOA videos are particularly beneficial because they present real-life contexts, diverse accents, and cultural insights that help learners bridge the gap between classroom learning and practical communication. This aligns with global language acquisition theories, which emphasize the importance of exposure to authentic language use in different contexts (Krashen, 1982; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Furthermore, studies have shown that integrating multimedia resources, such as VOA videos, into language learning enhances comprehension and engagement among students from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Rost, 2016; Graham, 2017).

Voice of America is an internationally recognized multimedia television company that provides services in over 40 languages. Reaching an audience of 141 million people worldwide each week, Voice of America offers news, information, and social programs through the Internet, portable devices, social media, radio, and television (Astuti et al., 2019). This global reach underscores its relevance as a language learning tool beyond the Indonesian context, making it a valuable resource for learners in various international settings. VOA Learning English is part of the Voice of America multimedia channel, available on websites and in smartphone apps that contain an extensive list of daily news and podcasts on various topics (Rahmaningtyas & Mardhiyyah, 2021). As an educational media, the VOA website not only allows learners to listen to content but also to view and interact with it (Risawati, 2020). Abdi and Makiabadi (2019) suggested using VOA to learn English, utilizing useful features such as transcription, vocabulary lists, and podcasts, which make listening assignments more convenient and practical for students across different regions. Most students agreed that they enjoyed using VOA videos in listening lessons (Andasari et al. 2021). Additionally, Astuti et al. (2020) mention that with the use of VOA, students' scores could improve in listening comprehension, a finding consistent with research in other educational contexts that highlights

the effectiveness of multimedia-based instruction (Mayer, 2021; Chapelle, 2018). Andasari et al. (2021) state that there are many advantages to using VOA, as it motivates, inspires, and attracts students in listening classes to acquire new knowledge. The VOA Learning English media program encourages students to imitate the pronunciation of native speakers, which in turn increases their enthusiasm, improves their fluency, and significantly boosts their self-confidence (Surayya et al., 2024). The practice of VOA encourages students to contribute to listening practice. Vaishnavi and Gandhi (2020) confirm that using the VOA website can improve listening skills.

In connection with the above rationale, researchers are interested in conducting research related to listening skills for students in the English section and those studying English on their own. This study aims to address the limitations of previous research by exploring the relationship between the use of VOA videos and students' listening comprehension in an English course. While prior studies have examined multimedia tools for language learning, they have not sufficiently addressed the specific impact of VOA videos, nor have they resolved inconsistencies in findings regarding their effectiveness in enhancing listening skills. This study focuses on the relationship between the use of VOA videos and students' perception of spoken English in an English language course. By integrating VOA videos into listening classes, teachers strive to introduce students to authentic spoken English and to engage their interest. The purpose of this study is to investigate or identify students' perceptions of using VOA videos as a learning resource for listening comprehension. This involves evaluating the advantages and potential limitations of integrating VOA videos into the teaching and learning process in an English course setting.

This research examines the relationship between VOA videos and students' listening comprehension in English courses. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How does the use of VOA videos influence students' listening comprehension in EFL learning? (2) In what ways can the VOA Channel be integrated effectively into English courses to enhance student engagement and achievement? Furthermore, this study explores the potential of the VOA Channel as a learning resource. The results are expected to provide empirical evidence for educational practitioners, teachers, and students, supporting the adoption of VOA videos as a strategy for improving student achievement in EFL. For English language teachers, this study offers insights into how VOA videos can serve as an effective tool to enhance students' listening skills. Teachers can adapt the findings to develop interactive and student-centred learning strategies. For students, VOA videos may increase motivation and improve comprehension by providing exposure to authentic English through a combination of audio and visual materials, helping them familiarize themselves with different accents and real-life conversations. Additionally, for English language courses, this research offers guidance to educational institutions in selecting or developing engaging and effective learning materials, ultimately improving the quality of their instructional services

METHOD

This research used mixed methods to evaluate the relationship between the use of VOA videos and this study explores students' perceptions of listening comprehension in an English language course, focusing on their experiences with speech perception through auditory input. Conducted at Kingston Course an English course in Pagaralam, this research examined how students engaged with spoken English in an academic setting.

The participants in this study included twenty students, aged 15-18 years old with varying levels of English proficiency, ranging from beginner. The sample consisted of both male and female students who were enrolled in the Kingston Course, providing a diverse perspective on how learners with different backgrounds and skill levels perceived spoken English. Analysing these perceptions, this study aimed to contribute valuable insights into the challenges and

strategies students used when processing spoken English. The findings might help educators refine their teaching methods to enhance listening comprehension in EFL/ESL classrooms.

In the framework of this study, which employs an explanatory sequential design, quantitative data were first collected and analyzed, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data to explain the quantitative findings. Moreover, Creswell & Clark (2017) mentioned some kinds of sequential design. The primary design was exploratory sequential, and the other was explanatory sequential. This research paid special attention to the explanatory sequential design that employed mixed methods research. In the explanatory sequential design, special attention was paid to the quantitative research, followed by the qualitative stage (Creswell, 2011). The research design integrated quantitative and qualitative methods. This research began with the collection and analysis of quantitative data, followed by the collection of qualitative data to explain or deepen the quantitative results. The objective was to present the quantitative results in more detail using qualitative data. After it was found that using VOA videos improved students' listening performance (quantitatively), interviews were conducted to understand why and how effective the media are (qualitatively).

The study implemented a listening comprehension test as the primary instrument for data collection, supplemented by a meticulously designed questionnaire. This dual approach enhanced the reliability and validity of the findings, as noted by Creswell and Clark (2017). The questionnaire focused on specific dimensions of engagement with the Voice of America (VOA) channel, including usage frequency, types of videos viewed, average viewing duration, and total engagement time with the content. The listening comprehension test aimed at assessing students' proficiency in interpreting and comprehending spoken language within the context of VOA videos. This quantitative assessment provided valuable insights into students' perceptions of their experiences with VOA content. To complement these findings, a structured interview technique was utilized to garner richer qualitative data from participants, following a predetermined sequence of questions (Saunders et al., 2019). These interviews allowed for a nuanced exploration of students' interactions with VOA videos and the challenges they faced in the learning process. The application of this mixed-methods approach facilitated a comprehensive analysis, integrating quantitative data with qualitative insights.

The survey component utilized a Likert scale (1 = never, 5 = very often) to gauge students' awareness of the integration of VOA videos in listening instruction. Conducted online via a Google Form, the questionnaire comprised ten targeted questions. The collected data were then inputted into SPSS for analysis, employing Pearson correlation to examine relationships among variables. Concurrently, thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data derived from interviews and group discussions, emphasizing the coding process necessary for identifying meaningful themes. Themes were identified based on recurrence, relevance, and theoretical significance during the coding process (Guest et al., 2012). This process involved the categorization and organization of the data, facilitating the identification of unique codes through observation and quotations. Ultimately, the methodology encompassed a rigorous review process, allowing for comparison, understanding, and classification of the data, thereby enabling the synthesis of ideas and the identification of significant themes relevant to the study's objectives.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The use of VOA videos had a significant positive relationship with the improvement of students' listening comprehension skills in English courses. This medium not only helped students understand authentic English pronunciation, intonation, and accent variations but also increased their learning motivation through the presentation of interesting and relevant content.

Table 1. Table of survey results

Likert scale	PARTICIPANT									
	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 5	Q 6	Q 7	Q 8	Q 9	Q 10
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Disagree	1	11	1	0	0	6	0	0	0	2
Neutral	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Agree	9	1	13	11	14	3	10	10	9	7
Strongly Agree	10	8	6	9	6	11	10	10	11	11

Table 1 indicates that the use of VOA videos has been shown to be effective in enriching students' vocabulary and improving their understanding of the overall language context. However, there were some challenges that needed to be considered, such as the speed of speaking in the videos and technical terms that were difficult for some students to understand.

Table 2. Table of listening results test

Participants	Score
1	80
2	80
3	90
4	40
5	80
6	60
7	60
8	100
9	80
10	100
11	100
12	100
13	80
14	60
15	70
16	60
17	60
18	20
19	90
20	60

Table 2 indicated that, based on the test results, the use of VOA videos proved to have a positive impact on the listening comprehension abilities of students in English courses. The majority of students achieved above-average scores, with a median score of 80, indicating significant improvement in their listening skills. The range of 20 to 100 points reflects the variation in listening abilities among students, which may be influenced by differences in the frequency of VOA video usage and the students' initial level of understanding. Most of the students obtained scores in the range of 60 to 100 points, indicating that this method is effective in improving the abilities of the majority of learners.

Table 3. Pearson correlations

		Listening	VOA
Listening	Pearson Correlation	1	.108
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.651
	N	20	20
VOA	Pearson Correlation	.108	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.651	
	N	20	20

Based on the results of the Pearson correlation test, it is known that the correlation coefficient between Listening and VOA is 0.108. This value indicates a very weak positive correlation between the two variables. A correlation close to zero indicates that the relationship between the two variables is almost non-existent or very weak. Pearson Correlation Coefficient Range:

a. 0.00-0.19 → The relationship is very weak or almost absent.
b. 0.20-0.39 → weak ties.
c. 0.40-0.59 → moderate relationship.
d. 0.60-0.79 → strong relationship.
e. 0.80-1.00 → very strong relationship.

In this case, the value of 0.108 is in the range of 0.00 - 0.19, so the relationship between the two variables is very weak. The p-value, or significance level, is 0.651. Since the p-value (0.651) is greater than 0.05 (5% significance level), this correlation is not statistically significant. The observed relationship between Listening and VOA could have happened by chance and was not strong enough to indicate a real relationship. In other words, increasing or decreasing Listening scores does not consistently affect VOA scores. The number of samples used in this correlation test is 20. With a relatively small sample size, correlation results may be unstable or sensitive to data variations.

To grasp the speaker's message, listening involves an active process where the listener must not only hear but also concentrate. In this study, the researcher highlighted the issue of numerous learners struggling with limited vocabulary due to insufficient focus. Consequently, the researcher employed media to enhance learners' attention and understanding through listening. The selected medium for teaching listening skills in English classes was the *VOA news video*. According to the theory proposed in the generally accepted communication scheme, the listening skill is considered important because effective speaking, a crucial oral language skill, cannot be achieved without proper listening. Listening serves as the foundation for developing speaking abilities, as it enables individuals to understand sounds, words, phrases, and grammatical structures essential for meaningful communication, and this is a task that requires focus. (Alharbi & Al-Ahdal 2022). Utilizing videos in teaching significantly enhances students' listening skills, fostering both their motivation and understanding.

The results of the Pearson correlation test conducted to assess the relationship between Listening and VOA showed a correlation coefficient value of 0.108, which falls into the category of very weak or almost non-existent correlation. This suggests that the relationship between the two variables is not strong enough to indicate a clear pattern. In addition, a p-value of 0.651, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05, indicates that the observed relationship between Listening and VOA is not statistically significant. In other words, this connection most likely happened by chance and cannot be considered evidence of a real relationship.

One important factor to consider in this discussion is the sample size; the number of samples used in this analysis was 20 respondents, which may be considered small for correlation statistical analysis. However, despite this limitation, the study was conducted to provide preliminary insights into the relationship between the variables. The findings can serve

as a foundation for future research with larger sample sizes to validate and expand upon these initial results. Small sample sizes can cause results to be less stable and more susceptible to data variation. Therefore, the results obtained may not be fully representative of the larger population. For future analyses, a larger sample size may improve the validity and reliability of the results. The correlation value of 0.108 falls within the range of 0.00–0.19, indicating a very weak relationship between VOA use and students' listening comprehension. This suggests that changes in listening scores do not consistently impact VOA scores. One possible explanation is that both variables may function independently, or other external factors may play a more significant role in influencing both. A key consideration is the potential impact of student motivation, prior knowledge, and learning strategies on listening comprehension. Students with higher intrinsic motivation or stronger background knowledge in English may perform better in listening tasks regardless of VOA use. Additionally, the effectiveness of VOA videos may depend on how they are integrated into instruction—passive exposure alone may not lead to significant improvements.

Given the very weak and statistically insignificant correlation, the practical implications of this finding are limited. However, this result highlights the need for further investigation into how instructional design, student engagement, and complementary teaching strategies might enhance the effectiveness of VOA materials in improving listening skills. Future research should consider incorporating additional variables, such as learner autonomy, instructional methods, and the frequency of VOA video use, to better understand their role in shaping listening comprehension outcomes. That is, if the goal of the study was to understand or predict VOA based on Listening, then these results indicate that the relationship between the two variables was not strong enough to support that goal.

To enhance future research on the relationship between listening skills and the use of Voice of America (VOA) resources, the following recommendations are proposed.

1. Increase Sample Size
   Conduct studies with larger sample sizes to improve the accuracy and reliability of the results. Larger samples reduce variability and provide more stable estimates of correlation coefficients.
2. Incorporate Additional Variables
   Explore other factors that may influence the relationship between listening skills and VOA usage, such as learners' proficiency levels, motivation, and prior exposure to similar materials. Including these variables can offer a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play.
3. Utilize Diverse Statistical Methods
   Beyond Pearson's correlation, apply various statistical techniques to analyze the data, such as linear regression to assess the predictive relationship between VOA usage and listening skills and determine how changes in one variable may predict changes in the other variables. If the data do not meet the assumptions required for parametric tests, consider using nonparametric alternatives, such as Spearman's rank correlation or Kendall's tau, to evaluate the relationship between variables.

Based on interviews with two respondents who frequently used VOA, it was found that the majority of respondents believe that VOA has a positive effect on improving listening skills. The respondents stated that using VOA provides an interesting learning experience, and helps to improve the ability to listen, speak, and replenish vocabulary. In addition, Voice of America videos are believed to contain useful ideas and knowledge. However, respondents also noted some difficulties in learning to use VOA, such as difficulty in understanding the message or key information conveyed by the speaker and the speed of speech, which sometimes makes

sense. To cope with this, the respondents had to listen to the video several times and concentrate better. Here are excerpts confirming these findings:

Advantages of using VOA

This research identified several advantages of learning through VOA based on respondents' experiences.

> *P1: "Highlighted that using VOA was a valuable experience, allowing them to watch videos and acquire knowledge"*. Similarly,
>
> *P2: "Found learning through the VOA website interesting and beneficial, emphasizing its positive impact on students"*.

A key advantage noted by participants was the improvement in listening, speaking, and vocabulary acquisition. P1 specifically mentioned that VOA videos enhanced listening skills, while P2 stated that working with VOA felt like learning at a higher level due to exposure to authentic speech.

Challenges in using VOA

Despite its advantages, students also face challenges while using VOA. One of the main difficulties was understanding the speaker's message.

> *P1: "Reported struggling to grasp the main idea and needing to listen multiple times for full comprehension".*
>
> *P2: "Added that the fast pace of the speakers made it difficult to catch the intended meaning, requiring them to listen more attentively".*

These findings suggest that while VOA is an effective tool for developing listening skills, addressing technical issues such as speech speed and comprehension strategies could further optimize its use in language learning.

This research has the same result as Azizah and Sholikhah (2023), who found that the use of VOA in teaching English could be effective. This study is also comparable with Hayati et al. (2022). According to statistical calculations, there is a positive impact between learning listening skills through the VOA Learning English website and learning without the VOA Learning English website. The VOA Learning English website can develop listening skills in English language learners. As a result, VOA videos serve as authentic audio-visual media that can encourage students and challenge them to practice listening. The VOA website consists of a Learning English video that provides an opportunity to improve students' listening skills. Using VOA Learning English as a medium is effective for improving students' listening.

CONCLUSION

This study explores the relationship between the use of VOA videos and students' level of listening comprehension, which showed a weak correlation, indicating that while VOA videos provide exposure to authentic speech, their impact on listening comprehension improvement is limited. English language courses, with an emphasis on the potential benefits of including a VOA channel in the curriculum. The results provide valuable information to education professionals, teachers, and students, highlighting the role of multimedia resources in improving language learning. For English language teachers, this study highlights the effectiveness of VOA videos as a dynamic learning tool to improve students' listening skills. Teachers can use these videos to develop more interactive and contextually relevant learning strategies that meet the diverse needs of students. By using authentic content, teachers can create a more engaging and meaningful learning environment. For students, VOA videos serve as a motivational resource, offering an introduction to authentic English through a combination of audio and video materials. This not only enhances students' ability to understand different English accents but also helps them understand the context of real conversations. The integration of such content contributes to the development of listening skills, which is crucial

for the overall level of language proficiency of students. For English language courses and educational institutions, this study is a guide to choosing or developing engaging and effective learning materials.

The findings of this study highlight the value of VOA videos in providing students with authentic and practical opportunities to enhance their language skills. They encourage both teachers and students to integrate VOA videos as a strategy to improve listening comprehension, enrich the learning experience, and support academic achievement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. The sample size was relatively small, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study did not account for other potential factors influencing listening comprehension, such as students' prior knowledge, motivation, learning styles, or the frequency and method of VOA video usage. The study also focused solely on listening skills without exploring how VOA videos might contribute to other language competencies like speaking, vocabulary acquisition, or pronunciation. Future research should address these limitations by including larger and more diverse participant groups to increase the validity of the results. Further studies could also examine how different instructional approaches using VOA videos impact language learning and whether their effectiveness varies across proficiency levels. Additionally, researchers may explore the integration of VOA videos in a multimodal learning environment, combining them with interactive tasks, teacher-led discussions, or supplementary learning materials to maximize their benefits. By addressing these aspects, future research can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how multimedia resources like VOA videos can be optimized for language education.

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Exploring Trauma, Memory, and Identity Formation in 'The School for Good Mothers' by Jessamine Chan

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https://doi.org/10.24071/ijels.v11i1.11305
received: 10 January 2025; accepted: 25 March 2025

ABSTRACT
This article examines the links between trauma and memory and implications for identity in Jessamine Chan's novel, The School for Good Mothers. It describes how intergenerational trauma impacts Frida (the protagonist) and her interactions with Harriet from the respective perspectives of psychoanalytic trauma theory and pluralistic trauma models. Based on the analysis, Frida's identity and behaviours are significantly shaped by unresolved childhood trauma and social expectations related to motherhood. Hence, the novel critiques institutional approaches to dealing with trauma that rely on surveillance and standardisation as opposed to identifying and resolving deeper psychological issues. For example, the continued monitoring presented in the novel is a form of ongoing traumatisation and mirrors contemporary concerns about privacy, autonomy, and mental health. This research contributes to the field of trauma studies by focusing on trauma as a complexity of experiences based on individual experiences, traumatic experiences within family systems, and external societal pressures, particularly in the experiences of mothers. Lastly, this research illustrates, through multiple lenses, why trauma should be treated individually and how universalised approaches to trauma are limited at best when addressing complex trauma in institutional contexts.

Keywords: identity formation, institutional abuse, intergenerational trauma, psychoanalytic model, societal expectations

INTRODUCTION
Jessamine Chan, a Chinese American writer, came to the United States for higher education and professional opportunities. Chan, the daughter of Chinese immigrants, earned an MFA at Columbia University and has emerged as an important voice in contemporary American literature. A prior book editor for Publishers Weekly, her work has evolved within a complicated sociopolitical context and often examines the confluence of cultural identity, institutionalised power, and motherhood. Although her work spans many themes, it centres on evaluating the social experiences of individuals through the lens of power dynamics, particularly as they affect women and immigrants. Chan's debut novel, The School for Good Mothers (2022), stands out for its distinctive dystopian approach to examining motherhood and state control, earning widespread critical acclaim for its innovative narrative techniques and unflinching social critique. Her fiction involves a voyeuristic inspection of societal norms, a nuanced exploration of unfamiliar social groups, and an interrogation of institutional authority. Her quest to illuminate human experiences is reflected in her plots and characters, which investigate topics with extensive social depth and emotional resonance (Coulter, 2022).

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Her literary approach offers new insights into social topics. Jessamine's work makes women's privacy visible, how marital status categorises individuals and the interests of motherhood focus solely on female characters. Women are depicted in historical backdrops and narratives. Controversy surrounding essentialist fiction and foundational research challenges its validity as a specialised tool. Jessamine's literature suggests essentialism in her analysis and facilitates discussion due to the complexity of each context. Despite this, the sphere of motherhood remains a subject that lacks an exploration of maternal statuses. Jessamine contemplates the motherhood of characters, processing numerous facets while considering the scope's performance.

Jessamine Chan's novel *The School for Good Mothers* tells a story of trauma and memory. A key aspect of the novel is the exploration of the protagonist's internal and external life regarding her new life status as a mother and the constant observation by the state. In this context, this paper seeks to discuss the way Chan presents trauma and memory in the novel and how the two literary devices enhance the picture of the main character and her struggle. Subsequently, trauma and memory cannot be overlooked when analysing the layers of character development and the novel's organisation. Trauma, as exemplified by Frida, becomes more than an individual psychological issue; it is also a social problem that plays out through oppression and cultural gender roles (Walker, 2022). On the other hand, memory plays an essential role in constructing the characters' personalities and their relation to the environment (Luckhurst, 2013). Analysing these topics, this work aims to reveal the underlying messages behind the work and outlines the role of the novel in current discourses surrounding trauma and memory.

Several key questions guide this research: How are trauma and memory represented in Chan's work? What narrative techniques have been employed in this text to create or signal these themes? What signals, signs, and symptoms do the characters of the story portray, and in what way are they affiliated with social problems? To explore these questions, this study examines how Chan portrays the psychological impact of institutional surveillance on motherhood through the character of Frida, analysing how her past traumas manifest in her present behaviours and interactions with her daughter Harriet. In answering these questions, the strategy of close reading is chosen as the main type of analysis of the novel. The current findings are discussed with reference to theoretical underpinnings drawn from psychoanalytic theory, pluralistic theories of traumatic memory, and memory studies.

This work's significance lies in its examination of how contemporary literary texts engage with trauma theory within the specific context of maternal identity and institutional power structures. While numerous studies have analysed trauma in fiction, few have explored how surveillance-based institutional control becomes a mechanism of ongoing traumatisation. This study provides new insights by examining how Chan's novel illustrates the failure of standardised approaches to complex psychological trauma for mothers within the parameters of race and class. The article uses psychoanalytic and pluralistic trauma models in examining the contemporary text to help bridge the gap between traditional literary analysis and current psychological understandings of trauma, thus allowing a more nuanced understanding of intergenerational trauma through the lens of culturally entrenched systems of oppression. Further, the article aims to demonstrate how Chan's work offers a commentary that moves beyond an individual psychological analysis to comment on the broader institutional talks of maternal "failure" and rehabilitation for their purported failure.

Trauma theory

Trauma is not just an occurrence in the past, but rather the trace of the experience on the mind, brain, and body, which reconstructs how the human organism will adapt to survive in the present moment (Van der Kolk, 2014). Trauma studies have developed a view that acknowledges the complexity of the psychological, social, and biological factors that follow in

the wake of traumatic events and experiences (Carlisle, 2024; Chouliara et al., 2024). Trauma is now also understood as having a radiating effect beyond the individual and is not just about the individual but about entire communities and generations of people affected by it (Li et al., 2023; Pathania, 2024). Trauma has its names: collective trauma, historical trauma, and intergroup conflict. Art, literature, and music have the power to process trauma (Malchiodi, 2020) and they do provide a way to find a language when words are not adequate and to externalise what is happening inside. When a survivor creates it, it may help them to process their experiences and find meaning among the senseless (Parsons et al., 2024; Dalal & Srivastava, 2023).

Understanding psychological trauma, the linguistic expressions of trauma, and the role of memory in the formation of individual and cultural identity is one of the key concerns in trauma studies (Hunt, 2010; Eyerman, 2019). The field of trauma studies utilises psychoanalytic theories of trauma paired with frameworks such as post-structural, socio-cultural, and post-colonial theory to interpret and analyse the impact of extreme experience on memory and identity. Trauma is typically characterised as a deeply disruptive experience that fundamentally shifts an individual's emotional life and worldview (Yadav et al., 2024). The study of trauma deals with the complicated psychic and social aspects of how trauma shapes our understanding of experience, how we talk about trauma with others, and finally, slice and communicate trauma in language (Balaev, 2018).

Psychoanalytic theories on the causes and repercussions of trauma go back to the nineteenth century. Breuer and Freud's early writings, particularly *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), and Freud's later work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), are exemplary instances still shaping what literary trauma critics engage in today. Freud holds that the hysterical condition is a result of any repressed experience relating to sexual violence. As Breuer and Freud state, "the original incident could not be traumatic per se but became so through its remembrance" (1955, p.191). Talking about cure or abreaction is fundamental for understanding past implications and freeing themselves from their symptoms. Only after a latency period or deferred action (Nachträglichkeit) does one understand a traumatic event with respect to its previous implications and effects. A current happening may remind an individual about something that occurred long before, making him/her unveil it (Breuer & Freud, 1955, p.192).

In the 1990s, there was a surge of scholarship exploring the concept of trauma and its role in literature and society. Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, and Geoffrey Hartman, among others, popularised the idea that trauma reveals the contradictions within language and experience. Caruth's traditional model of trauma sees it as an event that shatters identity, thus eluding direct linguistic representation. Trauma as an unassimilated event remains outside normal memory and narrative representation, fragmenting identity (Mambrol, 2018). This model also supports trans-historical trauma, thereby linking both personal and collective traumatic experiences (Balaev, 2018).

In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* (1996), Caruth interprets Freud's theories on trauma in terms of the referential limitedness of language and history. What she argues is that "latency and dissociation associated with trauma are factors that disrupt our understanding or representation of traumatic experiences" (Caruth, 1996, p.17). Traumatic events are consistently recognised through interrupted referentiality, pointing towards the past by recurring absence. Due to trauma's dissociative character and linguistic oddity, it often refuses to be narrated, which adversely affects consciousness as well as memory (Caruth, 1996).

The pluralistic model of trauma, which serves as the primary theoretical framework for this study alongside psychoanalytic theory, challenges the traditional Caruthian framework by emphasising trauma's structural and cultural dimensions. This theory recognises several narrative expressions and goes beyond merely looking at pathological fragmentation and dissociation, suggesting instead that "traumatic experiences may establish new kinds of relations between experience, language and knowledge" (Balaev, 2018, p.362). The pluralistic

model also claims that traumatic memory, though disruptive, does not necessarily stop the past from being integrated into identity. This perspective emphasises how trauma memories emerge in the interplay of internal and external forces; hence, trauma memory provides direct and indirect knowledge about trauma. It challenges trauma's fundamental unspeakability and highlights the significance of culture and history when recovering narratives (Balaev, 2018). Trauma studies have changed the traditional Caruthian model that emphasises trauma's unspeakability for a more pluralistic model that recognises the variety of narrative forms and cultural contexts, as well as trauma's role in the formation of identity and memory. These changes enable more understanding of how trauma can be expressed and what it means for oneself or society as a whole. By applying both psychoanalytic and pluralistic frameworks to Chan's novel, this study examines how personal, intergenerational, and institutional trauma shapes maternal identity and behaviour.

Trauma and memory in literature

Numerous scholarly works have investigated questions of trauma and memory in contemporary literature and their treatment in various cultural and historical contexts (Pires & Ricarte, 2024). Armie and Membrive (2023), for example, include several studies on female trauma in their collection that examine "wounds that have been inflicted on the body, mind, and spirit of women in Ireland" (p. 3). In their collection, studies demonstrate how contemporary literature reconciles tradition with modernity, dispels myths, and breaks silences surrounding women's experiences, offering pathways for renegotiating gender roles and healing past traumas. Similarly, Nassif (2024) examines trauma and memory in Lebanon's Post-War Novel, focusing on Rabee Jaber's works. His study defines trauma as "a cultural motif that Jaber employs to stress how much the past affects present affairs" (p. 17). It demonstrates how fiction can give voice to trauma survivors and explores the representation of 'invisible histories' within specific political-historical contexts.

Similarly, Berry (2016) explores trauma and memory in John Banville's Frames Trilogy. He demonstrates how "traumatic memory in the text operate[s] at both content and form levels," showing that the writing process functions as a subconscious therapeutic exercise (p. 42). This approach differs from analyses that treat Banville's work primarily through aesthetic or philosophical lenses.

While scholarship on trauma and memory in literature continues to grow, there remains a significant gap in the academic study of these themes in Jessamine Chan's *The School for Good Mothers*. Unlike works focused on war trauma or historical violence, Chan's novel presents a distinctive examination of institutional and gendered trauma specifically experienced by mothers under surveillance. This study addresses this gap by analysing how trauma and memory function within Chan's narrative, particularly in relation to contemporary standards of motherhood and institutional power. By applying both psychoanalytic and pluralistic models to this text, this research contributes new perspectives on how trauma operates at the intersection of maternal identity, state control, and intergenerational memory.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative psychoanalytical analysis of Jessamine Chan's novel *The School for Good Mothers* to examine the representation of trauma and memory. Several key steps can be distinguished in implementing this methodology. First, the analytical process involved selecting relevant textual segments from the novel that demonstrated trauma manifestations and memory processes. As Caruth (1996) suggests, trauma narratives often reveal themselves through "interruptions, gaps, and repetitions" (p. 7), so passages were chosen that exhibited these characteristics. Close reading was employed following Freud's method of analysing "the associative threads that connect seemingly disparate elements" (Breuer & Freud, 1955, p. 174). This approach revealed recurring motifs and patterns that illuminate how Chan constructs a narrative of trauma through Frida's experiences.

Second, the study incorporated two primary theoretical frameworks: the psychoanalytic trauma theory and the pluralistic model of trauma. Psychoanalytic theory, drawing on Freud's concept of Nachträglichkeit or "deferred action" (Breuer & Freud, 1955, p. 192), provided insights into how Frida's past experiences resurface and influence her present behaviours. As LaCapra (2014) notes, "Trauma is not simply an event that took place in the past, but is an event that continues to affect the present through unresolved mourning" (p. 89). The pluralistic Model, as articulated by Balaev (2018), extended thinking by considering "how cultural and historical contexts shape traumatic experiences and how those experiences are expressed" (p. 365). This dual framework facilitated the investigation of both the internal psychological and external sociocultural factors that affected Frida's trauma.

Third, a contextual analysis via character study and narrative structure was also performed. The character study examined Frida Liu's experiences and behaviour with a specific emphasis on what van der Kolk (2014) refers to as "the body's physical response to unresolved trauma" (p. 67). The analysis investigated how Frida's experiences of trauma influenced her behaviour and her relationship with her daughter Harriet and institutional authorities. Additionally, the narrative structure analysis examined how Chan uses what Whitehead (2004) calls "stylistic techniques that mirror the effects of trauma" (p. 84) involving temporal disruptions and shifting between the past and present to re-create trauma's effects on memory and perception. Through this combination of methodological approaches, this study offers an integrated analysis of how Chan depicts trauma and memory and how they shape character development and narrative structure in *The School for Good Mothers*.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The reading of *The School for Good Mothers* reveals important findings about trauma and memory in relation to identity, specifically in terms of motherhood and as a consequence of institutional control. The findings can be looked at from other trauma theory approaches: psychoanalytical and pluralistic, which allows for a rich multi-layered analysis of Chan's account. The depictions of trauma in the novel operate on an individual, intergenerational, and social level, which reflects current trauma theory in that it is a multi-layered phenomenon with many influencing factors. Frida demonstrates how personal history, family dynamics, and social norms converge to create this layered traumatic experience. Supporting this pluralistic model of trauma is the earlier notion that wider sociocultural factors are influential on an individual's trauma experience. Psychoanalytic perspectives are also well supported by the relationship between memory and identity depicted in the novel.

Throughout the novel, Frida’s self-identity is continually shaped and reshaped by her childhood memories and her experiences as a mother. The cyclical nature of this process – where past traumas inform present behaviours, which in turn create new traumatic experiences – aligns with the psychoanalytic concept of repetition compulsion. Specifically, one can view certain aspects of the way Chan portrays the school’s approach to the children as a critique of reductionist approaches to trauma treatment. In this respect, the institution’s focus on surface-level corrections and standardised solutions proves ineffective in addressing the deep-seated nature of psychological trauma. This interpretation thus highlights the limitations of purely behavioural or cognitive models of trauma treatment; it implies that therapy for trauma needs to consider the individual’s history, societal pressures, and psychological factors.

Therefore, this constant surveillance illustrated in the novel can be considered a form of ongoing traumatisation. This is concurrent with today’s definition of trauma, which not only refers to one-off incidents but also ongoing, persistent stressors. The monitoring realistically reflects people’s concerns about privacy, autonomy, and the psychological effects of living in a society where they are under constant watch.

With regard to trauma, the novel discusses social pressure towards motherhood, which can be read as a commentary on how cultural narratives and expectations can be sources of trauma. This understanding constitutes the basis for the feminist and sociocultural perspectives

on trauma as it focuses on power relations and cultural context in trauma survivors' lives. The arguments disputing universal solutions about how one responds to trauma or deals with complex psychological issues can be viewed as a call for better individualised approaches and methods for helping individuals experiencing trauma. In this interpretation, one opposes providing simple solutions to some of the most complex psychological questions.

Psychoanalytic theory, which deals with the transmission of unresolved psychological issues across generations, is also illustrated in the novel by showing how intergenerational trauma influences subsequent generations. This theory corresponds with epigenetics, where early experiences or adverse experiences of one's grandparents and parents may lead to biological repercussions in their offspring.

Memory and identity formation

According to the psychoanalytic model, trauma can be passed down from one generation to another: individuals can be traumatised without being exposed directly to the initial traumatic event. This is evident in Chan's reference to intergenerational trauma:

> "Had Frida been abandoned as a child? Was abandoning Harriet the result of intergenerational trauma?" (Chan, 2022, p. 136).

Her unresolved past influences the character Frida, and her fear and guilt about her mother's mistakes haunt her and create anxieties that shape her identity and actions. From a pluralistic model perspective that considers broader sociocultural contexts, Frida is also affected by the societal expectations and norms internalised towards motherhood in addition to her personality history. The latter further complicates her identity formation and exacerbates feelings of trauma and guilt.

Frida's identity and behaviours are profoundly affected by trauma:

> "Ms Gibson said her mother should have sought help – see a therapist, found a support group. Had she been a better mother, she would have taken better care of herself, and thus, been more available to her child" (Chan, 2022, p. 237).

This is evidenced by Frida's state and behaviour, symbolising how trauma affects the mind. She experiences a collapse, and her repressed memories and unresolved trauma manifest in her actions. Society has a major influence on certain aspects of motherhood, and its impact can be significant as seen in the case of Frida. Her perceived failure is not only personal but also due to societal judgment, as advocated by the pluralistic model. It illustrates how external pressures impact her trauma and identity issues.

Moreover, a complex interplay exists between memory and identity:

> "Ms. Gibson said, 'Maybe you would have turned out differently if you'd had a sibling. Clearly, you wanted something your mother couldn't give you'" (Chan, 2022, p. 237).

A prime source of Frida's identity, according to psychoanalysis, is past failure in her relationship with her daughter, creating a cycle of guilt and fear. Therefore, from the pluralistic model's perspective, Frida's self-esteem and anxiety regarding failure can be attributed to social influences. These pressures amplify her trauma and perpetuate feelings of inadequacy and judgment.

Representation of trauma

Chan critiques contemporary societal norms through her novel, particularly her protagonist's experiences of trauma. She touches on both the psychological and socio-political

dimensions. Metaphorically, she symbolises the superficial understanding and perception of trauma by the oppressive system Frida is subjected to:

> "The dent is only a surface wound and the technical department is overtaxed and leaving the dent will help Frida think about consequences" (Chan, 2022, p. 137).

For true healing, the psychoanalytic model stresses the importance of addressing underlying psychological issues. The surface-level corrections advocated by the institution overlook the deeper, more complex aspects of trauma. The societal structures fail to address the root causes of trauma, and this is evident in the institution's superficial treatment of Frida's trauma, which prioritises efficiency over genuine healing and understanding.

The school employs artificial and coercive methods:

> "Ms. Knight explains the rules of conduct. 'You're expected to treat the state's property with care... With empathy. Empathy is one of the cornerstones of our program'" (Chan, 2022, p. 71).

This can be interpreted through the psychoanalytic model as a reflection of trauma that is profoundly personal and resistant to superficial solutions. Genuine emotional connections cannot be forced or standardised. The cultural narratives impose unrealistic standards on mothers and cause trauma. The institution's methods undermine natural maternal bonds and replace genuine interactions with regimented, superficial standards. Furthermore, Chan highlights the psychological impact of living under surveillance:

> "Cameras will be installed in every room, Frida learns, except the bathroom... They'll also inspect the site of the incident... The state will collect footage from a live video feed" (Chan, 2022, p. 21).

For the psychological model, constant surveillance generates internalised stress and anxiety and exacerbates Frida's trauma and sense of inadequacy.

CONCLUSION

Jessamine Chan's novel offers a profound exploration of trauma, memory, and identity through the lens of motherhood and institutional control. This study demonstrates how Chan portrays trauma as both intergenerational and socially constructed, revealing how Frida's unresolved past experiences and internalised societal expectations shape her maternal identity and behaviours. Through the dual theoretical frameworks of psychoanalytic and pluralistic trauma models, this analysis shows how the novel critiques institutional approaches that employ surveillance and standardised interventions as ineffective responses to complex psychological trauma. The constant monitoring depicted in the novel functions as a form of ongoing traumatisation, reflecting contemporary concerns about privacy, autonomy, and institutional power.

Unlike previous literary works focusing on historical or war trauma, Chan's distinctive contribution lies in her examination of gendered, institutional trauma specific to mothers, highlighting the need for individualised approaches rather than universal solutions. Through its nuanced portrayal of trauma's psychological and sociopolitical dimensions, *The School for Good Mothers* deepens our understanding of how trauma shapes identity formation in contemporary contexts, particularly at the intersection of motherhood and institutional power.

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English Language Teachers' Knowledge, Use, and Perceived Effectiveness of Action Research for Professional Development

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received 24 January 2025; accepted 25 March 2025

ABSTRACT
In light of evolving pedagogical frameworks and increasing challenges in English Language Teaching (ELT), effective professional development is essential for teachers striving to enhance their practices. Action research is a pivotal strategy for teachers' professional development, fostering an adaptive learning environment through reflective pedagogy. While teachers have implemented action research, its engagement among secondary-level English language teachers remains underexplored, particularly regarding their knowledge, use, and perceptions of its role in professional growth. The study aimed to identify secondary-level English language teachers' knowledge, use, and perceived effectiveness of action research as a tool for professional development. The research employed a quantitative survey approach, focusing on English language teachers in private and public schools in Nepal, with a particular emphasis on those in the Sunsari district. A sample of 200 teachers was selected using a simple random sampling strategy, and a structured questionnaire was administered online via Google Forms. The collected data were analyzed using a bivariate analysis approach with SPSS. A chi-square test was conducted to assess the association between the variables, while Phi was employed to determine the significance of these relationships. The study examined the association between independent variables (such as sex, level of teaching, type of school, and academic qualification) and dependent variables (including use of action research, knowledge of action research, and perceived effectiveness of action research). The findings indicated no significant statistical association between the independent and dependent variables. However, the study concluded that the majority of teachers perceived action research as valuable for problem-solving, increasing professional confidence, promoting career advancement, fostering transformative agency, and enhancing teacher collaboration. It suggests that teachers could benefit from more effectively integrating action research into their teaching practices for professional development and transformation.

Keywords: action research, effectiveness, professional development, survey

INTRODUCTION

Teacher Professional Development (TPD) systematically enhances educators' skills, knowledge, and attitudes regarding teaching and learning processes. This initiative aims to align educators with contemporary technological advancements and pedagogical frameworks, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes. Moreover, it is defined as the formal or informal learning activities that develop one's skills, knowledge, and expertise while exploring one's teaching systematically for effective classroom organization and learning outcomes (Fullan, 1995; Rauteda, 2023).

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English Language Teaching (ELT) is becoming more challenging with the development of science, technology, and the current pedagogical shifts. In this regard, Sadeghi and Richards (2021) state that ELT has witnessed several changes, such as the nature of language, the nature of language learning, the reexamination of the roles of the learners and teachers, and the nature of teaching itself. For this reason, teaching English to speakers of other languages has become a difficult task. Hence, TPD can be an important solution to get the remedial practices of these issues. Moreover, English teachers must prepare themselves to tackle problems such as diversity, inclusion, and social justice.

Action research is one of the strategies that help teachers cope with the problems that arise in their work. It is considered a form of research where the teachers learn to improve their practice (Shanks et al., 2012). It is not just about teaching but is a more systematic and collaborative process that fosters shared experiences between pre-service and in-service teachers, enriching the professional development process and meeting the needs of both groups (Ridwan & Athena, 2023). Moreover, it has been viewed as a problem-solving approach that can help teachers handle the obstacles that occur in their actions. In this regard, Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) argue that action research is primarily oriented toward the solution of the problem but also poses issues and questions about teaching. In a similar vein, action research is taken as a tool for the teachers to tackle the problems in the class and enhance the teaching and learning process (Saeb et al., 2021).

Action research is a cyclic process where the teachers plan, act, observe, and reflect on the practices they have done (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). In that way, it is also taken as a process of reflection which is significant to improve one's teaching practices. Supporting the argument, Peralta-Castro and Mayoral-Valdivia (2018) state that action research is a way of looking at one's practice and taking action to change and improve. It is further seen as a method to generate "meaning and understanding in problematic social situations and improve the quality of human interactions and practices within those situations" (Burns, 2005, p.57). Moreover, researchers (Burns, 1999; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Schon, 1987) take action research as a collective, evaluative, and reflective inquiry that always seeks transformation, change, improvement, and the solution of the problems. Mills (2003) defines action research as "an invitation to learn, a means to tackle tough questions that face us individually, and collectively as teachers" (p.5). Consequently, action research is a reflective practice usually in the form of research that helps teachers to find the remedy of their classroom problems, and practices, leads them towards self-transformation, and empowerment, and helps them in their professional development.

Participation in action research has been proven to enhance the professional development of teachers by promoting a culture of continuous improvement and lifelong learning. Teachers who took part in action research reported increased job satisfaction and a greater sense of professional fulfillment as they witnessed tangible improvements in their teaching practices and student outcomes (Allwright, 2019; Day, 1999). It supports studying the teaching practice and taking action when they are doing what is called 'reflection in action' (Schon, 1983). Teachers explore the current issues relevant to their course and professional practice and search for solutions. Moreover, action research is taken as one of the pedagogical competencies of teachers (Shakhaweti, 2014) that they may utilize to cater to students' unique desires and aid in analyzing educational methods to accommodate the learners' diversity and learning styles (Shanks et al., 2012).

The act of teaching is incredibly multifaceted, yet the majority of teachers have minimal opportunities to explore common challenges and potential solutions or exchange fresh pedagogical ideas with their fellow educators (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Crucially, the changing nature of society, technological advancements, and the dynamics of language teaching have made the job more challenging for language teachers. Due to this reason, language teachers require continuing professional development to meet the various demands of learners in a rapidly changing society (Rauteda, 2024). Hence, action research could be the

strategy that allows teachers to face those changes in education, society, and pedagogy. Presenting action research as a process of identifying the problem and exploring solutions, Zeichner (2003) talks about the importance of action research for teachers and says that action research enables teachers to develop more student-centered approaches, resulting in active students' participation and learning outcomes.

Action research, which originated in the 1930s, has garnered significant application across multiple professional fields, particularly within education (McNiff, 2009). In the context of language education, there has been a notable shift toward learner-centered curriculum development, emphasizing classroom-based research and the role of the teacher as a reflective practitioner (Farrell, 2022). These elements have contributed to the rising popularity of action research in this domain (Burns, 2010).

The process of action research is characterized by inquiries aimed at addressing issues identified through careful observations and reflective practices of educators (Hei & David, 2017). This approach employs a self-reflective, critical, and systematic methodology to explore and analyze one's teaching environments (Hei & David, 2017; Peralta-Castro & Mayoral-Valdivia, 2018). Empirical studies indicate that educators engage in action research as a means of professional development, highlighting its significance for empowering both learners and teachers.

It is crucial to address challenges that emerge during the teaching and learning process. To enhance teaching strategies, learning outcomes, and overall professional growth, educators are encouraged to reflect on their practice at three critical stages: before, during, and after the action (Schon, 1987). Furthermore, the implementation of action research serves to critically evaluate instructional practices, foster self-awareness, and provide a deeper understanding of effective teaching methodologies (Zeichner & Listor, 2013).

Action research has been implemented by teachers in government schools in Nepal. Each year, it is mandatory for teachers to conduct action research, although they may choose to carry out additional research based on their specific needs and the challenges they encounter in their classrooms. According to the Teacher Service Commission (TSC) Rules, 2057 (Government of Nepal, 2000), action research is one of the criteria for teacher promotion, allocated five marks (TSC Rules, Chapter-4, No. 28, Gha, 2). Despite its mandatory status, some teachers do not take action research seriously. Engaging in this practice is essential for professional growth, as it empowers educators and enhances their confidence and autonomy (Johnson, 2021).

A review of the existing literature reveals that teachers engage in action research as a means of self-empowerment, enhancing student learning, facilitating positive changes within their educational environments, and addressing challenges that arise during their teaching practices. Moreover, the discourse emphasizes that action research is widely embraced by teachers who regard it as an essential tool for transformation. This approach holds particular significance for English language instructors in contexts such as Nepal, where the diverse classroom environment presents notable management challenges. While action research has been implemented by teachers, the involvement of secondary-level English language teachers in such research—specifically regarding their objectives, the extent of its application, and their views on its role in professional development—remains insufficiently explored concerning its implications for their professional lives. Thus, this research gap has motivated me to conduct a survey aimed at identifying secondary-level English teachers' knowledge, uses, and the perceived effectiveness of action research for professional development. Hence, the study answered the following research questions:

1. What are the uses and knowledge of English language teachers of action research for their professional development?
2. How do English language teachers perceive the effectiveness of action for their professional development?

Literature review

Action research and professional development

TPD encompasses a range of strategies, including training sessions, workshops, conferences, journaling, and action research. Action research is characterized by its iterative process of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Lewin, 1946). Moreover, action research serves as a reflective practice that encourages educators to critically examine their teaching activities, identifying both strengths and weaknesses and improving the weaknesses (Farrell, 2019). According to Rauteda (2024), English language teachers engage in a reflective process before, during, and after their actions to enhance their professional growth.

The significance of action research as a reflective tool is widely recognized as it enables teachers to evaluate their instructional methods and promotes continuous improvement in their pedagogy. Allwright (2019) and Tindowen et al. (2019) found that teachers typically take action research as a crucial instrument for improving instructional delivery and achieving favorable learning outcomes. This perspective aligns with the findings of Prudente and Aguja (2018), who reported that teachers in the Philippines acknowledge the role of action research in their professional development, highlighting a positive relationship between teachers' attitudes and their involvement in research activities. Moreover, McNiff (2017) discusses the significance of action research and says that when teachers engage in action research collectively, it fosters a sense of community and shared responsibility. Such a collaborative environment encourages the exchange of ideas and strategies, leading to innovative solutions that might not emerge in isolation. Such collective efforts are particularly beneficial in addressing complex educational challenges (Farrell, 2019).

Action research reshapes the role of teachers and brings transformation in their practices through transformative teacher agency. It takes teachers as change agents who can explore the relevant practices in the context and apply them in their teaching, and is grounded in the ethos that teachers can be both practitioners and researchers, facilitating a deeper understanding of their pedagogical practices and enhancing their efficacy in the classroom (Tindowen et al., 2019). Sagor (2018) discusses how action research empowers teachers to become active agents of change, leading to personalized and contextual improvements in teaching methodologies. It not only improves teaching practices but also contributes to the teachers' ongoing professional growth. Moreover, action research is known for driving sustainable change in education. Focusing on practical problems and involving teachers in the research process ensures that the outcomes are relevant and applicable. A study by Allwright (2019) illustrates that action research leads to long-term improvements in teaching practices, as teachers are more invested in the outcomes. Further, Meesuk et al. (2020) state that action research is beneficial in diverse educational environments, enabling teachers to tailor improvements in pedagogy to the unique contexts and student needs they encounter. Additionally, teachers' engagement in action research significantly impacts teachers' problem-solving skills and their professional growth (Pham et al., 2021). Thus, action research is crucial in the field of language teaching as the field is very diverse.

Despite its recognized benefits, many in-service English language teachers are not fully aware of the comprehensive benefits that action research offers for their professional development (Han, 2017). Tindowen et al. (2019) state that teachers struggle with the methodological aspects of conducting action research, which can hinder their effectiveness and confidence. Additionally, Wahlgren and Aarkrog (2020) argue that the practical application of action research often falls short due to a lack of institutional support. The ideas by Tindowen et al. (2019) and Wahlgren and Aarkrog (2020) further suggest that action research plays a crucial role in TPD by increasing their confidence, enhancing problem-solving skills, and improving teaching practices. However, teachers are not getting sufficient support from their institutions and opportunities to apply the research they conducted. Consequently, the literature reveals an urgent call for enhancing institutional support to address barriers that teachers face in conducting action research. Moreover, the literature appeals for targeted training and support

that can enhance teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward action research, as Vanderlinde and van Braak (2010) pointed out that teachers' perceptions of the relevance and applicability of research to their teaching contexts significantly influence their attitudes toward professional development.

Action research in language teaching

Engaging in action research allows reflective practitioners to enhance their language-teaching skills and methodologies (Curry et al., 2009). The perceived efficacy of action research in improving educational outcomes is a pivotal element influencing its adoption among English language teachers. Moreover, action research can yield enhanced instructional strategies and greater student engagement. Puspitasari et al. (2021) state that teachers who participated in action research can improve their pedagogical practices and increase their students' learning outcomes. Moreover, Farrell (2019) found that language teachers developed innovative strategies to address diverse student needs, such as differentiated instruction and culturally responsive teaching through action research projects.

Action research also plays a crucial role in the professional development of language teachers. By engaging in action research, language teachers can reflect on their teaching practices. In this regard, Farrell (2015) presented a reflective model for English language teachers through which teachers can reflect on Philosophy (Teachers' own past experiences, backgrounds, and previous lives), Principles (teachers' beliefs and assumptions on teaching), Theory (teachers' choice of theory), Practice (examining the connection between teachers philosophy, theory, and principles), and Beyond practice (reflecting on moral, political, social, emotional and ethical issues). In that way, teachers can see themselves and conduct action research, which makes them reflective practitioners and assists them in solving classroom problems and growing professionally.

Action research has emerged as a critical method for enhancing language teaching and learning, particularly in contexts such as English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The primary strength of action research is its capacity to foster teacher reflection. Supporting the argument, Hernández and Mejía (2022) demonstrate that action research allows teachers to implement interventions tailored to student needs, particularly in managing foreign language anxiety, which is a significant barrier to effective language learning. Moreover, action research improves confidence, pedagogical competence, classroom management, and lesson planning skills. May-Melendez et al. (2019) emphasize that action research supports teachers in evaluating their teaching practice and enhancing the learning experience of the students. Furthermore, the sustainability of action research as a tool for professional development is critical for achieving lasting impacts. Puspitasari et al. (2021) underscore the significance of recognizing the motivating factors that encourage teachers to persist in their action research endeavors, which can lead to sustained enhancements in their professional competencies. This focus on sustainability is vital as it ensures that the advantages of action research persist beyond initial implementations, thereby cultivating a culture of continuous improvement within educational environments.

Consequently, action research emerges as a remedial model for teachers that aims to enhance their professional development and the learners' achievement. Through its cyclical nature of planning, action, observation, and reflection, it enables teachers to engage critically with their teaching. By adopting a collaborative approach, addressing inherent challenges, and facilitating ongoing support, the action research can significantly contribute to the quality of language instruction and ultimately improve student learning outcomes.

METHOD

The researcher used a survey design to accomplish this study. Hence, the survey is a research design that involves data collection through standardized questionnaires or interviews from a sample that represents a large population (Groves et al., 2009). Moreover, it is a

predominant descriptive method employed in educational research (Cohen et al., 2017) and is primarily used to obtain a snapshot of conditions, attitudes, and events at a single point in time (Creswell, 2015). In the context of research studies in ELT, survey research serves an important function of investigating correlation and probable causal links. One of the purposes of conducting survey research in the field of ELT is to collect data from a large population and to generalize findings across diverse teaching environments and educational contexts (Pandey, 2024; Rauteda, 2025). Therefore, I used a survey to identify the teachers' uses and knowledge of action research, evaluating its perceived effectiveness for professional development. As the survey explores attitudes and perceived effectiveness and collects data from a large population, the design is appropriate for the issue.

The population of the study were English language teachers teaching at both basic and secondary levels, and the private and public schools of Sunsari district. Using a simple random sampling strategy, the researcher selected 200 teachers as the sample. A questionnaire was used as a data collection tool which was administered online. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS. The data was further interpreted using the bivariate approach of analysis where the chi-square and phi test were done. Demographic information (sex, school type, level of teaching, and academic qualification) was used as independent variables and the use of action research, knowledge of action research, and perceived effectiveness were used as dependent variables. The analyzed data were statistically tabulated and descriptively analyzed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The obtained data was analyzed using SPSS. The following results have been identified, statistically presented, and descriptively analyzed.

Table 1. Frequencies and percentage of demographic and research variables

Variables	Category	Frequency (n)	%
Sex	Male	106	53
	Female	94	47
Level of Teaching	Basic	74	37
	Secondary	126	63
School Type	Private	79	39.5
	Public	121	60.5
Academic Qualicifation	Bachelors	89	44.5
	Masters	111	55.5
Total		200	100

The table presents the demographic characteristics of the participants involved in the study. In terms of sex, the sample is comprised of 53% male and 47% female teachers, indicating a modest male majority among the teaching staff. Regarding the level of teaching, 37% of the participants are engaged in teaching at the basic level, while a more substantial 63% operate within the secondary level, highlighting a predominance of secondary school teachers in the sample. Concerning the type of school, 39.5% of the respondents are affiliated with private schools, in contrast to 60.5% from public schools, thus revealing a greater representation from public educational settings. Furthermore, an analysis of academic qualifications reveals that 44.5% of the teachers possess a Bachelor's degree, whereas 55.5% hold a Master's degree, suggesting an overall sample characterized by a high level of educational attainment, with a pronounced proportion of Master's degree holders. Collectively, these demographic characteristics establish a multifaceted context that is instrumental in comprehending teachers' knowledge, use, and perceived effectiveness of action research as a tool for professional development.

Table 2. English teachers' knowledge of action research in terms of sex, level of teaching, academic qualification, and type of school

Variable	Knowledge of Action Research	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Total	χ^2	p-value
Sex	Male	40 (37.7%)	36 (34.0%)	7 (6.6%)	11 (10.4%)	12 (11.3%)	106	0.667	0.955
	Female	31 (33.0%)	36 (38.3%)	7 (7.4%)	9 (9.6%)	11 (11.7%)	94		
	Total	71 (35.5%)	72 (36.0%)	14 (7.0%)	20 (10.0%)	23 (11.5%)	200		
Level of Teaching	Basic	29 (39.2%)	22 (29.7%)	6 (8.1%)	6 (8.1%)	11 (14.9%)	74	3.516	0.475
	Secondary	42 (33.3%)	50 (39.7%)	8 (6.3%)	14 (11.1%)	12 (9.5%)	126		
	Total	71 (35.5%)	72 (36.0%)	14 (7.0%)	20 (10.0%)	23 (11.5%)	200		
School Type	Private	28 (35.4%)	29 (36.7%)	5 (6.3%)	7 (8.9%)	10 (12.7%)	79	0.424	0.980
	Public	43 (35.5%)	43 (35.5%)	9 (7.4%)	13 (10.7%)	13 (10.7%)	121		
	Total	71 (35.5%)	72 (36.0%)	14 (7.0%)	20 (10.0%)	23 (11.5%)	200		
Academic Qualification	Bachelors	29 (32.6%)	35 (39.3%)	7 (7.9%)	9 (10.1%)	9 (10.1%)	89	1.319	0.858
	Masters	42 (37.8%)	37 (33.3%)	7 (6.3%)	11 (9.9%)	14 (12.6%)	111		
	Total	71 (35.5%)	72 (36.0%)	14 (7.0%)	20 (10.0%)	23 (11.5%)	200		

The table presents the distribution of teachers' knowledge on action research across sex, level of teaching, school type, and academic qualification, categorized into five levels: very high, high, moderate, low, and very low. Among males (n=106), 37.7% reported very high knowledge and 34.0% high knowledge, while among females (n=94), 33.0% had very high knowledge and 38.3% high knowledge, indicating balanced levels across genders. Regarding the level of teaching, basic-level teachers (n=74) had a higher proportion with very high knowledge (39.2%) compared to secondary-level teachers (33.3%), though the latter had more in the high-knowledge category (39.7% and 29.7%). Moderate and low knowledge levels were consistent across both groups, but a notable 14.9% of basic-level teachers fell into the very low category compared to 9.5% of secondary teachers. School type revealed minimal differences, with private school teachers (n=79) and public school teachers (n=121) showing nearly identical distributions in very high (35.4% and 35.5%, respectively) and high knowledge levels (36.7% and 35.5%). Lastly, teachers with Master's degrees (n=111) showed a slightly higher proportion with very high knowledge (37.8%) compared to Bachelor's degree holders (32.6%), while the latter had more in the high knowledge category (39.3% and 33.3%). Across all variables, knowledge of action research was generally balanced, with only slight variations observed based on demographic and professional characteristics.

Chi-square (χ^2) tests revealed no significant relationships between teachers' knowledge of action research and the variables examined. For sex, χ^2 (4, N = 200) = 0.667, p = .955; for level of teaching, χ^2 (4, N = 200) = 3.516, p = .475; for school type, χ^2 (4, N = 200) = 0.424, p = .980; and for academic qualification, χ^2 (4, N = 200) = 1.319, p = .858. In all cases, p-values exceeded the 0.05 threshold, indicating no statistically significant associations. These results suggest that demographic and professional factors do not significantly influence teachers' knowledge of action research.

Table 3. Use of action research in teaching in terms of sex, level of teaching, school type, and academic qualification

Variable	Category	Yes	No	Total	χ^2	p-value
Sex	Male	56 (52.8%)	50 (47.2%)	106	0.254	0.615
	Female	53 (56.4%)	41 (43.6%)	94		
Total		109 (54.5%)	91 (45.5%)	200		
Level of Teaching	Basic	38 (51.4%)	36 (48.6%)	74	0.470	0.493
	Secondary	71 (56.3%)	55 (43.7%)	126		
Total		109 (54.5%)	91 (45.5%)	200		
School Type	Private	42 (53.2%)	37 (46.8%)	79	0.094	0.759
	Public	67 (55.4%)	54 (44.6%)	121		
Total		109 (54.5%)	91 (45.5%)	200		
Academic Qualification	Bachelors	44 (49.4%)	45 (50.6%)	89	1.657	0.198
	Masters	65 (58.6%)	46 (41.4%)	111		
Total		109 (54.5%)	91 (45.5%)	200		

The relationship between demographic and professional variables and the utilization of action research in teaching was investigated using chi-square analyses. The findings indicate that there are no statistically significant associations between these variables and the practice of action research. In terms of sex, male teachers (n = 106) exhibited a marginally higher participation rate in action research ("Yes": 56=52.8%) compared to their female counterparts (n = 94; "Yes": 53=56.4%). However, the chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 0.254$, $p = 0.615$) indicates that these observed differences lack statistical significance. Similarly, the teaching level did not demonstrate a meaningful relationship with the use of action research. Both basic-level teachers (n = 74) and secondary-level teachers (n = 126) reported analogous engagement levels, with (38=51.4%) basic-level teachers and (71=56.3%) secondary-level teachers indicating the use of action research. The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 0.470$, $p = 0.493$) corroborates the absence of statistical significance in this context. Regarding school type, teachers from private schools (n = 79) and public schools (n = 121) reported comparable levels of action research engagement. Specifically, 42 private school teachers (53.2%) responded "Yes," compared to 67 public school teachers (55.4%). The chi-square analysis ($\chi^2 = 0.094$, $p = 0.759$) revealed no significant difference between the two groups. Finally, academic qualifications did not show a significant relationship with the use of action research either. Teachers holding Bachelor's degrees (n = 89) and those with Master's degrees (n = 111) demonstrated similar participation levels, with (44=49.4%) and (65=58.6%), respectively, indicating "Yes." The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 1.657$, $p = 0.198$) further validates the absence of a significant relationship.

Table 4. Teachers' perceived effectiveness in terms of sex, level of leaching, school type, and academic qualification

Variable	Category	For Problem Solving	Increase Professional Confidence	Help in Promotion	For Transformative Agency	For Teacher Collaboration	Total	χ^2	p-value
Sex	Male	21 (19.8%)	28 (26.4%)	21 (19.8%)	18 (17.0%)	18 (17.0%)	106	1.287	0.864
	Female	16 (17.0%)	28 (29.8%)	19 (20.2%)	19 (20.2%)	12 (12.8%)	94		

Level of Teaching	Basic	12 (16.2%)	28 (37.8%)	14 (18.9%)	13 (17.6%)	7 (9.5%)	74	6.919	0.14
	Second-ary	25 (19.8%)	28 (22.2%)	26 (20.6%)	24 (19.0%)	23 (18.3%)	126		
School Type	Private	19 (24.1%)	19 (24.1%)	18 (22.8%)	12 (15.2%)	11 (13.9%)	79	4.283	0.369
	Public	18 (14.9%)	37 (30.6%)	22 (18.2%)	25 (20.7%)	19 (15.7%)	121		
Academic Qualification	Bachelors	10 (11.2%)	23 (25.8%)	19 (21.3%)	20 (22.5%)	17 (19.1%)	89	8.152	0.086
	Masters	27 (24.3%)	33 (29.7%)	21 (18.9%)	17 (15.3%)	13 (11.7%)	111		

The table illustrates the distribution of responses based on sex, level of teaching, school type, and academic qualification concerning teachers' perceptions of the benefits of action research in areas such as problem-solving, professional confidence, promotion, transformative agency, and teacher collaboration. Specifically, 19.8% of male and 17.0% of female respondents believed that action research is beneficial for problem-solving. Similarly, 19.8% of male and 20.2% of female respondents indicated that action research contributed to their promotion. Additionally, 17.0% of male and 12.8% of female teachers perceived action research as instrumental in fostering teacher collaboration among colleagues. Furthermore, 29.8% of female respondents reported that action research enhanced their professional confidence, compared to 26.4% of male respondents. In terms of transformative agency, 17.0% of male and 20.2% of female respondents acknowledged the role of action research in creating a transformative agency among teachers. The chi-square test for sex yielded a value of $\chi^2 = 1.287$ with a p-value of 0.864, indicating no significant relationship between sex and the perceived benefits of action research.

Regarding the level of teaching, basic-level teachers exhibited a higher percentage (37.8%) for the category "Increase Professional Confidence" compared to secondary-level teachers (22.2%). Conversely, 19.8% of secondary-level teachers and 16.2% of basic-level teachers identified action research as significant for problem-solving. Additionally, 18.9% of basic-level and 20.6% of secondary-level teachers perceived action research as beneficial for promotion. Similarly, 17.6% of basic-level and 19.0% of secondary-level teachers recognized the value of action research in fostering transformative agency. For teacher collaboration, 9.5% of basic-level and 18.3% of secondary-level teachers reported positive perceptions. The Chi-square test for teaching level resulted in $\chi^2 = 6.919$ with a p-value of 0.14, indicating that the level of teaching does not significantly influence the perceived benefits of action research.

Concerning school type, private school teachers had a higher proportion (24.1%) who selected "For Problem Solving," whereas public school teachers showed a stronger inclination toward "Increase Professional Confidence" (30.6%). The chi-square test for school type yielded $\chi^2 = 4.283$ with a p-value of 0.369, indicating no significant relationship between school type and the perceived benefits of action research. Finally, academic qualification revealed notable variations, with teachers holding a master's degree reporting higher percentages for "For Problem-Solving" (24.3%) and "Increase Professional Confidence" (29.7%) compared to those with a bachelor's degree. The chi-square test for academic qualification resulted in $\chi^2 = 8.152$ with a p-value of 0.086, suggesting a borderline lack of significance in the influence of academic qualification on teachers' perceptions of the benefits of action research. Overall, the data suggest no statistically significant differences across these variables, indicating that teachers' perceptions of the benefits of action research remain relatively consistent regardless of sex, teaching level, school type, or academic qualification.

Discussion

The study found that the majority of teachers perceive action research as valuable, yet there were no significant statistical associations between the independent and dependent variables. The study revealed that action research serves as a valuable tool for teachers in addressing problem-solving, fostering professional development, enhancing collegiality, promoting transformative agency, and contributing to career advancement. Additionally, it was

observed that teachers possess an understanding of action research and actively integrate it into their teaching and learning practices. The current body of research suggests that action research is a powerful tool for supporting the professional development of teachers (Rauteda, 2024; Rumiantsev et al., 2023; Van, 2020; Vula & Saqipi, 2015). By promoting an inquiry-focused method, action research provides educators with improved pedagogical knowledge and abilities while also offering valuable insights into their teaching practices (Allwright, 2019; Rumiantsev et al., 2023). In addition, it enhances self-efficacy, fosters reflective practice, and assists teachers in developing their unique educational theories (Farrell, 2019; Zajic et al., 2021). The established effectiveness of action research in professional development is well-documented. Research studies indicate that incorporating action research into teachers' daily practices fosters a culture of ongoing improvement in teaching methods (Van, 2020; Vula & Saqipi, 2015; Wahlgren & Aarkrog, 2020). Not only does this approach allow educators to investigate and apply various teaching methods but also improves their professional skills and instructional effectiveness (Tindowen et al., 2019; Zajic et al., 2021). The use of action research has been confirmed as a transformative method for altering teaching practices (Sagor, 2018).

The study discloses that English language teachers in Nepal conduct action research for both the solution of classroom problems and promotion, but it empowers them and grows them professionally. The study further revealed that the teachers perceived action research positively which is applicable in their professional lives. This study explored the Nepalese English language teachers' knowledge, use, and perceived effectiveness of action research. The study concluded that the majority of the teachers are familiar with action research, and use it in teaching purposefully. While many teachers recognize the value of engaging in action research for their professional development, the literature also points out the various obstacles they face (Van, 2020). Importantly, those who engage in action research develop an inquiry-driven approach, confront classroom issues head-on, and broaden their reflections to include wider research insights rather than just their own experiences (Vula & Saqipi, 2015; Zajic et al., 2021). Nevertheless, previous research studies suggest that the pressures of grading and delivering content may take precedence over the importance of ongoing professional learning (Kijkuakul, 2019). As a result, there is an urgent need for school leaders and professional organizations to offer adequate support for action research-focused professional development to alleviate this problem (Wahlgren & Aarkrog, 2020).

Regarding teachers' awareness of action research, the reviewed studies indicate that most educators recognize the significant benefits of engaging in action research for their professional growth despite various challenges and difficulties (Van, 2020). Teachers who participate in action research cultivate a more inquiry-based approach, becoming increasingly involved in solving classroom challenges and utilizing research outcomes beyond their own experiences to thoughtfully evaluate and improve their teaching methods (Rauteda, 2024; Vula & Saqipi, 2015; Zajic et al., 2021). However, some research indicates that teachers may not always place a high priority on professional development due to a strong emphasis on grading assignments and covering content in many educational environments (Kijkuakul, 2019). To address this issue, scholars highlight the crucial role of school leaders and professional organizations in proactively enabling and supporting professional development opportunities centered on action research for teachers (Jaipal & Figg, 2011).

Consequently, the reviewed literature articulates compelling evidence supporting the view that action research is perceived as a highly effective instrument for enhancing TPD. It fosters improvements in pedagogical knowledge, reflective practices, and overall teaching competency. The documented prevalence of action research within professional development paradigms indicates that educators generally recognize its importance despite confronting various barriers. The study suggests that the teachers would better conduct action research to enhance their performance, teaching competence, confidence, and problem-solving skills and to employ transformative agency for change. Conducting action research makes an individual a reflective practitioner who can transform one's action and influence the whole system. The

study recommends that stakeholders, such as schools, administrators, policymakers, and trainers, support teachers in conducting action research and applying it properly. Continuous support and facilitation from school leaders and professional organizations are essential for the widespread adoption of action-research-based professional development.

CONCLUSION

This study explored English language teachers' knowledge, use, and perceived effectiveness of action research as a tool for professional development. The objective was to assess how these teachers understand and implement action research, particularly amidst the increasing challenges faced in ELT, and evaluate the perceived effectiveness of action research in teaching, learning, and professional development. A quantitative survey was employed to gather data from 200 teachers across private and public schools in the Sunsari district. This was executed through a structured online questionnaire, and the data were analyzed using SPSS, specifically employing bivariate analysis and chi-square tests.

The findings revealed no significant statistical associations between independent variables and dependent variables. Despite the lack of statistically significant relationships, the results indicated that the majority of teachers recognized the value of action research. They perceived it as a significant resource for problem-solving, enhancing professional confidence, fostering career advancement, promoting transformative agency, and facilitating teacher collaboration.

The study implies that while teachers value action research, there may be barriers to its effective integration into their professional practices. Professional development programs would better focus on equipping teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to utilize action research. Furthermore, fostering a collaborative culture among educators could enhance the practical application of action research in classrooms, ultimately leading to improved teaching practices and learning outcomes. Continued emphasis on the importance of action research in professional development can contribute to addressing the complexities and challenges within ELT, empowering teachers to adapt and thrive in their educational roles.

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Challenges in Teaching English Consonant Clusters to Non-Native Speakers: A Phonological Approach

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received 12 December 2024; accepted 17 March 2025

ABSTRACT
This study explores how non-native English speakers, especially Indonesian learners, pronounce consonant clusters. Differences in their native phonological systems often cause these difficulties, leading to the addition of vowels or the omission of consonants, which impacts communication. The purpose of this study is to understand non-native speakers' challenges when pronouncing consonant clusters in English. In addition, it also aims to find effective methods to address these issues. This qualitative descriptive study explored the phonological issues of consonant clusters taught by English teachers to non-native speakers. The data were collected through an online Google Forms survey that asked teachers about their experiences, opinions, and teaching methods. Only half of the twenty English teachers had received specific phonological training, and the majority had limited teaching experience, according to the survey. The results suggested that to improve pronunciation, more targeted teaching strategies such as phonetic drills and the use of multimedia tools are needed. Slow sound repetition and audio or video examples, which were the teaching methods evaluated, were found effective. Sound repetition was slightly preferred because of its active practice approach. This study emphasizes the importance of instruction tailored to students' needs and suggests the use of technology to improve the quality. Through a flexible and adaptive approach, it is hoped that students' English language skills can improve significantly.

Keywords: consonant clusters, English language learning, pronunciation, teaching strategies

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English is increasingly becoming a priority in a globalized world as it acts as a lingua franca in fields such as business, technology, and science. Not only do English language skills support more effective communication, but they also open up opportunities for advancement in the academic and professional fields. For non-native speakers, learning English presents its own challenges, especially in the aspects of phonetics and phonology, in which the complexity of sounds can significantly impact comprehension and fluency. Thus, teachers must be aware of these challenges in order to create teaching methods that are efficient and appropriate to the needs of diverse students (Istiqomah & Suprayogi, 2023).

A consonant cluster is a grouping of several consonants found at the beginning or end of a word or syllable (Sari, 2021). Many students who learn English, especially those coming from a language like Indonesian, often have difficulty pronouncing consonant combinations due to differences in the basic sound system of their native language (Situmorang et al., 2023). This difficulty often results in errors when they speak, such as adding vowels between consonants or leaving out some consonants in the cluster.

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When learning English, non-native learners often face challenges in sounding out consonant clusters. This is because their pronunciation of the sounds is different from that of native English speakers. For example, Indonesian does not have complex consonant clusters such as /sk/ or /st/, so students often have difficulty pronouncing them correctly. In addition, students often replace consonant sounds with sounds that are more familiar to them, which can result in vagueness. They also have difficulty in distinguishing word stress and rhythmic patterns, impacting their ability to pronounce and understand. Therefore, a detailed understanding of these differences is essential to help students overcome pronunciation difficulties.

Zhang's (2019) research shows that students who come from language backgrounds without consonant clusters often have difficulty applying sound combinations such as /str/ or /spl/, which do not occur in their native language. On the other hand, Lee and Kuo (2020) argue that it is important to implement more efficient teaching methods to help students overcome these phonological problems. In the past, this problem was only considered a challenge in students' oral communication. Thus, this study aims to develop more suitable teaching methods to improve non-native students' speaking skills through understanding and addressing the challenges.

In English phonology, elements such as pitch, stress, rhythm, and intonation are essential for successful communication. English teachers have a relevant role in supporting students in facing phonological challenges with systematic phonics teaching methods. Many students experience difficulties with English sounds due to the impact of their first language (Safitri et al., 2023). Research shows that regular phonological practice can improve students' ability to recognize and pronounce English sounds correctly (Tiwari, 2024). Teachers can assist by showing examples from native speakers, utilizing audio or video resources, and providing useful feedback.

Teaching consonant clusters poses certain challenges for non-native speakers, often resulting in mispronunciations that can interfere with clarity in communication (Noorzaida, 2023). Despite previous studies highlighting the effectiveness of repetition techniques in improving pronunciation (Umam, 2022), there is still a lack of research focusing on how specific phonological challenges impact non-native learners, particularly Indonesian EFL students. The absence of structured phonetic instruction and phonological awareness among teachers further exacerbates this issue. This study aims to fill this research gap by exploring non-native speakers' difficulties in pronouncing consonant clusters and identifying effective pedagogical strategies to address these challenges. The research is guided by the following questions: (1) What are the common pronunciation difficulties faced by non-native English learners regarding consonant clusters? (2) What teaching strategies can effectively improve students' pronunciation of consonant clusters? Addressing these questions is crucial as it provides insights into the role of phonological instruction in language learning. The findings of this study will contribute to the development of targeted teaching methods, emphasizing phonetic drills and multimedia tools, to enhance students' pronunciation and overall communicative competence. Additionally, this study has pedagogical implications for English language educators, highlighting the importance of integrating phonological approaches into teaching strategies to improve students' accuracy and fluency.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore phonological challenges related to consonant clusters in English language teaching for non-native speakers. The research framework is based on theories of second language acquisition (SLA) and phonological transfer (Derwing & Munro, 2015; Zhang, 2019), which emphasize how native language influences the pronunciation of a foreign language.

The study involved 20 English teachers from various schools and educational institutions across Indonesia. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure their experience in teaching English pronunciation was relevant to the study's objectives. Of the respondents, 63.6% had less than one year of teaching experience, 31.8% had one to three years of experience, and only 4.5% had four to six years of experience.

The data were collected using an online questionnaire administered through Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions designed to capture teachers' experiences, opinions, and methods used to teach consonant clusters. The questions were adapted from previous studies on phonological instruction (Tiwari, 2024; Tsang & Wong, 2019). The survey focused on teachers' experience with phonological instruction, common difficulties students face with consonant clusters, strategies used to teach consonant clusters, and the effectiveness of different instructional approaches. To enhance reliability, a pilot test was conducted with five teachers before full implementation. Feedback was used to refine the questionnaire.

The data collection and data analysis procedures started with the distribution of the questionnaire by sharing the survey link with teachers through email and professional networks. All participants provided informed consent before answering the questionnaire. The responses were collected over two weeks to ensure maximum participation. The collected data were then summarized and analyzed thematically to identify common patterns in teaching strategies and phonological difficulties. Descriptive statistics (percentages, mean scores) were used to quantify key trends in the teachers' responses. Additionally, qualitative responses were coded to extract insights on pedagogical challenges and potential solutions. This methodology ensures that the findings accurately reflect the challenges faced by English teachers in teaching consonant clusters while providing actionable recommendations for improved instructional strategies.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The structured questionnaire through Google Forms successfully collected data from twenty respondents. The purpose of the respondent profile in this study is to provide examples of sample characteristics present in the study.

Teaching experience in English language education

The survey findings show that most respondents (63.6%) have been teaching English for less than one year. A total of 31.8% had between one and three years of experience, only 4.5% had four to six years, and no respondents had more than six years. This shows that most of the people who responded are new teachers who may still be in the process of adapting to effective teaching approaches.

The qualitative analysis suggests that the teachers' ability to teach complex phonological aspects such as consonant pronunciation and grouping may be significantly affected by their limited teaching experience. Novice teachers, in particular, may struggle with confidence, strategy variation, and error identification, which are essential for effective phonological teaching. On the other hand, the small number of respondents with more than three years of experience suggests that these findings may not reflect the views of more experienced educators. As a result, there may still be limited awareness of next-level teaching methods (see Figure 1).

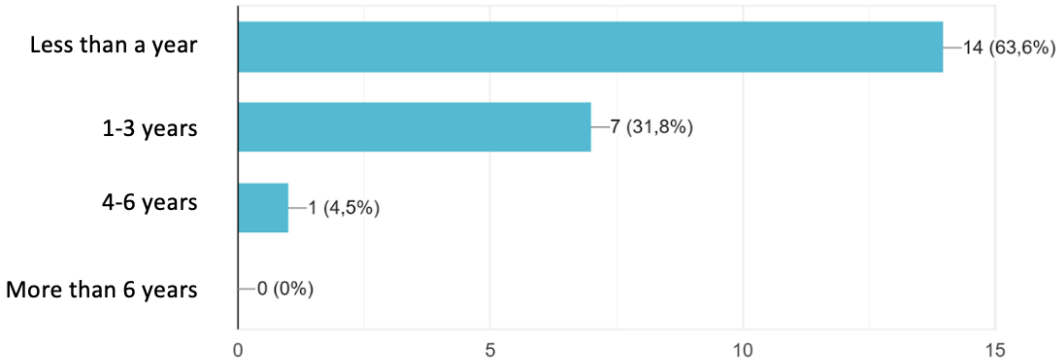


Figure 1. Experience in teaching English

According to research conducted by Tsang and Wong (2019), teaching experience has a significant impact on student learning outcomes. They found that language skills, such as pronunciation and phoneme awareness, tended to be more effectively delivered by teachers with more than three years of experience. This finding is in line with survey results that show that the majority of respondents are teachers who are new to their field. This may indicate that their lack of experience impacts their views on various learning strategies. In addition, Liu (2020) emphasized that professional training is very crucial for new teachers so they can improve the quality of their teaching. With adequate training, novice teachers can overcome the challenges of teaching English, especially in more complex areas such as phonology, according to Liu. Therefore, the findings of this survey indicate that training and guidance programs for novice teachers are essential to improve their teaching quality, especially in dealing with students' phonological problems.

Student age groups taught by respondents

The survey results showed that 81.8 percent of teachers or educators said they mostly taught children, while 45.5 percent also said they often taught adolescents. No respondents specifically stated that they teach adults or all age groups, so the percentage of both categories is 0%. The data shows that the focus of respondents' teaching is on the children's group. This suggests that most respondents have more experience in dealing with early childhood learning. It may be related to curriculum needs or the high demand for children's education in certain situations. However, several teachers also teach adolescents; this suggests that educators can handle more complex ages well. The absence of respondents who teach adults or all age groups may be due to limitations in the scope of their work or specialization in the education system they are in. For educators, this discussion can provide insight into the development of more diverse programs or training (see Figure 2).

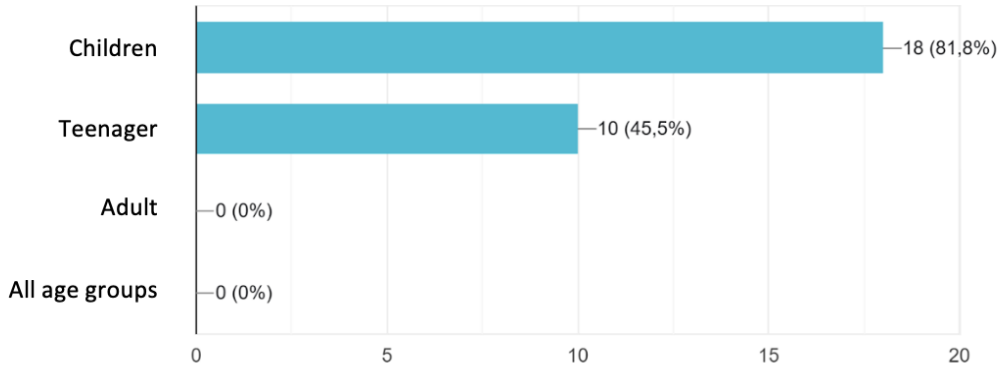


Figure 2. Students' levels taught by participants

According to research conducted by Pianta et al. (2017), early childhood education has a significant influence on children's social and cognitive development since early experiences are essential for shaping future learning abilities. This is in line with the survey results, which show that most respondents have experience teaching children, which can be defined as an effort to meet the urgent educational needs at this level. Additionally, research conducted by McCoy et al. (2017) suggests that, while many educators teach adolescents, having a strong background in early childhood education can help educators deal with a more complex age group. The study found that participation in a high-quality early childhood education program was associated with significant decreases in special education placement and grade repetition as well as increased high school graduation rates. As a result, a strong educational background is beneficial to early childhood education because it not only helps with a child's early development but also equips educators with the skills necessary to support the social and academic development of adolescents. This is in accordance with the article by Kulic et al. (2019), which shows the success of early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs in improving the cognitive and non-cognitive skills of children who face poor environmental conditions in their parents' homes.

Respondents' specialized training in phonology and pronunciation

The survey results show that half of the respondents received specialized training in teaching phonology or pronunciation, while the other half did not. This finding shows that there is a balance between respondents who have specialized training backgrounds and those who do not. The background characteristics of the teachers' competence in phonology and pronunciation are indicated by this finding. 50% of the respondents who received specialized training indicate that some of them have prepared themselves to teach technical elements of language, which are important for improving students' language skills, especially in pronunciation.

In contrast, the other half of the respondents who have not received specialized training may require professional development programs to enhance their ability to teach phonology effectively, as their limited training could impact their instructional competence. This balance also implies that phonology instruction might not always be a primary focus in language teaching, as curriculum structures and learning objectives may place greater emphasis on other linguistic components (see Figure 3).

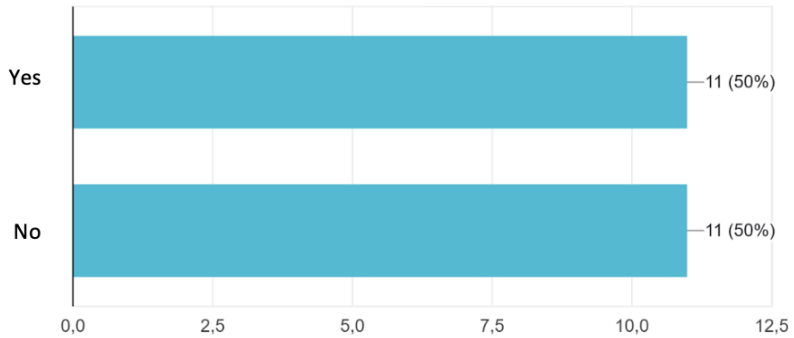


Figure 3. Phonology or pronunciation training background

According to Derwing and Munro (2015), teaching pronunciation correctly can improve students' ability to communicate in a second language. Additionally, they note that teaching phonology through an evidence-based method can yield superior outcomes, particularly if teachers possess a thorough understanding of the technical components of pronunciation. They add that teachers cannot fully comprehend the best methods and strategies for teaching pronunciation if they are not properly trained. Furthermore, the balance results in Figure 3 suggest that some curricula or particular learning objectives may not place a high

focus on teaching phonology. In some circumstances, other language components, such as vocabulary or grammar, could be preferable. In order to provide pupils with a more comprehensive language education, educational institutions should reconsider their curricula and think about delving deeper into the phonological components.

Students' difficulties in pronouncing consonant clusters

From all the respondents, 63.6% of them reported that their students frequently experience difficulty pronouncing consonant clusters such as spr, str, and bl. This suggests that the sound characteristics of the language are a major barrier to their learning. Only 9.1% of participants considered this issue a frequent problem, and 22.7% stated that this problem rarely occurs. Interestingly, 4.5% of participants said that they had never seen such a problem in their class. Pronouncing consonants turns out to be the most difficult part of English pronunciation to teach. To address this issue, teachers may need to use certain approaches or techniques, such as phonetic drills or exercises. The phonological background of the students and their exposure to English sounds is indicated by the relatively low number of respondents who reported "rarely" or "never" (Figure 4).

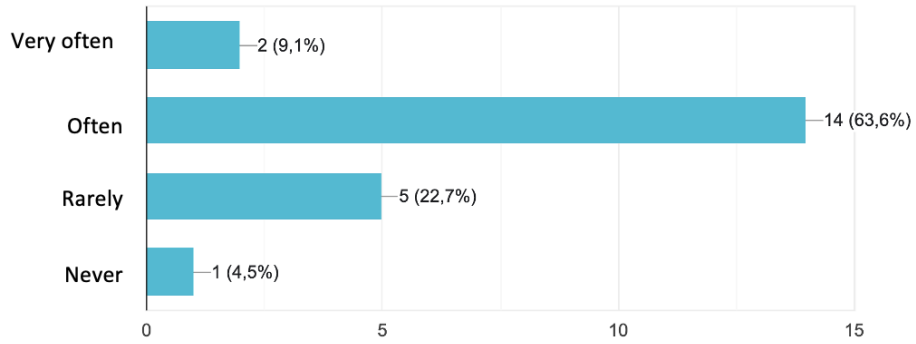


Figure 4. Students' difficulty in pronouncing consonant clusters (e.g. /spr/, /str/, /bl/)

Previous research results are in line with these findings in Figure 4. Fitriyah and Widiati (2021) emphasize that effective language assessment is essential to finding students' problems, including difficulties in pronouncing certain sounds. The survey results showed that many students had difficulties pronouncing consonant clusters. In addition, research conducted by Muñoz and Cadierno (2021) found that the level of exposure to English significantly affected students' ability to understand and produce the language. Because there are no consonant clusters in their learning environment, many students find it difficult to pronounce them, according to the survey's findings. This finding may help to understand why certain students struggle with consonant clusters in their classrooms. Therefore, English teachers should take this into consideration when teaching. Teachers should make appropriate teaching strategies to deal with this issue. Students' pronunciation can also be improved by exposing them to more English through a variety of activities, including viewing movies, listening to sound recordings, and engaging with English-speaking people.

Challenges faced by teachers in teaching consonant clusters

The findings in Figure 5 show that 59.1% of respondents said that teachers most often face problems teaching students the consonant cluster because they are not used to performing the sound pattern. In addition, 54.5% of respondents said that students often insert vowels between consonants, and 40.9% said that students often omit one of the consonant sounds. These findings suggest that the main obstacle was unfamiliarity with consonant clusters, which are less common in some students' native languages. The desire to add vowels may be the result of students' attempts to simplify complex sound patterns to fit into a linguistic territory they

are comfortable with. Similarly, difficulties pronouncing groups as a unit may arise when consonants are omitted. These challenges show how important structured drills and practice are to help students become more confident and accurate when producing consonant clusters, with particular emphasis on phonetic training and auditory discrimination. (see Figure 5).

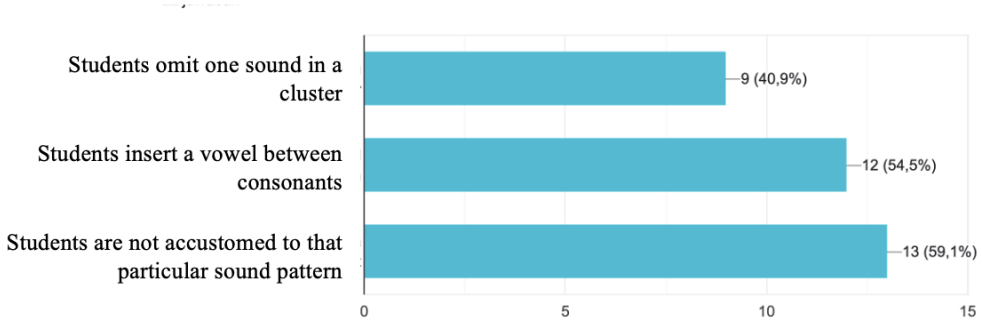


Figure 5. Challenges of teaching consonant clusters to students

Mauludin (2015) found that non-native English teachers have an important role in learning English as a foreign language. Non-native teachers who have also gone through the process of learning English can better understand the problems faced by students when learning English sound patterns, including consonant clusters. Therefore, they can develop a more humanistic and efficient teaching approach to overcome these problems.

Teaching methods for improving consonant clusters pronunciation

The results of the questionnaire on the main method used to understand consonant clusters, answered by twenty respondents, showed that the "drilling" technique repetition of pronunciation and listening is the main approach to understanding "consonant clusters". Most respondents said that to improve their understanding, they rely on listening to correct pronunciation either from native speakers or from audio recordings and repeating it regularly. This method is considered effective as it exercises the speech muscles directly and increases sensitivity to sound patterns in consonant clusters. Some respondents also combined drilling with phonetic, visual, or sound pattern analysis methods to support their learning. As it is considered beneficial for improving speaking skills, drilling remains the top choice. These results show that drilling is a popular method due to its practical nature. It allows students to learn consonant group patterns through repeated practice, which has a direct impact on their pronunciation ability.

Effectiveness of different pronunciation teaching techniques

The findings are consistent with the principles of auditory learning that highlight the importance of repetitive auditory input in the development of language skills. However, the drill-based approach has limitations in accommodating various learning styles. To achieve optimal learning outcomes, it is necessary to consider the integration of audio-based exercises with phonetic and visual approaches, especially for students who need visual representations or deeper conceptual understanding. The implications of these findings are very relevant for the teaching of English pronunciation, especially in the context of teaching vowel groups. They emphasize the importance of having high-quality audio sources and an environment that supports repeated practice. The "drilling" strategy dramatically improves students' speaking abilities, according to several studies. According to Nizza and Athena (2024), students' average scores increased from 52.27 on pre-tests to 70.90 on post-tests after employing the drilling strategy. According to another study, students' pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency significantly improved when they used YouTube for drilling (Putri, 2022). Furthermore,

research with two drilling cycles showed that mean scores increased from 60.67 to 80.56, with 97% of students reaching the required level (Atmi & Pharhyuna, 2018).

According to the survey involving 20 participants, two teaching methods were considered effective: (1) teaching sound repetition slowly and (2) providing audio and video examples. Among the respondents, 15 people rated these methods as very effective, 4 people rated them as quite effective, and 1 person rated them as less effective. Specifically, for the method of teaching sound repetition slowly, 15 people found it very effective, while the remaining 5 people considered it less effective. The survey results showed that most respondents considered both methods very effective, with practicing sound repetition being slightly better than providing audio and video examples. This may be due to the characteristics of the repetition technique, which allows students to actively practice pronunciation. This helps them remember the sound patterns of vowel groups more easily. According to Zamzami et al.'s (2023) research, poetry is also an example of a tool to strengthen students' memory of sound patterns, making it easier to identify and use a wider group of vowels.

However, it is important to remember that both methods work well with each other. Audio and video examples provide real sound models and help students understand the context of using vowel groups in real communication. In contrast, gradual repetition exercises allow students to correct their pronunciation mistakes, leading to more accurate pronunciation. Based on this information, teachers should combine both approaches in the learning process. Students can achieve better results in learning if they combine active practice and listening to authentic models. In addition, this combination can help them overcome the challenges they face in mastering vocal groups (Figure 6).

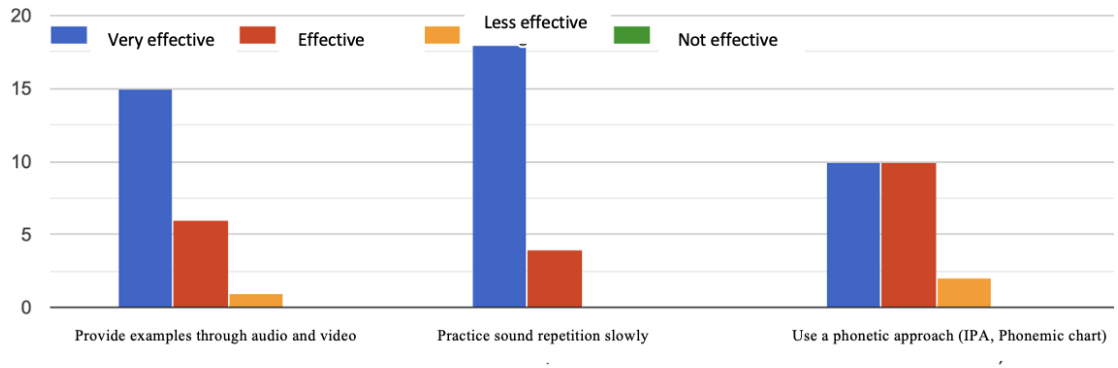


Figure 6. Techniques for overcoming pronunciation problems in consonant clusters

The survey's findings are consistent with other research highlighting efficient techniques for teaching consonant clusters. Practice and drilling are emphasized as crucial tactics, as studies show that ESL learners' pronunciation improves with repeated practice. Furthermore, learners of languages that normally insert vowels between consonants have found that specific instruction on the order of difficulty for consonant clusters is helpful. All things considered, these results demonstrate that practicing voice is more beneficial for learning consonant clusters than only using audio-visual examples (Khanbeiki & Rokni, 2015).

According to the analysis of twenty people surveyed, most of them think that the technique used to understand consonant clusters depends on students' ability to pronounce consonant clusters correctly. When students can imitate the correct pronunciation, either through direct feedback from the teacher or repeated practice, it is the main evidence of success. In addition, success can also be seen from the consistency of students' pronunciation in various situations, such as using new words or answering questions related to "consonant clusters". Some respondents also said that allowing students to practice more often helps achieve this

result. These results indicate that vowel cluster learning is highly dependent on the students' ability to speak correctly.

An outcome-based learning approach focuses on the mastery of practical skills, with assessments of success reflecting that achievement. This method is suitable for pronunciation that focuses on real communication. Although pronunciation is the primary measure, this method can be expanded by adding other evaluation tools, such as listening tests or assessing students' speaking patterns. To obtain a more complete picture of learning success, it is important to combine context-appropriate aspects of phonology and evaluation. Direct feedback from the teacher is very important so that students understand their mistakes and can improve their pronunciation. The result of this evaluation can serve as a guide for educators to focus on teaching activities that involve direct pronunciation practice and provide appropriate support to help students feel more confident in pronouncing consonant clusters.

Previous studies have highlighted the link between pronunciation ability and vowel cluster learning among learners of English as a second language. Al-Abdullah and Almutairi (2024) showed that Kuwaiti students often use vowel epenthesis when dealing with consonant clusters in English, indicating the influence of the phonological rules of their native language. Similarly, research by Zhang (2019) found that learners from language backgrounds without consonant clusters tend to insert vowels or simplify pronunciation, leading to deviations from native-like pronunciation patterns. Furthermore, a study by Lee and Kuo (2020) emphasizes the need for targeted teaching strategies to address these pronunciation challenges, particularly through phonetic training and increased exposure to authentic spoken English.

Among the twenty participants who provided answers regarding suggestions for other educators facing difficulties with consonant clusters, the majority recommended that educators adopt teaching methods that suit students' needs in dealing with vowel clusters. Considering that each individual has a different learning style, several participants emphasized the importance of understanding the most effective ways of learning for each student. In addition, they suggest that teachers recognize the specific problems students face so they can provide appropriate assistance. To support students optimally, the participants also emphasized the importance of creating teaching approaches that are adaptive and can meet various existing needs.

These results indicate that group vocal teaching techniques cannot be applied equally to all students. Instead, this approach must be tailored to each student's unique needs. This method reflects the principle of differential learning, which emphasizes the importance of understanding students' individual characteristics to determine the most appropriate teaching strategies. By recognizing the problems students face, teachers can design relevant materials, choose appropriate methods, and provide more focused guidance.

In addition, educators need to have the ability to adapt in teaching students. To help students understand the material, teachers are encouraged to utilize various techniques, such as interactive tools as well as visual and audio media. Not only can this approach increase students' confidence in communicating, but it can also help them deal with difficulties related to consonant groups. By implementing these strategies, educators can better overcome the challenges of teaching group vocals and create learning experiences that are more inclusive and appropriate to students' needs. In addition, this step also encourages educators to continuously evaluate and adapt their teaching methods to suit the diverse dynamics in the classroom.

Studies suggest that vocal group teaching approaches cannot be applied across the board and must be adapted to each student's unique needs. For example, Clanton Harpine (2013) found that vowel grouping significantly improved reading skills for at-risk students while emphasizing the need for approaches tailored to varying student characteristics. Research on EFL learners also shows that the phonological structure of the mother tongue influences their

pronunciation and learning strategies, which further strengthens the importance of using context-relevant teaching methods (Al-Abdullah & Almutairi, 2024).

Data from the questionnaire indicated a need to develop resources and training programs to enable teachers to overcome the challenges of teaching voice clusters. Most respondents suggested the need for specific training in pronunciation as well as the application of interactive methods to support teachers in dealing with this issue. They also emphasized the essence of training designed to deepen teachers' understanding of sound pronunciation. In addition, interactive resources such as digital applications, audio-based phonics guides, online training modules, and video demonstrations are considered very useful for improving students' understanding and teachers' teaching skills. This training can also help teachers adapt their teaching methods to suit the needs of diverse students.

The results of this study indicated that pronunciation training that uses technology in depth can be an effective solution to overcome the pedagogical problems associated with teaching consonant groups. With a focus on phonetic elements and physical demonstrations, this program gives teachers a deeper understanding of how language sounds are produced. The use of interactive technology in this training not only increases student participation but also supports more personalized and detailed feedback. The combination of live training and digital resources has proven to be relevant to meet various needs in the learning process.

Recent studies consistently show that the application of technology in pronunciation training for teachers, especially related to the teaching of cluster consonants, has a great influence on improving pedagogical skills. Mobile applications such as ELSA Speak, for example, have proven powerful in supporting independent learning and providing immediate feedback, allowing teachers to improve their pronunciation skills. These findings are in line with previous research results that emphasize the potential of technology in improving the quality of language teaching (Miladiyenti et al., 2022). In addition, various studies highlight that the use of automatic speech recognition and artificial intelligence plays an important role in supporting pronunciation learning (Vančová, 2021).

CONCLUSION

This research shows that students who are not native English speakers, especially those from Indonesia, face significant difficulties pronouncing consonant clusters. This problem is mainly caused by differences in the sound system between their mother tongue and English, which often results in phenomena such as the addition of vowels or the deletion of consonants. From the survey taken by 20 English teachers, it was revealed that many of them had limited experience in teaching aspects of phonology, and only half of them had had special training in this area. These results indicate the need for more appropriate and efficient teaching methods. Methods such as using audio or video recordings and repeating pronunciations at a slow speed have proven effective in the learning process. Among these various techniques, sound repetition is recognized as the most successful because it involves direct practice. This research recommends the use of technology to improve the quality of teaching and emphasizes the importance of approaches that suit student needs. Therefore, adaptive and flexible teaching regarding consonant clusters is very important to improve students' pronunciation and communication skills in English.

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Ethnocentric Hate Speech as an Impediment to National Development in Nigeria: Implications for Peaceful Communication

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https://doi.org/10.24071/ijels.v11i1.9983
received: 8 October 2024; accepted: 28 March 2025

ABSTRACT
Nigeria is a heterolingual, multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and multicultural country. The constitution of the country allows freedom of expression. Despite having English as a lingua franca, Nigerians use their respective indigenous languages. The inability of the citizens to manage this diversity has led to the use of ethnocentric hate speech by members of different linguistic groups against one another. This is inimical to national development. This intervention aimed to establish the effect of ethnocentric hate speech on national development in Nigeria and how applied peace linguists can serve as advocates of peaceful communication. Applied peace linguistics plays the role of facilitating dialogue and conflict resolution in Nigeria. It assists in ensuring peaceful communication and counter speech. Thus, ensuring early warming on speeches that can escalate violence. A questionnaire was administered to 900 respondents in the townships from January to July 2024. The researchers also conducted focus group discussion sessions with 19 groups of eight (8) participants in 19 townships in Nigeria. The major finding of the study indicates that an overwhelming majority of the respondents detest ethnocentric hate speech. They agree that ethnocentric hate speech engenders suspicions and phantom tolerance in society, thus an impediment to national development. Phantom tolerance is characterised by the pretence that one is tolerating another while, in reality, one hates the other. This study concludes that peaceful communication should be encouraged in the school curriculum and made a norm for general interaction in the country to build trust and foster national development.

Keywords: ethnocentric, hate speech, peace linguistics, peaceful communication

INTRODUCTION

Diversity is a core characteristic of the human experience (Reagan, 2021). The divergence is in the kinds of society we come from and our different orientations, even from the same society structure, our ideological, cultural, political, and economic dispositions and how we socialise with our fellow interlocutors in offline and online discourse. These apparent differences are not without consequences. For this reason, Russell (2024) asserts that one of the recurring activities of human beings is 'languaging.' However, people spend an insignificant amount of time cogitating about their actions, let alone the 'enlanguagements' they produce. The utterances we make because of our differences could drive and trigger conflict. This is because human beings live in a violent world and , therefore, see violence as an inherent part of our lives (Molina, 2019). People experienced several kinds of violence

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through discrimination, harassment, hate and hate speech (Banaji & Bhat, 2022; Agha, 2022). They may pass over them with silence or react in a way that is characterised by peaceful communication and sociability or hate speech, dehumanisation, derogatoriness, vulgarity, rudeness, indecency, obscenity, aggressiveness, offensiveness, and incitement – toxic speech acts (Mattiello, 2022; Sheldon et al., 2019). To mitigate the toxicity of language use and enhance peaceful communication, there is a need for counter-speech based on the principles of politeness. Counter-speech debunks negative speech acts by offering alternative views or reprimanding toxic linguistic behaviour (Smith, 2023). Politeness is germane in counter-speech because it enables the use of language to fit in with the social norms of the receiver, enables interlocutors to negotiate their position within the social group and displays their awareness of that positioning based on mutual respect (Mills, 2017). Thus, language users should align their politeness styles with cultural contexts to avoid threatening the face of their audience.

In line with the above, Parcon and Adriano (2024) conducted a study titled "Peace linguistics in the academic community through the lens of English language teachers: A multiple case study." They thematically analysed data based on five critical themes around violent and nonviolent phraseologies and terminologies expressed by students. It was found that expressions that do not promote peaceful communication, teamwork and the use of courteous language impede progress. They underscored that even within a classroom, effort should be made toward incorporating peace linguistics, especially promoting inclusive and peaceful language devoid of hate and hate speech. This proves that words do hurt (Beebe et al., 2004; Camp & Satterwhite, 2002).

Nigeria has a population of over 200 million people. They come from different ethnolinguistic backgrounds. Nigeria has witnessed a lot of violent conflicts that have served as impediments to its development. Most of the conflicts in Nigeria are linked to identity or ethnicity, of which the strong index is language (Bello et al., 2008) manifested through hate speech (Gbeyonron, 2014; Gbeyonron, 2024a; Gbeyonron, 2024b). Hate speech is prevalent in so many countries, including Nigeria, Ethiopia, Italy and Poland (Umar, Sarkinkaji, & Maibasira, 2020; Agha, 2022; Areri, 2024; Inobemhe et al., 2021; Onah et al., 2021; Yola, 2017). Works on the prevalence of hate speech expose its danger and negative use of freedom of speech and expression. Hate speeches do have ethnic, political or religious coloration and, in some cases, are racist in nature. They are expressed via social media, public lectures, informal dialogues, sermons, etc. (Paleta & Dyda, 2024). Ethnocentric hate speech-propelled conflicts have stunted Nigeria's quest of being a model in terms of peaceful coexistence that is capable of enshrining sustainable development in a dynamic world. Therefore, this study aims to explore the effect of ethnocentric hate speech on national development in Nigeria and how peaceful communication can accelerate national development in Nigeria.

METHOD

A survey research design was used to collect data for the study. A ten-item questionnaire adapted from the seven-item interview schedule used by Gbeyonron (2014) was administered to 900 respondents. In addition, focus group discussion sessions on four thematic areas related to ethnocentric hate speech and national development were conducted for 19 groups made up of eight (8) participants in each group from January 2024 to July 2024. The sampled towns were Lafia (Nasarawa State), Lokoja (Kogi State) and Jos (Plateau State, Kaduna (Kaduna State), Gusau (Zamfara State), Kano (Kano State), Damaturu(Yobe State), Bauchi (Bauchi State), Jalingo (Taraba State), Ibadan (Oyo State), Badagry (Lagos State), Owo (Ondo State), Uromi (Edo State), Agbor (Delta State), Port Harcourt (Rivers State), Awka (Anambra State), Nsukka (Enugu State), Aba (Abia State) and Kubwa (Federal Capital Territory). All the respondents provided their content before they responded to the questionnaire and participated in the focus group discussion.

The focus group discussion sessions were conducted systematically in English, Pidgin English, and Hausa, depending on the language of wider communication of participants in each of the focus group discussion sessions. The respondents to the questionnaire and the focus group discussion sessions were drawn from over 80 different Nigerian ethnolinguistic backgrounds.

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used for data analysis. For the quantitative data analysis, a simple percentage was used to describe the frequency of the participants who agreed or disagreed with each item presented to them in the questionnaire. For the qualitative data analysis, the impact of ethnocentric hate speech on four thematic areas was analysed and discussed. The thematic areas are how ethnocentric hate speech 1) breeds exclusion and marginalisation in society, 2) causes anxiety and low self-esteem for members hate speech is used against, 3) escalates and sustains disunity and strife among members of the society, and 4) adversely affects national development.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Responses to the questionnaire on the use of ethnocentric hate speech in Nigeria

S/No.	Item	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
1	You have ethnocentric hate speech in your language/culture	832 (92)	68 (8)
2	You use ethnocentric hate speech to label other languages/culture	469 (52)	431 (48)
3	You know ethnocentric hate speech is used against your language/culture	767 (85)	133 (15)
4	The use of ethnocentric hate speech against you could provoke you	869 (97)	31 (3)
5	The use of ethnocentric hate speech against you could make you develop a phobia towards the language of the user of the hate speech	788 (88)	112 (12)
6	The existence of ethnocentric hate speech against a language/culture has made the recipients assimilate with the superior language/culture	462 (51)	438 (49)
7	You would like to be labelled with ethnocentric hate speech	0 (0)	900 (100)
8	The use of ethnocentric hate speech is an impediment to national unity	888 (99)	12 (1)
9	Learners should be taught peaceful communication across all school subjects	900 (100)	0 (0)
10	The government should enforce extant laws on ethnocentric hate speech to engender peaceful communication	876 (97)	24 (3)

The data presented in respect of item 1 in Table 1 indicate that 92% of the respondents agreed that their respective linguistic groups have ethnocentric terms used against members of other ethnolinguistic groups. Conversely, 8% of the respondents did not agree that they have such terms in their languages/cultures. Responses to item 2 in Table 1 show that 52% of the respondents agreed that they use ethnocentric hate speech to label people from other linguistic/cultural groups. However, 48% of the respondents stated that they do not use ethnocentric hate speech against others. From the data presented in Table 1 in respect of item 3, one can realise that 85% of the respondents agreed that they are aware of some

ethnocentric hate speeches used against their languages/cultures. Contrastively, 15% of the respondents indicated that they did not know ethnocentric terms used against their languages/cultures.

Ninety-seven percent (97%) of the respondents that responded to item 4, as presented in Table 1, revealed that the use of ethnocentric hate speech against them could provoke anger. However, 3% of the respondents stated that the use of ethnocentric terms against them would not have any significant emotional impact on them. Table 1 also shows that 88% of the respondents who responded to item 5 agreed that the use of ethnocentric hate speech against them could make them develop a phobia towards the languages of the users of the ethnocentric hate speech. In contrast, 12% of the respondents stated that the use of ethnocentric hate speech against them would not make them develop a phobia against the languages/cultures of the users of such terms. While 51% of the respondents agreed that the existence of ethnocentric hate speech against one's language/culture could make one assimilate into the 'superior' language/culture, 49% of the respondents disagreed with the sixth item presented in Table 1.

All the respondents to the seventh item in Table 1 disagreed that they would like to be labelled with ethnocentric terms. Table 1 shows that 99% of the respondents who responded to item 8 agreed that the use of ethnocentric hate speech impedes national unity. However, 1% of the respondents disagreed. In their response to item number 9 in Table 1, all the respondents agreed that peaceful communication should be taught across the curriculum. While 97% of the respondents agreed that the government should enforce extant laws on ethnocentric hate speech, 3% of the respondents disagreed with the tenth item presented in Table 1.

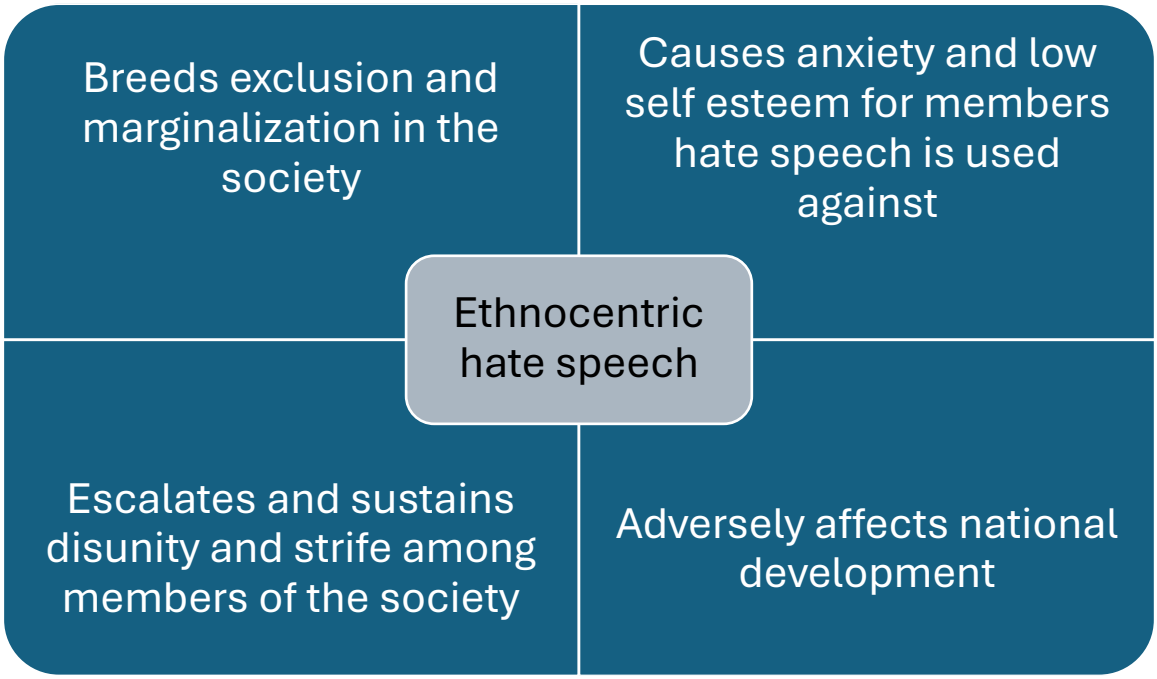


Figure 1: Matrix showing the summary of the findings of focus group discussions

The findings from the focus group discussions reveal that ethnocentric hate speech is inimical to national development because it breeds exclusion and marginalisation of people that hate speech is used against. In addition, it causes anxiety and makes the members of the speech community ethnocentric, thus escalating and sustaining tension, disunity and strife among members of the society, which will in turn affect national development negatively.

The findings of this study reveal that an overwhelming majority of the respondents agreed that they have some ethnocentric hate speech that is used against members of other

ethnolinguistic groups in their respective languages/cultures. These include the use of words like *arne* (Hausa for infidel), *kirdi* (Kanuri for unbeliever), *oruke* (Tiv for non-Tiv person), *aboki* (a derogatory term used by Southern Nigerians to describe a Hausa), etc. Cofresi and Gorman (2004) assert that ethnocentrism depicts the propensity of a group to perceive their culture as superior to that of others. Ethnocentric hate speech is used to discriminate against some categories of people because of their faith, belief, ancestry or linguistic identity. While participants in the focus group discussion session gave examples of ethnocentric hate terms, it is not the aim of this intervention to present them in this paper.

There is no significant difference between respondents to the questionnaire who agreed that they use ethnocentric hate speech to label others and those who said they do not use such terms against others. An overwhelming majority of the respondents to the focus group discussions did not agree that they use ethnocentric hate speech. However, even in the United States of America, for instance, Gamble and Gamble (2005) stress that stereotypical chants, dances and music offensive to Native American culture and tradition are also used. In such use, the users tend to project their languages\cultures as more significant than those of the other people referred to. In Nigeria, utterances made by some politicians and religious leaders are replete with ethnocentric hate speech.

A cursory look at Table 1 would reveal that an overwhelming 97% of the respondents agreed that being targeted with ethnocentric hate speech evokes negative emotions in them. Furthermore, linguistic ecology in a dynamic world provides that members of speech communities tend to protect their respective languages and struggle to use them as sources of pride. Therefore, any attempt to relegate the potential and endowments of their languages would sound offensive to them. Gamble and Gamble (2005) further state that such language stresses the differences between people of different groups, downplays any similarities, and claims that the persons who are different do not try to adapt. This is provocative, and the effect of this could lead to conflict, which is a major barrier to national integration and national development.

Similarly, respondents in the focus group discussion underscore that the use of ethnocentric hate speech can trigger anxiety and low self-esteem in the recipient. Anxiety is a feeling of unease, characterised by fear or worry, which can be accompanied by physical symptoms (Collins & Baker, 2023). This can affect productivity. A non-productive citizen cannot contribute to national development. They added that the use of hate speech can lead to polarisation, marginalisation, and exclusion. This agrees with the position of Smith (2023).

Most of the respondents agreed that they could develop a phobia against the languages/cultures that label them with ethnocentric hate speech. Beebe et al. (2004) caution that the terms we use about ethnic groups have a direct reflection on the perception of culture and identity. If you use the wrong word, you may be labelled ‘politically incorrect’ or, at worse, a ‘bigot’. Thus, a language that encourages the extreme use of ethnocentric terms could be regarded as prejudiced. This will generate resistance and aggressive responses from the members of the linguistic groups termed ethnocentrically.

According to Cofresi and Gorman (2004), each language, with its associated culture and value system, may place unique constraints on the bilingual person’s sense of identity. This becomes more complex when one of the languages used by the bilingual is regarded as inferior by the other language, which occupies a dominant position in the society. This could lead to a language shift. This study found that 51% of the respondents agreed that the use of ethnocentric terms against a language or culture has made the recipients assimilate with the ‘superior’ language/culture. Personal observation by the researchers also reveals that the feeling of ethnolinguistic inferiority complex by speakers of some Nigerian languages in some sociolinguistic environments has led to a gradual language shift.

All the respondents disagreed that they would like to be labelled with ethnocentric terms. According to Schaefer (2006), ethnocentrism is the tendency to assume that one’s own

culture and way of life represent the norm or are superior to all others. This negates the provision of Article 1 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights,* which stipulates that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). They are all endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. It would be of interest to underscore the fact that the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and relevant laws dealing with social and criminal justice in Nigeria frown at any sort of imputation that could incite hatred or contempt against an individual, class of persons or ethnolinguistic groups. What may be lacking is enforcement of the laws. For this reason, a significant majority of the respondents agreed that the extant laws on ethnocentric hate speech in Nigeria should be enforced to encourage peaceful communication.

The findings of this study imply that even though some members of Nigerian society may benefit from propagating ethnocentric hate speech to be relevant by the means of using the terms to degrade and intimidate others, ethnocentric language use engenders distrust and promotes phantom unity in the polity. The continuous use of ethnocentric terms would delimit people's chances of aspiring to excellence in the spirit of collective national interest. Furthermore, it would undermine Nigeria's quest of instilling respect for the worth and dignity of fellow human beings in addition to thwarting cross-ethnolinguistic phatic communion. This may lead to social ills like anarchy, crime, and poverty. As a result, the aspiration of Nigeria to be a model in a dynamic world from the perspective of being monolithic via the process of individualisation that is projected towards collective national interest would be jeopardised. Thus, Nigeria's indigenous scientific, technological, artistic and aesthetic potentialities and endowments would be left unexplored, unexploited and undiffused.

Language serves as an instrument that enhances and cements communicative unity among people of distinct ethnolinguistic backgrounds. It also breeds linguistic and social identity. The world has witnessed an unprecedented change in all spheres of life since the start of the 21st century. Despite the dynamic nature of the world, communities all around the world are becoming closely knitted. This can be observed in the areas of cross-linguistic and cultural studies and learning. This has, in a sense, given language the key position of serving as a turbine engine for sustaining the creation of a positive dynamic world.

It is pertinent to state that the strategy that can make peaceful communication to mitigate the impact of ethnocentric is hinged on empathising with fellow interlocutors, dignifying the tenets of dialogue and prioritising politeness. Thus, there is a need to pay attention to the choice of words, negotiation of meaning and concession, and respect for the worth and dignity of fellow interlocutors no matter where they come from. This would enhance the building of trust and, by extension, national development.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria is the most populous black nation in the world. In consequence, the whole world has a keen interest in the issues, events and people that pertain to Nigeria. Thus, Nigeria has a role to play in a dynamic world that is knowledge-based. However, Nigeria's positive impact in a dynamic world cannot be significant until the different nationalities in the country work towards cumulating their respective contributions towards achieving common national interests. This cannot be achieved until there is mutual trust and respect across ethnolinguistic entities. Of immense concern is the role of language in nation-building and national development. Conversely, wrong language use, deliberate or because of insensitivity to its consequences, could render this goal vulnerable. As a result, this work investigated the use of ethnocentric hate speech in Nigeria and the implication on development through peaceful communication. It was found that people still use ethnocentric hate speech in this dynamic world that has been reoriented to foster respect for human dignity. But then, all the

respondents to this study vehemently expressed their distaste for ethnocentric hate speech. In consequence, this study concludes that even though every individual has the right to freedom of language use, not all such rights are right in a dynamic world that realises that no one ethnolinguistic group is superior to others, and neither is there any ethnolinguistic group that is an island. As a result, there is a need for all ethnolinguistic groups to have their worth and dignity respected in a dynamic world.

The following are recommended in light of the findings of this study:

1. Nigerian language policy should address the issue of ethnocentric hate speech. It should make the media, judiciary, parliament, education, religion, commerce, industry, banking, entertainment, sports, diplomacy and political participation not be platforms for ethnocentric hate speech.
2. The Nigerian education sector should explicitly incorporate language arts items that project the ills of ethnocentric language use in the respective language education curriculums, thus making teaching peaceful communication across the curriculum obligatory.
3. All the laws in Nigeria that pertain to ethnocentrism should be invoked and enforced to serve as a deterrent.
4. Reorientation and sensitisation should be intensified to inculcate the spirit of brotherhood and collective national interest in the minds of Nigerians.

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Representation of Women in Jo March's Character in the Novel Little Women: A Feminist Study

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received 31 January 2025; accepted 25 March 2025

ABSTRACT
Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* is an American novel that describes the lives of women in the 19th century, when many social inequalities between men and women existed. Starting from these problems, the purpose of this research is to analyze the feminist values represented by the character Jo March. It examines the forms of social injustice and discrimination against women depicted in the novel as a reflection of women's real-world issues. It also explores and unveils the forms of resistance by the female characters. The primary data source is the novel *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, which is analyzed using Beauvoir's existentialist feminism approach and qualitative descriptive method. The results of the research show the existence of gender injustice, which limits women's space through gender stereotypes, subordination of women, and objectification of women. The forms of resistance that demonstrate women's existence include fighting subordination, working to achieve financial independence, and becoming influential figures in society.

Keywords: existentialist feminism, identity, Little Women

INTRODUCTION

Literary works are a form of creative expression that contains aesthetic elements and often reflects the values of experience and outlook on life. They are not only the result of oral and written creation but also the result of the expression of feelings. They also describe the authors' imagination, which is communicated and referred to as aesthetic (Permatasari, 2016). Literary works can be divided into several forms, including poetry, which contains rhythm and rhyme; prose, which is in the form of narrative; drama, which is a written work to be staged containing dialogue between characters; essays, which discuss a theme from the author's point of view containing arguments or reflections; folklore, which is a literary work that comes from oral traditions such as fairy tales; and biography or autobiography, which is a literary work that tells a person's life either from the point of view of another person (biography) or the author himself (autobiography) (Desmawati, 2018; Klaler, 2004).

Regarding prose, a novel is a part of prose that is arranged in regular sentences and paragraphs containing a certain complexity. It imaginatively presents human experiences, usually through a series of interrelated events involving a group of people in a particular setting (Desmawati, 2018). Novels refer more to a high reality and deep psychology; they are a form of description of a person's life and his environment (Wellek & Warren, 1998). *Little Women*, a famous 19th-century novel written by Louisa May Alcott, is no exception. *Little Women* is an important work of literature in literary history because it challenges traditional gender roles. Alcott's writing often reflected her belief in women's independence and social reform. She wrote

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both children's literature and novels aimed at adults, and her works continue to resonate with themes of family, gender roles, and personal growth.

Alcott created multi-dimensional female characters, each with their own dreams, strengths, and weaknesses. Depicting the diverse experiences of the four March sisters, Jo, Ami, Meg, and Beth as they relate to each other, shows the importance of support between women. They show that women can work together instead of competing with each other, as they support each other in achieving their dreams and facing challenges. Jo March defies conventional notions of women's issues. She is not only a tomboy but also a passionate writer, showing that women can pursue careers and goals outside the home. In this book, each female character undergoes a process of searching and determining their own identity. Alcott describes this journey meticulously, emphasizing the difference between individual desires and societal expectations. This description is represented by the character Jo, who shows a passionate attitude when determining her identity.

Little Women, published in 1868, is a work of American literature that explores the lives and struggles of the March sisters in the post-Civil War era. Among them, Jo March stands out as a complex and dynamic character, often interpreted as a pioneer of feminist values. Jo's character has emotional depth; she feels anger, frustration, and joy, which goes against the conventional perception of women being silent and passive. Her complexity makes her more plausible and exemplary for women. Jo shows how important female solidarity is in her relationship with her sister. She reinforces the idea that women can help each other by encouraging Meg to achieve her goals and helping Amy in her artistic endeavors. Jo opposes conventional female obligations, such as marriage and domesticity. For example, she rejects Laurie, who claims that self-fulfillment is more important than social rules, as an example of rejecting social pressure to marry. Jo often behaves in ways that are considered unfeminine, such as dressing in a more practical way and cutting her hair. These are actions that show resistance to the feminine standards set by society. The opinion is also strengthened by the existing previous studies that highlight various aspects of Jo's character, from her ambition to become a writer to her rejection of social expectations regarding marriage and domestication.

Focusing on Jo March, this research examined the feminist values represented by Jo's character. In addition, this research also unveiled how her traits and choices have challenged the traditional gender roles of her particular time. In order to achieve this, a library study on previous similar research using descriptive qualitative methods was conducted to achieve the aforementioned goals.

Understanding Jo's role in *Little Women* will enrich the discourse surrounding feminist literature and highlight the enduring relevance of this character in contemporary discussions on gender identity and empowerment. Feminism is a women's movement based on society's perception of women, where women cannot do anything without men and where women are only considered by men if they have a position above men (Gusfitasari et al., 2022). Feminism is a movement that demands women's emancipation, equality, and justice (Wilany, 2017). Feminism is a women's movement that occurs almost all over the world. As Hooks (2015) says, feminism is a movement to end sexism, exploitation, and oppression. According to Beauvoir (1956) in his book *The Second Sex*, feminism is a movement that aims to achieve gender equality, focusing on the understanding that women must be recognized as independent subjects. From these definitions, it can be seen that feminism is a broad and multidimensional movement that focuses on equality, justice, and dismantling structures of gender oppression.

A novel is a meaningful structure of thought. A novel is a work that has intrinsic and extrinsic elements (Kurnia, 2013). According to Ariska and Amelysa (2020), a novel is a long prose work that contains a series of stories of a person's life with people who are around him and emphasizes the character and nature of each actor. One of the approaches to analyzing novels is feminism. In this regard, the researchers are interested in researching the novel *Little Women*, which is the work of Louisa May Alcott. The reason the researcher conducted this feminist study

is to find out the role of the character, the position of the character, and gender injustice to women in the novel *Little Women*. The feminist movement has changed how women are treated today from how they were in the past. Women are starting to get justice in pursuing their rights and have equal educational and political opportunities (Sitepu, 2023). Based on the description above, the research explaining the values of feminism of Jo March's character in the novel *Little Women* needs to be researched.

Preview of the research

In order to achieve the research's aims regarding existential feminism, the researchers conducted a library study on previous research that focused on similar topics. This section also explains some previous research related to feminism. The author found previous studies that discussed the same novel and explored different issues and theories.

The title of the first previous study is *Analysis of Feminism in the Novel of Little Women by Louisa May Alcott* (Desmawati, 2018). It explains feminism in the novel, a movement by women to reject everything that is marginalized in political life, economics, and other social life, which is a belief that women and men are inherently equal in value and worth. As Beauvoir (1956) said, feminism is a movement that aims to achieve gender equality, focusing on understanding that women must be recognized as independent subjects. This research used qualitative research methods with Rosenstand's analysis of feminism theory. Based on the research result in the novel, the main character, Jo March, expresses herself through a feminist point of view, especially the independence and emancipation of women in a patriarchal era. The significant difference from this research is the theory. Desmawati's research used Rosenstand's theory to describe its feminist value, while this research used Beauvoir's theory to analyze the feminist value of the main character.

The second research is *Liberal Feminism in the Little Women Movie* (Sofia et al., 2024), which shows the gender discrimination that occurs in the movie, discrimination in society, education, work, and politics that depicts liberal feminists by confronting women's stereotypes. This research used a qualitative research method with Mukarovsky analysis theory. The significant difference from this research was the source of data. The research by Sofia et al. used the movie as the data source, while this research used the novels.

Another previous research is entitled *Feminism potrayed in Greta Gerwig's movie Little Women: Analysis in modern era* (Dewi & Medina, 2020). Showcasing modern feminists who defy gender stereotypes through financial independence and freedom of expression, Dewi and Medina focused on analyzing the main character, Jo March, who represents modern feminist aspirations and the challenges faced by women today. This research used library study and descriptive qualitative using content analysis to study the movie. The significant differences from this research are the theory and data source used.

Theoretical framework

This research used Beauvoir's (1956) theoretical framework on existential feminism, which states that the definition of existentialism refers to an understanding in the school of philosophy that places existence before essence (Azzahra, 2022). This theoretical framework expands literacy to include theoretical understandings of feminism. This model proposes how readers can understand existential feminism in *Little Women* through four existential feminist concepts: a) "The Other", b) Freedom and Liberty, c) Choice and Responsibility, and d) Existence before Essence. Through analysis using these concepts, results can be found that represent Jo's character in the novel, showing an attitude of wanting to be free with her choices.

Novel

A novel is a long prose work that contains a series of stories about a person and the people around him that emphasize the nature and character of the actors (Sugono, 2008). Novels are

prose works that are built with intrinsic elements, including theme, setting, character and characterization, point of view, language style, plot, and others. According to Wellek and Warren (1998), novels refer more to a high reality and deep psychology, but basically, novels are a form of description of a person's life and environment. From this statement, it can be interpreted that a novel can be used as a mirror in seeing the human condition in the surrounding society.

The novel *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott tells the story of a March family that tells the story of four female figures. The first is Meg, who is beautiful and orderly; the second is Jo, who is passionate and unruly; the third is Beth, who is quiet and kind; and the youngest is Amy, who has talent in the arts and is childish. The four lived with their mother while their father fought in the civil war. As sisters, they love and care for each other. Even though they mock each other and often fight with each other, they still protect each other because they realize the presence of their sisters is more valuable than anything else.

Beauvoir's (1956) existentialist feminist theory refers to Sartre's existentialist philosophical theory, particularly on the concept of human relationships. For Sartre, human relationships are based on opposition, and each individual tries to maintain subjectivity by making others an object. By adopting Sartre's concept of existentialism, Beauvoir argues that there is an unequal relationship between men and women, where men call themselves one or self, while women are passive objects (Beauvoir, 1956). Based on Beauvoir's concept of existential feminism, these acts of objectification of women and gender injustice are prevalent in *Little Women*. The forms of gender injustice and different treatment of women can be divided into three parts: 1) subordination of women, 2) stereotyping of women, and 3) violence.

Existentialist Feminism

Existentialist feminism is a way of thinking about women's existence in society. Existentialist feminism places great value on women being themselves and appearing on an equal footing with men in public life. It explained that only a self-aware person knows how to behave in public (Kasimbara, 2022). Existentialist feminism believes that human beings are sublime and that their existence is determined by themselves. Existentialism was initially founded by John Paul Sartre and later led to Simone de Beauvoir's ideas of existential feminism. According to Beauvoir (1956), the worlds of men and women are always interconnected as evidence of men's superiority over women. Because patriarchy is so deeply rooted, women are seen as objects and have no autonomy. Certain restrictions have been put in place that prohibit women from working in the same position as men, which is controversial, especially regarding the right to self-determination. From a woman's point of view, the restrictions are undoubtedly a serious problem. As Beauvoir (1956) stated, women should be given the same freedom to make decisions about their own lives as men.

In his concept of existential feminism, Tong (2014) encourages women to live freely and make their own decisions about their future without support or guidance from others. In other words, Beauvoir (1956) encourages women to be who they truly are. Just as women have the same rights as men and can express their human existence, they must be allowed to express themselves freely in all societies (Tong, 2014). Furthermore, Kasimbara (2022) states that women will be able to realize their full potential by achieving their independence. Women will not even have to worry about their biological limitations to be intelligent. Women can seduce men, but they refuse to be used as objects. Moreover, women must fight for their own presence in the public sphere as a result of cultural constructions created and reinforced by patriarchy through myths and stereotypes about women, which place them in a weak and subordinate position (Kurnianto, 2021).

METHOD

This research used a descriptive qualitative approach to describe the problem and research focus. Moleong (2007) argues that qualitative research is presented in the form of words and

pictures, not numbers. In addition, a qualitative research approach is based on qualitative evidence and not based on statistical results (Nisya et al., 2024). Ibrahim (2015) states that a qualitative approach emphasizes deepening the aspects of the data to obtain high-quality research results. This method was used to find elements and characteristics of a phenomenon. The data source of this research is the novel *Little Women*. By using the descriptive qualitative method, the author described the data and depicted gender identity in the form of representation, social roles, and characteristics. In this research, the data sources were literary works, words, sentences, and discourse. In order to obtain the data and strengthen the research, the researcher used the quotations from the novel. To deepen the analysis, the researchers also read several books, references, and a few literature reviews.

The data analysis technique involved a series of steps. First, data were collected from various sources, including the novel and journal articles relevant to feminism in the novel. The collected data were analyzed using Beauvoir's theory of existential feminism, assisted with some supporting theories to strengthen the arguments. The data in the discourse were then analyzed specifically based on the feminism of the main character, Jo March. This analysis focused on how this character reflects existential feminism and how gender equality illustrates feminist values. The results were summarized to reveal how the novel represents feminism and how gender equality illustrates feminist values in the context of the novel.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data analysis, the researchers revealed the findings to answer the research's aims. The analysis focused on two topics: how feminism is represented in Jo March's character and how the challenges faced by Jo March are related to women's issues in literature. As mentioned, *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott is a work of American literature that explores the lives and struggles of the March sisters in the post-Civil War era. Among them, Jo March stands out as a complex and dynamic character, often interpreted as a pioneer of feminist values. This research examines the feminist values represented by Jo's character, as well as how her traits and choices challenged the traditional gender roles of her time.

The novel illustrates how injustice against women is depicted through resistance to society's gender stereotypes that refer to women. Jo, a woman who wants the same freedom of expression as men, ends up expressing herself without regard to the gender stereotypes of her time. The feminism represented by Jo's character is a positive effect of Jo feeling that in order to express herself, she must show her power and dominance. This novel explores the main topic of how women can express themselves without having to refer to existing gender stereotypes because it does not harm someone who has an impact on others. This analysis will be divided into two parts: the forms of gender injustice and discrimination against women and the forms of women's resistance as a form of self-existence.

Forms of Gender Injustice and Discrimination against Women

Subordination

Subordination is the belief that women are irrational and emotional and, therefore, unable to lead, and causes women to be placed in unimportant positions. According to Karwati (2020), gender subordination occurs in resistive women, so women are the root of gender subordination. The 19th-century American culture is one of the factors that caused the subordination of men and women. Women are placed in a lower position than men. In the novel *Little Women*, data was found that became a form of gender injustice subordination.

> *"... I'm dying to go and fight with Papa, and I can only stay at home and knit like a poky old woman." – and Jo shook the blue army sock till the needles rattled like castanets, and her ball bounded across the room.* (Alcott, 2020, p.8)

Jo is described as a girl who likes boys' games. She likes the things that men can do and their behavior patterns. She regrets that she was not born a man who is free to do any activity without anyone hindering him. Jo wants to join the army just like her father, but this desire is hindered by her status as a girl, who at that time was prohibited from joining the war and could only wait at home.

War belongs to the military field, which is closely related to masculinity. The tradition of war is the beginning of the trigger for the emergence of patriarchal culture because of the continuity of war, which positions men as the dominant class because of their physical strength. War became a form of male masculinity that was persistent and brave. This stereotype makes war unsuitable for women. In contrast to men, women are considered unable to participate in a war like men because women have many limitations and are seen as weak creatures and can only wait at home doing domestic work that is womanly in nature.

Stereotyping of Gender

Stereotyping is the labeling or marking of a particular group (Adzkia et al., 2022). Butler (1990) argues that gender stereotypes are social constructions formed through societal norms, values, and expectations. Stereotypes are a form of the social and cultural construction of society that is passed down. In this case, stereotypes are often negative and detrimental to one party, be it the woman or the man.

In the novel *Little Women*, there are several stereotypes portrayed of women. These gender stereotypes arise from the assumption that women should not look or act like men.

> *Jo immediately sat up, put her hands in her apron pockets, and began to whistle. "don't, Jo-it's boyish."* (Alcott, 2020, p.7)

> *"You are old enough to leave off boyish tricks, and behave better, Josephine. It didn't matter so much when you were a little girl, but how you are so tall, and turn up your hair, you should remember that you are a young lady."* (Alcott, 2020, p.8)

Jo is the second of the four March sisters. She likes to act like a boy because she thinks it makes her comfortable. Jo often whistles, and her actions are often reprimanded by her sister, Meg, because it is considered inappropriate behavior for a woman. If a woman whistles, then she will be considered a naughty and flirtatious woman, unlike men, who will not be reprimanded or considered inappropriate when whistling because it fits the stereotype of men who are wild and allowed to flirt with women. Meanwhile, women are limited in their freedom of expression and action.

> *"I ain't! And if turning up my hair makes me one, I'll wear it in two tails till I'm twenty," cried Jo, pulling off her net, and shaking down a chestnut mane. "I hate to think I've got to grow up and be Miss March, and wear long gowns, and look as prim as a China aster."* (Alcott, 2020, p.8)

Women have many demands on their lives due to cultural influences. The majority of baby boys will be dressed in blue accessories, while girls will be dressed in pink. The gender identity that has been formed will continue to develop into adulthood and refers to masculinity and femininity. When they grow up, colors no longer differentiate their identity. They are required to show who they are and what their identity is. For example, women have long hair, which is neatly put in a bun in 19th-century American culture. Men, on the other hand, have short hair, which, even if it is untidy, will not be commented on by society. In 19th-century America, women were required to wear dresses, and only boys were allowed to wear pants. If women wore pants, it was seen as strange and perverted by the existing culture, so it was not uncommon for women

who wore pants to be stoned as a form of male disapproval of women who wore pants because the stereotype was that women wore dresses and men wore pants.

Violence

Umniyyah (2021) argues that violence is an attack on a person's physical or psychological mental integrity. Violence against humans comes from several sources, one of which is violence against particular sexes caused by gender assumptions, called gender-related violence. According to Fakih (2010), gender violence is caused by the inequality of power that exists in society.

> *"I don't approve of corporal punishment, especially for girls. I dislike Mr Davis's manner of teaching, and don't think the girls you associate with are doing you any good, so I shall ask your father's advice before I send you anywhere else."* (Alcott, 2020, p. 92)

When Amy received a beating from her teacher at school because she had broken the rules, Amy cried and told Marmee about it. Marmee looks displeased and uncomfortable after hearing the explanation from Amy because she thinks that the punishment given by Mr. Davis is an act of physical violence. Physical violence often occurs because of power imbalances. Girls are one of the groups that are victimized because they are considered weak parties, so violence can be easily committed against them. Through the analysis of this novel, three forms of gender injustice are depicted in the situation and conditions in America in the 19th century, and the results show the social inequality between women and men that supported the existence of gender injustice at that time.

Forms of Women's Resistance as a Form of Self-Existence

Based on the data obtained from the novel, the female character depicts an independent woman who fights for her existence in society against all forms of gender injustice and discrimination against women. In this case, Beauvoir (1956), with her existentialist feminism theory, has offered various strategies to assert the self-existence of women in society. By using Beauvoir's theory of existentialist feminism, we found several quotes that show the existence of women in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, including 1) working, 2) becoming an intellectual agent, 3) rejecting subordination, and 4) becoming an influential figure in society.

Work

Beauvoir believed in her theory that one of the main keys to women's freedom lies in economics. Although working in a capitalist social culture meant that women had to carry additional burdens on top of their family responsibilities, Beauvoir believed that women had the opportunity to develop through work. This belief gives women more freedom to make their own life decisions and demonstrate their ability to live independently and without dependence on men. One of the quotes that shows this is as follows.

> *"Mother didn't say anything about our money, and she won't wish us to give up everything. Let's each buy what we want, and have a little fun –* ***I'm sure we grub hard enough to earn it****," cried Jo, examining the heels of her boots in a gentlemanly manner*. (Alcott, 2020, p.6)

Despite the dominant patriarchal culture, Jo and her sister insist on working to fulfil their daily needs. Although her path is not easy, she still does the work for her needs.

> *"I know I do - teaching those dreadful children nearly all day, when I'm longing to enjoy myself at home," began Meg, in the complaining tone again. (Alcott, 2020, p.6)*

In the context above, Meg also realized that the work she did was not easy and made her occasionally complain about her work. Teaching children requires a strong mentality.

Based on the discussion above, both Jo and Meg are independent women who work and do not depend on anyone. Financial independence also gives both female characters their own authority and strength to fight subordination over them. Thus, this proves that working can be a form of self-existence for a woman.

An Intellectual

An intellectual is someone who has a high intelligence that is concerned with thinking and understanding. An intellectual is also not only bound by formal understanding but includes all understanding and thinking in everyday life. Being an intellectual agent shows the existence of women in society. As said by Beauvoir in her theory, for women to be free from the shadow of men, women must also continue to learn to become intellectual agents who are intelligent in thinking and able to voice their opinions to bring change. In the novel *Little Women*, there are female characters who show to be intellectual agents but in different domains, which are shown through quotations:

> *"You don't have half such a hard time as I do," said Jo.*
> *"How would you like to be shut up for hours with a nervous, fussy old lady, who keeps you trotting, is never satisfied, and worries you till you're ready to fly out the window or box her ears?"* (Alcott, 2020, p.6)

The quote above explains Jo's complaint that she works as a companion to an old woman (Aunt March), which in the quote means that Jo has become an intellectual agent where the job Jo takes is an unusual job where Jo must have the ability to manage Aunt March's daily life and make decisions about her care and comfort. Inevitably, Jo must be able to handle difficult situations and conflicts with Aunt March, who is stubborn. Therefore, Jo's role as Aunt March's companion shows the progress of women's emancipation. In addition, Jo defies gender stereotypes by working outside the home, and this experience shapes Jo's identity as an intellectual agent.

Rejecting Subordination

In the concept of the Self or the Other, women are always placed in the second position, namely as passive objects. In order to be free from this subordination, women must first have the courage to voice their opinions that reject all forms of subordination. This act of rejection is also represented by Jo's character when she does not want to be governed by the existing culture, especially the style in which she wants to wear clothes that she thinks are comfortable.

> *"I ain't! And if turning up my hair makes me one, I'll wear it in two tails till I'm twenty," cried Jo, pulling off her net, and shaking down a chestnut mane. "I hate to think I've got to grow up and be Miss March, and wear long gowns, and look as prim as a China aster. It's bad enough to be a girl, anyway, when I like boy's games, and work, and manners. I can't get over my disappointment in not being a boy, and it's worse than ever now"* (Alcott, 2020, p.8).

From the quote above, it can be seen that Jo wants to wear what she thinks is comfortable. She also wants to be free to express herself and not be bound by social conventions. Thus, she chooses to dress simply and comfortably. In addition, Jo is more interested in activities such as reading, writing, and sports than dressing up.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research that has been conducted on the novel *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott using de Beauvoir's theory of existentialist feminism, it can be concluded that several forms of gender injustice befall the female characters in the novel, such as the existence of gender subordination which considers women weak when compared to men, gender stereotypes in society against women, and violence against women where they are considered weak beings. Apart from the forms of discrimination against women, there are also forms of resistance carried out to show their existence. Firstly, working means women can become independent and have freedom over themselves, not just staying at home. Secondly, by becoming intellectuals, women can have broad insight and be more open-minded. The third is to reject the concept of subordination or the so-called "the Other", where women are not only objects but can become themselves.

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Challenges of Teaching Legal English at a Law Higher Education Institution – Lecturers' Voices

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received: 15 March 2025; accepted: 28 March 2025

ABSTRACT
English for Specific Purposes (ESP) plays a crucial role in language education, catering to the specific linguistic and communicative needs of learners in various professional and academic fields. In the context of globalization, legal English, a type of ESP language among legal professionals, has emerged as a vital component in law training programs in recent years. However, despite its growing importance, teaching legal English presents major challenges. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through surveys and semi-structured interviews with legal English lecturers at a law higher education institution. The findings identify that while instructors acknowledge the importance of legal language and legal content several significant obstacles were addressed, including learners' insufficient knowledge of English and laws, distinctive features of legal English language and law content topics, limited teaching material resources and varying student language proficiency levels as well as the lack of specialized training for instructors. Based on these insights, the study proposes a set of practical recommendations for professional development, material adaptation, and pedagogical strategies to maximize the quality and effectiveness of legal English education.

Keywords: law higher education institution, lecturers' voices, legal English, teaching challenges

INTRODUCTION

The process of international integration demands a high-quality workforce that is well-trained in the legal field and proficient in English. Therefore, legal English plays an essential role in achieving success across various sectors in today's globalized context. It is evident that equipping students with specialized legal knowledge and legal English skills is increasingly emphasized in legal education institutions (Tống & Nguyễn, 2021). As a result, legal English has become a fundamental course in law training programs. The issue of effective teaching and learning legal English turns out to be the key point, contributing to achieving the expected learning outcomes of these programs. Yet, legal English has been reputed to be a challenging subject due to its distinctive characteristics, such as technical jargon, Latin terms, and complex sentence structures (Bhatia, 1993; Goga-Vigaru, 2015; Veretina-Chiriac, 2012), and the high demands it places on all stakeholders involved (Nhac, 2021). Research by Varó and Hughes (2002) highlights significant differences between common law (e.g., English and American legal systems) and civil law traditions (e.g., French and German legal systems). This divergence complicates instruction as teachers must address multiple legal frameworks. In the view of Goddard (2010), teaching legal English requires instructors to have expertise in legal knowledge, legal skills, and language skills. However, legal systems vary across jurisdictions, which may lead to the lecturer's unfamiliarity with the legal frameworks. Furthermore, the

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focus on legal terms is likely to result in a neglect of crucial and practical skills, i.e., legal writing, advocacy, and negotiation (Bhatia et al., 2006).

At Hanoi Law University, legal English has been a compulsory course in the law training program for International trade and business majors since the academic year 2011-2012, then for other law majors. Several studies were conducted to determine complex learners' obstacles in learning legal English (Nhac, 2021; Nhac, 2022), while lecturers' challenges have been under-researched. To ensure the quality of teaching and learning, it is of great necessity to identify the difficulties lecturers face throughout their teaching journey. Accordingly, this study aims to seek such obstacles lecturers encounter when teaching legal English at Hanoi Law University. On the basis of such findings, it highlights the significance of legal English teaching training, not only to overcome these challenges but also to optimize the teaching and learning process of Legal English.

Legal English – a type of English for specific purposes (ESP)

Scholars have proposed various definitions of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to distinguish it from General English (GE). However, there are some common points among these perspectives. Robinson (1991) defines ESP as an English course with a specific goal, based on needs analysis to determine what learners must do and what they should be able to achieve through English. Dudley-Evans (1998) identifies several characteristics of ESP, stating that ESP courses are designed to meet the specific needs of learners. These courses use language learning methods and activities relevant to the subject area, focusing on grammar, vocabulary, study skills, discourse, and other language components. One important note is that ESP is generally designed for adult learners at the university level, in vocational training, or for professionals already working in a specific field. ESP learners, accordingly, are expected to have an intermediate to advanced level of English proficiency. In other words, they need to acquire a certain level of GE knowledge before studying ESP.

Legal English is understood as English for the legal profession, designed to meet the needs of learners and professionals working in legal fields. As a result, legal English is taught in higher education institutions for law students or professionals working in legal institutions. Legal English has specific characteristics, including specialized legal terminology, vocabulary (Latin terms, loanwords, doublet/triplet expressions), grammar (passive voice, inversion), and distinctive writing style (complex and compound sentences) (Veretina-Chiriac, 2012). These features contribute to the challenges faced by both learners and instructors.

Issues related to ESP teaching in the literature

ESP has been taught in educational institutions for decades; however, certain issues remain, as follows.

Demand analysis

One of the key requirements for an ESP curriculum is conducting a needs analysis of learners. According to Anthony (1997), in most cases, when designing an ESP curriculum, course designers fail to perform a needs analysis or to interview experts of disciplines. Instead, they apply or create teaching materials without assessing their relevance or making necessary adjustments to complex, specialized texts. As a result, such curricula or textbooks often fail to fully meet the needs of learners, professionals, or workplaces. Currently, in Vietnam, it is still debated how ESP should be taught: Should English be taught for a specific field, or should specialized subjects be taught in English? Moreover, who should teach it—English teachers or subject-matter experts? (Lâm, 2011).

Learners' proficiency

The proficiency level of learners is a crucial factor in teaching ESP. According to previous research, ESP often requires learners to have at least an intermediate or advanced

proficiency level and a certain foundational knowledge of their specific field (Lâm, 2011). In other words, if learners have insufficient GE skills and lack expertise in their field, studying ESP becomes extremely challenging (Lâm, 2011). Consequently, the objectives of ESP programs cannot be achieved as expected.

Lâm (2011) also points out that some administrators and experts believe ESP is merely specialized vocabulary and terminology and that if learners have a good GE proficiency, learning ESP is not difficult at all. Consequently, many educational institutions adopt the policy of up-to-B1 (Common European Framework of Reference - CEFR) GE program for mainstream students or level B2 (CEFR) (level 4) for high-quality and joint programs. ESP is then left for self-study, or institutions provide only specialized reading materials and exercises on vocabulary and grammar. Similarly, some argue that learners can effectively study ESP even without prior knowledge of their specialized field. However, in reality, when learners do not have a solid grasp of their subject matter, acquiring ESP becomes challenging and does not fully develop their learning potential (Lâm, 2011).

Instructors' specialized knowledge

Specialized fields contain numerous unique concepts and terminology, requiring instructors to have a certain level of subject knowledge to teach ESP effectively. Previous studies have highlighted the crucial role of lecturers' specialized knowledge in teaching ESP. Researchers such as Hutchinson and Waters (1987) and Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) argue that ESP lecturers need a certain level of subject knowledge to effectively teach discipline-specific language and concepts. However, the extent of this requirement remains debated. Some studies suggest that while linguistic expertise is essential, a deep understanding of specialized content can enhance teaching efficiency by making lessons more relevant and engaging. Others, such as Lâm (2011), point out that a lack of subject knowledge can hinder lecturers' ability to explain complex terminology and concepts, potentially limiting students' comprehension. Such debate leads to ongoing discussions about whether ESP should be taught by subject specialists or English language instructors (Lâm, 2011). Simultaneously, it underscores the need for collaboration between language instructors and subject specialists to bridge the gap between linguistic competence and disciplinary knowledge in ESP instruction.

METHOD

The purpose of the study is to identify the difficulties that instructors face in teaching legal English at Hanoi Law University (HLU). Therefore, a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were utilized to seek their viewpoints. The survey questionnaire was developed based on the set of criteria for questions about perspectives recommended by Dörnyei (2007), which consisted of two parts. Part 1 was for collecting participants' information, while Part 2 delved into their views on obstacles faced during the process of teaching legal English. Specifically, challenges were categorized into two main groups: 1) challenges related to learners and 2) challenges related to instructors and teaching methods. Further, the questionnaire explored the participants' views on the necessity of legal English teaching training courses.

Seventeen lecturers with legal English teaching experience at HLU participated in the Google Forms survey distributed via email. Participants were required to respond using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (*Never, Rarely, Occasionally, Frequently, Always*) or from 1 to 3 (*Not Important, Useful, Very Important*) in the first semester of the academic year 2023-2024. The collected data were processed using SPSS to determine the extent of instructors' perspectives on the factors contributing to difficulties in teaching legal English.

Additionally, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with three (3) voluntary lecturers who provided notable answers from the 17 participants. Each interview took place via Microsoft Teams and lasted 15 minutes, seeking details for the interviewer's

choices. The collected data were transcribed into direct quotes and then coded into corresponding themes for further analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Among the 17 lecturers participating in the survey, nine participants are law specialists (accounting for 52.9%), while the rest are legal English lecturers (accounting for 47.1%). Among them, five lecturers have less than 5 years of experience, eight of them have between 5 and 10 years of experience, and four instructors have more than 10 years of experience teaching legal English. The specific data is presented in Table 1. It can be observed that the number of lecturers with more than 5 years of experience account for 70.6%.

Table 1. Teaching experience of Legal English lecturers

Years of Experience	Number of Lecturers	Percentage (%)
Less than 5 years	05	29.4
5-10 years	08	47.0
More than 10 years	04	23.6
Total	17	100.0

When asked whether lecturers teaching legal English participated in training courses on legal English instruction, the majority of lecturers (87%) reported that they had not attended any such training programs.

Factors related to learners

Table 2. Factors related to students

No.	Factor	N	Mean (M)	SD
1	Differences in students' English proficiency levels in the Legal English class	17	3.78	.875
2	Students' inadequate general English proficiency	17	2.86	.1023
3	Lack of motivation to study Legal English	17	2.97	.958
4	Students' excessive use of Vietnamese in class	17	2.75	.973
5	Students' lack of specialized knowledge	17	3.98	.972
6	Students' lack of knowledge of specialized English terminology	17	3.76	.865
7	Students prioritize high scores over developing Legal English proficiency	17	2.87	1.073
8	Students focus more on specialized knowledge than on learning specialized terminology and Legal English skills	17	3.84	.983

1-1.8: Never; 1.81-2.6: Rarely; 2.61-3.4: Occasionally; 3.41-4.2: Frequently; 4.21-5: Always

The table presents factors related to students in teaching legal English. From Table 2, the mean values range from 2.75 to 3.84, indicating that all lecturers surveyed encountered difficulties related to students during their teaching process. Among the challenges, the most frequently occurring issues include students' lack of specialized knowledge (M = 3.98, SD = .972), differences in English proficiency levels within the same class (M = 3.78, SD = .875), and students prioritizing subject knowledge over legal English terminology and skills (M = 3.84, SD = .983). Other notable difficulties include students' limited understanding of specialized English terminology (M = 3.76, SD = .865) and their lack of motivation to study

legal English (M = 2.97, SD = .958). The results suggest that these challenges significantly impact the effectiveness of legal English instruction as the follow-up interview qualitative data.

> *"In several cases, students do not have specialized knowledge, which takes me a lot of time and effort to explain the terms."* – L2

> *"Honestly, I do think that background knowledge of law is important when learning or teaching legal English. Legal terms are complicated; thus, without understanding legal terms, one finds it much more challenging to acquire them in English."* – L1

> *"Sometimes, learners feel demotivated to study legal English due to its complexity. This fact requires teachers to diversify learning activities with the aim of fostering students' motivation. If not, it certainly affects the efficiency of legal English acquisition."* – L3

The findings are consistent with previous studies (Enesi et al., 2021; Medrea & Rus, 2012). Medrea and Rus (2012) point out that students have varying levels of English proficiency, with some not even reaching level 3 (B1) of the CEFR, which creates difficulties for instructors. Saliu (2013) suggests that lecturers need to become familiar with students having different levels of language proficiency and specialized knowledge. Regarding motivation in ESP learning, Zavistanavičienė and Dagilienė (2015) emphasize that learning motivation is a decisive factor in the process of acquiring ESP. A lack of learning motivation among students, accordingly, poses challenges for ESP teaching in general and legal English in particular.

Factors related to instructors

Table 3. Factors related to instructors, teaching materials, and curriculum

No.	Factor	N	Mean (M)	SD
1	Unfamiliar topics in the legal English curriculum	17	3.56	1.020
2	Difficulty in understanding the content of the legal English course	17	2.25	.942
3	Complicated, specialized legal knowledge	17	3.68	.947
4	Complex legal terminology	17	3.55	1.071
5	Complex characteristics of legal English	17	3.98	.967
6	Legal English curriculum does not meet learners' needs	17	3.96	.969
7	Designing the legal English curriculum	17	3.47	.982
8	Developing teaching materials relevant to legal English topics	17	3.26	.966
9	Difficulty in classroom management	17	1.82	1.073
10	Difficulty in designing assessment methods for evaluating learners' legal English proficiency	17	3.83	.993
11	Insufficient time allocation for the legal English course	17	2.73	1.089
12	Application of technology in the classroom	17	1.95	.997

1-1.8: Never; 1.81-2.6: Rarely; 2.61-3.4: Occasionally; 3.41-4.2: Frequently; 4.21-5: Always

Table 3 addresses several factors related to instructors, such as difficulties in designing a legal English program that meets students' needs, classroom management, access to and

development of teaching materials, student assessment, as well as challenges related to a lack of legal expertise, legal terminology, unfamiliar legal English topics, and course content.

It can be seen that for these factors, most instructors selected options ranging from "rarely" to "frequently" (mean values ranging from M=1.82 to M=3.98). Specifically, instructors admitted that they rarely encountered issues in classroom management (M=1.82; SD=1.073), applying technology in teaching (M=1.95; SD=.997), or understanding the content of the legal English course they were teaching (M=2.25; SD=.942).

However, regarding the complicated knowledge in legal expertise and legal terminology or characteristics of legal English in teaching materials, many instructors frequently faced difficulties (M=3.68; SD=.947; M=3.55; SD=1.071; M=3.98; SD=.967, respectively). This is understandable because, although legal English instructors hold a law degree, they cannot have comprehensive knowledge or a full understanding of legal terminology across different legal fields. Similarly, in the case of law lecturers instructing legal English classes, there exist law areas they do not specialize in.

> *"I am a law instructor specializing in Intellectual property law, actually. However, legal English covers different areas of law, therefore, in some cases, I still find it challenging when teaching legal English."* – L3

> "*Usually, highly complex legal terms and concepts without sufficient explanation or contextualization appear, which makes it difficult for both lecturers and students to grasp the materials."* – L1

Regarding legal English course content, issues such as unfamiliar law fields in textbooks (M=3.56; SD=1.020), failure to meet students' needs (M=3.96; SD=.969), difficulties in designing a legal English curriculum (M=3.47; SD=.982), and assessment methods for students' legal English proficiency (M=3.83; SD=.993) were mostly rated as "frequently". This reflects the reality that curriculum design and textbook selection have not been based on students' needs or employers' expectations regarding students' legal English competence. Such findings are consistent with data from follow-up interviews.

> *"Legal English coursebook tends to focus heavily on vocabulary and grammar rather than real-world legal communication skills, which creates a gap between what students expect/ need and what can be offered to them."* – L2

Similarly, L3 shared his viewpoint:

> *"The book focuses primarily reading and vocabulary exercises while neglecting speaking and writing skills. In other words, lack of interactive and task-based activities constraints students' active learning."*
> *"There is insufficient emphasis on practical skills such as contract drafting, legal writing, etc., which forces lecturers to develop his own supplementary teaching materials catering learners' needs. Such kind of teaching preparation costs lecturers a huge amount of time and effort."* – L3

Such findings are consistent with several previous studies (Johns, 1991), which argue that existing legal English coursebooks often fail to provide authentic materials that reflect real-life practice, including contract drafting, case analysis, or courtroom proceedings. According to Fălăuș (2017), there are four key factors to consider when selecting or designing ESP materials: input, content focus, language focus, and task design. However, Larsen-Freeman (2003) argues that newly developed ESP textbooks mainly emphasize grammar and vocabulary exercises (language focus) while failing to concentrate on content focus and lacking

a balance of all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). As a result, instructors struggled with syllabus design, lesson planning, and the development of teaching materials (M=3.26; SD=.966). When a curriculum does not fully meet students' needs, it becomes difficult to assess their comprehensive legal English proficiency. Additionally, another contributing factor is that the time allocated for teaching legal English is sometimes considered insufficient (M=2.73; SD=1.089). Consequently, the teaching and learning of legal English have not been maximized for effectiveness. These research findings are similar to the study by Enesi et al., (2021).

> *"I usually have difficulty in assessing students' performance. There should be a need for more structured exercises that could assess students' ability to apply legal English in professional contexts."* – L2

The above viewpoint of one legal English instructor reveals the status quo of assessment in legal English. This proves the finding of Basturkmen's research (2010) that indicated that traditional exams focus on vocabulary recall rather than functional language use.

Table 4: The necessity of legal English teaching training course

No.	Factor	(N)	Mean (M)	(SD)
1	Teaching methods	17	2.79	.983
2	Legal English curriculum design	17	2.27	1.012
3	Specialized terminology	17	2.82	.984
4	Approaches to and development of teaching materials	17	2.31	.783
5	Assessment and evaluation in legal English teaching	17	2.29	1.056
6	Lesson plans and teaching materials	17	2.77	.948

1 - 1.66: Not important; 1.67 - 2.33: Useful; 2.34 - 3: Very important

In addition to identifying the challenges faced by instructors in teaching legal English, the survey also explored teachers' perspectives on the importance of training in legal English instruction. Looking at the data in Table 4, most factors were rated as very important by instructors in the context of legal English teaching. Specifically, lesson plans and teaching materials (M=2.77; SD=.948), teaching methods (M=2.79; SD=.983), and specialized terminology (M=2.82; SD=.948) were considered the most crucial factors. Bojović (2006) argues that ESP terminology plays a key role in understanding lesson content, as it is often context-dependent. ESP instructors are not "experts" in the specialized fields they teach; therefore, training them and equipping them with an understanding of terminology is essential. As illustrated in the statistics, teaching method is viewed as of extreme importance, thus significant challenges may be faced if lecturers have not received training in instructional methodologies as Cenaj (2015) noted. Other aspects of training, such as legal English curriculum design (M=2.27; SD=1.012), approaches to and development of teaching materials (M=2.31; SD=.783), and assessment and evaluation in legal English instruction (M=2.29; SD=1.056), were rated as useful by instructors. Such findings are consistent with previous study in different disciplines (i.e., Bocanegra-Valle, 2010) which affirms that effective curriculum design ensures that course content is relevant and tailored to the specific linguistic and professional requirements of the learners. Additionally, assessment and evaluation in ESP courses serves to measure not only language proficiency, the ability to apply language skills within specific professional contexts but also to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum and instructional methods (Pasaclic, & Plancic, 2018).

CONCLUSION

This current study has identified the challenges that instructors face when teaching legal English courses at Hanoi Law University. These difficulties may arise from both learners and teachers. Specifically, instructors frequently encounter obstacles when students in the same legal English class have varying levels of English proficiency, lack sufficient specialized knowledge, or focus more on their legal expertise than on specialized terminology and legal English skills. Moreover, students' lack of motivation to learn legal English further complicates the teaching process, as motivation is a key factor in language acquisition.

Regarding challenges concerning instructors, it is reported that they never or rarely have problems related to classroom management or the use of technology in teaching. However, the lack of legal expertise, difficulties in designing and developing learning materials, and the complexity of legal English in instructional materials create significant barriers to teaching legal English.

Based on the findings, several practical recommendations are addressed to help instructors overcome such challenges. Firstly, the necessity of specialized training on legal concepts and terminology for legal English instructors is highlighted to ensure better teaching outcomes (Fălăuş, 2017; Enesi et al.,2021). The collaboration with law specialists or lecturers is encouraged to bridge the gap between legal and linguistic knowledge, helping students not only grasp legal knowledge but also use English accurately and effectively in professional settings. The second suggestion relates to teaching materials and curriculum design. Specifically, course materials should be developed on the grounds of students' needs and legal experts' advice in order to have practical content and skills. Simultaneously, optimizing class time in legal English courses by applying modern teaching methods and leveraging technology to boost learners' motivation is another issue for consideration. Bhatia et al. (2006) emphasize the importance of the corpus-based approach, through which instructors could expose students to authentic legal texts, helping them to understand legal conventions, terminology, and collocations more effectively. In general, combining knowledge of legal English with teaching methodologies, instructional materials, and assessment methods is the key to successful teaching and learning, ultimately enhancing students' acquisition of legal English.

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