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Editorial

Dr. Carlo Granados-Beltrán
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In this 28th issue of *GiST Education and Learning Research Journal*, we explore the intersection of innovative teaching practices, the integration of technology, the impact of community and context, and the well-being of educators and learners. Across the contributions from scholars in Thailand, Ethiopia, Turkey, and Colombia, a recurring theme emerges: the importance of leveraging diverse pedagogical strategies to address the evolving needs of students and teachers in a globalized and challenging educational landscape.

One of the key threads running through this issue is the focus on active, collaborative, and contextualized learning and the role of innovation in improving learning outcomes. The article by **Ruijuan Li, Sarit Srikhao, and Nirat Jantharajit** highlights how combining collaborative and active learning strategies can significantly enhance academic achievement and self-motivation among vocational students. This finding aligns closely with the work of **Johanna Marcela Sabogal Bedoya** and **Norma Constanza Durán Narváez**, who demonstrate the potential of community-based pedagogies when paired with visual literacies to improve writing skills in high school students. Both studies emphasize the transformative power of creating meaningful, contextually relevant learning experiences that engage students actively in their development.

The flipped classroom approach, explored by **Javier Rojas**, echoes this focus on active learning by shifting the traditional classroom dynamics. His findings reveal that flipping grammar instruction enables adult EFL learners to maximize their speaking practice during class, leading to increased confidence and grammatical accuracy. When juxtaposed with the study on mind mapping by **Hümeýra Uysal** and **Sabri Sidekli**, we see a shared emphasis on tools and strategies that empower students to take ownership of their learning. While flipped learning redefines how class time is used, mind mapping provides a scaffold for students to organize and develop their ideas, enhancing creative expression and writing skills.

Technology emerges as a common element in many of these studies, particularly in integrating digital tools to support student engagement and learning. **Mitiku Tasisa Dinsa** and **Essayas Teshome Taddese** examine how social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube can serve as valuable tools for improving speaking proficiency among EFL learners. Their study not only highlights a gap in students' purposeful use of these platforms but also underscores the exciting potential of social media to bridge the gap between formal and informal learning. Similarly, the flipped classroom study leverages audiovisual materials to extend learning beyond the classroom, offering an exciting perspective on how technology can enrich language learning experiences.

As we reflect on the insights offered in this issue, we are reminded of the importance of addressing the human dimension of education—particularly the well-being of educators. **Teshale Ayalew**, **Getachew Seyoum Woldemariam**, and **Adege Alemu** explore the factors contributing to job burnout among EFL teachers in Ethiopia, shedding light on educators' challenges in maintaining engagement and effectiveness. Their findings resonate with the broader emphasis on creating supportive and motivating learning environments, not just for students but for teachers as well.

The articles in this issue form a cohesive narrative about the interconnectedness of pedagogical innovation, contextual relevance, and the well-being of all stakeholders in education.

We thank the authors and peer reviewers whose contributions make this issue possible. Their dedication and expertise enrich our understanding of the dynamic field of English language teaching and learning. We invite scholars from around the world to continue contributing to GiST Journal, whether by submitting articles, participating as reviewers, or offering book reviews. Your support is invaluable to us, and we hope you enjoy this issue as much as we enjoyed creating it.

An Experimental Study on the Impact of Collaborative and Active Learning on Vocational Students' Learning Achievement and Self-Motivation

Estudio experimental sobre el impacto del aprendizaje colaborativo y activo en el rendimiento académico y la automotivación de los estudiantes de formación profesional

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Abstract

The study examines a blended instructional approach combining collaborative and active learning to improve vocational students' learning achievement and self-motivation. An experimental design was utilized, dividing vocational students into control and experiment groups. The experiment group participated in a one-month collaborative and active learning intervention, while the control group received traditional instruction. The experiment group achieved significant gains in academic achievement, with pre-test and post-test means rising from 79.63 to 86.15 ($t=19.72$, $p<0.05$) and self-motivation scores increasing from 37.82 to 42.74 ($t=19.71$, $p<0.05$). In contrast, the control group exhibited lower post-test scores in both academic achievement (mean=80.16, $t=3.67$, $p<0.05$) and self-motivation (mean=38.4, $t=5.31$, $p<0.05$). These results indicate that integrating collaborative and active learning strategies significantly impacts learning achievement and self-motivation in vocational education. This suggests that this instructional approach is highly effective in improving student outcomes.

Keywords: Instructional Approach; Collaborative Learning; Active Learning; Learning Achievement; Self-Motivation

Resumen

El estudio examina un enfoque de enseñanza combinado que integra el aprendizaje colaborativo y activo para mejorar el rendimiento académico y la automotivación de los estudiantes de formación profesional. Se utilizó un diseño experimental, dividiendo a los estudiantes de formación profesional en grupos de control y experimental. El grupo experimental participó en una intervención de aprendizaje colaborativo y activo durante un mes, mientras que el grupo de control recibió instrucción tradicional. El grupo experimental logró aumentos significativos en el rendimiento académico, con medias de pretest y posttest que aumentaron de 79.63 a 86.15 ($t=19.72$, $p<0.05$), y en las puntuaciones de automotivación, que incrementaron de 37.82 a 42.74 ($t=19.71$, $p<0.05$). En contraste, el grupo de control mostró puntuaciones más bajas en el posttest tanto en rendimiento académico (media=80.16, $t=3.67$, $p<0.05$) como en automotivación (media=38.4, $t=5.31$, $p<0.05$). Estos resultados indican que la integración de estrategias de aprendizaje colaborativo y activo tiene un impacto significativo en el rendimiento académico y la automotivación en la educación profesional, sugiriendo que este enfoque de enseñanza es altamente efectivo para mejorar los resultados de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: Enfoque de enseñanza; Aprendizaje colaborativo; Aprendizaje activo; Rendimiento académico; Automotivación.

Resumo

O estudo examina uma abordagem de ensino combinada que integra a aprendizagem colaborativa e ativa para melhorar o desempenho acadêmico e a automotivação dos estudantes de formação profissional. Foi utilizado um desenho experimental, dividindo os estudantes de formação profissional em grupos de controle e experimental. O grupo experimental participou de uma intervenção de aprendizagem colaborativa e ativa durante um mês, enquanto o grupo de controle recebeu instrução tradicional. O grupo experimental alcançou aumentos significativos no desempenho acadêmico, com médias de pré-teste e pós-teste que aumentaram de 79,63 para 86,15 ($t=19,72$, $p<0,05$), e nas pontuações de automotivação, que aumentaram de 37,82 para 42,74 ($t=19,71$, $p<0,05$). Em contraste, o grupo de controle apresentou pontuações mais baixas no pós-teste, tanto no desempenho acadêmico (média=80,16, $t=3,67$, $p<0,05$) quanto na automotivação (média=38,4, $t=5,31$, $p<0,05$). Esses resultados indicam que a integração de estratégias de aprendizagem colaborativa e ativa tem um impacto significativo no desempenho acadêmico e na automotivação na educação profissional, sugerindo que essa abordagem de ensino é altamente eficaz para melhorar os resultados dos estudantes.

Palavras-chave: Abordagem de ensino; Aprendizagem colaborativa; Aprendizagem ativa; Desempenho acadêmico; Automotivação

Introduction

Traditional education has long been the dominant model in teaching professions. The teacher-centered approach focuses on knowledge transmission and standardized learning (Ribeiro, 2011). Bonwell and Eison (1991) criticized traditional, lecture-based instruction for limiting student participation and adopting a one-way transfer of information. While this method effectively transmits large amounts of information, more is needed to foster deeper understanding and critical thinking (Regmi, 2012). Despite its conventional use, traditional education has inherent limitations. Expecting students to learn uniformly can result in disengagement or aversion to education (Cole et al., 2004). This has prompted a shift toward innovative, student-centered approaches to address these issues.

Collaborative learning and active learning represent innovative teaching methods successfully applied in vocational education for decades (Győri & Czakó, 2020). These methods enhance students' teamwork skills and foster independent thinking and problem-solving abilities. Collaborative learning involves students working together to complete tasks, discuss problems, and find solutions, helping them develop communication, coordination, and cooperation skills. It fosters a sense of teamwork and collective responsibility, enabling students to support each other when facing complex practical tasks (Haugland et al., 2022; Coll et al., 2014). Active learning requires students to engage actively in courses, explore knowledge independently, pose questions, and seek solutions. This approach cultivates autonomous learning, fostering independent thinking and problem-solving and enhancing motivation and achievement (Paulins & Moeller, 2017; Freeman et al., 2014). In the 21st-century vocational environment, these abilities are considered essential skills. Therefore, applying collaborative and active learning methods in vocational education is crucial.

Previous research has theoretically supported integrating collaborative and active learning methods in vocational education, indicating that these approaches can enhance students' learning achievement and self-motivation (Ruijuan et al., 2023). Despite the broad theoretical acceptance of blended teaching methods, their practical application in vocational education has yet to be fully validated. Research on the impact of these methods on student achievement and motivation remains limited in Chinese vocational education. For instance, a Collaborative Learning by Teaching experiment conducted at a Chinese university was positively received by students (Zhou et al., 2019). Chinese education authorities have increasingly encouraged veteran teachers to incorporate collaborative learning methods, including classroom action research and joint lesson planning (Qi et al., 2021). A meta-analysis found that in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education in China, active learning improved students' academic performance, engagement, and classroom satisfaction compared to traditional teaching methods (Ting et al., 2023).

Hence, this study aims to investigate the implementation of blended teaching methods and their impact on students' learning achievement and self-motivation in vocational education. Specifically, it seeks to answer two core questions: 1) Can blended teaching methods significantly improve vocational students' learning achievement and self-motivation? 2) Do blended teaching methods offer a clear advantage over traditional approaches in vocational education? The findings will provide theoretical insights for improving teaching methods in vocational education and practical guidance for educational practice.

This study is grounded in the theory that collaborative and active learning, though well-developed in general education, has yet to be widely explored in vocational education. However, new insights and approaches tailored to vocational students are now available. From a practical standpoint, this research will develop blended teaching strategies that integrate collaborative and active learning to address practical challenges in vocational skills education. These strategies will help improve teaching quality and the vocational skills development of students. Additionally, this study contributes to the theoretical discourse on vocational education by providing evidence for educational reforms, thereby promoting the holistic development of vocational students within the specific educational environment of vocational training.

Literature Review

Importance of Learning Achievement and Self-Motivation

The importance of learning achievement and self-motivation is well-documented in educational research. Wild and Grassinger (2023) found that difficulties in self-regulating personal motivation are linked to higher dropout rates in university courses, with students who struggle in self-regulation more prone to dropping out. Achievement motivation, including academic self-concept and interest in the subject, directly influences academic performance, with students possessing higher motivation typically performing better (Susanto & Bahar, 2020; Ghorbani Yekta et al., 2020). Perceived teaching quality indirectly impacts dropout rates through its effect on academic self-concept, subject interest, and motivation regulation. High-quality teaching can increase student enthusiasm and retention (Wild & Grassinger, 2023). Alrashidi (2020) suggests that strategies such as detailed feedback, group work, and multimedia can enhance motivational constructs (e.g., self-efficacy) and improve language achievement. Envisioning oneself as a proficient language user (Ideal et al.) is closely tied to learning achievement and is a crucial motivator (Tort Calvo, 2015).

What is Collaborative Learning?

Collaborative learning promotes cooperation and active group participation, enhancing outcomes through interaction, idea-sharing, and mutual support. Grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, it posits that learning is a social process where knowledge is constructed through interaction and discussion with others. Laal and Laal (2012) argue that optimal learning occurs through active participation and peer collaboration, where students discuss ideas and gain new insights. In collaborative learning, students work in groups to achieve common goals, with interaction and discussion being crucial to learning. Teachers act as facilitators, providing guidance and support as needed. Collaborative learning can occur face-to-face or online using technological tools. Research indicates collaborative learning promotes higher-order thinking skills and improves learning achievement while enhancing social skills and motivation (Ghavifekr, 2020). However, it requires careful planning and a well-structured environment to be effective (Stahl, 2023). Challenges of collaborative learning include ensuring individual accountability, managing team dynamics, and assessing individual contributions. Technology platforms like the metaverse and social media for collaborative learning also raise new considerations regarding privacy, security, and data access (Jovanović & Milosavljević, 2022; Ansari & Khan, 2020).

What is Active Learning?

Active learning promotes student engagement by directly involving them in acquiring knowledge, skills, and understanding (Ruijuan et al., 2023). Freeman et al. (2014) found active learning improves student performance, especially in STEM fields. The advantages of active learning include: 1) improving exam scores and reducing failure rates; 2) fostering collaboration between students and teachers; and 3) increasing student engagement, leading to better retention and understanding (Freeman et al., 2014; Sølvyberg, 2023). However, active learning faces challenges in higher education, including institutional inertia and infrastructure coordination (Børte et al., 2023). Aini (2020) notes that implementing active learning requires careful planning and design, using tools like the ADDIE model to ensure material effectiveness. Stöckert et al. (2020) highlight using collaborative learning spaces, such as the "Portal" system in a master's program, to promote cross-campus and team-based learning.

Relationship Between Collaborative Learning and Active Learning

Collaborative and active learning, as interconnected concepts, often complement each other. Collaborative learning focuses on collective student efforts, while active

learning emphasizes engagement in diverse activities. Numerous studies have confirmed that both methods effectively enhance student engagement. Qureshi et al. (2023) found that social media and active collaborative learning significantly improved student engagement, satisfaction, and achievement. Additionally, collaborative and active learning strategies can lead to superior learning outcomes. Menacho-Vargas et al. (2022) found that using Canva in virtual environments promotes collaborative learning and improves engagement and learning outcomes. Instructors' teaching methods also significantly impact students' group learning and their ability to enhance learning through collaborative activities (Chang-Tik, 2023). Technology integration plays a crucial role in supporting collaborative and active learning. Wang & Wang (2023) demonstrated how capsule networks in hyperspectral image classification promote active learning and collaboration.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study investigates the impact of a blended instructional approach combining collaborative and active learning on vocational students' learning achievement and self-motivation. The research is divided into three phases: 1) the first focuses on designing the blended instructional approach. A comprehensive literature review was conducted on collaborative learning, active learning, learning achievement, and self-motivation. In collaboration with teachers, the Chinese freshman telecommunications principles textbook was analyzed. The teaching model was designed, and scales and tests were developed based on the textbook's characteristics and collaborative and active learning elements. 2) The second phase is the validation and revision stage. The experiment group participated in a one-month intervention using the collaborative and active learning model. The group was assessed using skill assessment scales and tests. Research data analysis assessed the reliability and validity of the tools, leading to revisions of the teaching model. 3) The final phase is the implementation stage. The study utilized an equivalent control group design with a significance level (α) of 0.05. Pre-tests were administered to the experimental and control groups to evaluate their baseline learning achievement and self-motivation. Over one month, post-tests were conducted to measure the effectiveness of the instructional methods, facilitating a comparative analysis.

Research Variables

This study investigates the effects of different instructional methods on vocational students' learning achievement and self-motivation. The independent variable is the

instructional method, with the experiment group using a blended approach and the control group using traditional methods. The dependent variables are learning achievement and self-motivation.

Participants

Using cluster sampling, 77 students were randomly selected from a cohort of 290 freshmen at Liuzhou Vocational and Technical College. These students were randomly assigned to the experiment group (27 students), the control group (25 students), and the validation group (25 students). The average age for the control group was 17.4 years, and for the experiment group, it was 17.8 years. All participants had similar academic backgrounds and studied the same major.

Intervention

The intervention took place in natural classroom settings at Liuzhou Vocational and Technical College. Initial assessments of students' learning achievement and self-motivation were conducted through pre-tests. Subsequently, a blended instructional approach combining collaborative and active learning was introduced, designed to foster a collaborative environment that enhances academic achievement and self-motivation (Table 1). This environment was achieved by assigning practical, challenging tasks, offering guidance and support, emphasizing collaboration, and promoting active learning. Students worked in groups to complete tasks, participate in discussions, and collaboratively solve problems.

Teachers served as coaches and guides, offering resources, technology, and feedback to support student learning. The instructional framework was designed to develop students' collaborative, analytical, presentation, and problem-solving skills and their interest and initiative in learning. The instructional process included 20 sessions, each lasting 45 minutes. Following the instructional period, post-tests evaluated improvements in students' learning achievement and self-motivation. The comparison of pre-test and post-test data highlights this instructional approach's impact on students' learning achievement and self-motivation, offering insights for future educational practice.

Table 1. Instructional Design: Objectives, Resources, and Time Allocation

Instructional Design	Details
Teaching Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase student engagement and motivate them to apply themselves in their learning activities. 2. Foster mutual understanding and enhance collaboration through improving communication skills. 3. Promote analytical thinking and encourage a focus on producing outcomes. 4. Inspire students to explore unfamiliar concepts and adopt a proactive attitude.
Teaching Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Group Allocation: Organize students into groups (4-6 people) to promote interactive learning and teamwork. 2. Collaborative Tools: Provide tools such as whiteboards, shared documents, and online platforms for effective communication and cooperation. 3. Resources: Supply teaching notes, reference materials, and web links. 4. Technical Support: Ensure students have the necessary technology and skills to complete their tasks.
Teaching Time	90 minutes

Table 1 presents the foundational goals, resources, and time allocations for this intervention, establishing a framework for understanding each activity's expected outcomes and the support structure fostering a conducive learning environment. Based on this foundation, Table 2 details the execution of each instructional phase, illustrating how collaborative and active learning components were integrated throughout each session. This progression from Table 1 to Table 2 reflects a logical transition from instructional planning to practical application, aligning each phase with the intended educational objectives.

Table 2. Teaching Process

Phase	Description	Duration
Introduction Phase	Define task objectives and expectations. Explain collaborative activities and motivate students to share ideas.	10 minutes
Task Design Phase	Design a practical, team-based task requiring innovative solutions. Provide learning materials and technical support.	15 minutes
Group Collaboration	Facilitate teamwork and idea-sharing within groups. Ensure active participation from all students.	25 minutes
Active Learning Phase	Promote critical thinking and curiosity through questions and exploration. Encourage students to engage in various activities such as experimenting.	20 minutes
Teacher Guidance	Provide feedback and guide students through tasks. Create a supportive learning environment.	10 minutes
Summary and Evaluation	Students present their results and reflections. Evaluate student performance and provide feedback.	10 minutes

Research Hypotheses

H1: The blended instructional approach combining collaborative and active learning will improve first-year students' learning achievement and self-motivation compared to their pre-intervention levels.

H2: The blended instructional approach, which combines collaborative and active learning, will result in higher learning achievement and self-motivation in first-year students compared to the control group.

Research Instruments

Academic Achievement Test Papers (AATP)

The Academic Achievement Test Papers (AATP) consist of 50 multiple-choice questions, each worth 2 points, for a total of 100 points. The pretest will assess students' learning achievement before and after the course. A question bank will prevent pretest results from affecting post-test results and maintain consistent difficulty across tests. Questions will be randomly selected for the pretest and post-test to ensure

no repetition. This ensures that each student encounters a unique set of questions, preventing any influence of the pretest on post-test results.

Additionally, this method ensures that the difficulty level remains consistent across both tests. Questions will be categorized into manageable (20), medium (20), and challenging (10) levels and randomly selected for both the pretest and posttest. Five field experts rigorously reviewed the AATP, deeming it high-quality.

Self-motivation Assessment Scale

The Self-Motivation Assessment Scale (SMAS) includes five dimensions: Interest and Engagement, Participation and Collaboration, Focus and Perseverance, Self-Encouragement and Positive Attitude, and Self-Estimation and Career Development, with two questions per dimension, totaling 10 questions. The widely recognized Likert 5-point scale ensures objective and accurate scoring. By evaluating specific items within these dimensions, teachers can understand students' eagerness to learn and provide appropriate support. SMAS provides educators with a detailed guide to enhance students' motivation, encouraging participation, goal-setting, problem-solving, concentration, perseverance, and self-study while building confidence for future careers. Five trained teachers will assess 27 students from the experiment group and 25 from the control group, with each teacher evaluating 5-6 students to ensure comprehensive and accurate assessments. SMAS was deemed high-quality after a rigorous review by five experts.

Data Analysis

SPSS statistical software was used to analyze the AATP and SMAS scores. The data were analyzed using ANOVA and t-tests to examine 1) differences between pre-test and post-test results and 2) distinctions between the experiment and control groups. The threshold for statistical significance was established at $p < 0.05$, with Cohen's d values of 0.2, 0.5, and 0.8 signifying small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively.

Ethical Approval

This study received formal approval from the Ethics Committees of Liuzhou Vocational and Technical College and Nakhon Phanom University. Before providing voluntary consent, participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, methods, potential risks, and their rights and obligations. The study adhered to ethical guidelines, taking continuous measures to protect participants' legal rights and the confidentiality of their personal information.

Results

Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test in the Experiment Group.

Table 3 compares academic achievement between pre-test and post-test scores for a sample of 27 participants. The mean academic achievement score increased from 79.63 (SD=6.77) in the pre-test to 86.15 (SD=5.74) in the post-test. The t-test for paired samples indicated a statistically significant improvement ($t=19.72$, $p<0.05$) with a large effect size (Cohen's $d=3.794$). Similarly, the self-motivation scores increased from the pre-test ($M=37.82$, $SD=3.98$) to the post-test ($M=42.74$, $SD=3.03$). The paired samples t-test also revealed a statistically significant enhancement ($t=19.71$, $p<0.05$) with a large effect size (Cohen's $d=3.793$).

Table 3. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test in the Experiment Group.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t	P	Cohen's d
Academic Achievement pre-test	27	79.63	6.77	19.72	0.000*	3.794
post-test	27	86.15	5.74			
Self-motivation pre-test	27	37.82	3.98	19.71	0.000*	3.793
post-test	27	42.74	3.03			

Note: * $P<0.05$.

The results indicate significant improvements in academic achievement and self-motivation following the intervention. The larger effect size can be attributed to the intensive and targeted nature of the instructional approach, which offers students direct engagement and hands-on experience, leading to a deeper understanding of the material and higher self-motivation. The increase in mean scores from pre-test to post-test in both variables suggests that the intervention positively impacted students' performance and motivation. The high t-values and corresponding p-values (<0.05) reinforce the reliability of these findings, confirming the robustness of the improvements observed.

Comparison of Experiment Group Pre-test with Control Group Pre-test

Table 4 compares pre-test scores between the experimental and control groups. In academic achievement, the control group ($N=25$) had a mean score of 77.84 ($SD=6.38$), while the experiment group ($N=27$) had a mean score of 79.63 ($SD=6.77$). The independent samples t-test showed no statistically significant difference ($t=0.98$, $p>0.05$), with a small effect size (Cohen's $d=0.272$). This indicates that the two groups

had no significant disparity in academic achievement before the intervention. Similarly, the self-motivation scores were compared. The control group had a mean score of 36.48 (SD=3.11), and the experimental group had a mean score of 37.82 (SD=3.98). The t-test for this comparison yielded a t-value of 1.34 and a p-value of 0.186, which is not statistically significant ($p>0.05$). The effect size was moderate (Cohen's $d=0.372$), indicating a noticeable difference in mean scores, but not enough to conclude a significant effect from the intervention at this stage.

Table 4. Comparison of Experiment Group Pre-test with Control Group Pre-test

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t	P	Cohen's d
Academic Achievement						
Control Group	25	77.84	6.38	0.98	0.332	0.272
Experiment Group	27	79.63	6.77			
Self-motivation						
Control Group	25	36.48	3.11	1.34	0.186	0.372
Experiment Group	27	37.82	3.98			

Note: * $P<0.05$.

The results indicate that, prior to the intervention, there were no significant differences in academic achievement or self-motivation between the experimental and control groups. This baseline equivalence is crucial for ensuring that any post-test differences can be more confidently attributed to the intervention itself rather than pre-existing differences between the groups. The small and moderate effect sizes for academic achievement and self-motivation suggest that observed differences are likely due to random variation rather than systematic effects from the intervention.

Comparison of Experiment Group Post-test with Control Group Post-test

Table 5 compares post-test scores between the experimental and control groups. The academic achievement mean score for the control group ($N=25$) was 80.16 (SD=6.03), whereas the experiment group ($N=27$) had a significantly higher mean score of 86.15 (SD=5.74). The independent samples t-test indicated a statistically significant difference ($t=3.67$, $p<0.05$) with a large effect size (Cohen's $d=1.019$). This substantial effect size suggests that the difference in academic achievement between the groups is not only statistically significant but also of practical importance. For self-motivation, the control group had a mean score of 38.40 (SD=2.84), while the experiment group's mean score was markedly higher at 42.74 (SD=3.03). The t-test for this comparison also revealed a statistically significant enhancement ($t=5.31$, $p<0.05$) with an even larger effect size (Cohen's $d=1.475$). This indicates a meaningful improvement in self-motivation for the experiment group.

Table 5. Comparison of Experiment Group Post-test with Control Group Post-test

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t	P	Cohen's d
Academic Achievement						
Control Group	25	80.16	6.03	3.67	0.001*	1.019
Experiment Group	27	86.15	5.74			
Self-motivation						
Control Group	25	38.40	2.84	5.31	0.000*	1.475
Experiment Group	27	42.74	3.03			

Note: *P<0.05.

The results indicate substantial improvements in academic achievement and self-motivation for the experiment group post-intervention. The enormous effect sizes and significant p-values indicate a profound positive impact on learning achievement and self-motivation. The high demand for practical skills and real-world applications explains this outcome in vocational education. This instructional approach aligns with vocational students' learning needs by emphasizing hands-on practice and task completion, enabling them to apply learning to practical skills. Furthermore, collaborative and active learning fosters a deeper understanding of the subject matter while enhancing students' autonomy and sense of ownership in the learning process. When students actively engage with tasks and work in groups, they experience increased social support and develop essential problem-solving skills, contributing to heightened motivation and academic success.

Structured interaction in collaborative settings helps students build confidence by sharing ideas and receiving peer feedback. This form of learning enables them to explore different perspectives, reinforcing their ability to tackle complex tasks independently. The increased control over learning by active methods cultivates self-efficacy and persistence, contributing to the significant effect sizes. These factors create an enriched learning environment where students are more likely to achieve higher academic performance and maintain long-term motivation.

The increases in the mean scores in both variables from the control group to the experiment group underscore the effectiveness of the intervention. The high t-values and corresponding p-values reinforce the reliability and robustness of these findings, confirming that the improvements observed are significant. This suggests that the blended instructional approach of collaborative and active learning enhances vocational students' academic outcomes and supports the development of critical life skills, promoting both short-term success and long-term educational benefits.

However, the small sample size in this study (only 27 students) may limit the broad applicability of the findings. The small sample size may increase the variability of the data and reduce generalizability to larger populations. Nevertheless, the large effect

sizes and significant results suggest that this sample's instructional approach was highly effective.

Discussion

The study investigates the impact of collaborative and active learning on vocational students' learning achievement and self-motivation. The experimental results show significant improvements in the experiment group's learning achievement and self-motivation, indicating that the combined method enhances self-motivation. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is supported. The control group showed minor improvements, while the experiment group demonstrated significant post-test progress, confirming the method's effectiveness. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is also supported.

The study's findings reveal that collaborative learning significantly enhances vocational students' learning achievement. This result aligns with existing literature, such as Yuretich et al. (2001), which found that implementing cooperative learning in classroom exercises and guided discussions improves students' learning outcomes. Sipayung et al. (2018) found that the collaborative inquiry learning model enhances students' 4C skills (collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity) compared to traditional methods. In this study, the experiment group improved academic performance and teamwork through collaboration, task sharing, and information exchange. In vocational education, collaborative learning helps students apply knowledge in real-world contexts, solve problems, and improve academic performance.

The study further confirms the positive role of active learning in enhancing students' self-motivation. Ballen et al. (2017) demonstrated that active learning disproportionately benefits underrepresented minority (URM) students, increasing learning achievement, science self-efficacy, and a sense of social belonging in STEM courses. In this study, the experiment group enhanced their understanding, memory, interest in learning, and intrinsic motivation through task design, problem-solving, and active exploration. This suggests that active learning, which promotes autonomous learning, effectively enhances self-motivation, leading to greater engagement when facing challenges.

The combination of collaborative learning and active learning can produce complementary effects. Challenges in the curriculum, such as varying academic preparedness, can be addressed through integration, teamwork, active learning, and technology, as Morgan et al. (1998) noted. Detyana et al. (2024) found that combining active learning with collaboration and simulation improves content understanding, learner engagement, and knowledge retention. Our results confirm this, showing significant improvements in the experiment group's academic performance and self-

motivation after adopting the combined method. This synergy likely results from collaborative learning providing team support and communication, while active learning fosters autonomy and responsibility, encouraging proactivity and higher outcomes.

Despite the positive findings, this study has several limitations. First, the sample was limited to first-year students at Liuzhou Vocational and Technical College, and the small sample size may affect generalizability. Future research could include more schools and students from various grades to improve the generalizability of the findings. Second, this study relied primarily on quantitative data and did not explore students' specific experiences and feedback during collaborative and active learning. Future studies could incorporate qualitative methods, such as interviews and observations, to gain deeper insights into students' experiences and provide more comprehensive references for optimizing instructional approaches.

Scaling up these instructional approaches presents logistical and practical challenges. Successful application requires teachers with extensive classroom management skills who can effectively manage team dynamics and provide targeted feedback. In China, recruitment standards for vocational college teachers now require master's degrees, with "dual-teacher" qualifications becoming more desirable (Xue & Li, 2022). The overall improvement in teacher quality has supported the implementation of innovative instructional approaches. Adequate teaching resources (e.g., time management, technological tools, and personalized support in large classes) are vital for improving teaching quality (Delgado et al., 2015). Differences in resource allocation across schools may lead to variations in implementation.

Another consideration is students' academic preparation and socioeconomic conditions. Vocational students often have diverse academic backgrounds, with some needing more foundational knowledge or self-regulation (McInerney & King, 2017). Individual differences must be considered to balance students' starting points for learning through upfront academic assessment and support. Socioeconomic backgrounds, such as limited access to stable internet or a conducive learning environment, may affect resource access (Fabito et al., 2020). Future research should explore how these external factors affect instructional outcomes and suggest inclusive strategies for students from diverse backgrounds.

Future research could incorporate qualitative methods, like interviews and observations, to gain insights into students' learning experiences. For example, examining students' feelings during group learning, their perceptions of self-learning, and how these approaches affect their confidence in future career development. This will provide more comprehensive data to support the optimization of instructional approaches in vocational education.

Conclusion

In this study, comparative analysis revealed that an instructional approach combining collaborative learning and active learning significantly improved vocational students' academic performance and self-motivation. The results suggest that this approach promotes interaction and knowledge sharing while enhancing students' motivation and autonomy. However, the small sample size (27 students) may limit the generalizability of the results. The short experimental period (one month) may only partially capture the long-term impact of these approaches on student development. Future studies should include larger samples and longer experimental periods to assess the long-term effects of these approaches on learning outcomes and motivation. Future research could also incorporate qualitative methods, such as interviews and observations, to explore students' learning experiences in greater depth. This will provide a more comprehensive basis for optimizing instructional approaches in vocational education.

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Community-based explorations and visual literacies: A key interplay to enhance writing skills in early high school students

Exploraciones basadas en la comunidad y literacidad visual:
una conexión clave para mejorar las habilidades escritoras en estudiantes de básica secundaria

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Abstract

This paper presents the outcomes and findings of a qualitative study aimed to describe the effects of combining visual literacies with Community-Based Pedagogies (CBP) to enhance writing skills in early high school learners. The data was gathered through community mapping reports, a needs analysis instrument, students' artifacts, a focus group, and teacher's field notes. This action research revealed how students, through systematic and consistent work, were smoothly guided in the writing process with the help of visual elements that served as triggers or supporters to produce short texts in which their voices were relevant by exploring their context and portraying their realities. The triangulation of the different instruments within the grounded analysis (Saunders et al., 2012), indicated a rise in the students' quantity and quality of the writing production in the foreign language and a learners' genuine interest in writing assuming an active role. Based on the available findings, they contribute significantly to nurturing English language teaching practices in public schools by boosting students' writing skills through the cognizant use of information about the surrounding contexts combined with visual stimuli as a valuable source.

Keywords: Community-Based Pedagogy (CBP); Critical Pedagogy; Visual Literacy; Writing.

Resumen

Este artículo presenta los resultados y hallazgos de un estudio cualitativo destinado a describir los efectos de combinar literacidad visual con Pedagogías Basadas en la Comunidad (CBP) para mejorar las habilidades escritoras en estudiantes de básica secundaria. Los datos se recopilaban a través de informes de mapeo comunitario, un instrumento de análisis de necesidades, producciones de los estudiantes, un grupo focal y notas de campo de los maestros. Esta investigación-acción reveló cómo los estudiantes a través de un trabajo sistemático y consistente fueron guiados fluidamente en el proceso de escritura con la ayuda de elementos visuales que sirvieron como provocadores o soporte para producir textos breves en los que las voces de los estudiantes eran relevantes al explorar su contexto y retratar sus realidades. La triangulación de los diferentes instrumentos dentro del análisis fundamentado (Saunders et al., 2012), indicó un aumento en la cantidad y calidad de la producción escrita en lengua extranjera por parte de los estudiantes y un interés genuino en ellos por asumir un papel activo en los ejercicios de escritura. Con base en los hallazgos disponibles, se contribuye significativamente a fomentar las prácticas de enseñanza del idioma inglés en las escuelas públicas, al impulsar las habilidades de escritura de los estudiantes a través del uso consciente de la información sobre los contextos circundantes combinados con estímulos visuales como una fuente valiosa.

Palabras clave: Pedagogía Basada en la Comunidad (CBP); Pedagogía Crítica; Literacidad Visual; Escritura.

Resumo

Este artigo apresenta os resultados e achados de um estudo qualitativo destinado a descrever os efeitos de combinar letramento visual com Pedagogias Baseadas na Comunidade (CBP) para melhorar as habilidades de escrita em estudantes do ensino médio básico. Os dados foram coletados através de relatórios de mapeamento comunitário, um instrumento de análise de necessidades, produções dos estudantes, um grupo focal e notas de campo dos professores. Esta pesquisa-ação revelou como os estudantes, através de um trabalho sistemático e consistente, foram guiados de forma fluida no processo de escrita com a ajuda de elementos visuais que serviram como provocadores ou suporte para produzir textos curtos, nos quais as vozes dos estudantes eram relevantes ao explorar seu contexto e retratar suas realidades. A triangulação dos diferentes instrumentos dentro da análise fundamentada (Saunders et al., 2012) indicou um aumento na quantidade e qualidade da produção escrita em língua estrangeira por parte dos estudantes e um interesse genuíno deles em assumir um papel ativo nos exercícios de escrita. Com base nos achados disponíveis, contribui-se significativamente para fomentar as práticas de ensino da língua inglesa nas escolas públicas, ao impulsionar as habilidades de escrita dos estudantes através do uso consciente das informações sobre os contextos circundantes combinados com estímulos visuais como uma fonte valiosa.

Palavras-chave: Pedagogia Baseada na Comunidade (CBP); Pedagogia Crítica; Letramento Visual; Escrita.

Introduction

Based on the Common European Framework and the Suggested Curriculum (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2016), early high school learners are supposed to reach level A2. Following the Standards for English (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2006), the students can write short texts in which they express relations of contrast, addition, and cause and effect among ideas; write short messages with different purposes about everyday situations with a basic level of competence. In correlation to the Basic Learning Rights (DBA [because of the acronym in Spanish]), students at level A2 are capable of writing short and simple texts about familiar actions, experiences, and plans using a sequence of images and pre-established models in addition to describing activities related to a subject in their family or school environment by using simple sentences and visual aids.

Even though the Standards and DBA establish a basic level of competence, learners show underachievement, struggle with making word choices and writing down their ideas coherently, and their attitude to writing tasks is usually rejected. Students limited prior knowledge, low motivation, and lack of connection to the school environment negatively influence their attitudes and disposition toward the learning process. Other factors, such as the Colombian educational context policies, driven instructional practices combined with the reality of large classes, very little interest in learning, few hours of English classes a week, school dynamics, and students' growing demotivation, make it difficult to take real actions to overcome problems.

These facts nurtured the possibility of transforming the teacher's researchers' practice to impact learners positively, to increase their understanding of their school lives and learning, and to arouse their motivation to learn English through the implementation of new alternatives in which raising awareness about the sociocultural implications that can permeate all pedagogical practices (Giroux, 1997; Freire & Macedo, 2005). Consequently, critical pedagogy has supported this intervention, in which renewed literacy practices that advocate students' active role have emerged. These practices address sociopolitical issues involving students' communities that may lead them to a more critical development of agency and engagement. In addition, classroom practices might become meaningful opportunities to create peaceful environments in which empathy, reflection, and transformation play a remarkable role (O'Brien & Comber, 2020; Vasquez, 2014). For these reasons, we increased our interest in the incorporation of meaningful activities in which language goes beyond the development of isolated skills to interplay with content and knowledge, opening the door to inquiry, communicative, and problem-solving abilities that facilitate them to become more competitive agents in society while improving their writing skills through critical literacy practices (Vasquez et al., 2019).

Therefore, this study endeavors to portray three main principles. First, implementing meaningful writing tasks in the EFL classroom, where literacy instruction places students at the center of the learning process. Second, language learning is essential in developing socially situated literacy practices through community-based tasks that might nurture the construction of socio-cultural knowledge present in students' school communities. Third, the influence of using visual literacies to arouse the building knowledge processes intentionally and support students' production.

Fundamentally, the focal point of this research study was motivated by the search for a strategy to enhance not only the acquisition of language but also the collaboration, inquiry, and reflection in the English language class. For those reasons, this research integrated the socio-cultural dimension of language and an inquiry-based learning approach to propose writing as a socially situated practice and visual literacy as an enhancer of learning. We tried to examine how written competence could improve by implementing tasks that led to exploring the school context and how using visual tools could stimulate meaning-making processes. Moreover, researchers sought to determine the student's level of engagement in these tasks and the type of reflection they can reach when they play active roles and become agents of change in their communities.

Building on this context, the strategy aimed to enhance learners' writing skills through the use of visual and locally relevant inquiries, reflecting the highly visual nature of contemporary texts (Kalantzis & Cope, 2001, 2004, 2005). This approach aligns with more contextualized experiences, where students depict their own realities, consistent with Clavijo's (2015) work, who observed that:

When teachers inquire in the local community to identify valuable resources to establish connections with the curriculum, it is possible to broaden the opportunities for meaningful learning and to recognize multiple literacy practices used by learners that account for their local knowledge, surpassing the traditional practices promoted by schools. (p. 33)

Another relevant aspect of this research study deals with theoretical and methodological contributions that an inquiry-based approach brings to the EFL classroom. In this line, CBP fosters writing from a more integrative perspective, where learners and teachers co-construct the language curriculum, considering common interests and valuing local knowledge as sources.

This action research study embraces the design of an innovative pedagogical space inside the classroom where learners can receive visual input utilizing images, photographs, or drawings and publish their written production. This dual purpose intends to develop students' writing skills by focusing on the different stages of the process when they write short texts as a result of exploring community issues. Another paramount aspect to consider is the enhancement of the learners' abilities of observation, reflection, analysis, discussion, and cooperation.

In light of the study's aims, the following research question emerged: To what extent could the use of Community – Based Learning activities and visual literacy foster writing skills in early high school students?

Literature Review

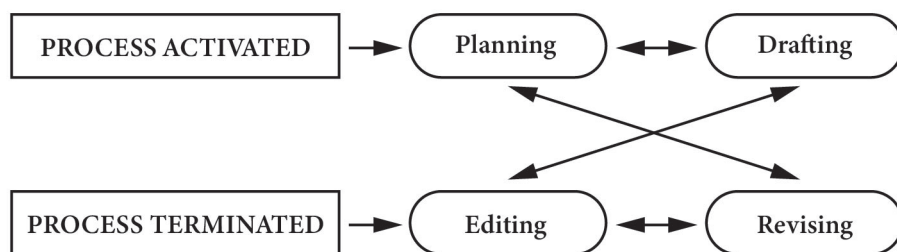
Writing to enhance Learning

According to Nunan (2003), writing is a physical and intellectual activity in which the authors must find their ideas, conceptions, and perspectives and make the necessary considerations about expressing and arranging them into a clear statement or paragraph to be understood. White and Arndt (1991) describe writing as a form of problem-solving that demands mental effort; it involves such processes as generating ideas, discovering a “voice” to write, planning, goal setting, monitoring, and evaluating, among others. In this sense, Cumming (1998) asserts that “writing” refers not only to text in the written script but also to the acts of thinking, composing, and encoding language into such text; these acts also necessarily entail discourse interactions within a socio-cultural context. These definitions pinpoint that writers are challenged to express their thoughts and look for effective forms to organize them into a good composition. Writing requires the integration of ideas systematically through the thinking processes of planning, sequencing, and transmitting messages.

In recent decades, new trends have emerged in teaching writing, considering the text, the writing process, and the social perspectives on its nature. In this respect, Cumming (1998) and Silva (1993) focused their attention on L2 writers as complex individuals who approach writing in unique ways. Connor (1996) and Hinkel (2002) emphasized the products of writing and provided principles to guide writers in structuring the text, while keeping the context and the reader's expectations in mind.

Due to the nature of a product-oriented approach that downplays creative thinking and writing, it has shifted to an approach in which writing is conceived as a personal and innovative activity, paying particular attention to literacy as a social practice and conceiving writing as a developmental process (Elbow, 1973, 1981; Murray, 1985; Flower & Hayes, 1981a; Zamel, 1983; Leki, 2000; Hylland, 2004). In the writing process, learners are engaged through modeled and shared instruction, taking into consideration their level. It is necessary to model all aspects of the writing process as many times as possible until students become familiar with each stage through specific strategies for planning, drafting, revising, and editing (Seow, 2002). It is essential to teach these four stages of the writing process, and despite it being shown in sequence, it is also vital to help students understand that writers can continuously alternate between the steps as they write.

Figure 1. Four stages of the writing process.



Source: Seow (2002, p. 315)

In conclusion, the process of teaching writing is a powerful tool that allows learners to reflect on their compositions, interpret and analyze their contexts, and engage in inquiry, providing them with opportunities to develop critical thinking skills. Regarding these conceptions and principles about the writing process, the Community-Based Learning approach emerges as a practice that profoundly impacts students' retention and engagement by offering authentic learning experiences. These kinds of activities encourage reflection processes in which students start envisioning potential real-life problems and become part of possible solutions from their teenage perspective. For this study, written production, and multimodal texts are manifestations of how students were guided to read their worlds differently, make sense of them, and take a stand to contribute to transforming their environments. That is the value of the situated nature of critical literacies, where the students depart from local realities, relate them to global ones, and, when encouraged, use different modes of written expression in which they realize they can take action.

Community-Based Pedagogy (CBP)

A community, in the context of this action research, refers to the classroom, school dynamics, or the place where students live, spend time, share ideas, learn, and play together. In a broader sense, a community is part of the intertwined platform of social structures, power relations, and critical literacies (Trigos-Carrillo et al., 2022). According to Warburton and Martin (1999), "Community-Based Pedagogies include the way people observe and measure their surroundings, how they solve problems and validate new information, and the processes through which knowledge is generated,

stored, applied, and transmitted to others” (p. 1). Sharkey and Clavijo (2012) define CBP as “an asset-based approach that stresses local knowledge and resources as the basis of the curriculum standards that teachers must address in teaching and learning processes” (p. 41).

Regarding these definitions and our educational setting, CBP might become an opportunity to construct meanings inside and outside the classroom. This approach empowers students to play an active role in the learning process by giving them the possibility of engaging in meaningful experiences and reading their community critically using English. This study focused primarily on the classroom and the school as settings to be explored, considering that the scope of community-based experiences embraces the classroom, school, and neighborhood. Following Sharkey and Clavijo’s claim (2012) about the importance of considering the urban communities “as rich resources for curriculum and see their students as inhabitants of communities with multiple linguistic and cultural assets” (p. 9). Likewise, these learning experiences let teachers posit the community as a curriculum resource to foster learners’ personal, interpersonal, and social development (Cummins et al., 2006).

According to Canagarajah (2005) and Murrell (2001), community teachers must know the contexts where they serve to create pedagogies that value local knowledge. As community teachers, we might give prevalence to thought-provoking tasks and materials to which the students can attach their funds of knowledge, identities, and needs to bring improvement to the communities. Teachers also have the responsibility to design purposeful learning experiences that reflect our understanding of the school context’s socio-economic background and the curricula’ awareness. Regarding these considerations, teachers’ practices and students’ roles are paramount in breaking boundaries, as critical literacy underlies alternative ways to build knowledge. In the case of this article, it expands the view and learning opportunities for developing writing skills in school learners.

Understanding the implications of this approach demands an effective school mapping strategy. This strategy must help students raise awareness and consciousness of their realities and react to their immediate world. In this way, the incorporation of visual literacies emerged as a response due to the powerful role that images play in boosting meaning-making processes.

Visual Literacy to enhance critical thinking

Since one of the core constructs of this research concerns visual literacy, different authors have provided multiple definitions. Deebs (1969) coined the term and gave the earliest definition that refers to “a group of visual competencies that enable a visually literate person to discriminate and interpret a visible number of elements from the

environment and the improvement of these competencies is fundamental to enhance learning and communication” (p.26). The poet Simonides defines literacy as “words are the images of things” (as cited in Benson, 1997, p. 141); similarly, Aristotle stated that “without an image, thinking is impossible” (as cited in Benson, 1997, p. 141). Wileman (1993), defines visual literacy as “the ability to ‘read,’ interpret and understand the information presented in pictorial or graphic images” (p.114). Associated with visual literacy is visual thinking, described as “the ability to turn information of all types into pictures, graphics, or forms that help communicate the information” (p.114).

Following these ideas, Ausburn and Ausburn (1978) listed potential benefits. Visual literacy facilitates self-expression and ordering insights and increases students’ motivation and interest in all subjects and levels. The use of visuals involves a pedagogical intention because they promote inclusion as they serve to teach students with diverse needs and learning styles. In this sense, developing visual literacy skills will also increase the ability to better comprehend today’s world and its relationships, enhancing critical viewing and thinking. On the other hand, from a more contemporary view, Powers and Powers (2019), define visual literacy as:

the ability to interpret, negotiate, and make meaning from information presented in the form of an image, extending the meaning of literacy, which commonly signifies interpretation of written or print text. Visual literacy is based on the idea that pictures and their meaning can be “read” and understood. The basic objective elements are line, shape, form, value, space, texture, color, composition, and perspective. The subjective elements have to do with interpretations of the subject matter, the context in which the image is seen, and the viewer’s emotional state and depth of knowledge. (p.311)

By incorporating these strategies, all learners are considered “equals,” receiving recognition for their contributions and having the opportunity to personalize the possible outcomes. Whether students can assume different roles and accept new responsibilities, they would bring innovation and tangible changes to the school. Moreover, learners can improve the quality of their written texts and develop a sense of connectedness, active involvement, and personal investment in the learning process. We have recently witnessed an increasing rate of technological advancements, bringing multifaceted change to education and language learning. Particularly, this unveils both opportunities and challenges as a significant body of recent research documents. These developments open the door to novel ways to prompt thinking through visual information and express meaning through diverse written forms. Technological resources, like the use of apps and social media, among many others, were not regarded in the configuration of this study due to limitations such as participants’ age and access to technology. However, ever-changing technology demands that such a myriad of resources be incorporated into the language curriculum and capitalized on for the benefit of students’ situated learning and the development of communicative skills.

Previous studies about the development of writing skills from the perspective of community-based pedagogies and visual literacies

Recognizing the importance of these theoretical approaches, previous studies and investigations that validate, expand, and support the procedures and constructs of this action research have defined Community-Based Pedagogy and its implications in developing transformative practices (Giroux and McLaren, 1992); the concept of writing as a social and situated practice; and the tools that visual literacies provide to enhance writing skills. In action research, Sánchez (2017) presents a pedagogical experience in a school in Bogotá where students collaboratively investigated their surroundings through literacy practices from a sociocultural perspective. This experience demonstrates how the school community offered alternatives for students to develop their language and literacy skills through meaningful learning environments. Students assumed roles as community researchers, employing multimodal literacy practices to express their ideas. In a similar effort, Orjuela (2017) describes a series of activities that include cooperative learning, task-based learning, and a descriptive writing approach encouraged through activities grounded in students' communities, incorporating CBP projects as a valuable strategy that gives students opportunities to work on their context, using the target language as a tool rather than an end in achieving English writing competence.

Shifting to writing as the central construct of this research, Chala and Chapetón (2012) present relevant perceptions about writing as part of a social and situated practice that seeks to provide students opportunities to stand their voices so that they express, communicate, share, and negotiate their views of the world and feelings through the written text. Also, the authors argue that literacy goes beyond the mere development of skills and the mastering of linguistic forms to make the writing event a significant experience that contributes to transformation. These theoretical contributions align with our research interest since they perfectly suit the study's objectives, highlighting the power of writing to reflect the writer's skills, needs, and voice. Additionally, they emphasize the strong connections between writing and the social and cultural context in which the authors produce their texts.

Additionally, a study by Ariza (2005) shows how English teachers can guide students in developing their texts. The author demonstrates that the best pieces of writing involved pictures because learners showed great interest, and better outcomes resulted from images rather than words. Furthermore, using visuals as a starting point during the brainstorming stage proved effective in generating ideas and developing vocabulary. This strategy enabled students to express their views based on different interpretations, illustrating that visual literacy provides a significant stimulus during this phase of the writing process. In parallel with these studies, the work of Larrota and Pedraza (2016) offers critical insights focused on in-context photography and

Community-Based Learning Activities. The authors' results indicated that integrating these two elements enhanced students' ability to introduce new vocabulary and accurate language chunks while lowering their affective filters, significantly influencing their performance.

To sum up, writing as a process-oriented approach, community-based pedagogy, visual literacy, and the relevant considerations stated in these previous studies serve as the theoretical foundations for the present research. Although some studies considered the local knowledge of students' communities to develop writing practices from a socio-cultural perspective, none of them precisely follow the complete process of writing or demonstrate the effectiveness of using visuals for different pedagogical purposes. For all these reasons, conducting our work was relevant and appropriate since it potentially contributes to the EFL field.

Methodology

Type of Study

This study is part of classroom action research that aims to tackle an identified issue to generate possible alternatives. According to Burns (2009), action research is a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring one's teaching context. It can be defined as an approach used by educational practitioners and professionals to examine and ultimately improve their pedagogy and practice (Clark et al., n.d.). The present study embraces the design of an alternative strategy that allows students to communicate effectively by focusing on writing short texts resulting from the exploration of different community issues according to their level, needs, and interests so that they could react to their realities and raise their awareness about school life by expressing their teenage stance. The schema presented by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) of reflection, planning, action, observation, and subsequent reflection to close the cycle was the path that better suited the purposes and nature of this study. The innovation was implemented through two extended cycles.

In the initial cycle, students were exposed to a "Pre-writing task" designed to diagnose the real students' level. This first cycle encompassed several substages in which students identified messages, words, pictures, and illustrations on the walls and desks of the classroom. As a result of this activity, we created a new space called "OUR VOICES" inside the classroom for the students to post their written products. In a subsequent substage entitled "Mapping my Classroom," students classified the gathered information and discussed findings based on observation, interpretation, and analysis of the pictures taken from the classroom. Following this, they used a first graphic organizer to brainstorm and organize their ideas within small groups. As a result of the reflection within the process proposed in the schema followed, the preliminary

findings from Cycle 1 showed both achievements and limitations that made us realize that it was necessary to reinforce the type of visual stimuli to trigger a student's deeper understanding regarding the topics as well as to provide more extensive linguistic input to facilitate the accomplishment of the written tasks. Considering the emergent gaps presented in the first cycle, we incorporated these insights into the design of the second cycle to capitalize more on writing skills development and the benefits of community-based pedagogy principles and visual literacies.

The second cycle focused on a school community exploration for the students to examine their surroundings, find potential environmental problems, and raise their awareness about situations that could affect them. Working in groups, students took pictures, classified the photos according to the issues identified, and discussed how these findings impacted them and how they could propose a solution. Afterward, students brainstormed ideas about the problems identified. They shared their opinions to generate a first draft using a template in which they wrote down their points of view and possible recommendations to prevent the issues. Throughout the revising and editing phase, with the teachers' assistance, students strengthened their texts and built their final production, "How could we make our school a greener place?". To conclude, students decided to exhibit their findings to the broader community by using a visual source to increase awareness of environmental challenges within the school, supported by the pictures they took at the beginning of the exercise.

Throughout this process, we collected and analyzed data that progressively showed seventh graders' growth in developing writing skills, expanding their knowledge, and improving their comprehension of local situations. It is worth noting that all the topics chosen for this implementation were aligned with the syllabus in terms of content and the competencies outlined in the DBA and Standards in every cycle. These topics were condensed into a curricular unit, where the procedures, activity descriptions, and aims of the sessions were integrated into each stage.

Participants

This study was conducted with a group of thirty-one seventh graders from a public school in northeast Ibagué-Tolima (Colombia). There were 19 boys and 12 girls, ages 10 to 12 years old. Students struggled with low motivation to accomplish academic tasks because they were dissatisfied with school practices and the disconnection between contents and their realities. They attended 4 hours of English lessons per week structured in two sessions of 110 minutes in which the pedagogical instruction and classwork usually focused on isolated activities about grammar, reading, and writing. Despite the weekly hours of class, they showed apathy in acquiring a new language. They declared that they were not interested in learning English due to the apparent irrelevance of this subject in their future expectations.

Data Collection Instruments

The research data was collected through different procedures during interactions with the students and the implementation of the various study phases in and outside the classroom. Initially, a needs analysis served as a point of departure to enquire about the students' perceptions of the school and their sense of belonging, interest in communicating their ideas, and attitudes regarding writing. Subsequently, focus groups were carried out at the end of the interventions, in which students assumed different roles and shared common ideas related to three main aspects: the use of visual elements, the student's level of engagement in the activities, and the path walked during the writing process. Additionally, the researchers implemented field notes in order to keep a record of students' attitudes, responses, and reactions to the strategies or activities developed during the implementation. They also encouraged ongoing teacher reflection on teaching practice and helped us keep track of the teachers' perspectives on classroom dynamics. Finally, students' written and visual artifacts, including written tasks, creative projects, and photographs taken by the students, contributed to understanding classroom and school dynamics. Students developed these artifacts during the two pedagogical implementation cycles of this study. In conclusion, using all the data mentioned above was intended to triangulate and maximize the validity of the findings. Parental informed consent was sought for the students' participation in the project.

Data Analysis

Considering the methodology presented, categories emerged from the data and were grounded to strengthen the study. Data collected from the four instruments (students' artifacts, focus group, photos and videos, and teacher's field notes) were analyzed using an open coding technique. Interrelationships appeared, providing important insights during this systematic and schematic process. Then, the information was grouped into two categories, and seven subcategories emerged as a whole interpretation (Freeman, 1998).

This data analysis was conducted by employing Grounded Theory, which guided the research process, data collection, and detailed procedures for analysis. This approach helped identify and conceptualize the underlying social patterns of interest through constant comparison (Scott, 2009). Besides, "Grounded theory helps develop an understanding of phenomena that cannot be explained with existing theories and paradigms" (Saunders et al., 2012). The initial research questions were determined to draft and compile data by theoretical sampling. Afterward, researchers transcribed the collected information and categorized it into extracts using open encoding, enabling further analysis to create new axial coding groups. During this process, constructs were labeled with keywords and grouped based on core concepts and subthemes

related to the research areas, such as writing, visual literacies, and Community-Based Pedagogies. Finally, a central idea was defined to guide the analysis of the problem question initially posed.

To ensure the inclusion of valuable information and avoid potential bias, we conducted data analysis using both grounded analysis and ATLAS.ti. We also analyzed the data through traditional and computer triangulation to offer validity to our research by contrasting data gathered through different data analysis instruments and methods. Data triangulation, as defined by Denzin and cited in Freeman (1998, p. 97), refers to the use of various data collection instruments that, in turn, contributed to adding weight to this study. Each data collection method and instrument was defined and designed according to the research objectives and population characteristics. Since triangulation also implies the reduction of data during the analysis of the instruments, there was abstraction and interpretation of the information collected during the different implementations in each action research cycle. This involved gradually identifying coding systems and themes that guided us in reflections, interpretations, and even adjustments to the subsequent implementations when necessary.

Findings

The systematic analysis of the collected information revealed two main categories that gave us a broader comprehension of the relationship between situated visual prompting and students' writing dispositions and gradual improvement. We classified the information into two categories that were aligned with the research question and responded to the specific objectives of our research study as follows:

To analyze how students may engage in writing tasks when portraying their own contexts through community-based learning activities.

To determine the use of visual literacies as a tool in the English classroom to improve students' writing skills.

Consequently, in the following category, students scaffolding their path for writing and its subcategories, such as brainstorming, togetherness, a social analysis under the teenage gaze, and writing gear, follow the order of the first objective as they reveal the connection between the local and situated resources and the way the students unfolded their process in the development of writing skills. In contrast, the second category, students reading a visual world, relates to the second objective of this study as it was centered on incorporating visual elements to arouse students' interest in their community and provoke the development of critical thinking skills and multiliteracies.

Students Scaffolding their Path for Writing

This category indicates that successful enrollment in the writing process occurs when we depart from students' surroundings. Students' artifacts and the teachers' fieldnotes show that discussing ideas and opinions about students' interests and familiar topics can facilitate the students' embarking on a journey that takes them from a brainstorming step to the publication of their writing outcomes.

The writing approach in this research involves several stages, including pre-writing, drafting, revising, and publishing. Through this process, students must think, organize their ideas, revise their texts, and post their writing pieces. Despite being scarcely promoted in classrooms, the results of this study evidenced a growing students' interest as a point of departure for engaging them in meaningful writing tasks. Therefore, it is essential to raise awareness about the significance of the writing process in education. Additionally, students should be encouraged to initiate their writing based on their environment, fostering a habit that integrates significant elements from their realities.

The students' written tasks required aligning their language needs with the curriculum. This fact demonstrates the current need in our Colombian educational system to incorporate writing into the Basic Standards of Learning and Basic Rights of Learning. Indeed, integrating these aspects fostered improving students' writing skills through community participation in learning activities in which visual literacy played a meaningful role.

In the following excerpt, the students spotlighted the benefits of following steps to scaffold the writing path when they desired to communicate their ideas about specific topics (Table 1). In effect, students recognized not only the improvement in their skills to produce pieces of writing but also how they faced the process.

Table 1. Focus group. Participant 1.

“Antes no sabía bien cómo escribir párrafos, y en la lluvia de ideas y los otros pasos que hacemos, yo pude mejorar la escritura.”
“Before I didn't know very well how to write paragraphs, and in brainstorming and the other steps we do, I improved writing.”

Source: Seventh-grade student. Public School from Ibagué – Tolima

Brainstorming: Departing from Students' Surroundings

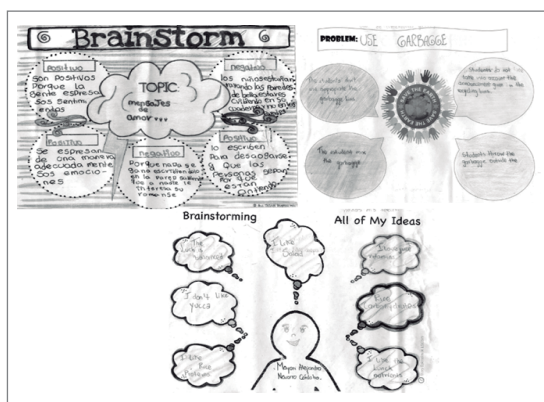
This category highlights the students' capability to explore, critique, and reflect upon their contexts by reading images and photos. The materials and tasks I used stimulated the students' transition from passive agents to active and empowered actors involved in transforming their communities.

Brainstorming techniques are commonly incorporated in classrooms to retrieve ideas and elicit students' previous knowledge about a specific topic. Introducing this resource inevitably encourages students to build on existing schemas and knowledge while discovering new ways to organize the information. During group brainstorming, the mutual stimulation motivates students to generate new ideas and develop creative thinking skills. This approach also allows students to offer several opinions on a given topic, which may support writers in developing ideas while seeking strategies to facilitate the writing process.

The participants in this study brainstormed ideas and vocabulary about their likes, favorite activities, healthy eating, and environmental problems in the school in a template (Figure 1). This shows evidence that providing students with new opportunities to access and share information can support the development of their ideas during the writing process. One of the observed advantages of this strategy was that the use of graphic organizers assisted students in the mental process of bringing back ideas and recalling their previous knowledge in a structured template. This proves that after using such templates, students can effectively familiarize themselves with the proposed exercise to generate a written production.

Finally, the introduction of brainstorming activities in the early stages of writing showed how teachers and peers could help each other develop creative and critical thinking skills by identifying possible solutions to the posed problems. These activities provide opportunities for students to exchange ideas, adapt existing knowledge, and integrate new information into their existing knowledge. Additionally, this stage fosters the development of life skills that allow students to become more adaptable learners through social interaction, allowing them to freely communicate their ideas and appreciate diversity as they have plenty of knowledge to share.

Figure 2. Student's artifacts: Brainstorming exercises



Source: Seventh graders. Public School from Ibagu  – Tolima

Togetherness: a key ingredient in collaborative writing.

The second subcategory of this research study was related to constructing a strategy based on collaborative work. It focused on the idea of scaffolding students' writing. Vygotsky (1989) stated, "What the child can do in cooperation today, he can do alone tomorrow" (p. 189). In classroom terms, this means that a student's language develops first socially and then individually. When students share their perceptions, discuss their ideas, and convey meaning through social interaction, togetherness becomes a motivating force that facilitates English language learning development and promotes higher-order thinking skills, leading to the construction of a strategy based on collaborative work (Figure 2).

Regarding the writing process, teachers do not traditionally promote collaborative learning through group work since it is usually neglected daily in language teaching. Consequently, there is a recognized need for methodological change. The data supporting this claim demonstrates the positive impact of encouraging collaborative writing among students. After engaging students in different collaborative activities, they remarked on the benefits of peer feedback, peer writing, and collaborative writing as allies in the composition of written texts. They underscored the effectiveness of sharing their ideas within groups and correcting mistakes to enhance their compositions and to grow students' trustworthiness concerning their peers. At the same time, they simultaneously have the possibility to work synergistically and independently.

In addition, students highlighted the advantages of collaborative work, recognizing that each individual's contribution can produce better and more enriched texts (Table 2). Notably, they acknowledged the dynamics of teamwork as assistants for writing, as evidenced in the following excerpt:

Table 2. Focus group. Participant 3.

"Estas actividades me han ayudado a compartir primero mis ideas con mis compañeros de clase, luego corregir los errores y así mejorar mi escritura"

"These activities have helped me to first share my ideas with my classmates, then correct the mistakes and thus improve my writing."

Source: Seventh graders. Public School Ibagué – Tolima

A Social Analysis Through the Teenage Gaze

Integrating resources from both classrooms and the community enables students to research and write about issues confronting their surroundings. Faced with this statement, designing and implementing community-based learning activities at school provided a foundation for students to understand their contexts. Consequently, by focusing on community problems, the writing process within the English class serves

as a platform in which students can engage actively in becoming aware of their role in society. Furthermore, a vital component of this research project was that students played the role of researchers without noticing it. This confirmed that students show enthusiasm when tasks take place outside the classroom. Moreover, by assuming the role of researchers, students conducted a school mapping to identify potential problems inside the school.

The inquiry process showed that when students engage in school explorations, they turn information and data into useful knowledge for their benefit. The data revealed that the realization of mapping and self-reflection exercises through the search for problem-solving exhibits that implementing CBP enhances effective writing processes and outcomes through meaningful opportunities for learning inside and outside the classroom (Table 3).

Table 3. Focus group. Participant 5.

“Gracias al proyecto ambiental que desarrollamos en la clase de inglés, entendí que estos problemas también se originan en la escuela, en los hogares y en otros lugares. Por ejemplo, aquí en la escuela, los estudiantes no se sienten responsables de tirar basura, y no usamos los tres contenedores de basura de manera adecuada.”

“Thanks to the environmental project that we developed in the English class, I understood that these problems are also originated in the school, at homes and elsewhere. For example, here at school, students do not feel responsible for littering, and they do not use the three garbage bins properly.”

Source: Seventh graders. Public School Ibagué – Tolima

Similarly, at the beginning of the process, students acknowledged the teacher’s role as an enhancer who creates appropriate learning environments. They also perceived changes in the way the teacher conducted the lessons and recognized the inclusion of useful strategies to involve them in the class. Thus, as the following excerpts support (Figure 3), students were able to examine and evaluate the information they obtained from images.

Figure 3. Students tackling the school issues.

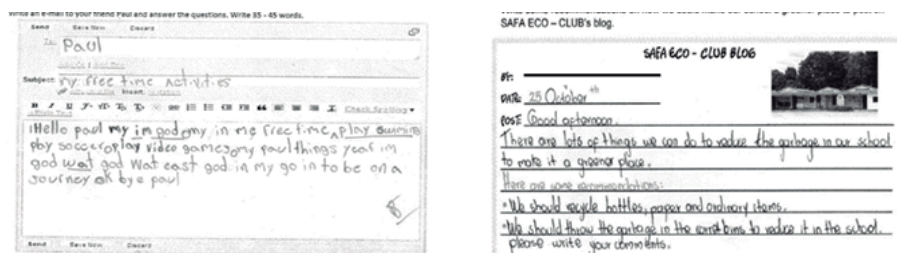


Source: Seventh graders. Public School Ibagué – Tolima

Writing Gear

Building upon Silva's ideas (1990) in L2 writing, the process-oriented approach seems to suggest a progressive, systematic, persistent, flexible, scaffolding, and contextual organization of collaborative workshop environments in which the teaching premise is learner-centered. Following his ideas, it was evidenced that the writing process requires a positive, encouraging, and collaborative setting within which the interaction of different components is crucial. In line with this approach, teachers are encouraged to act as facilitators, helping students develop feasible strategies for finding topics and generating ideas during the writing process, enabling multiple drafts, and adding, deleting, modifying, and rearranging ideas throughout the editing phase.

Figure 4. Students' Artifacts. Pre and Post Writing tasks



Source: Seventh graders. Public School Ibagué - Tolima

Based on the analysis of the data analysis and students' behaviors, it was evident that students consistently used the writing process with slightly different graphic organizers corresponding to the writing stages. Students were more familiar with the brainstorming stage. They revised their first drafts and corrected mistakes using the dictionary while I gave support. The students provided clear evidence of the step-by-step in which they gradually were immersed in how they coped with the writing process throughout the implementation. Students enjoyed embarking upon the writing tasks without realizing they were following a process. For these reasons, students expressed their satisfaction in doing these types of activities, and they commented on the possibility of understanding different topics through dynamic and creative activities like graffiti design, lap books, the simulated wall in the classroom created with the purpose of posting the students' written production, and feedback from the teacher and peers that facilitated learning, as shown below:

Table 4. Focus group. Participant 2

<p>“La escritura se ha vuelto más fácil al utilizar algunas plantillas que nos dio la profesora, luego pudimos compartir ideas con los compañeros para corregir y mejorar nuestros textos.”</p>
<p>“Writing has become easier by using some templates that the teacher gave us, then we were able to share ideas with classmates to correct and improve our texts.”</p>

Source: Seventh graders. Public School Ibagué – Tolima

Students Reading a Visual World.

Upon thorough analysis of the data, it is evident that the incorporation of visual elements generates a twofold process directly impacting students’ learning opportunities. First, images promote students’ comprehension, and second, they trigger the students’ ability to read their surrounding world critically. Furthermore, incorporating community-based learning activities and visual literacy invigorate the learning process by facilitating the construction of meaning and a sense of belonging inside and outside the classroom. Building upon the experts’ ideas in the field of Community-Based Learning, this learner-centered approach promotes the development of knowledge, critical thinking skills, and attributes of community members. This is achieved through fostering awareness of their roles by engaging students in seeking, discussing, prioritizing, and solving potential surrounding social issues (Melaville et al., 2006; Sharkey & Clavijo-Olarte 2012; Villani & Atkins, 2000).

Figure 5. Poster: “School lunch” and school mapping



Source: The author

When students become aware of specific situations in their community, they begin a reflection process that positions them as transformative agents in their world. This study found that integrating visual elements acted as catalysts, strengthening the students’ written texts and enhancing their ability to understand their environment. With these activities, the students’ image interpretation skills improved, facilitating

memory and allowing for better expression of their thoughts. Consequently, tasks and classes turned into more meaningful, interactive, and dynamic learning experiences.

The aforementioned points become relevant as they highlight the advantages of incorporating visual aids in the educational context. Using images facilitates the association and visualization of word images and the retrieval of prior knowledge. Notably, students responded positively to the visual stimuli displayed in the classroom and found it advantageous in assisting the production of sentences.

Figure 6. Visuals as supporters



Source: Seventh graders. Public School Ibagué – Tolima

During the analysis, it was evidenced that visual tools served as previous knowledge activators or as visual input to introduce new topics and new vocabulary; they increased comprehension or aroused students' interest in the English class. These tools demonstrated that students found it easier to interpret and convey meanings and facilitated the expression of their preferences using English. They also became a visual source to reinforce their points of view. These visual aids were displayed inside the classroom and around the school, serving as a source of appreciation for others. In the light of Freire and Macedo (2005), "Reading the word and learning how to write the word so one can later read it is preceded by learning how to write the world, that is having the experience of changing the world and touching the world" (p. 12). This assertion underscores the significance of critical engagement, which questions reality, raises awareness of issues, transforms the self, and rewrites the world, demanding a deeper understanding of the community's concerns. As teachers, we have the opportunity to contribute to this process from our classrooms by utilizing writing as a transformative learning element.

Table 5. Focus group. Participant 4.

“Las imágenes me han ayudado a comprender los temas fácilmente y cuando escribimos los párrafos es más fácil recordar las palabras.”
“The images have helped me understand topics easily and when we write the paragraphs it is easier to remember the words.”

Source: Seventh graders. Public School Ibagué – Tolima

Discussion

This study exemplified the symbiotic relationship between students’ improvement in writing skills, community-based learning activities, and visual stimuli, which served as resources to progressively expand and strengthen the students’ views and understanding of the writing process. To this extent, the findings emphasized the deliberate need to foster connections between students and communities, recognizing the mutual benefits derived from this interaction and making the school community the object of the study (Comber, 2013). Likewise, the findings highlighted the opportunity to connect the students’ everyday lives with the curriculum, a fact that is in line with Clavijo-Olarde & Sharkey’s work (2018).

The analysis of the interplay of the core components of this study let us see that in order to enhance writing skills in early high school learners, it is imperative to redesign the teaching practices focusing on scaffolding writing through process-oriented methodologies that foster in the students the development of better-quality writing and adopting better writing behaviors (Richards and Nunan, 1990). In this regard, guiding students through the writing process by implementing stages such as brainstorming, drafting, editing, and publishing might be a powerful tool for improving English writing skills. Notably, students’ productions exhibited a progressive improvement in their written work, as shown in Figure 4. This progression can be accomplished by modifying and adapting prompts according to the tasks’ nature and presenting useful language and expressions that facilitate learners’ production. In terms of the reasons the students had to write, a socially situated Barton and Hamilton (Carrillo, Diaz, and Lyons 2023) environment to activate the students’ disposition to write was crucial to stimulate them to focus on the different tasks proposed that could be pleasurable, transformational, and pedagogical (Vasquez, Janks, and Comber 2019) and, in our view, disruptive.

The integration of visual literacies combined with Community-based Pedagogies in English classes offered a high number of worthwhile opportunities to improve English teaching practices. As a result, these new educational experiences facilitated “transformative growth,” positioning students as active participants who may read,

interpret, and act upon their community issues, fostering positive social change and nurturing a new and fresh perspective of themselves as learners, citizens, and human beings. Hopefully, some of the insights presented in this research study could contribute to the field of language teaching and learning concerning the effectiveness of incorporating visual components, the student's response to initiatives of local inquiry, the writing process, and its impact on language teaching within schools. Nevertheless, to expand on the nature of future similar studies and be in tune with the contemporary pervading changes in the digital era, we cannot disregard, as P., R. (2024) suggests, that language educators nowadays must prioritize ongoing professional development focused on integrating technology into writing instruction as a strategic challenge in the 21st century.

To sum it up, our pedagogical intervention brought to the surface the connection between community-based pedagogies and multimodal practices for the development of critical thinking skills among students. From this framework, the students observed, explored, and raised their voices, boosting their literate repertoires, evidenced in the form of emails, posters, blog posts, and graffiti. Furthermore, incorporating individual and collaborative dynamics within the classroom contributed to this progress. Through structured writing tasks and teacher guidance, early students had the chance to play the role of researchers in their contexts, exploring their schools locally, increasing their awareness about their realities, and becoming active agents of their language learning process. Consequently, learners could reflect on issues that affected their lives at school, recognize the importance of the local, and establish a relationship between it and the global to build new knowledge together.

Conclusions

To address the research question that guided the study, two main factors could influence the outcomes of this exploration. First, students embarked on meaningful writing tasks that involved exploring their context and portraying their realities to produce short texts in which their voices were relevant to achieving the goal. Second, students were progressively and systematically guided through the writing process with the assistance of visual elements that served as triggers or supporters in accomplishing the writing tasks.

The results demonstrated the students' capability to accomplish the written tasks when certain conditions converge in the English classroom. The teacher must provide the necessary linguistic input regarding vocabulary and grammar structures to comply with this. In addition, the use of prompts and the incorporation of visual stimuli tailored to the selected topic are vital to facilitate written production. Furthermore, the encouragement of collaborative work has evidenced that students can learn from

peers, and it promotes the development of personal and interpersonal skills throughout the interaction. Integrating these elements gave students more opportunities to discuss their ideas, feelings, and points of view before they embarked on the writing process. Consequently, these outcomes underscore the necessity of providing students with training in reading and decoding visual elements, as well as in the consistent and progressive presentation of realistic and situated learning activities within the multiliteracies perspective in the EFL classroom.

Going beyond, using visuals in our classes serves different practical purposes. Images hold power when used as input, catalyzers, or resources that encourage learners' motivation, make classes and activities more meaningful and interactive, facilitate word-image association, and support or reinforce the texts authored by the students. Accordingly, the integration of visuals has demonstrated their effectiveness in stimulating students' memory, maximizing the opportunities to examine, contrast, and evaluate information to communicate their ideas and thoughts, thereby developing higher-order critical thinking skills. These results are consistent with the strategies presented by Trigos-Carillo et al. (2019) for fostering peacebuilding through essential literacy practices among young children.

As researchers, this was an opportunity to see how the students could develop higher critical thinking skills, active engagement, and a sense of belonging by participating in a systematic and structured language-learning process. The findings of our study reveal that students can position themselves in their communities and transform their realities when they assume the challenge of playing active roles in learning experiences. Therefore, we emphasize the necessity of encouraging students by providing them with opportunities to construct strong arguments that depart from their interests and realities. This outcome represents a foundational responsibility we should assume as 21st-century language teachers when we address emerging challenges and orchestrate the processes students must go through when engaging in literacy practices within the classroom and school.

Limitations and future directions

Some constraints and limitations were evidenced during the present study, leading to improvement in future related research, having to do with the challenge of taking the students out of their comfort zone to encourage them to participate in purposeful individual and collaborative writing tasks. In such a way, some ideas for further research could be focused on the systematic incorporation of multimodal forms of expression to channel the students' voices and the use of AI tools in the language classroom to promote meaningful learning experiences through authentic linguistic interactions and peer collaboration in the EFL scenarios.

Even though visual literacy is not a recent area, it still presents breakdowns in its implementation, like the lack of teachers' preparation on the topic, because it demands supportive criteria for the selection of materials as well as the design of meaningful tasks that involve particular ways of questioning and elicitation of information from images and visual representations; in fact, during this implementation, not all the students responded equally to the challenges of reading images and visual representations with a critical perspective, which in turn become areas to focus further attention Guo et al. (2019) in both classroom practices or research endeavors.

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The effect of flipped classroom audiovisual content on students' talking time and speaking skills in an adult EFL class.

El efecto del contenido audiovisual del aula invertida en el tiempo de conversación y las habilidades orales de los estudiantes en una clase de inglés como lengua extranjera para adultos.

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Abstract

This action research report explores the effect of a *flipped learning* strategy on adult EFL students' speaking skills. Flipped learning, or inverted learning, reverses the traditional educational model where students learn in class and practice out of it; flipped learning promotes the students' learning of concepts and theories out of the classroom that is later practiced and applied in class under the teacher's guidance. The primary hypothesis was that by flipping grammar explanations, students would be more prepared and have more time to interact in English and use the structures in class. This research revealed that flipped learning helped to increase student talking time in class and accuracy in grammar use. Furthermore, it shows evidence that using flipped audiovisual materials poses advantages and challenges that can potentially boost learning inside and outside the classroom.

Keywords: Flipped learning, class preparation, student talking time, CALL, Action Research, communicative skills.

Resumen

Este reporte de proyecto de investigación-acción explora el efecto de una estrategia de *aprendizaje invertido* en la habilidad oral de adultos en clase de inglés como lengua extranjera. El aprendizaje invertido desafía el modelo tradicional de educación donde los estudiantes aprenden en clase y practican fuera del aula; el aprendizaje invertido promueve el aprendizaje de conceptos y teorías fuera del salón de clase para luego practicarlos y aplicarlos en el aula con la guía del profesor. La hipótesis original es que a través de *invertir* las explicaciones de gramática (hacer que los estudiantes las estudien en casa), ellos podrían estar más preparados y tendrían más tiempo de interactuar en inglés y practicar las estructuras gramaticales en clase. Este estudio reveló que el aprendizaje invertido ayudó a incrementar el tiempo de interacción oral de los estudiantes en clase, así como la precisión en el uso de las estructuras gramaticales estudiadas. Adicionalmente, hay evidencia de que el uso del material audiovisual que se usó para la estrategia de aprendizaje invertido plantea ventajas y desafíos que pueden impulsar el aprendizaje dentro y fuera de la clase.

Palabras clave: Aprendizaje invertido, preparación de clase, tiempo de interacción oral del estudiante, CALL, investigación-acción, habilidades comunicativas.

Resumo

Este relatório de projeto de pesquisa-ação explora o efeito de uma estratégia de aprendizagem invertida na habilidade oral de adultos em aulas de inglês como língua estrangeira. A aprendizagem invertida desafia o modelo tradicional de educação, onde os alunos aprendem em sala de aula e praticam fora dela; a aprendizagem invertida promove o aprendizado de conceitos e teorias fora da sala de aula para depois praticá-los e aplicá-los em sala, com a orientação do professor. A hipótese original é que, ao inverter as explicações de gramática (fazendo com que os alunos as estudem em casa), eles poderiam estar mais preparados e teriam mais tempo para interagir em inglês e praticar as estruturas gramaticais em sala de aula. Este estudo revelou que a aprendizagem invertida ajudou a aumentar o tempo de interação oral dos alunos em sala de aula, bem como a precisão no uso das estruturas gramaticais estudadas. Além disso, há evidências de que o uso do material audiovisual utilizado para a estratégia de aprendizagem invertida apresenta vantagens e desafios que podem impulsionar o aprendizado dentro e fora da sala de aula.

Palavras-chave: Aprendizagem invertida, preparação de aula, tempo de interação oral do aluno, CALL, pesquisa-ação, habilidades comunicativas.

Times have changed. People can work from home; kids prefer being in front of a screen to going out and playing in the park. Teenagers can get richer than their parents, among many other things that people over 40 might find eccentric or even outrageous. Many of us have assimilated these changes easily, but others have had to challenge their old habits, traditions, and beliefs to keep up with them. This is also true in education. Flipped learning has recently come to the ELT stage to innovate education and turn it around, literally. The idea of asking students to learn concepts and theory at home and then use that knowledge under the teacher's guidance to practice in class might have been unthinkable a few years ago.

Flipped learning is a logical consequence of the changes mentioned above. It is not unusual for learners to study concepts and theories at home. Technology and the Internet allow them to access this knowledge at home and later apply it in class. The class is not a place to learn but to practice; it is a laboratory for applying concepts and theories.

Statement of the problem

The educational context and challenges in the program in which this research is framed in terms of syllabus pace, the evaluation type of the program (formative assessment and qualitative evaluation), and the number of students make timing a common concern for teachers. Having these time constraints in the program sometimes means sacrificing speaking moments and interaction to give feedback and to explain grammar and vocabulary points that students need to learn to improve their level. In a program that has adopted a communicative approach and formative assessment as part of its principles and curriculum, it is not ideal that long grammar explanations take away the time devoted to having students speak freely in the target language. Despite the importance of making students focus on specific language in class, practice can boost students' mastery of the structure.

Kareema (2014) indicates that a teacher explaining a new grammar topic can spend between 60% to 80% of the class talking, and this is something that may affect our students' opportunities to talk and communicate, especially in a kind of program that is proud of its curriculum based on a communicative approach. The situation pointed out above related to freeing up time and maximizing students' speaking is fundamental because "in communicative language classes, students need ample opportunity to practice the target language so that the teacher should reduce the amount of their talk." (Kareema, 2014, p. 1)

Research question

What effect does flipped classroom audiovisual content have on adult students' talking time and speaking skills?

Literature review

Flipped learning, according to Karlsson and Janson (2016), “reverses the traditional order of instruction where lectures precede students’ activities: students are instead given homework as *preparation* for class, and classroom time is then spent on active learning under the guidance of the teacher.” (p. 128) The present project was about creating instructional videos with explanations and examples of the course grammar for students to watch before the class. This could allow teachers to avoid long grammar explanations in class and use this time to boost students’ communicative skills, which is the research problem to be overcome in this project. Neaupane (2017) encapsulates our thesis when he says that with flipped learning, also called inverted classroom, “teachers and students have more time in class to discuss and try out the things to be learned rather than just sitting and listening to the lectures from the teachers.” (p. 1)

Flipped learning takes a step towards a new way to experience teaching and learning that deserves to be studied and shared (Neaupane, 2017). It takes advantage of technology and strengthens students’ autonomy, making them more active and responsible for their own learning; it makes time in class for hands-on activities and student interaction; it fosters the practical application of knowledge under teacher’s supervision that will, eventually, build the know-how and can-do skills that the new century demands from new generations. Ozdamli and Asiksoy (2016) compiled some other principles from different authors:

- Flipped learning fosters student-centeredness through a set of interactive activities in the classroom and individual teaching through activities out of the class through a computer (Bishop & Verleger, 2013, in Ozdamli & Asiksoy, 2016)
- It encourages students to prepare themselves for class through reading and audiovisual materials (Mull, 2012, in Ozdamli & Asiksoy, 2016)
- It increases active learning activities and gives students the opportunity to use their knowledge in class under the teacher’s guidance (Toto & Nguyen, 2009, in Ozdamli & Asiksoy, 2016)

All in all, by encouraging students to learn by themselves at home through audio, video, and reading material, flipped learning makes students more autonomous, more responsible for their own learning, and more prepared to reflect upon language items

(grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc.) and upon language learning in general (how they like to learn, how they learn better, and what strengths and challenges they experience while learning). On the side of the teachers, it helps them to devote more time to interactive activities and communication in class, to avoid squeezing too many activities in only one lesson, and to give more responsibilities to students that are totally capable of taking on.

Flipped learning also features surprising results in terms of class time savings. The following table shared by Ozdamli & Asiksoy (2016) sets the differences between how traditional class time is spent and the time used in the flipped classroom.

Table 1. Differences in time use between the traditional and the flipped class

Traditional class activities	Time	Flipped classroom activities	Time
Warm up	5 min	Warm up	5 min
Homework checking	20 min	Answering lecture and video questions	10 min
Teaching of new subject	30-45 min	Exercise of lab applications	75 min
Exercise of laboratory and application	20-35 min		

Note: From Flipped Classroom Approach. *World Journal on Educational Technology. Current Issues*, 8 (2), 98-105 by Ozdamli, F., & Asiksoy, G. (2016).

A case study with similar research aims as the one reported on this article was conducted by Bueno-Alastuey & Galar (2017) in Pamplona, Spain. Their research also wanted to report on the difference in the performance of teenage students in a control group and an experimental group as well as on students' perceptions of the flipped classroom model. The study concluded that students who were exposed to flipped audiovisual materials during the course had a better performance than the ones who were not.

Bueno-Alastuey and Gala's (2017) study is similar to the one depicted in this paper in the sense that both intended to explore students' perceptions of the flipped classroom experience, but their research differs from this one because, whereas Bueno-Alastuey & Galar (2017) wanted to analyze students' performance with and without flipped audiovisual materials, the present study intended to find out the impact of flipped learning on class time and a subsequent increase in communicative activities and communication in class.

On the other hand, Cabi (2018) reported on a flipped learning research project in Turkey, this time with university students majoring in English and Turkish language teaching. Her main objective was to study the impact of the flipped classroom on students' academic achievement. By analyzing the results obtained from a control group and an experimental group, Professor Cabi established that, in her case study, there were no significant differences between the students in the control group and the ones in the experimental group in terms of their academic achievement. These results, according to the researcher, were surprising in the sense that most similar research projects, such as the one conducted by Bueno-Alastuey and Galar (2017), had reported considerable differences between control and experimental groups. She found a possible explanation in one of her data-gathering tools results. In the focus-group interviews, it was noticed that there were many variables that affected the results, being the most important the lack of time students had for reflecting and analyzing the materials they were supposed to study at home, the students' preference to be explained the topics in class, and the lack of concentration and training that autonomous learning endeavors demand.

The other two concepts that contributed to the understanding of this research were autonomy and the use of technology for learning. Student autonomy started to be discussed long before the arrival of computers as an educational tool (Godwin-Jones, 2011), but, as with most areas of life, the concept of autonomy has also taken a new breath with technology. In this study, CALL, MALL, CMC, and audio and visual material had an important role because that is going to be the way the flipped content will be presented and through which students will get ready for class speaking practice. However, no matter how important technology is in language learning, the effective use of it "has to do with the role and content of audio and visual material and how these interact with each student's language learning experience." (Price, 1987, p. 168)

Research Design and Methodology

Action research does not only want to understand social phenomena, but it also leads to changes in practice. Following Carr and Kemmis' ideas (1986), the best research should unite theory and practice. Taking into consideration that the intention of this project is to solve a problem that has been observed in class, action research was the best research path for this study. As a matter of fact, this research project holds many of the characteristics of action research highlighted by Burns (1999): It is contextual, small-scale, and localized, it is evaluative and reflective, and it proposes changes in practice based on collected information and data (Burns, 1999, p. 30)

Given the action research nature of this study, instructional videos were created for students to get familiar with the grammar explanations and examples that they would watch before class. This way, the present study aimed to bring about change in the classroom because more student talking time could be allotted in the lesson.

For the creation of videos, Karlsson and Janson' (2016) suggestions, as well as Neaupane's (2017) ideas, were followed: 1) Create videos that are no more than 6 minutes long: In their study, Karlsson and Janson (2016) found that shorter videos are more engaging. 2) Create videos in which students can see the information (through slides, for instance) but also where they can see their teacher's face: Videos with a personal feel can be more engaging. 3) Create videos where you speak fast and enthusiastically: They help maintain students' interest. 4) Use your own voice: It is different when students hear your voice than when they hear a stranger's voice. (Neaupane, 2017)

The participants in this study were taking English classes at Centro Colombo Americano-Bogotá. They belonged to a B1+ level course in English, aiming at a B2 level in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001). The course was made up of seven students who took their classes Monday through Friday from 6 am to 8 am. Five students were professionals working in fields as varied as engineering, digital technologies, international commerce, and real estate. Two students were teenagers who just finished high school and were studying English before enrolling in a university program. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 35.

In this study, there was a control group that was not asked to see the instructional videos before class and an experimental group that was invited to see them; this way, the real effect of flipped classroom videos in the experimental group could be unveiled. Students in the experimental group watched five explanatory videos with grammar information that reviewed and elaborated on the grammar boxes that students have in their textbooks. The textbook with which students were working is *Summit 1* by Pearson, and the units and grammar that were considered are Repeated and Double Comparatives (Unit 8), Transforming parts of Speech (Unit 8), Perfect Modals in Active and Passive Voice (Unit 9), Be Supposed to (Unit 10), and Structures to describe habitual actions in the past (Unit 10)

Our data collection methods were:

Surveys

Students filled out the surveys after watching each video and experiencing the lesson to identify if they noticed a benefit in watching the video before the class regarding their speaking time during the lesson and an evaluation of technical aspects of the videos, such as their audio and video quality.

Final Questionnaire

Students filled out a final questionnaire with their general impressions about the research project, the use of flipped audiovisual materials, and their effect on their learning at the end of the course.

Field Notes

The teacher-researcher jotted down his impressions on the development of the lessons that correspond to the flipped grammar explanations. He also took notes about students' participation and attitudes, the researcher's perceptions of the lesson's positive and negative points, class and project outcomes, etc.

Time Control Formats

A format was designed to track the students' talking time. The teacher-researcher compared the information from the two groups and contrasted it to see differences in the control and experimental group students' talking time.

The implementation stage lasted less than a month. During the course, the videos were sent to the students via WhatsApp so that they could easily access these audiovisual materials from anywhere.

In the class that followed a video watching, students had to demonstrate their understanding of the topics and structures in the videos by explaining them briefly to another partner, carrying out checking and review activities, and incorporating the new language into the communicative event for that day.

The time control format in the lessons featuring a grammar topic in both the control and the experimental group was also filled out. This quantitative method format focused on taking the time of the class activities, particularly the activities where students talked. This format specified if the interaction was transactional (controlled practice, comparing homework, answering teachers' questions, etc.) or communicative (free speaking practice, topic discussions, and reporting on communicative outcomes). Even though communicative activities are the main aims of this study, transactional language is the first step in preparing for that. Transactional language is also communication and can help learners use language for real transactions inside the classroom (Kramsh, 1985)

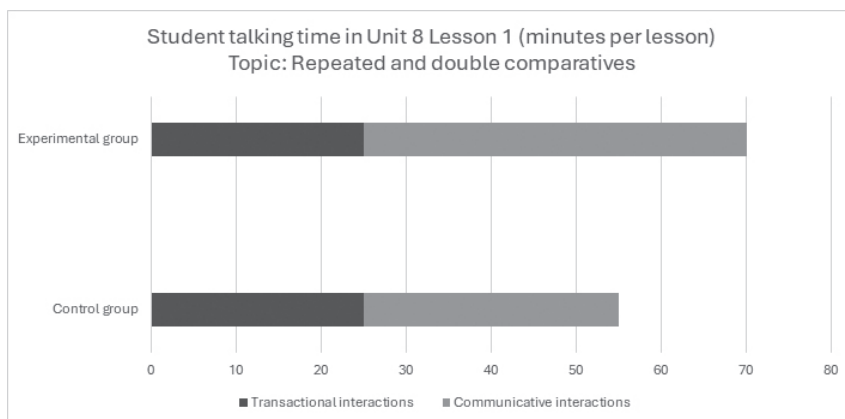
Table 2. Heading of the class time control format and example.

Activity/class moment	Time spent (minutes)	Student talking time and type of talk (transactional or communicative)	Activity description and analysis
Objectives presentation/ Warm-Up/ Homework checking	6:10-6:20 am (10 minutes)	8 min (Transactional)	Students compare their homework and check the meaning of the expressions in Ex. A

Data Analysis and Findings

After completing the class time control formats, the teacher-researcher compared the timing information from the control and the experimental groups. This way, the changes in patterns of increasing or decreasing student talking time between the control and experimental groups could be seen. Some bar graphs depicting the student talking time were designed to have a more graphic identification of the information obtained. Here is an example of the formats:

Table 3. Students taking time in the control and experimental groups for Unit 8, Lesson 1.

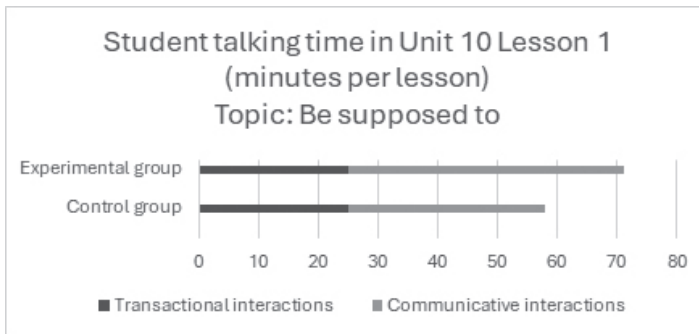


Note: Student talking time in Unit 8, Lesson 1: The control group is 55 minutes. Experimental group: 70 minutes. Student talking time increase: 27%

The graphs and data collected through the other data collection tools recurrently suggest that speaking opportunities and options have increased using flipped audiovisual materials. As grammar explanations were flipped and students had the chance to learn the lesson grammar in advance, the time not devoted to grammar explanations in class was used to make students speak more.

In all the surveys collected after the lessons where a grammar point was studied, students mentioned that they had spoken more than in the usual classes where grammar was explained in class. In survey #5, for instance, everybody felt they had spoken 'a lot' in class. Their perception was correct if we consider the graph that shows the comparison between the regular class with grammar explanation included that was carried out in the control group and the experimental group where the grammar explanation had been flipped. The graph representing the grammar topic in Unit 10 lesson 1 describes the information obtained from the class time control format filled out in that lesson. The control group spoke for 58 minutes during the class, and the experimental group spoke for 71 minutes, representing an increase of 22% in student talking time.

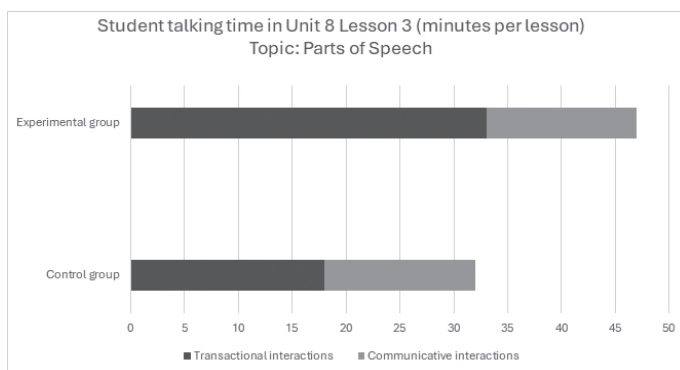
Table 4. Differences in student talking time between the control group and the experimental group in Unit 10, Lesson 1



Note: Student talking time in Unit 10, Lesson 1. Control group: 58 minutes. Experimental group: 71 minutes. Student talking time increase: 22%

In some cases, the increase was as high as 46% as it happened in lesson 3 unit 8 (Table 5), where students in the control group spoke for 32 minutes compared to the 47 minutes students said in the experimental group according to the class time control format for this lesson.

Table 5. Differences in student talking time between the control and experimental groups in Unit 8, Lesson 3.



Note: Student talking time in Unit 8, Lesson 2. Control group: 32 minutes. Experimental group: 47 minutes. Student talking time increase: 46%

In the five lessons in which we tested the flipped learning strategy, there was an average increase of 25%. In a way, we confirmed Neaupane's (2017) thesis that says that with flipped learning, also called inverted classroom, "teachers and students have more time in class to discuss and try out the things to be learned rather than just sitting and listening to the lectures from the teachers." (p. 1)

The students shared their ideas about why it may have happened. For instance, student B, in the final questionnaire, explained: "When you have already an idea of the topic, you just spent a little time clarifying doubts and you can focus on practice what you already learn" (student B final questionnaire)

Students C and D also expressed their ideas: "The time that we don't use learning the grammar in class we use it in speaking" (student C's final questionnaire). "We get more information, and we practice with more people." (student D's final questionnaire)

Despite the evident increase in student speaking time, the increase was thought to be higher at the beginning of this study. I got that idea after reading the work of Ozdamli & Asiksoy (2016), which reported an increase of over 50% in the laboratory activities for a science class, which would be like the communicative activities for a language class. An explanation for this was found after the analysis of the different lessons, in which it was noticed that the more complex or unfamiliar a grammar topic was, the less student talking time increased.

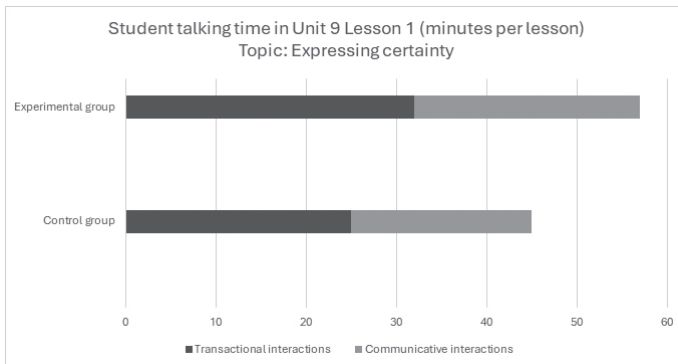
In the field notes, it is written down that: "The expressions that were presented in the textbook for this lesson were already known by students (maybe, it's possible, etc.),

except for two or three expressions of certainty (most likely, it's obvious)” (Field notes Unit 9 lesson 1)

It is hypothesized that students had already gotten some automaticity using these expressions from previous courses, so they did not need to review their meaning or how and when to use them. Thornbury (2007), who developed the concept of automaticity, claims that a way to keep closing the gap between what students know and what they can use in interaction is achieved by constant practice and repetition of structures and, especially of prefabricated chunks, linking devices, and other ready-made units that are recurrent in social language.

As a result, the familiarity of students with these expressions allowed them to speak more extensively, as is evident in the graph that corresponds to this lesson, where students increased their talking time by 26 % in comparison to the student talking time in the control group:

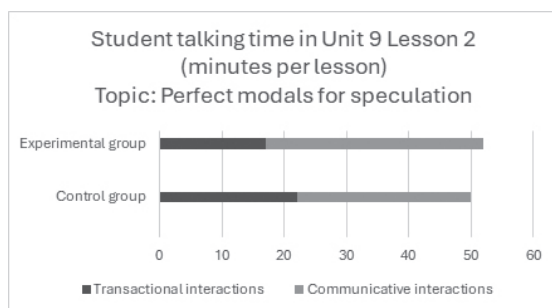
Table 6. Differences in student talking time between the control and experimental groups in Unit 9, Lesson 1.



Note: Student talking time in Unit 9, Lesson 1. Control group: 45 minutes. Experimental group: 57 minutes. Student talking time increase: 26%

On the contrary, when a grammar topic was unfamiliar to students (even though students said in the survey that the explanation was clear), the increase in student talking time halted, as it happened in Unit 9, Lesson 2, in which students studied Perfect Modals to speculate about the past:

Table 7. Differences in student talking time between the control and experimental groups in Unit 9, Lesson 2.



Note: Student talking time in Unit 9, Lesson 2. Control group: 50 minutes. Experimental group: 52 minutes. Student talking time increase: 4%

Even though there was an increase in speaking in communicative interactions (accessible speaking), the overall student speaking time increased by 4% in this lesson. In terms of the quality of the interaction, on the other hand, students in the experimental group seemed to have used the structure more manageable and more naturally than the students in the control group:

“...however, even though they did not speak way more than the control group, students felt more confident when using the new structure in the communicative activity and just a few corrections were made to a couple students.” (Field notes Unit 9 lesson 2)

A student in the final questionnaire also shared an idea that depicts this idea accurately: “I feel more confident when I know the topic than when I see the topic for the first time.” (student A final questionnaire)

The analysis of the data also suggested a set of benefits that flipped videos carry with them different from the purpose they were intended to, that is, the increase in speaking opportunities in class: “I consider that my listening and vocabulary about the topic have been impacted” (student A Final questionnaire)

Student C was more straightforward when asked what other skills had been improved: “Listening.” (Student C Final questionnaire)

The fact that the videos had no subtitles helped students continue training their ears to listen and increased their vocabulary range in the examples shown in the videos. However, as it is stated in the field notes, the video explanations had a clear impact on writing as well: “Audiovisual materials also boost other kinds of skills, and, in this

case, other language skills. Students were also more prepared to use the new grammar and vocabulary in their project essays.” (Field notes Unit 10 Lesson 1)

This commentary was jotted down in the field notes after the teacher checked students’ final versions of their controversial issue essays, which is the project students in this course had to accomplish. Most of them implemented correctly repeated and double comparatives to express trends that are increasing or decreasing (unit 8, lesson 1), perfect modals to speculate about past events (unit 9, lesson 2), and parts of speech to select correct words for the corresponding sentences (unit 8 lesson 3)

Flipping the grammar explanation was also an opportunity to help students carry out an activity that students in this institution are encouraged to do: class preparation. As a learning routine, students at the Centro Colombo Americano embrace class preparation to be ready for class. The videos helped them go beyond and prepare vocabulary and grammar points for the following class. In the final questionnaire, all students said using videos was beneficial for familiarizing themselves with grammar before the class.

Student A expressed her point of view: “I feel if you watch the videos before the class, you have two opportunities to understand the topic, and you feel more confident.” (Student A Final Questionnaire)

Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

This research study could provide an answer to the research question and help to improve a problematic situation that was observed in the classroom. By considering the analysis of the data and the results, it can be concluded that flipped classroom audiovisual content positively impacts adult students’ talking time and speaking skills in terms of the amount of student talking time in the classroom. It was because asking students to study the grammar rules at home frees up time in class that can be used for more communicative activities through control, semi-control, and free oral activities. Additionally, it benefited the quality of interactions because students were able to implement accurately the grammar points studied through flipped learning in their final essays, as it was written down in the field notes taken after grading students’ written work in the experimental group. (Field Notes Unit 10 Lesson 1)

On the other hand, the flipped audiovisual materials prepared by the teacher were highly appreciated by students, who are experienced technology users. Rikhye et al. (2009) call them ‘Digital Natives’ because they were born among computers and technological tools for learning, which gives them a natural ability to understand how tech tools work. Conversely, the teacher-researcher is what the same author calls a ‘Digital Immigrant’ born and taught before the Internet era. In this study, students evaluated the videos as part of the end-of-class surveys that they filled out in terms of

audio and video quality, in which an improvement in the production and edition of the videos was evident:

Table 8. Progression of students' opinions about the video quality in the surveys

	Video 1 survey Unit 8 lesson 1 (4 students)	Video 2 survey Unit 8 lesson (7 students)	Video 3 survey Unit 9 lesson 1 (6 students)	Video 4 survey Unit 9 lesson 2 (7 students)	Video 5 survey Unit 10 lesson 1 (5 students)
Great quality	3	5	5	6	5
Good quality	1	2	1	1	0
Poor quality	0	0	0	0	0

On the side of the teacher, thus, this research project was also a learning opportunity, and facing technology became a challenge because it meant much extra work, not only recording videos but also planning them and getting self-trained to make these materials more appealing and practical to students.

- Apart from the abovementioned ideas, here are some additional conclusions drawn from the study regarding positive aspects as well as challenges when flipping the grammar explanations through videos.
- As was highlighted before, other skills different from speaking were also impacted positively. Among them, we find writing, vocabulary, and listening, as was evident in the surveys and field notes.
- Students refined their class preparation skills. In addition to reviewing the previous class, they learned the importance of preparing for the next class to gain confidence in speaking and concentrate on practice.
- Students found a fun way to deal with typically boring topics such as grammar. Grammar explanations are more interesting when they are prepared online, and it impacts their communication skills. Furthermore, the task of watching the videos and preparing before class encouraged students to continue learning more by themselves and using technology to be more autonomous. As student A put it in the final questionnaire: "After we finish this course, I plan to review those topics I do not remember very good and find videos to review the grammar. I like to watch videos like the ones that the teacher made."
- Students reported changing their schedules and usual routines to watch the videos and, at the same time, continue with their usual study habits (practice topics on a digital platform and carry out project tasks and assignments). This way flipped learning encourages flexibility and open-mindedness, two necessary qualities for modern academic and work environments.

- Teamwork was also fostered because students worked together to discuss what they understood from the videos and clarified their doubts with the teacher's help. They also worked together to share applications and online resources to practice English outside the classroom and troubleshoot tech-related problems. They started seeing technology to learn and practice English and not only to be entertained or to communicate with others. Student D gave his insight in the final questionnaire: "I think I am going to use technology better, not only to chat with friends and play online games...I think I will see more things about English."

Some of the pedagogical challenges that emerged from the study were:

- Some flipped learning activities may diverge from the academic program principles of the institution. In this case, I tried to plan the videos so that they reflected the inductive teaching of grammar that the institution supports.
- Teachers must do much extra planning to cope with flipped learning, especially if it involves videos. (Flipped learning may also happen through other means.) It requires teachers to think differently, give students information in advance, and plan practice activities for the class. In addition to planning classes differently, teachers must deal with technology and learn new things constantly to make flipped learning work.
- When students are not connected with a project like this and do not do their part at home, the teacher may need to explain things again in class and take time away from practical activities. Even though it did not happen in the class that was part of this project, some students were more prepared than others because they had followed the suggested activities in the video to the letter or because they watched the videos more than once. In this sense, doing the flipping activities planned by the teacher may even be more important than doing homework or other kinds of assignments because if students do not prepare and study the topic at home, the teacher will have to come up with a plan B for these cases in class (with all the extra planning and execution that it entails), which may delay the lesson plan and may end up taking away even more communicative opportunities than a regular session.

To conclude, being this an action research project report, this paper does not intend to provide new and innovative information about a widely discussed pedagogical approach as it is flipped learning but to disseminate actionable input and results of a particular case where a single flipped learning strategy was applied. It reported on how an isolated problematic situation in the classroom was addressed and what steps in collecting and analyzing data were carried out by a concerned teacher to bring about positive change and improvement in his classroom. Even though this research study was carried out to solve a problem in a specific situation, and its findings and

results may be generalizable only in relatable scenarios and within specific educational contexts, it is hoped that other teachers experiencing a similar challenge in their pedagogical practice may want to replicate it or develop similar research projects to contrast the results found in this study and continue building knowledge about the application of flipped learning actions to the language class.

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So Easy to Write a Story with a Mind Map: An Experimental Study

Tan fácil escribir una historia con un
mapa mental

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the effect of mind mapping on story writing skills of the students. A pre-test, a post-test, and a semi-experimental research design were used in this study. The study group consisted of a total of 86 third-grade students; 33 students from the experimental group, 23 students from the control 1 group, and 30 students from the control 2 groups. Stories were written by the students in the experimental group by using the mind map method during 18 lesson hours. In the control 1 group, story topics were given to the students, and they were asked to write stories about them as homework during one lesson hour for 9 weeks. In the control 2 group, the researcher did not intervene in their lessons during the term. As a result of the research, there was an increase in the post-test writing skill scores of the experimental and control 1 groups. The mind map method and story writing with homework exercises improved students' writing skills.

Keywords: Writing, Story writing, Mind map, Story writing with homework, 3rd grade

Resumen

Este estudio tuvo como objetivo determinar el efecto del uso de mapas mentales en las habilidades de escritura de historias de los estudiantes. En este estudio se utilizó un diseño de investigación de pre-test, post-test y semi-experimental. El grupo de estudio fue conformado por un total de 86 estudiantes de tercer grado: 33 estudiantes del grupo experimental, 23 estudiantes del grupo de control 1 y 30 estudiantes del grupo de control 2. Los estudiantes del grupo experimental escribieron historias utilizando el método del mapa mental durante 18 horas de clase. En el grupo de control 1, se les asignaron temas de historias a los estudiantes y se les pidió que escribieran sobre ellos como tarea durante una hora de clase por 9 semanas. En el grupo de control 2, el investigador no intervino en sus lecciones durante el semestre. Como resultado de la investigación, hubo un aumento en los puntajes de las habilidades de escritura en el post-test tanto en el grupo experimental como en el grupo de control 1. El método del mapa mental y los ejercicios de escritura de historias como tarea mejoraron las habilidades de escritura de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: Escritura, Escritura de historias, Mapa mental, Escritura de historias como tarea, 3er grado.

Resumo

Este estudo teve como objetivo determinar o efeito do uso de mapas mentais nas habilidades de escrita de histórias dos estudantes. Neste estudo foi utilizado um desenho de pesquisa de pré-teste, pós-teste e semi-experimental. O grupo de estudo foi composto por um total de 86 estudantes do terceiro ano: 33 estudantes do grupo experimental, 23 estudantes do grupo de controle 1 e 30 estudantes do grupo de controle 2. Os estudantes do grupo experimental escreveram histórias utilizando o método de mapa mental durante 18 horas de aula. No grupo de controle 1, foram atribuídos temas de histórias aos estudantes e foi solicitado que escrevessem sobre eles como tarefa durante uma hora de aula por 9 semanas. No grupo de controle 2, o pesquisador não interveio em suas aulas durante o semestre. Como resultado da pesquisa, houve um aumento nas pontuações das habilidades de escrita no pós-teste tanto no grupo experimental quanto no grupo de controle 1. O método de mapa mental e os exercícios de escrita de histórias como tarefa melhoraram as habilidades de escrita dos estudantes.

Palavras-chave: Escrita, Escrita de histórias, Mapa mental, Escrita de histórias como tarefa, 3º ano

Introduction

Writing is the most powerful means of communication in human history, and it directly affects social life. Even ancient times began with the invention of writing. It is necessary to acquire the writing skill, which has such an important place in human history. By acquiring writing skills, societies and cultures can preserve knowledge and ensure its direct transmission to future generations.

Writing is defined as the process of expressing emotions, thoughts, desires, and events in our minds in accordance with certain rules with symbols and putting information structured in the mind into writing (Güneş, 2013; 2020), producing the essential symbols and marks to express our feelings and thoughts in accordance with its rules and legibility (Akyol, 2000). The concept of writing creates information that evokes cognitive processes and structures that work below the level of conscious thought (Galbraith & Baaijen, 2018), develops students' cognitive learning strategies (Bangert-Drowns, Hurley & Wilkinson, 2004) combining information in long-term memory (Silva & Limongi, 2019), is expressed as a troublesome process (Galbraith & Baaijen, 2018) that facilitates learning. Graham (2018) considered writing as a product of people, community goals, social practices, determined actions, tools, and people's common history. Writing is a set of activities such as setting goals, generating ideas, organizing information, selecting the appropriate language, drafting, reading and evaluating, and then reviewing and editing (Hedge, 2001). In addition, technological advances and the use of social media have created new areas of writing. Email writing, blogging, interpersonal messaging, Facebook (Graham et al., 2011), sharing on Twitter, and photo comments on Instagram are among the writing activities.

The skill used to translate ideas in a language fluently in written text format and transmit them to the other party is the writing skill (Goldstein & Naglieri, 2011). Steinlen (2018) defined writing skill as a complex task that requires the coordination of fine motor skills and cognitive skills and reflects social and cultural patterns. According to the Ministry of National Education [MoNE] (2019), the Turkish curriculum, "with the development of writing skills, it is aimed that students express their feelings, thoughts, dreams, designs and impressions, their opinions and theses on a subject in accordance with the rules of written expression, using the possibilities of language, turn writing into a habit in self-expression and develop those skills of those who have the ability to write" (p.) Development of writing skills is associated with repeated practice, practice controls, and writing about a topic that attracts the attention of the student and where the student is an expert (Johnstone et al., 2002). Writing skills are not innate skills, they should be acquired during childhood (Kellogg, 2008).

To improve writing skills, it is necessary to follow certain processes. Writing is a complex task that activates various cognitive skills, such as planning, synthesizing,

observing, analyzing, editing, and reviewing. Additionally, writing is shaped by different strategies, which are reflected in the editing stage. This process can be learned through structured feedback and enhances higher-order thinking skills (Benjamin, 2005; Canady, 2008; García & Fidalgo, 2008; Sharples, 2003). In the process of gaining writing skills, teachers are required to teach students handwriting and grammar skills as well as basic writing rules such as text planning, drafting, and reviewing (Cutler & Graham, 2008). The writing process is complex and requires careful organization. To teach it effectively and efficiently, teachers should employ a variety of methods and techniques. In addition, these methods and techniques to be applied with students will enhance the quality of the texts written by the students and will enable them to increase their motivation. It has been studied how methods used were effective in developing positive attitudes towards writing. Studies have shown that activities performed before writing have a positive effect on students' writing skills (Susar Kırmızı and Beydemir, 2012; Uysal and Sidekli, 2022). Many different methods are used before writing; one of them is the mind map.

The mind map was developed by Tony Buzan in the 1960s. The mind map is a visual, graphic holistic thinking tool that is suitable for memory, creativity, learning, and all kinds of brain functions (Buzan & Buzan, 2015). Brinkmann (2003) defined the mind map as a powerful technique that enables the expression of thoughts in the mind and reveals the potential of the brain. Mind maps are regular, visual graphic structures in which topics and themes are regularly presented (Tucker et al., 2010); and students can explain, criticize, and rearrange their thinking (Montgomery, 2005, as cited in Kan, 2012). Although a mind map is generally preferred to be made individually, it is also possible to make a mind map with the group. Mind map practices with the group eliminate the focus of students' brainstorming technique on one point (Buzan & Buzan, 2015) and offer a chance to visually enrich emerging ideas. Mind maps have a wide range of uses. They are commonly employed as tools for notetaking, learning, teaching, organizing thoughts, and editing information, as well as for uncovering existing knowledge. Numerous studies highlight the effectiveness of mind maps as both teaching and visual learning tools (Goodnough & Woods, 2002).

The mind map is one of the methods used in the writing process. It is generally used at the pre-writing stage due to its feature of revealing information. Bharambe (2012) explains that the mind map provides a useful focus for students to organize their knowledge with their thoughts and present clearly and effectively. Şahin (2016) states that tasks such as scribbling, using images, symbols, words, and drafts during the pre-writing process can be done more easily with the help of mind maps, which also help to reduce confusion. The use of the story map along with the mind map in the pre-writing process will also ensure that the stories are structured and effective.

The reason for using the story map is that the mind map reveals the students' prior knowledge by providing them with unlimited thinking opportunities (Uysal & Sidekli, 2020). The story map, on the other hand, presents the unlimited ideas of the students

under the elements of the story and enables them to be molded and gathered under categories to create their stories. In this way, students' unlimited ideas are gathered under certain patterns, and scattered ideas are collected. Akyol (2011) and Sidekli (2013) emphasized that the importance of using the story map before starting to write will allow students to understand the elements of the story in planning their stories, distinguishing important and insignificant information, and attracting attention to important details.

Writing is the most advanced and challenging linguistic skill to develop. Therefore, it is required to organize the pre-writing, writing, and post-writing stages well for students to be proficient writers and to have good writing education. While organizing the writing process, utilizing different methods and techniques will make the process more efficient. It should also be ensured that students enjoy this while writing, that they are not prejudiced against writing, and that their motivation is high. Students' positive attitudes during the writing process can significantly enhance the quality of their work. The methods and techniques to be applied to students in their writing processes will enable students to write more creative and original stories. The methods and techniques used before writing should ensure that the creativity comes out with the information required for the story. Using the mind map method in the pre-writing process will reveal students' prior knowledge through visuals and connotations, enhancing their creativity and enabling them to write more original stories. From this point of view, this research aims to determine whether the use of the mind map method in the pre-writing stage has an impact on the story writing skills of primary school third graders.

For the research, answers to the following questions were sought.

1. Is there any significant difference between the pre-test results of the groups participating in the comparison between the groups in the study?
2. Is there any significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results of the groups?
3. Is there any significant difference between the post-test results of the groups participating in the comparison between the groups in the study?

Method

Research Model

The pre-test and post-test with control group semi-experimental research design which is one of the quantitative research methods was used in the research. In the pre-test and post-test control group method, the groups are formed randomly. This study consists of an experimental group and two control groups. Pre-experiment and post-experiment story writing studies were conducted for each group.

Study Group

The study group consists of third grade students studying at two state primary schools in the Menteşe District of Muğla Province during the fall semester of the 2019-2020 academic year. Three teachers from these two state schools have volunteered to implement the study in their classrooms. Experimental, control 1, and control 2 groups were determined by drawing lots between the three classes.

Experimental Group: It is aimed to research the impact of an activity to be applied in the pre-writing process on the success of story writing. For this reason, the mind map method was applied to the experimental group in the pre-writing process. Then the story writing activity started.

Control 1 Group: In the pre-writing process, the students were given story topics without any studies or activities, and they were asked to write stories about them. The purpose of writing stories without any pre-writing activity in the control 1 group is to check whether students' story writing skills increase without any activity. Story writing activity with homework was carried out for this reason.

Control 2 Group: No intervention was made, and no activity or study was conducted by the researcher. The class teacher continued his lessons and activities without disrupting the process of his own course. Students wrote the stories only for the pre-test pro-test.

The methods, duration, and the number of students in the research groups are given in the following table.

Table 1. Groups, Number of Students in Groups, Methods and Duration

Groups	N	The Method	Duration
Experimental Group	33	Mind Map	18 hours course
Control 1 Group	23	Writing with Homework	9 hours course
Control 2 Group	30	Class Teacher as Independent	18 hours course

Data Collection Tool

The researcher developed the ‘Story Writing Rubric’ to collect data. The story writing rubric consists of 3 grades and 10 items. These items are in the form of title, characters, place, time, plan, word richness, relevance to the topic, spelling- punctuation, page layout, and originality. The lowest score a student will get from a rubric is 10 and the highest score is 30.

Before the rubric was finalized, a pool of 17 items was formed. Chong (2017) said that in the teaching of writing, the students should answer questions such as where, when, who, how, and why in their writings by presenting a detailed description of events. After this statement and the literature are scanned, in the item pool; title, characters, place, time, event order, event flow, word richness, originality, relevance to the topic, main idea, spelling rules, punctuation marks, page layout, legible writing, plan, word usage and style are included. It was decided that title, characters, place, time, spelling-punctuation, and plan items should be strictly by considering the issues from the item pool that students should pay attention to throughout the application. Three experts in the field of classroom teaching have been consulted on which of the remaining items to be added. After being interviewed by three experts, the rubric was made up of ten items adding the items of word richness, relevance to the topic, page layout, and originality.

After the proficiency levels, scores, and rubric items were developed, two linguists specializing in Turkish language education reviewed them, necessary corrections were made, and the final version was established.

The final version of the rubric is presented in the following table.

Table 2. Story Writing Rubric

Title	1	2	3
	The title isn't written.	The student writes the same topic in the title or uses an uninteresting title.	The student writes a creative title that enables the text to arouse interest.
Characters	There are characters, but they aren't introduced.	There are characters, but only the main characters are introduced.	All the characters are introduced.
Place	There is a place, but it isn't introduced.	There is a place, but the introduction is so little.	A detailed introduction of the place is done.
Time	The time isn't specified. Expressions such as 'One day, that day' are used.	The time is clear, but there are no details.	Time is specified in detail.
Plan	There are no introduction parts.	There are introduction parts or there is only an introduction part.	There are introduction parts that are in coherence with the text.
Word Richness	Word usage is limited, and words are used in their real meanings.	Word usage is limited, words are used in their real and figurative meanings.	Word usage is varied, words are used in their connotations, and real and figurative meanings.
Originality	The student writes the same program he/she has watched or a book he/she has read. It isn't relevant to the topic.	The student is inspired by a program he/she has watched or a book he/she has read.	The student writes a unique, new, and creative story.
Relevance To Topic	It isn't relevant to the topic.	The student tries to write on the topic, but there is no coherence.	The content is completely appropriate to the topic and there is coherence in the story
Spelling Punctuation	There are more than five mistakes in spelling and punctuation.	There are less than five mistakes in spelling and punctuation.	There are no mistakes in spelling or punctuation.
Page Layout	The writing is not legible. No suitable blanks have been left. His/her credentials are missing.	The writing is partially legible. No suitable blanks have been left. The student writes his/her credentials completely	The writing is legible. Suitable blanks have been left. His/her credentials are complete.

Research Process Data Collection Process

A story on “Family” was written by all groups to determine the story writing levels of the three groups before the practice. When the topic of the story was chosen, the class teachers of all groups were consulted, and all three teachers stated that it was consistent with the curriculum and that students’ readiness levels would be higher about this topic.

After the practice, a story on “Home” was written by all groups to determine the levels of story writing of the three groups and the change in their story writing skills. The stories on “Home” were collected from the students for evaluation of the post-test.

Experimental Group

In the experimental group, a 2-hour session on mind mapping and a 2-hour session on story mapping were conducted before the implementation. The group then underwent two-hour sessions per week over a period of 9 weeks, totaling 18 course hours of practice. During the practice, a mind map of the topic was developed in one-course hour. In the next class, they were asked to write their stories by using the story map on the topic. For 9 weeks, they created mind maps in groups and individually while doing the mind map study.

The weekly story writing topics of the experimental group and their weekly studies are included in Table 3.

Table 3. Weekly Story-Writing Topics of Experimental Group and Studies in the Courses

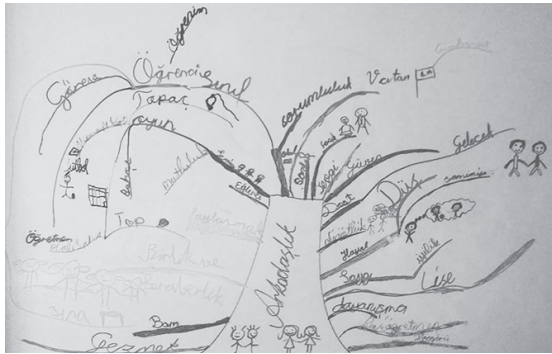
Topic	Week	Date	1st Lesson	2nd Lesson
Feast	1st Week	31.10.2019	“Mind Map” was created with the class.	The story writing activity was done with the help of a story map.
Friendship	2nd Week	07.11.2019		
Love	3rd Week	14.11.2019	“Mind Map” was created in groups of 6 people.	
Animals	4th Week	28.11.2019		
Game	5th Week	05.12.2019	“Mind Map” was created in groups of 4 people.	
Meatball	6th Week	12.12.2019		
Atatürk	7th Week	19.12.2019	“Mind Map” was created in groups of 2 people.	
New Year’s Wishes	8th Week	26.12.2019	“Mind Map” was created individually by the students.	
Nature	9th Week	02.01.2020		

The topics to be written every week were decided by pre-interviewing with the class teacher of the experimental group and Control 1 group, story topics were chosen by taking into consideration the students' readiness levels.

For example, the story-writing work on "Friendship" was done. Before this topic was chosen, a pre-interview was conducted with the class teacher and then it was decided that the topic of "Friendship" would be appropriate for the student's readiness levels by sharing decision-making. In the first lesson, the mind map about "Friendship" was chalked up with the students. The mind map made by the class is presented in Figure 1. During the lesson, the students went to the blackboard and created a mind map in turn. In the second lesson, students prepared a story map individually by using the mind map. And then they wrote their own original stories by using the story map.

Creating the story map enabled them to write their stories faster and fluently. In the second lesson, they finished their stories and handed them over to the researcher.

Figure 1. The Mind Map about "Friendship" Made by the Class



Control 1 Group

The topics to be written every week were decided by pre-interviewing with the class teacher of the experimental group and Control 1 group, story topics were chosen by taking into consideration the students' readiness levels.

Topics specified every week were given to the Control 1 group and the students were asked to write about them as homework during the lesson. The weekly story writing topics of the control 1 group and their weekly studies are included in Table 4. The duration for writing the stories was set at one hour. This is because, in the experimental group, students were given one hour to write their stories after completing the pre-writing activities. The goal was to assess the story writing skills of the Control 1 group without any intervention. For this reason, it is thought that a lesson hour is appropriate for the students in the Control 1 group to write a story.

Table 4. Weekly Story-Writing Topics of Control Group 1 and Studies

Topic	Week	Date	1st Lesson
Feast	1st Week	01.11.2019	Students were given 40 minutes and asked to write their stories.
Friendship	2nd Week	08.11.2019	
Love	3rd Week	15.11.2019	
Animals	4th Week	29.11.2019	
Game	5th Week	06.12.2019	
Meatball	6th Week	13.12.2019	
New Year's Wishes	7th Week	20.12.2019	
Atatürk	8th Week	27.12.2019	
Nature	9th Week	03.01.2020	

The Control 1 group and the experimental group wrote stories on the same topics every week. The reason why they write stories on the same topics every week is not to cause differences in students' stories because of the topics.

Control 2 Group

Stories were written by the students in the Control 2 group to acquire only data from the pre-test and post-test. No intervention was made by the researcher in the Control 2 group. In the Control 2 group, writing activities were conducted by the classroom teacher following the guidelines of the Turkish curriculum. The 3rd-grade curriculum includes writing exercises as part of its learning objectives. Based on this, it is assumed that the classroom teacher carried out weekly writing activities in alignment with the curriculum.

Data Analysis

Before conducting the analysis, the researcher randomly selected seven participants from each group, totaling 21 participants, to assign scores and ensure that no bias was present in the study. Dunsmuir et al. (2015) and Uysal and Sidekli (2020) used different raters to evaluate the students' stories. They found that stories were scored reliably by different raters. For this reason, two experts were asked to assign scores to 15 selected students. This was found to be 0,82 (95%GA; 0,56-0,91). This result indicates inter-rater compliance. Scores were found to be unbiased and reliable.

As a result of the analysis, it was determined that the data obtained were normal distribution. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out to examine the significant difference between the pre-test and post-test, and Dunnett's C complementary statistical technique was used in cases with significant differences. Paired Samples T-test was carried out to analyze whether there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the groups. The Paired Samples T-test analysis determined whether there was a significant difference between the two mean scores being compared. Additionally, it was necessary to calculate the effect size to evaluate the magnitude of the significant difference. The influence quantity is calculated with the ratio of the t-score to the square root of sampling subsistence (Green & Salkind, 2005). Cohen's (1988) classification was used in interpreting the level of the influence quantity. According to this classification, $0.150 \leq d < 0.150$ is at an insignificant level, $0.151 \leq d < 0.400$ is at a low level, $0.401 \leq d < 0.750$ is at medium-level, $0.751 \leq d < 1.100$ is at wide level, $1.101 \leq d < 1.450$ is at very wide level and $1.451 \leq d$ is at excellence level.

Findings

The results of the analysis conducted in accordance with the purpose of the study are presented in tables.

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was carried out to determine the levels of the groups before the practice and to determine whether there were statistical differences between the groups. If there were significant differences, Dunnett's C complementary statistical technique was used to determine the source of this. The results of the analysis are given in Table 5.

Table 5. Comparison of Pre-Test Results of the Students by Groups

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	sd	Average of Squares	F	p	Significant Difference
Between-groups	11.62	2	5.81	2.27	.11	
In-group	212.20	83	2.56			-
Total	223.82	85				

When Table 5 is analyzed, in the group consisting of 86 students from three different third grade, the mean scores of the levels of story writing skills of the groups formed according to their classes were compared with a one-way analysis of variance for the unrelated samples in order to test whether there was any difference between the levels of story writing skills before the practice. At the end of the test, it was found that the average of the students in the experimental group was (\bar{X} experimental = 16.12),

the average of the students in the control 1 group was (\bar{X} control1 =16.35), and the average of the students in the control 2 group was (\bar{X} control2 = 15.47). No significant statistical difference was found as a result of the Dunnett C multiple comparison test.

The levels of story writing were compared before and after the practice with the mind map of the experimental group. The analysis of the Paired Samples T-test was conducted to make comparisons before and after the practice. The result of the analysis is given in Table 6.

Table 6. Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of the Experimental Group

Measurement	N	\bar{X}	S	sd	t	p
Experimental Pre-test	33	16.12	1.19	32	-7.06	.00
Experimental Post-test	33	19.00	2.59			

The t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between the mind map and the averages of the scores of the stories written before, and after the practice for related samples in a class of 33 people, where the impact of the use of mind map on the development of story writing skills was investigated. As a result of the analysis, a significant difference was found between the average of the story scores written before the practice (\bar{X} pre-test = 16.12) and the average of the story scores written after the practice (\bar{X} post-test = 19.00) [$t(33) = -7.06, p < .05$]. It is possible to say that story writing practices using the mind map improved third graders' story writing skills. The effectiveness of the practice applied in the experimental group was calculated as $d=1.23$. According to Cohen's (1988) classification of influence quantity, this practice was found to be very effective at a very wide level.

A comparison of the levels of story writing skills in the Control 1 group between before and after the study of story writing with homework. The analysis of the Paired Samples T-test was conducted to make comparisons before and after the practice. The result of the analysis is given in Table 7.

Table 7. Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of the Control 1 Group

Measurement	N	\bar{X}	S	sd	t	p
Control 1 Pre-test	23	16.35	1.94	22	-5.51	.00
Control 1 Post-test	23	17.22	1.73			

The t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between the averages of the scores of the stories written before and after the practice for related samples in a class of 23 people, where the impact of the study of story

writing with homework done by giving topics every week on the development of story writing skills was investigated. As a result of the analysis, a significant difference was found between the average of the story scores written before the practice (\bar{X} pre-test = 16.35) and the average of the story scores written after the practice (\bar{X} post-test = 17.22) [$t(22) = -5.51, p < .05$]. It was found that the study of story writing with homework improved third graders' story writing skills positively. The effectiveness of the practice applied in the experimental group was calculated as $d = 1.15$. According to Cohen's (1988) classification of influence quantity, this practice was found to be very effective at a very wide level.

A comparison of the levels of story writing skills was made before and after the lessons according to the Turkish curriculum of the control 2 group. The analysis of the Paired Samples T-test was conducted to make comparisons between before and after the lessons. The result of the analysis is given in Table 8.

Table 8. Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of the Control 2 Group

Measurement	N	\bar{X}	S	sd	t	p
Control 2 Pre-test	30	15.47	1.70	29	.24	.81
Control 2 Post-test	30	15.40	1.83			

The t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between the averages of the scores of the stories written for the pre-test and post-test without interfering with the class teacher's lessons for related samples in a class of 30 people, where the impact on the development of story writing skills was investigated. As a result of the analysis, a significant difference was not found between the average of the story scores written for pre-test (\bar{X} pre-test = 15.47) and the average of the story scores written after the practice (\bar{X} post-test = 15.40) [$t(29) = .24, p > .05$].

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was carried out to determine the levels of the groups after the practice and to determine whether there were statistical differences between the groups. If there were significant differences, Dunnett's C complementary statistical technique was used to determine the source of this. The results of the analysis are given in the following table.

Table 9. Comparison of Pre-Test Results of the Students by Groups

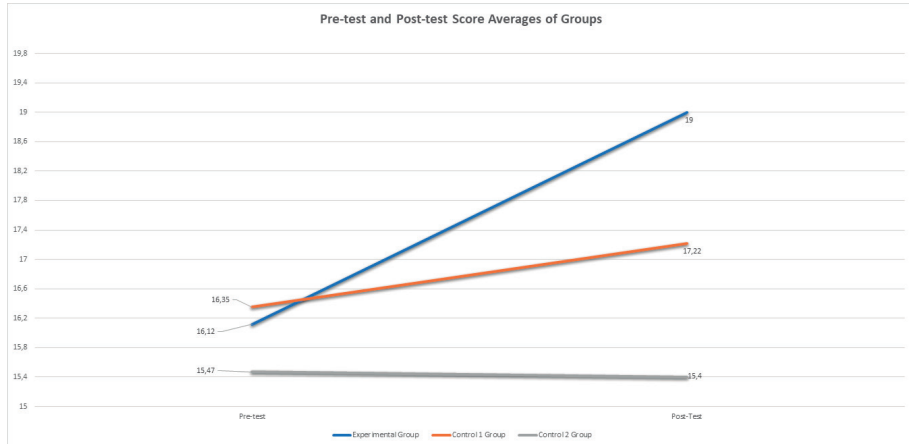
Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	sd	Average of Squares	F	p	Significant Difference
Between Groups	203.74	2	101.87	22.42	.00	Experimental > Control 1
In-Group	377.11	83	4.54			Experimental > Control 2
Total	580.85	85				Control 1 > Control 2

When Table 9 is analyzed, in the group consisting of 86 students from three different third grade, the mean scores of the levels of story writing skills of the groups formed according to their classes were compared with a one-way analysis of variance for the unrelated samples in order to test whether there was any difference between the levels of story writing skills after the practice.

At the end of the test, it was found that the average of the students in the experimental group was (\bar{X} experimental = 19.00), the average of the students in the Control group 1 was (\bar{X} control1 = 17.22) and the average of the students in the Control group 2 was (\bar{X} control2 = 15.40). A significant difference was observed statistically between at least two of them [$F(2-85) = 22.42, p < .05$]. As a result of the Dunnett C multiple comparison test, a significant difference was found between the experiment and Control 1 group in favor of the experimental group, between the experiment and Control 2 groups in favor of the experimental group, and between the Control 1 and Control 2 groups in favor of the control 1 group.

Figure 2 shows the pre-test levels of all groups and the progress they made in their post-test levels as a result of the implemented practices, activities, and courses.

Figure 2. Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Score Averages of Groups



The pre-test and post-test score averages of the three groups were analyzed. It was found that the pre-test score average of the Control 1 group was higher than the pre-test score averages of other groups. It was also given in the results that the pre-test score averages of all groups were close to each other. When we looked at the post-test score averages of the groups, it was found that the mean score of the experimental group was better than the mean scores of the other groups. While the experimental

group ranked second in pre-test score averages, it ranked first in the post-test score averages, outdistancing the other groups. Although there was a significant increase in the experimental group and Control 1 group, there was a negative change in the mean score of the Control 2 group.

Discussion, Conclusion And Suggestions

As a result of comparing the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group, a significant difference was found between the pre-test and post-test of the group in favor of the post-test. Story writing activities improved students' story writing skills positively with the mind map method applied to the experimental group. Padang and Gurning (2014) used the mind map method to develop descriptive writing skills of eighth grade students. As a result of the research, it was found that the method improved their writing skills as well as their writing motivation. As a result of the research carried out by Yunus and Chien (2016), they discovered that the mind mapping method is a supporting tool in planning and editing students' writings in the teaching of story-telling text writing to eleventh graders. Waloyo (2017) found that writing using a mind map enables students to think freely and creatively, making it easier for students to write stories (Uysal and Sidekli, 2020). They revealed that the mind map improves the story writing skills of fourth graders in primary school. The study, along with previous research, concluded that mind mapping has a positive impact on students' writing skills.

The use of a story map as well as a mind map had a positive effect on students' story writing. The story map was also used to determine the elements of the story after the mind map method and helped improve the writing skills of the students. Li (2007) analyzed the fluency of story writing and the variety of word usage of students who had a learning disability with the story map technique. As a result of the research, they found that three out of four students' writing fluency improved, and there was no noticeable change in students' writing performance related to the diversity of word use. As a result of Brunner's (2010) study, it was observed that the use of a story map also increased the number of words written by students, the number of words written correctly, and the number of sequences of words written correctly by students. Sidekli (2013) used the story map to improve the story writing skills of undergraduate students and as a result of his research, he observed a positive increase in the student's story writing skills. Based on this study and supporting literature, story mapping contributes significantly to the improvement of students' writing skills.

As a result of comparing the pre-test and post-test scores of the Control 1 group, a significant difference was found between the pre-test and the post-test. Writing activities with homework applied to the Control 1 group were found to be effective

in the development of the student's story writing skills. Regular story writing studies without any pre-writing activities also enhance the students' story writing skills. In Denny's (2008) study, conducted with university students, they were forced to write. As a result of this research, it was revealed that there was improvement in students' writing skills. However, some studies indicate that assigning writing as homework does not lead to improvements in students' story-writing skills. Story writing activity with homework conducted by Uysal and Sidekli (2020) did not improve the story writing skills of the students in fourth grade.

As a result of comparing the pre-test and post-test scores of the Control 1 group, a significant difference was not found between the pre-test and the post-test scores of the Control 2 group. This revealed that the Turkish curriculum did not improve the students' story writing skills. No significant differences were found between the pre-test and the post-test in story writing studies conducted according to the Turkish curriculum, even though there was a decrease by .07 in the average of the students' story writings.

A significant difference was found between the experimental group and the Control 1 group. In the development of story writing skills, the mind map method is more effective than story writing with homework. The mind map allowed students to relax at the pre-writing stage, make preliminary preparations, and reveal their knowledge again. This enabled the students to develop their writing skills. In the Control 1 group, story writing studies that had certain topics were given to the students as homework. No pre-writing activities were done. Despite this, as regular writing activities were done, it enabled students to have significant changes in their stories. In their study, Uysal and Sidekli (2020), with fourth graders, concluded that story writing activities with mind map are more effective than story writing activities with homework when comparing story writing with the mind map method and story writing with homework.

Considering the effect size of both the experimental and Control 1 groups, their levels are equivalent. Although they were at the same level of influence quantity, the influence quantity of the experimental group was higher than the influence quantity of the Control 1 group. This shows that pre-writing activities improve students' writing skills more. Research shows that pre-writing practices improve students' writing skills positively and have an impact on students' writing skills (Sidekli & Uysal, 2017).

A significant difference was found between the experimental group and the Control 2 group. It was concluded that story writing studies conducted with the mind map method are more effective than story writing activities conducted according to the Turkish curriculum. In a mind map study conducted with an experimental group, students are motivated to write stories. It also reveals the prior knowledge and creativity of students. A significant difference was found between Control 1 group and Control 2 group. It was concluded that story writing activities with homework were more efficient than story writing activities according to the Turkish curriculum.

Story writing activities with homework prepared by students each week had a positive impact on story writing skills, as they enabled students to write stories regularly. Different methods and techniques applied before and during the process of writing attract the attention of the students and make them write better stories. Not only the mind map method or writing activities with homework, but also different methods improve students' writing and story writing skills. Peker and Adıgüzel (2020) In study of Uysal (2022) found that primary students' writing skills increased with the think-research-discuss-write-present strategy developed the creative writing skills of the students with the private property technique, which is one of the creative drama methods. Taç (2020) proved that students' writing skills improve with an investigative writing approach.

Considering all groups, it was concluded that the study conducted with the experimental group improved students' writing skills more than the others. In addition, it was found that story writing activities with homework prepared by students also affect students' story writing skills positively.

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Along with mind mapping, various methods can be used to support the pre-The mind mapping method can be applied to writing different types of texts.
- Writing activities can be introduced as homework starting in the second grade.
- Providing students with feedback after writing can help them create even better stories

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Social Media Strategies for EFL Students: Enhancing Speaking Proficiency

Estrategias de redes sociales para
estudiantes de EFL: mejorando la
competencia oral

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Abstract

Social media is a communication tool that facilitates EFL students to improve their speaking proficiency as it enables them to fully engage in oral communication, exchange information, and form long-term bonds in this modern era. This study intended to investigate EFL students' social media as speaking strategies used vis-a-vis their speaking proficiency. A descriptive correlational design was used in this study. The participants were 70 English major students (second year and third year) at Wolkite University. To this end, data were collected using a questionnaire, the IELTS speaking proficiency test, and an interview to obtain reliable information. The findings showed that Facebook and YouTube were the most frequently used social media by learners, even though they felt less confident, more anxious, and less willing to communicate in English. The results also indicated that learners lacked awareness of how to purposefully use social media to address their speaking challenges. Conversely, the findings of this study showed that there was a positive correlation between the students' use of social media and their speaking proficiency ($r=0.461$, $p=.000$, $p>0.05$). However, the students' speaking proficiency was very poor because learners didn't use social media for educational purposes, especially speaking skills. This might be because the learners did not use social networks effectively to promote their speaking proficiency. Therefore, it is suggested that in the learning of speaking skills, more attention should be paid to investigating the use of social media as a speaking strategy.

Keywords: EFL learners; social media; speaking skills; speaking test; Wolkite University

Resumen

Las redes sociales son una herramienta de comunicación que facilita a los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) mejorar su competencia oral, ya que les permiten participar plenamente en la comunicación oral, intercambiar información y formar lazos duraderos en esta era moderna. Este estudio tuvo como objetivo investigar el uso de las redes sociales como estrategias de habla en relación con la competencia oral de los estudiantes de EFL. Se utilizó un diseño correlacional descriptivo en este estudio. Los participantes fueron 70 estudiantes de inglés (de segundo y tercer año) de la Universidad de Wolkite. Para este fin, se recopilaban datos mediante un cuestionario, la prueba de competencia oral del IELTS y una entrevista para obtener información confiable. Los hallazgos mostraron que Facebook y YouTube fueron las redes sociales más frecuentemente utilizadas por los estudiantes, aunque se sentían menos seguros, más ansiosos y menos dispuestos a comunicarse en inglés. Los resultados también indicaron que los estudiantes carecían de conciencia sobre cómo utilizar las redes sociales de manera intencionada para abordar sus desafíos de expresión oral. Por otro lado, los hallazgos de este estudio mostraron que había una correlación positiva entre el uso de redes sociales por parte de los estudiantes y su competencia oral ($r=0.461$, $p=.000$, $p>0.05$). Sin embargo, la competencia oral de los estudiantes era muy pobre porque no utilizaban las redes sociales con fines educativos, especialmente para mejorar sus habilidades de habla. Esto podría deberse a que los estudiantes no usaban las redes sociales de manera efectiva para promover su competencia oral. Por lo tanto, se sugiere que en el aprendizaje de habilidades de habla se preste más atención a investigar el uso de las redes sociales como una estrategia de habla.

Palabras clave: estudiantes de EFL; redes sociales; habilidades de habla; prueba de expresión oral; Universidad de Wolkite

Resumo

As redes sociais são uma ferramenta de comunicação que facilita aos estudantes de inglês como língua estrangeira (EFL) melhorar sua competência oral, pois lhes permite participar plenamente da comunicação oral, trocar informações e formar laços duradouros nesta era moderna. Este estudo teve como objetivo investigar o uso das redes sociais como estratégias de fala em relação à competência oral dos estudantes de EFL. Foi utilizado um desenho correlacional descritivo neste estudo. Os participantes foram 70 estudantes de inglês (de segundo e terceiro ano) da Universidade de Wolkite. Para esse fim, foram coletados dados por meio de um questionário, do teste de competência oral do IELTS e de uma entrevista para obter informações confiáveis. Os resultados mostraram que Facebook e YouTube foram as redes sociais mais frequentemente utilizadas pelos estudantes, embora se sentissem menos seguros, mais ansiosos e menos dispostos a se comunicar em inglês. Os resultados também indicaram que os estudantes careciam de consciência sobre como utilizar as redes sociais de maneira intencional para enfrentar seus desafios de expressão oral. Por outro lado, os resultados deste estudo mostraram que havia uma correlação positiva entre o uso de redes sociais pelos estudantes e sua competência oral ($r=0.461$, $p=.000$, $p>0.05$). No entanto, a competência oral dos estudantes era muito baixa porque eles não utilizavam as redes sociais com fins educativos, especialmente para melhorar suas habilidades de fala. Isso pode ser devido ao fato de que os estudantes não usavam as redes sociais de forma eficaz para promover sua competência oral. Portanto, sugere-se que, no aprendizado de habilidades de fala, seja dada mais atenção à investigação do uso das redes sociais como uma estratégia de fala.

Palavras-chave: estudantes de EFL; redes sociais; habilidades de fala; teste de expressão oral; Universidade de Wolkite

Introduction

English plays a pivotal role as an international language for communication around the world, and it is the key language for communication on the Internet. As stated by Mustafa (2018), English is the most commonly used language, accounting for 25.2% of technology users worldwide. Since it is the most widely spoken language, most learners want to improve their English by learning the language through global social platforms, podcasts, and blogs.

Social media is a technological learning strategy that can help learners master English in this modern era (Putri, 2022). The study shows that social media enables students to transcend geographic barriers, allowing EFL learners to interact with native speakers and connect with diverse cultures. Similarly, Al Qahtani (2018) stressed that social networks provide powerful information-sharing and meaning-making opportunities for EFL learners. It is an effective learning strategy that can develop learners' discourse, language structure, vocabulary, and pronunciation anywhere and anytime. In addition, Mitu (2020) states that social media provides advanced opportunities for improving speaking proficiency. Mitu's findings suggest that social media should be integrated with effective teaching strategies to enhance speaking skills. There, utilizing social media as a learning strategy can boost learners' self-confidence and reduce anxiety about speaking English in front of others.

Various social networks, such as YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Instagram, provide learners with opportunities to share ideas with native speakers and build their confidence. The use of online homophones can further enhance learners' speaking skills (Seyede, 2017). Seyede's findings suggest that learners should focus on improving their pronunciation, language structure, and understanding of social context. Additionally, social networking plays a crucial role in language acquisition, as learners naturally interact verbally with one another (Kuning, 2020). According to Ravindran et al. (2022), EFL learners' speaking proficiency is closely tied to their exposure to the target language, making social media essential for creating an optimal learning environment. Therefore, social media serves as a powerful tool for improving the speaking proficiency of EFL students.

The social media learning strategy enables learners to access language resources, practice skills, and engage directly with proficient speakers of the language (Mustafa, 2018). Mustafa's findings indicate that social media provides students with opportunities to enhance their linguistic knowledge outside the classroom, fostering independence and competence in their learning. Consequently, it creates a supportive environment for effective English learning. Additionally, social media facilitates verbal two-way communication, allowing learners to practice speaking English with native speakers from around the world.

Nowadays, most learners are familiar with social media from an early age, and they most frequently use it for various purposes. Most students spend more time online each day for academic purposes and entertainment (Fidan & Debbag, 2018). The study has also found the impact of social media to be positive on mental well-being if it is practiced a little bit. It provides learners with a modern and innovative awareness of day-to-day activities, giving them more time to share information verbally. Moreover, social media learning strategies can help students to share thoughts and feelings orally in the target language in an interactive way. Thus, digital social media influences English speaking; it motivates learners to develop their speaking proficiency.

According to Ravezza et al. (2017), the use of social media for entertainment and social purposes can negatively affect learners' speaking performance. Conversely, there is some evidence about the use of social media learning strategies in convalescing learners' speaking proficiency. For example, Twitter could use curricular discussion that positively affects higher education learners' speaking proficiency. It contributes a lot to promoting learners' speaking proficiency because of its useful functions in interacting with people all over the world and giving freedom to convey meaning. It is also believed that this study opens the door to the use of new and unique methods and pedagogies that will enrich the field of English language teaching in the future.

Therefore, social media paves the way for improving higher education students' speaking proficiency. This study aims to investigate EFL students' social media use vis-a-vis their speaking proficiency.

Statement of the Problem

The digitization of technology has made social media an essential tool for developing mutual interactions in educational settings. As a result, English teachers should understand the kinds of applications that can be used to overcome students' English problems. Learning English through social media plays a key role in learners' oral production and interactions with others in a more advanced way (Mohammed, 2021; Namaziandost & Nasri, 2019). In this case, it is seen as a complementary component of the pedagogical process of learning speaking skills. AlSaleem (2018) points out that speaking is a complex skill; therefore, learners should focus on performing live oral expressions and discourse. This implies that learning speaking skills needs an individual's interest and courage to practice verbally in the target language.

In Ethiopia, learners of English as a foreign language are continually seeking to improve their speaking proficiency, as English instruction primarily focuses on grammar and structure. This emphasis often results in less attention being given to speaking skills. Consequently, the need to address students' speaking challenges has prompted the integration of digital technologies to keep pace with contemporary learning methods.

From the researchers' observations and experiences, students often fear speaking English orally in front of their classmates. As a result, they feel nervous when asked to participate and are reluctant to engage in speaking activities. During debates, oral presentations, and other speaking opportunities, they lack the confidence and motivation to share information in English. Furthermore, students are often unaware of how to use various social media platforms to practice their English-speaking skills, preferring instead to use these platforms for entertainment in their native language (Nkhi, 2023; Ravindran et al., 2022). This highlights that students' speaking proficiency is a significant concern that requires serious attention to ensure global competence.

Based on the above considerations, we can conclude that there are several reasons why most Ethiopian students do not improve their speaking proficiency. First, students may not know how to use social media to solve their speaking problems. Second, teachers limited awareness of using technological digitalization to teach speaking lessons authentically and facilitate their use of effective social media to practice speaking English. Third, some students may not have access to smartphones and the internet; they lack the knowledge and information to use social media for educational purposes, especially speaking English. Fourth, exposure to the learning environment is another problem that affects students' purposeful use of social media. Finally, book-oriented teaching methods may not be able to incorporate different social media in the teaching process. The use of modern teaching methods in the speaking classroom may not be efficacious.

Therefore, little attention has been paid to the use of technological speaking strategies to learn speaking skills, especially social media (Rizqiningsih & Hadi, 2019). This study points out that effective strategies are implemented to improve the speaking ability of students, resulting in new ways of using digital technology to keep pace with the times. EFL learners do not intentionally use social media as a learning strategy to overcome their speaking problems.

Although social media for learning speaking skills has been studied in the EFL context, it does not seem to have been studied in the Ethiopian context. Such research can also promote a more serious reflection on the levels of students' speaking proficiency. Furthermore, to the researchers' knowledge, no study has adequately focused on the use of social media learning strategies by EFL students in relation to their speaking proficiency within the context of Ethiopian public universities. This study also aims to provide empirical evidence of students' social media use in relation to their speaking proficiency. To this end, the current study sought to answer the following basic research questions:

1. Which social media platforms do Ethiopian higher education students most frequently use to improve their English-speaking skills?

2. What relationship exists between Ethiopian students' use of social media learning strategies and their speaking proficiency?

Methodology

Research Design

In this study, a descriptive-correlational design was employed to collect, process, analyze, and interpret data. This design was primarily used to identify the social media platforms most frequently utilized by EFL students to improve their speaking proficiency. Additionally, it aimed to determine the relationship between students' use of social media as speaking strategies and their speaking proficiency.

Setting

This study was conducted at Wolkite University (WKU), situated in Wolkite town in the Central Ethiopia Region. Established in 2012 by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), WKU is classified as a third-generation public university. The university was selected for this research because the researchers are affiliated with its English Language and Literature department. Data collection took place from February to June 2022.

Participants and sampling techniques

The participants in this study were 70 English major students at Wolkite University, consisting of 42 third-year students (20 males and 22 females) and 28 fourth-year students (23 males and 5 females), with ages ranging from 19 to 24. To ensure representation across different educational stages and disciplines, a purposive sampling technique was employed. All participants had completed the Spoken English I & II and Advanced Speech courses.

Instruments

Questionnaire

The aim of this questionnaire was to identify the social media platforms EFL students use as speaking strategies. It assessed the types and frequency of these platforms employed in learning speaking skills, specifically investigating how many students utilize social media for educational purposes. To achieve this, the researcher developed the questionnaire based on a literature review to understand Ethiopian students' use of social media as a speaking strategy. The questionnaire comprised 31 closed-ended items focused on students' use of social media for developing speaking skills. Designed as a self-report tool, it featured straightforward questions that were appropriate for learners at the Ethiopian university level. The questionnaire primarily targeted the frequency of social media use in addressing speaking challenges. Participants rated their usage on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = not sure, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). The average scores for each social media platform were interpreted using an adjusted reporting scale.

Speaking Proficiency Test

The purpose of this test was to assess students' levels of speaking proficiency. To achieve this, the standardized academic IELTS speaking test was employed. The questions were adapted from Li's (2019) IELTS speaking proficiency test and consisted of three parts. The first part focused on self-introduction, including family, interests, and hobbies, lasting 3 to 5 minutes. The second part required students to engage in 3 to 4 minutes of self-talk on familiar topics, such as university life, Ethiopia's green legacy and tree planting, and descriptions of their hometowns or villages. The final part involved a two-way discussion between the interviewer and the student on the topic introduced in the second part, lasting another 3 to 5 minutes.

The IELTS test duration for each participant was 11 to 14 minutes and was administered through face-to-face interviews. It incorporated the four scoring criteria of the IELTS speaking assessment: fluency and coherence, pronunciation, lexical resources, and grammatical range and accuracy. These benchmarks were adapted from the University of Cambridge's (2019) IELTS Speaking Proficiency Test. To evaluate learners' oral performance and enhance the reliability of the assessment, the researchers rated the students' speaking proficiency collaboratively. This approach minimized grading bias and ensured a more objective evaluation of the students' speaking proficiency.

Finally, each student's IELTS speaking proficiency was assessed using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): Learning, Teaching, and

Assessment (Athiworakun et al., 2018). This framework classifies language proficiency into three levels: proficient users (C2 level or a score of 9, and C1 level or band scores of 7-8), independent users (B2 level or scores of 5.5-6.5, and B1 level or scores of 4-5), and basic users (A2 level or a band score of 3, and A1 level or scores of 1-2). Consequently, the results of the students' IELTS speaking proficiency tests were evaluated according to CEFR guidelines, utilizing the 0-9 IELTS scoring system to determine their proficiency levels.

Semi-structured Interview

The purpose of this interview was to corroborate the data obtained from the questionnaire and the IELTS speaking proficiency test. It also aimed to gather information that might not be available through these methods. Out of 70 participants, six students were randomly selected for the interview, which lasted 10 to 15 minutes for each interviewee. The data were collected in English, focusing on the learners' awareness of using digital technology and the role of social media as strategies for developing their speaking proficiency.

Validity and Reliability of Instruments

Before the main study, the instruments were validated by two experts (Ph.D. in TEFL) who work at Wolkite University. The experts had 15 and 16 years of working experience teaching English in Ethiopian public universities. They then evaluated the content and face validities of the questionnaire items, the IELTS speaking proficiency test, and the interview. Not only that, but they also commented on format specifications, items, applicability to participants, and the extent to which the data collection tools measure what the researcher really intended to measure. The researchers gained constructive insights on content and face validity, as well as the relevance of the items (including the wording, language and format of the three tools). Finally, the tools were modified and revised based on the comments given by the experts.

The researchers carried out a pilot study to test the dependability of the data collection instruments, notably the questionnaire, the IELTS speaking proficiency test and interview, and the administrative procedures. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were used to evaluate the questionnaire's reliability. The Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire was 0.889, indicating a high level of reliability. This shows that the items are both effective and dependable in recognizing students' usage of social media as a speaking strategy.

To verify the reliability of the IELTS speaking proficiency test, the results from two raters were analyzed using inter-rater reliability. Both raters actively participated in the

evaluations and independently assessed the students' spoken performances. Cohen's Kappa was employed to calculate the scores, confirming the consistency of their ratings. This study found significant agreement between the two raters ($k = 0.724$), highlighting the test's strong reliability.

The researchers prepared a short-term training manual and conducted an eight-hour training session to enhance students' understanding of the IELTS test and its importance for their future careers. To minimize subjectivity in scoring, the researchers evaluated the tests and recorded each interviewee's responses using assigned codes. Ultimately, each student's speaking proficiency was assessed according to the IELTS band scales, ranging from 0 to 9.

The researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with the participants to ensure the credibility of the data. Additionally, the interview transcripts were independently coded and categorized to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings.

Data Analysis

The questionnaire and speaking proficiency test results were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0. Descriptive statistics were used to identify the most frequently utilized social media, including mean, standard deviation, percentage, and frequency. Additionally, Pearson correlation (r) was employed to examine the relationship between students' social media use and their speaking proficiency.

The data from the interviews were analyzed using a systematic procedure. First, the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and formatted in conversation style to accurately capture the interviewees' responses. Second, the transcripts were coded and categorized separately to facilitate further analysis.

Findings

Results of the Questionnaire

The frequency of students' learning strategies is identified mainly through the mean (M) values: mean scores ranging from 3.5 to 5.0 indicate a higher strategy user who usually or almost always uses strategies, while mean scores in the range of 2.5 to 3.4 indicate a medium strategy user who sometimes uses strategies, and mean scores from 1.0 to 2.4 indicate a lower strategy user who does not usually use strategies (Oxford, 1990). Since speaking strategies are a subset of LLSs, the following data were analyzed by considering the mean (M) scores of students' speaking strategies used

(social media). The students' responses to the questionnaire were categorized based on the above criteria.

Students' response to the first research question Which social media platforms do Ethiopian higher education students most frequently use to improve their English-speaking skills?

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the frequency use of Social Media

Strategies	Mean (M)	SD	Level of strategy use	Frequency of use	Rank
Facebook	4.00	0.933	High	Usually used	1st
YouTube	3.81	0.828	High	Usually used	2nd
Telegram	2.53	0.785	medium	Not usually used	3rd
Google+	2.22	0.545	Low	Not usually used	4th
WhatsApp	2.20	0.528	Low	Not usually used	5th
Twitter	2.18	0.514	Low	Not usually used	6th
Skype	1.01	0.511	Low	Not usually used	7th
Blogs	0.84	0.470	Low	Not usually used	8th
Grand total	2.35	0.0.718	Low	Sometimes used	

Table 1 presents the mean scores of students' use of social media for learning speaking skills, which ranged from a high of 4.00 to a low of 0.84. Respondents indicated that they used various social media platforms less frequently, including Blogs (M = 0.84), Skype (M = 1.01), Twitter (M = 2.18), WhatsApp (M = 2.20), and Google+ (M = 2.22). Telegram (M = 2.30) was used at a moderate level. In contrast, Facebook (M = 4.00) and YouTube (M = 3.81) were employed at a high level. These results indicate that students most frequently use Facebook and YouTube as social media platforms to learn speaking skills.

Table 2. Purposes of using Social Media in Learning Speaking Skills

Item	Social purposes		Educational purposes	
I most commonly use social media	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
	67	95.7	3	4.3

As shown in Table 2, there was a strong preference for using social media for social purposes rather than educational ones in the context of learning speaking skills. Specifically, 95.7% of respondents reported using social media primarily for social interactions, while only 4.3% used it for educational purposes. This suggests that social

media was predominantly utilized for personal communication and leisure rather than for enhancing speaking skills or engaging in educational.

Students' responses to the second research question: What kind of a relationship is there between Ethiopian students' use of social media learning strategy and their speaking proficiency?

Table 3. Self-rating Speaking Proficiency

Scale	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Very good	1	1.43	1.43
Good	5	7.14	7.14
Fair	18	25.72	25.72
Poor	46	65.71	65.71
Total	145	100.0	100.0

Table 3 shows that according to their self-rating, most students were not proficient speakers of the target language. In this case, 65.71% and 25.72% of the respondents rated their speaking proficiency as poor and fair, respectively. In contrast, 7.14% and 1.43% of the participants said that their speaking proficiency was good and very good, respectively. These results indicated that most students were not comfortable with their speaking proficiency.

Results of the IELTS Speaking Proficiency Test

According to the University of Cambridge (2019), the score on the IELTS speaking proficiency test scale includes 9 (expert user), 8 (very good user), 7 (good user), 6 (competent user), 5 (modest user), 4 (limited user), 3 (extremely limited user), 2 (intermittent user), 1 (no user) and 0 (did not attempt the test). In addition, students' speaking proficiency was determined by considering the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): learning, teaching, and assessment. This means that proficient users (C2 or 9 scores and C1 or 7-8 scores), independent users (B2 or 5.5-6.5 scores and B1 or 4-5 scores), and basic users (A2 or 2-3 scores and A1 or 0-1 scores) (Athiworakun et al., 2018). Hence, the results of the students' IELTS speaking proficiency test were defined using CEFR guidelines to determine their proficiency levels by using scales 0-9.

Table 4. Students' IELTS Speaking proficiency Test Result

Students	IELTS Scores	S23	3.25	S47	3.25
S1	3.25	S24	3.50	S48	2.88
S2	3.38	S25	4.13	S49	2.88
S3	2.75	S26	4.00	S50	2.50
S4	2.63	S27	3.25	S51	3.00
S5	2.38	S28	3.50	S52	3.00
S6	2.75	S29	2.75	S53	2.88
S7	2.50	S30	2.88	S54	3.38
S8	3.25	S31	4.88	S55	3.00
S9	3.75	S32	4.00	S56	3.13
S10	3.38	S33	4.38	S57	2.88
S11	2.75	S34	2.50	S58	3.00
S12	3.25	S35	3.25	S59	3.13
S13	3.38	S36	4.13	S60	3.00
S14	2.63	S37	3.38	S61	3.25
S15	3.38	S38	3.07	S62	3.50
S16	2.88	S39	2.50	S63	2.38
S17	2.63	S40	2.75	S64	3.50
S18	4.00	S41	3.00	S65	2.50
S19	3.50	S42	3.38	S66	2.75
S20	3.75	S43	3.25	S67	3.50
S21	3.63	S44	2.75	S68	2.75
S22	4.63	S45	2.13	S69	3.38
		S46	3.25	S70	3.00

As stated above, students had limited knowledge of using digital technology to improve their speaking proficiency. The results also indicated that students used social media primarily for entertainment and social purposes in their native language rather than in English. Additionally, two informants provided the following insights:

“In my spare time, I enjoy watching movies, recording videos and playing games in my native language. It motivates me to watch videos for fun and different social purposes. I never use social media to learn to speak English.” (S4)

“I love the jokes and pranks there on social media. However, I do not use social media for educational purposes instead, I use it for social purposes. This means that students use their native language most often when using social media.” (S5)

“Awareness of using social media to learn speaking skills is low. I have never used social media to improve my speaking skills. I mainly use Facebook and YouTube for watching movies and doing different social activities in my native language.” (S6)

Students were not purposefully using social media learning strategies to communicate with each other in the target language in and out of the classroom. If these purposes were achieved in the target language, the students’ English proficiency would significantly improve.

The results of this interview supported the findings of the questionnaire. Most students did not use different social media as a learning strategy to solve their speaking problems. However, Facebook and YouTube were most frequently used for different social purposes rather than educational purposes. Therefore, students are not using social media as a learning strategy to solve their speaking problems.

Discussion

The most frequently used Social Media by Students

The aim of this study was to pinpoint the social media most frequently used by EFL students to improve their speaking proficiency. Questionnaires and interviews were used to discover the social networks used by students.

The findings indicated that among all social media platforms, Facebook ($M = 3.83$) and YouTube ($M = 3.50$) were the most frequently employed by students, while Telegram ($M = 2.97$) was used at a moderate level. In contrast, blogging, Skype, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Google+ were the least utilized for developing speaking skills. The results revealed that social media was not primarily used to enhance speaking proficiency. Additionally, the interview results supported the questionnaire findings, showing that students used Facebook and YouTube mainly for socializing and entertainment, likely due to easy access for non-educational purposes. Students were generally unaware of how to leverage social media to improve their speaking

skills. The findings also highlighted that the lack of social networking integration in the language curriculum contributed significantly to the underutilization of these strategies for speaking practice. More importantly, the results indicated that learners faced challenges related to their educational background, social factors, and exposure to language learning environments

The convergence between the results obtained via questionnaire and interview could give us a reliable picture of students' use of Facebook and YouTube for social purposes rather than educational purposes. The students thought that social platforms helped them to relax and interact with one another, but they again reported that their understanding of it was poor because they did not take it in any spoken English courses or repeat and reflect on it. These results showed that learners' awareness of using social media in learning speaking skills in a class was very low. There was no contribution of social media learning strategies in improving students' linguistic knowledge.

Furthermore, the results of this study are inconsistent with findings from previous research on EFL students' use of social media for learning strategies (Alrasheedi, 2020; Aristiawan, 2022; Piannu & Rosita, 2023; Rahmawati et al., 2023; Seyedeh, 2017). These earlier studies indicate that social media can offer students greater opportunities to communicate with native speakers through various platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube, and Telegram. According to Putri (2022), students frequently utilize different social media both inside and outside the classroom to express themselves. Similarly, Choirunnisa and Sari (2021) note that students often use Facebook and Instagram to communicate with native speakers for educational purposes despite experiencing psychological barriers related to oral communication. The findings of the current study align with Wulandari (2019), who emphasizes that students should consistently use social media as a learning strategy to enhance creativity, critical thinking, and effective oral communication in the target language. Additionally, it aids in the development of linguistic skills and discourse at a more advanced level. Therefore, social media plays a significant role in boosting students' self-confidence and reducing anxiety and shyness when speaking English verbally. It also provides opportunities for improving pronunciation, vocabulary, and language structure.

It was unexpected that Ethiopian students did not utilize Facebook and YouTube as learning strategies for educational purposes, particularly in developing speaking proficiency. This may be attributed to teachers' failure to recognize the potential of effective social platforms in conjunction with traditional, book-oriented teaching methods. Additionally, English teachers may not have trained or introduced their students to the use of various social media both inside and outside the classroom, resulting in a lack of awareness about how to consciously leverage these tools to enhance speaking proficiency. The issue seems to stem from limited exposure to environments where the target language can be practiced as a means of communication. There are few opportunities for students to engage with English in real-world contexts. Moreover,

As Table 4 shows, the results of this test showed that students were limited users (4), extremely limited users (3), and intermittent users (2). Their test scores were below the requirements for the IELTS speaking proficiency test, indicating that they were not proficient speakers of the language.

Table 5. The Relationship between the use of Social Media Learning Strategy and Speaking Proficiency

		Social media	Speaking proficiency
Social media	Pearson Correlation	1	.461**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	70	70
Speaking proficiency	Pearson Correlation	.461**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	70	70

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

Table 5 showed a significant positive relationship between students' use of social media and their speaking proficiency ($r = 0.461$, $p = .000$, $p > 0.05$). The results indicated a moderate relationship between the two variables, reflecting a linear association. Furthermore, the findings suggested that as students increased their use of social media, their speaking proficiency tended to improve.

Results of the Interview

The results of the interview showed that students did not use social media as a learning strategy to develop their speaking proficiency. Based on this, most interviewees indicated that they lacked awareness of using social media as speaking strategies. S1 said, "Not only students but also teachers do not use social media for educational purposes, especially for speaking skills." This means that teachers are not using different social media when teaching speaking skills in the classroom. Besides, two informants said:

"I always use social media to have fun. Therefore, I like to watch movies and different pictures released in my native language instead of English." (S2)

"I don't use social media to learn English speaking skills. I always use Facebook and YouTube just for fun and to connect with friends, but most of my social media use is not to learn speaking skills." (S4)

the new educational curriculum did not encourage the use of digital technology and diverse social media to promote speaking proficiency, possibly because it did not differ significantly from the previous curriculum.

Students primarily used Facebook and YouTube for entertainment and social purposes rather than for educational purposes, particularly in developing speaking skills. Teachers also lacked awareness of how to utilize digital technology to enhance their speaking courses. Therefore, it is believed that the limited use of social media in an educational context in Ethiopia restricts learners' opportunities to practice speaking in English.

The relationship between students' use of social media as a speaking strategy and their speaking proficiency.

This study examined the relationship between students' use of social media as speaking strategies and their speaking proficiency. To achieve this objective, the results from the questionnaire and the IELTS speaking test were utilized.

The findings of this study indicated that students' IELTS speaking test scores were limited users (4), extremely limited users (3), and intermittent users (2). This means that the students' speaking proficiency levels were independent users and basic users. These survey results showed that the scores of the students were lower than the requirements of the proficiency test. In addition, the results of the Pearson correlation showed that there was a linear relationship between students' use of social media and their speaking proficiency ($r=0.461$, $p=.000$, $p>0.05$). These results indicated that the social media learning strategy did not contribute to the level of students' speaking proficiency. It could partly be because of students' limited awareness of social media use for educational purposes, their speaking proficiency lying at an alarmingly low level.

After identifying that learners' speaking proficiency was at an unexpectedly low level, several factors were considered, including learners' background knowledge, infrequent use of social media for oral practice, teaching methods, and psychological factors. Additionally, interview results revealed that many students attributed their challenges to the university system, which often assigns students to the English department without considering their interests. This misalignment may contribute to a negative attitude toward the program. Furthermore, students did not effectively utilize digital technology, such as social media, both inside and outside the classroom. Thus, learners did not intentionally use social media as a strategy to address their speaking difficulties.

The relationship between social media as a learning strategy use and speaking proficiency was positive, but it was weak. Weak ties indicate that students are not using social media as a learning strategy to improve their speaking proficiency. As a result,

it is possible to help students develop their understanding and use of effective social media to improve their speaking proficiency. It is also essential for English teachers to combine social media with a book-oriented method to teaching speaking English.

Furthermore, the findings of the present study are inconsistent with those of previous studies (Choirunnisa & Sari, 2021; Kuning, 2020; Mohammed, 2021; Putri, 2022; Yükselir & Kömür, 2017), which provided evidence of a significant relationship between social media use and speaking proficiency. Specifically, Ilyas and Putri (2020) highlight that the level of learners' speaking proficiency determines the frequency with which they use appropriate social networking platforms to practice oral communication. They demonstrated that social media positively influences students' speaking proficiency. Similarly, Mitu (2020) found a significant correlation between EFL students' social media usage and their speaking proficiency test scores ($r=0.935$, $p=0.000$, $p<0.05$), reinforcing the idea that a strong relationship exists between these two variables. Additionally, Bahtiar et al. (2020) suggest that increased self-confidence in students using speaking strategies leads to improved speaking performance. As Seyede (2017) further points out, effective social media models can assist students in becoming proficient in English. The use of learning strategies is concurrently linked to speaking proficiency. Overall, the findings indicate that students who are proficient in spoken language tend to use social media learning strategies more frequently for educational purposes, both in and out of the classroom.

It was expected that there was a significant relationship between social media learning strategy and speaking proficiency. However, the findings of the present study indicated that the correlation between the two variables was weak. First, one possible reason for the weak correlation between the two variables could be that students were unaware of using effective social media as a learning strategy to solve their speaking problems. Second, students had limited exposure to using social media to verbally express meaning in the target language. It can be considered that the students' speaking proficiency was influenced by other factors by students in and out of the classroom. Finally, in Ethiopia, it might be because the English curriculum (i.e., book-oriented) was not integrated with technology (social media) to teach spoken English courses.

Conclusion

This study showed that learners utilized social media learning strategies the least frequently to improve their speaking skills. Additionally, it found that students at Ethiopian universities primarily use Facebook and YouTube for socializing and entertainment. Although they engage with social media daily, they rarely use it to converse with native speakers. The findings indicated that they predominantly used social media in their mother tongue rather than in English, suggesting that social

networking did not effectively promote their English-speaking skills. Furthermore, the results revealed that students did not employ digital technology strategies to enhance their speaking proficiency and were largely unaware of how to use these learning strategies to address their speaking challenges.

Moreover, the present study indicated a significant relationship between speaking proficiency and the use of social media. This suggests that due to the lack of intentional use of social media as a speaking strategy, learners' speaking proficiency remained low. Consequently, students are not integrating social media with traditional book-oriented learning strategies to enhance their overall English proficiency, particularly in speaking.

Based on the conclusions drawn, several recommendations can be made. English teachers should encourage and train students to use social media as a learning strategy for developing speaking skills. Additionally, they should modernize their instructional methods by incorporating digital tools, such as social media, to enhance students' speaking proficiency. Students, in turn, should become aware of how to effectively use social media to improve their speaking abilities. Furthermore, educational curricula should integrate social media as a strategy for teaching English skills, particularly speaking. The university administration should ensure the provision of necessary resources and infrastructure, such as internet access and language laboratories, to support spoken English courses. Lastly, EFL teachers should employ modern teaching methods while still valuing traditional book and module-oriented approaches; this integration can maximize English language skills and foster greater student engagement in learning speaking skills.

This study was conducted at WKU and focused exclusively on English major students. The findings highlight the necessity for further research involving large-scale surveys and diverse sample sizes across various contexts. Such studies would provide more comprehensive insights into all public and private universities in Ethiopia, thereby enhancing our understanding of the generalizability of these results.

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EFL Teachers' Job Burnout Its Associated Factors: Public Primary School of Jimma Zone in Focus

El burnout laboral de los docentes de EFL y sus factores asociados: Un enfoque en las escuelas primarias públicas de la Zona de Jimma

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Abstract

Because of environmental and personal factors, EFL teachers are often exposed to job burnout. However, the problem and factors that form causal associations seem ignored in the context of the study. This study, thus, aims to investigate EFL teachers' burnout and its associated factors among public primary schools in Jimma Zone, Ethiopia. A mixed methods research design was used for the study. Cluster sampling and judgmental sampling techniques were employed to select 100 EFL teachers, and a questionnaire and an interview were utilized to collect data. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. The finding shows that the majority of EFL teachers underwent a high level of burnout, and all the hypothesized factors had a significant association with burnout and its dimensions. The major finding is that job burnout negatively affected EFL teachers' work engagement. Considering this finding, the provision of training on coping strategies is recommended. The pedagogical implication of the finding is to incorporate content on emotional intelligence and stress-coping mechanisms in EFL teaching methodology courses. Finally, further study is recommended to be undertaken on a large scale to understand the magnitude of expansion of the problem in the region and nationwide as the sample is small to generalize to these contexts.

Keywords: EFL teachers, job burnout, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment, coping strategies

Resumen

Debido a factores ambientales y personales, los docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) a menudo están expuestos al *burnout* laboral. Sin embargo, el problema y los factores que forman asociaciones causales parecen ser ignorados en el contexto de estudio. Por lo tanto, este estudio tiene como objetivo investigar el *burnout* de los docentes de EFL y los factores asociados en las escuelas primarias públicas de la Zona de Jimma, Etiopía. Se utilizó un diseño de investigación de métodos mixtos para el estudio. Se emplearon técnicas de muestreo por conglomerados y muestreo por juicio para seleccionar a 100 docentes de EFL, y se utilizaron un cuestionario y una entrevista para recopilar los datos. Se utilizaron tanto estadísticas descriptivas como inferenciales para el análisis de los datos. Los hallazgos muestran que la mayoría de los docentes de EFL experimentaron un alto nivel de *burnout*, y todos los factores hipotetizados tuvieron una asociación significativa con el *burnout* y sus dimensiones. El hallazgo principal es que el *burnout* laboral afectó negativamente el compromiso laboral de los docentes de EFL. A la luz de este hallazgo, se recomienda la provisión de capacitación sobre estrategias de afrontamiento. La implicación pedagógica del hallazgo es incorporar contenido sobre inteligencia emocional y mecanismos de afrontamiento del estrés en los cursos de metodología de enseñanza de EFL. Finalmente, se recomienda realizar un estudio adicional a gran escala para comprender la magnitud del problema en la región y a nivel nacional, ya que la muestra es pequeña para generalizar estos resultados a estos contextos.

Palabras clave: docentes de EFL, burnout laboral, agotamiento emocional, depersonalización, realización personal, estrategias de afrontamiento

Resumo

Devido a fatores ambientais e pessoais, os professores de inglês como língua estrangeira (EFL) muitas vezes estão expostos ao burnout profissional. No entanto, o problema e os fatores que formam associações causais parecem ser ignorados no contexto do estudo. Portanto, este estudo tem como objetivo investigar o burnout dos professores de EFL e os fatores associados nas escolas primárias públicas da Zona de Jimma, Etiópia. Foi utilizado um desenho de pesquisa de métodos mistos para o estudo. Foram empregadas técnicas de amostragem por conglomerados e amostragem por julgamento para selecionar 100 professores de EFL, e foram utilizados um questionário e uma entrevista para coletar os dados. Tanto as estatísticas descritivas quanto as inferenciais foram utilizadas para a análise dos dados. Os resultados mostram que a maioria dos professores de EFL experimentou um alto nível de burnout, e todos os fatores hipotetizados tiveram uma associação significativa com o burnout e suas dimensões. O principal achado é que o burnout profissional afetou negativamente o engajamento no trabalho dos professores de EFL. À luz desse achado, recomenda-se a oferta de capacitação sobre estratégias de enfrentamento. A implicação pedagógica do achado é incorporar conteúdo sobre inteligência emocional e mecanismos de enfrentamento do estresse nos cursos de metodologia de ensino de EFL. Finalmente, recomenda-se realizar um estudo adicional em larga escala para compreender a magnitude do problema na região e em nível nacional, uma vez que a amostra é pequena para generalizar esses resultados para esses contextos.

Palavras-chave: professores de EFL, burnout profissional, esgotamento emocional, despersonalização, realização pessoal, estratégias de enfrentamento

Introduction

Background of the Study

Over the last few decades, a growing number of burnout studies (e.g., Gaitan, 2009; Heinemann & Heinemann, 2017; Kamtsios, 2018; Mukundan & Kehandehroo, 2010; Özkara, 2019) have been observed globally. Burnout is a psychological strain characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced efficacy that mainly affects service-giving professionals like teachers. The etymology of the term goes back to the year 1961 when the German novelist “Greene” coined and used it for the first time in his novel entitled “A Burn Out Case” (Lou & Chen, 2016; Schabracq et al., 2003). However, the concept has become popular and used widely in scientific discourses after Herbert Freudenberger, a popular psychiatrist and pioneering researcher of the construct, used it to describe a mental disorder caused by work-related stressors (Schabracq et al., 2003). At a similar time, another prominent social psychologist, Christian Maslach, explored a psycho-social disorder and labeled it as burnout (Schabracq et al., 2003). More importantly, Maslach operationalized the concept as a multidimensional construct and introduced a scale used to measure the factor. These two pioneer researchers (Freudenberger and Maslach) made burnout public and the main agenda of mainstream media (Casserley & Megginson, 2009; Schabracq et al., 2003).

Then, the concept was further expanded with the supplementation of a positive antithesis engagement, and now, a full spectrum of workers' well-being has been studied globally (Schabracq et al., 2003). What is more, these days, a large number of studies on burnout and teachers' burnout have emerged. Maslach and Leiter (2014), as cited in Fontes (2020), pointed out that 1000 articles are published yearly on some aspects of burnout. Rudow (1999), as cited in Heinemann and Heinemann (2017), states that teachers' burnout spreads worldwide, and its prevalence rate reaches roughly 30%. The problem also seriously affects EFL teachers' working behavior in countries where there are major socio-economic challenges that increase pressure on teachers' life situations and lead them to suffer from work-related stress, fatigue, and exhaustion, which are the most prominent signs of job burnout (De Silva, 2015; Fontes, 2020).

The problem, as previously stated, has been researched worldwide. Yet, it appears that the study area and the nation have disregarded the matter and have only started to pay very little attention to it. This circumstance drives the current study to be carried out in the study setting on the issue of EFL teachers' burnout in their jobs and its triggering factors. Teachers' burnout is, therefore, an emotional strain characterized by a feeling of incompetence, ineffectiveness, and exhaustion due to the demands that stem from the job and other environmental and personal stressors. The state of mind also exposes teachers to a cynical and detached attitude towards the school community. The problem can further be seen as an erosion of teachers' engagement and negative

self-evaluation (Gaitan, 2009; Badawy, 2015). The present study, therefore, raised some questions: What factors lead EFL teachers to develop negative behaviors? What factors caused teachers to lose their passion for their job? What makes achieving the EFL teaching process difficult? What are the threats that lead them to burnout? These inquiries, thus, motivated the researcher to conduct a study on job burnout with a particular focus on EFL teachers working at a public primary school in Jimma Zone, Ethiopia.

The stated problem poses a severe threat to developing nations like Ethiopia. In these countries, there is a lack of resources, a high workload, a large class size, and a lack of incentives. These factors make teachers feel exploited and demotivated, affecting their concentration on their work and ability to tolerate maladministration and other challenges. The factors further trigger negative emotions that can easily affect EFL teachers with poor emotional intelligence because such teachers are incapable of dealing with emotional challenges that stem from their everyday teaching activities (Dastgoshadeh & Javanmardi, 2021). In addition, the studies conducted on teachers' emotions (e.g., Gobena, 2018; Shishigu, 2015; Wossenie, 2014; Gonzales, 2010; Valente et al., 2023) also reported that most teachers in Ethiopia underwent various stressors due to lack of resources, low social value, etc. For instance, Wossenie (2014) pointed out that many EFL teachers were obsessed with salaries and living conditions. In line with this, Amanu (2013) also reported that several EFL teachers were dissatisfied with their monthly salary and the absence of fringe benefits. Shishigu (2015), in his part, indicated that most teachers in Ethiopia and most parts of the world have not yet enjoyed due respect. He further noted that a large portion of teachers worked in stressful conditions because of various environmental factors. The reality of the project area was not different from nationwide phenomena. This can inflict work-related emotional strain among EFL teachers, negatively affect their emotions, dismantle their work engagement, and possibly lead them to job burnout; however, a study on EFL teachers' burnout is lacking.

The researcher noticed that some EFL teachers experienced negative behaviors (e.g., carelessness, lack of passion, lack of interest, coming late to class, etc.) while working in the study area. This experience informed him that EFL teachers in the Zone may experience work-related emotional strain because every behavior is influenced by emotion (Pettinelli, 2016). The literature review also suggested that no research study has been conducted on the given topic in the project area. Therefore, the study aims to investigate the level of EFL teachers' job burnout and its associated factors. This would enable us to learn from the lived experiences of EFL teachers' work-related emotional strain to determine the triggering factors and suggest possible interventions to address the problem.

As mentioned earlier, various studies (such as De Silva, 2015; Maroofi & Ghaemi, 2016; Nayernia & Babaya, 2019) reported the presence of risk factors that lead EFL

teachers to job burnout in the different educational institutes where they work; however, it is hard to find a research study on the issue in the context of this study. Therefore, this study investigated EFL teachers' burnout and its associated factors. Teachers' burnout is viewed as an emotional problem characterized by Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Reduced Personal Accomplishment (RPA) (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach & Leither, 1997). This strain is not an incident that happened suddenly. Instead, it develops gradually due to persistent influence that evolves from various environmental and personal factors (e.g., work overload, maladministration, lack of reward, lack of motivation, and perceived stress). The main purpose of this study, thus, is to investigate the level of the problem and its associated factors by focusing on EFL teachers working at public primary schools in Jimma Zone. To achieve this, the following questions were formulated.

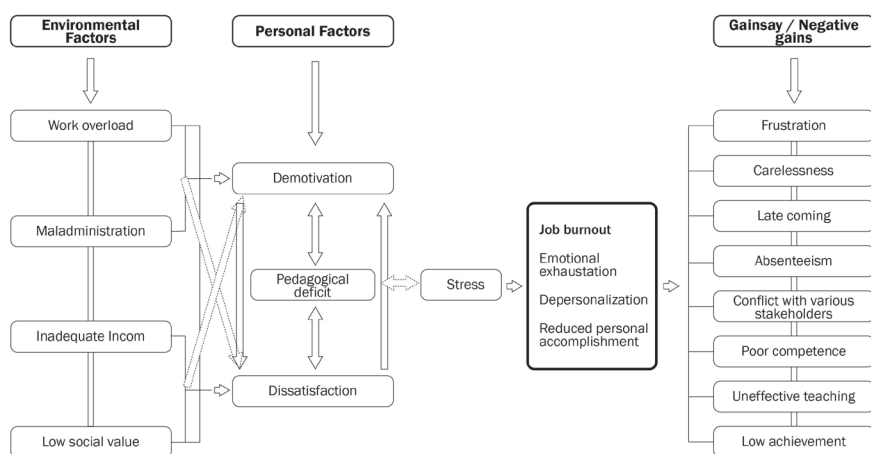
Research Questions

1. To what level do EFL teachers at public primary schools experience job burnout?
2. What factors are associated with EFL teachers' job burnout?
3. Which factors predict more EFL teachers' burnout on their jobs?

Conceptual Framework

The study employs a conceptual framework that depicts the possible relationship among the hypothesized factors, job burnout, and gainsay. It hypothesizes that negative personal factors like demotivation, discontent, and a lack of basic pedagogical content knowledge are triggered by environmental factors: workload, insufficient income, low social value, and poor administration. It also demonstrates how the environmental and personal variables somehow influence stress. The constant influence of these variables resulted in persistent stress experiences that ultimately ended up in job burnout. This problem further led to anger, negligence, tardiness, absenteeism, poor performance, etc. (Figure 1). Therefore, the schematic diagram below displays the potential relationship that may exist among the hypothesized variables.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



Conceptual Framework of EFL Teachers' Burnout Associated Factors, (Adapted from Teshale et al., 2023)

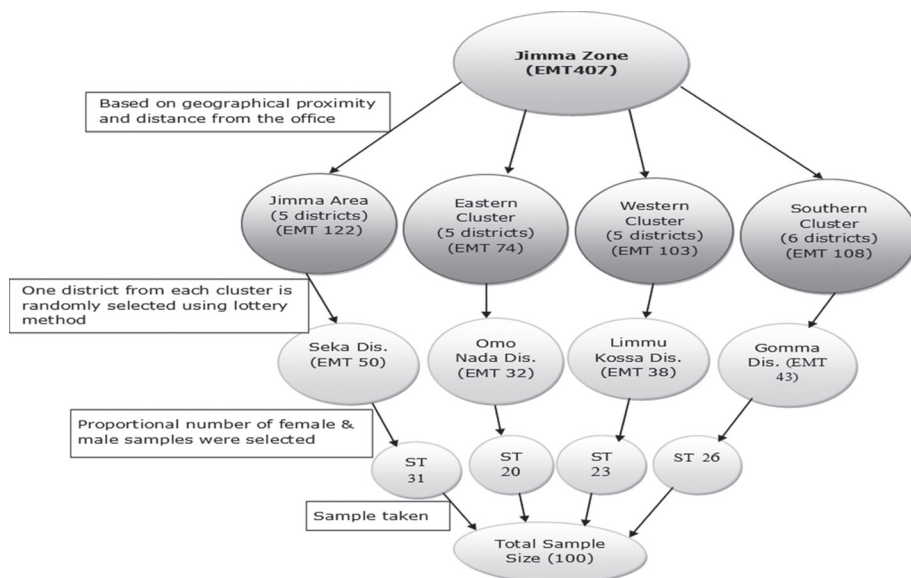
Research Design

As noted before, this study aimed to investigate EFL teachers' job burnout and its associated factors. Thus, a descriptive survey design that employs a mixed explanatory approach (quantitative dominant over qualitative, QUAN-qual) was used (Creswell, 2009). This design enabled us to explain the problem, determine the associated factors, and better understand EFL teachers' job burnout and its triggering factors. This, in turn, enables us to suggest a possible intervention that facilitates burnout prevention. Thus, the general methodological steps employed from the sample selection to data analysis are explained in the following sections.

The Study Population and Sampling Techniques

Cluster random sampling and judgmental sampling were the two sampling techniques used in this inquiry. The first technique was employed to select participants for a quantitative study, whereas the second method was used to choose samples for an interview. There were only 407 English major teachers in the Zone. Out of these teachers, 100 EFL teachers were randomly selected from the specified number (see Figure 2). On the other hand, a judgmental sampling technique, as just mentioned, was utilized for the qualitative part of the study wherein 13 EFL teachers were selected from four districts in the Zone—three teachers from Goma, three teachers from Limu Kossa, three teachers from Omo Nada, and four teachers from Seka Chekorsa.

Figure 2. Sampling Technique



Key: EMT: English Majoring Teachers, ST: Sample taken from each district, Dis.: District

The Cluster and proportional Sampling Techniques

As previously mentioned, the data were gathered using two instruments: a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guideline. Each of these instruments is explained below.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was utilized to collect quantitative data for the study. It has two major parts: the six-point rating scale and the five-point rating scale. The first part is the psychometric Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES), which was designed by Maslach et al. (1981), as cited in Bowen (2013), to measure burnout. This scale consists of 22 items that measure the three components of burnout: Emotional Exhaustion/EE (9) items, Depersonalization/DP (5) items, and Personal Accomplishment/PA (8) items. The second part of the scale consists of a five-point Likert scale questionnaire with 69 items divided into eight subscales, including

items on job dissatisfaction (10), inadequate pedagogical content knowledge (10), perceived stress (10), low social value (6), lack of motivation (9), work overload (8), maladministration (8), low salary and other benefits (8), and perceived stress (10) that were taken from various literature (Agegnehu, 2014; Cohen & Williamson, 1994; Getachew, 2007; Gezimu, 2013; Jima, 2018) to measure if the stated variables form a causal relationship with job burnout.

The instrument was piloted with 33 EFL teachers to test its feasibility in the study context. After completing the pilot test, the alpha coefficient was measured to determine the item reliability, the correlation between items, and the overall correlation among items. Consequently, the following coefficients of alpha were obtained from the test: 0.3 and above for a single item and 0.73 for total items in the scale of MBI-ES; then 0.3 and above for a single item and 0.80 for the total items in the scale set to measure factors that are associated with burnout. These findings suggested that the overall scale items could be applied confidently for the main study. In the process, the items with weak alpha coefficients of the subscales to measure factors associated with burnout were removed, and only the items with good alpha levels were retained for the main study. According to Cohen et al. (2007) and Hinton et al. (2004), the coefficient alpha is measured as 0.3 and above for a single item and 0.7 and above for the correlation of all items. The subscales adopted, thus, were used for the main study because the coefficient alpha obtained matches the criteria suggested by the scholars. Eventually, 100 participants were given the questionnaire in a face-to-face context. Nevertheless, only 93 of them completed and returned it, which resulted in a 93% response rate with a 7% rejection rate.

Semi-structured Interview Guideline

This tool was developed following the purpose of the study, the core issues outlined in the problem statement, and the literature review. The data obtained through this instrument were primarily used to learn the participants' lived experiences on the problem and to support the quantitative findings. The participants were then asked questions about the three components of burnout and the factors that contribute to it. The participants' responses were recorded and transcribed manually.

Procedures of Data Collection

The aforementioned tools were used in the data collection process. Participants' oral consent to participate in the study was obtained before data collection. This was preferred because participants' limited language proficiency may discourage them from filling out the written consent form and show their willingness to fully partake in the study process. Thus, before the survey questionnaires were given out, they were

first given a clear explanation of the study's objective, which is purely academic and does not hurt anyone. They were given this information to enable them to make an informed decision about taking part in the study.

To encourage each interviewee to freely reflect on their experience of the issue under investigation, it was made clear to each of the selected participants during the interview session that there was no right or wrong answer and that all responses were equally relevant to the study. Each respondent was also informed that their responses would be kept confidential and that they might withdraw from the interview process at any point if they felt uncomfortable. In addition, each participant was made aware that just his or her idea was used when writing the report, and a pseudonym was given to the idea's owner. Finally, it was agreed that the study findings would be shared with the participants. The steps followed, thus, enabled the participants to engage in the study process willingly.

Method of Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods were used. With the help of SPSS software version 20, the quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (such as percentage and mean) and inferential statistics (such as Regression and Beta coefficients of multiple regression analysis). The qualitative data, however, were examined and interpreted thematically. As a result, the steps of arranging, coding, organizing, and reading carefully were employed in the analysis process to find recurring themes and sub-themes. Then, the result was presented in narrative form, followed by an interpretation.

Results

EFL Teachers' Burnout

EFL teachers' burnout, as mentioned repeatedly, is a multidimensional strain characterized by EE, DP, and reduced PA. The present study also examined the status of the problem and the factors that inflicted it. The result obtained from the analysis suggested that most of the studied EFL teachers suffered from a high level of burnout triggered by several environmental and personal factors. Hence, the results obtained are presented as follows.

Emotional Exhaustion (EE)

EE is the central component of job burnout, characterized by the depletion of emotional and physical resources (Gaitan, 2009). The finding obtained on this factor shows that (n: 80 or 86.02%) of EFL teachers underwent EE. This implies that the majority of the participants suffered from the problem. The overall result gained on this dimension is demonstrated in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3. Distribution of EFL Teacher's Emotional Exhaustion

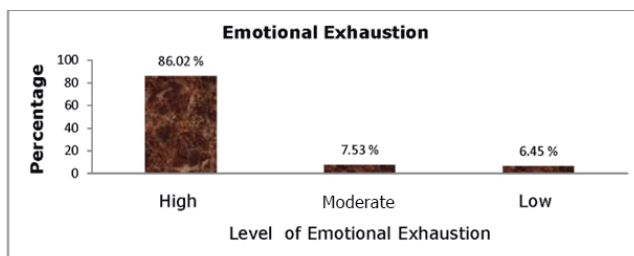
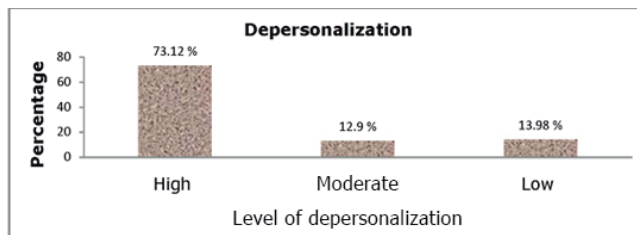


Figure 3: Distribution of EFL Teachers' Emotional Exhaustion

Depersonalization (DP)

As a component of job burnout, DP is viewed as an act of a teacher distancing themselves from students and becoming indifferent to the needs and qualities of an individual in an attempt to cope with cynicism (Gaitan, 2009). The result of the present study on this dimension shows that the majority (n: 68 or 73.12%) of the participants underwent a high-level DP. The rest of the participants experienced moderate and low levels of DP. Thus, this result denotes that most of the studied EFL teachers suffered from a high level of DP (Figure 4).

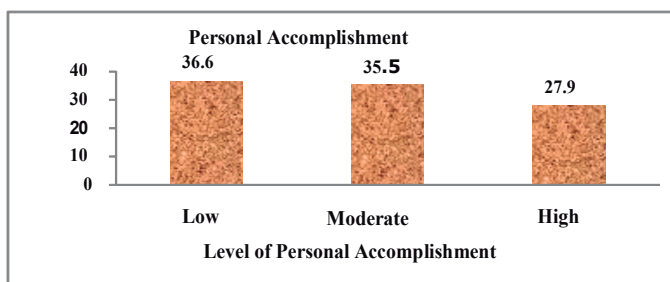
Figure 4. Distribution of EFL Teacher's depersonalization



Personal Accomplishment (PA)

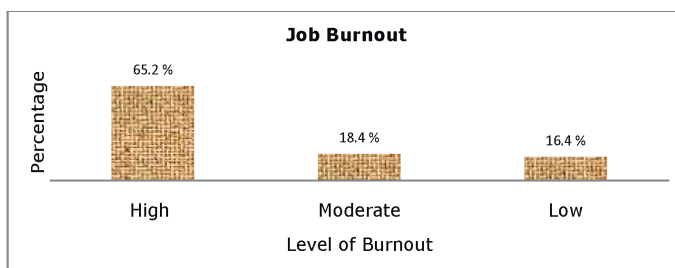
Reduced PA is the other dimension of burnout that arises when a teacher no longer believes that their action can positively change student learning. In this regard, the result of the study revealed that 34 (36.6%) of the EFL teachers underwent a low level of PA. The other almost equal proportion (n: 33 or 35.5 %) of the respondents experienced a moderate level. The outcome of the analysis is demonstrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Distribution of EFL Teacher's Personal Accomplishment



Indeed, burnout, as mentioned earlier, is a multifaceted construct. Each of its dimensions is often measured and described independently as it has been done just before. To describe the overall distribution of the problem, the overall mean score was calculated and described. Therefore, the result obtained indicated that 65.2% of the studied teachers underwent a high level of job burnout, while the rest of the participants experienced moderate and low levels of job burnout, respectively (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Distribution of EFL Teacher's Job- Burnout



In addition, the result from the qualitative component of the study supported the above findings. Most of the participants reported that they suffered from problems in their jobs due to various work-related stressors such as high workload, student ill behavior, lack of resources, and low income. For instance, Teacher-1 stated:

The students in this school are ill-disciplined and they do not respect the teacher. Also, it is forbidden to use corporal punishment, which I know is unscientific, but I feel that it should be reconsidered because our students are well accustomed to such practices at home and in the community. Besides, the school leaders at different hierarchies seem not to have the willingness to solve the problem related to work overload. For instance, I teach 30 periods per week, and the class size was very large and I am forced to teach up to 100 students in a narrow class. In such a context, let alone teaching, managing students is very difficult and overwhelming. Sometimes, I feel as if I am holding a meeting, not teaching. [Teacher-1, interview, 7.03.2020]

Besides, most participants stated mistreatment and favoritism by school leaders, who were biased and did not serve all teachers equally. The leaders often chose close teachers for short-term training and created unnecessary bureaucracy for teachers whom they thought unfriendly. These conditions offended several EFL teachers in the study area, who experienced emotional and physical fatigue due to work-related stressors like high workload, negative student behavior, lack of resources, low rewards, maladministration, and lack of school support. EFL teachers experience EE and physical fatigue due to work-related stressors like high workload, student negative behaviors, limited resources, low rewards, and school support. In line with this, Teacher-3 said:

Firstly, there are a large number of students in a single classroom, which makes EFL teaching and assessment tiresome. In a single classroom, you can find about 80 students. So, it is difficult to teach and assess these students. Secondly, lack of teaching resources (e.g., furniture, textbook, etc.) and absence of a conducive classroom environment has negatively affected my interest and discourages me to involve actively in my job. Finally, the job by itself is frustrating because it makes me toiled without enough compensation [Teacher-3, interview, 12.03.2020].

Concerning teaching resources, Teacher 1 also complained about a shortage of textbooks that made them feel extremely tired of writing everything on the board in every classroom. Teacher-2 and Teacher-3 further complained that the class size was large (more than 70 on average), and they taught 30 periods per week, which brought fatigue. Teacher 4, on their part, stated that the work overload and unfriendly work environment triggered their frustration. They pointed out their experiences as follow:

I teach 28 periods per week. The class size is large (72 on average). The work environment is unfriendly because of poor leadership practice. For instance, the leaders do not listen to teachers and they are not supportive. I have applied formally to the directors to give me a support letter to be transferred to another school. However, they denied to give it to me. Then, I applied to the district

education office, but the office refused it as well. On the other hand, I have seen in my eyes when teachers who applied after I did got a transfer. These experiences made me less concerned about my job. [Teacher-1, interview, 7.03.2020].

In addition, most respondents reported poor school relationships and interactional problems with stakeholders, including students, colleagues, and school leaders. This suggests the teachers developed a detached attitude towards the community. Teachers experienced poor interactions with students due to unfriendly behavior and unfriendly leaders. Divergent views on teachers' personal accomplishments were found, with many feeling ineffective due to students and school-related factors. For instance, Teacher-7 was afraid to say they were successful due to students' lack of interest and willingness to learn.

Table 1. Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis as Predictors of Emotional Exhaustion

Model Summary							
R = .901a		R Square= .811		Adj. R Square = .794		Std. Error = 4.156	
ANOVA							
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	sig.	
	Regression	6244.333	8	780.542	45.191	.000b	
1	Residual	1450.849	84	17.272			
	Total	7695.183	92				
Coefficients							
Predictors			Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
			B	Std. Error	Beta	T	sig.
	(Constant)		1.362	9.034		.151	.881
	Lack of motivation		.330	.095	.170	3.475	.001
	Work overload		.701	.105	.448	6.665	.000
	School maladministration		.180	.110	.086	1.632	.106
	Low salary and lack other benefits		.128	.139	.048	.919	.361
	Low social value		.818	.226	.181	3.611	.001
	Lack of job satisfaction		.222	.115	.122	1.932	.057
	Lack of proper Pedagogical knowledge		.380	.123	.216	3.092	.003
	Perceived stress		.474	.104	.271	4.538	.000

Dependent Variable: Emotional Exhaustion

As can be shown in Table 1, the model of multiple regression analysis was employed to produce regression and beta coefficients. The result indicates Adj. R square = 0.794, $F(8, 84) = 45.191$, $P < 0.05$. This implies that all the predictors explain 0.794 of the variability of EE. In other words, the combination of eight predictors contributed 79.4 % to the development of EE. The remaining 20.6% of the influence might be contributed by other factors that were not considered in this study. Also, the beta value (β) shown under the standardized coefficient, which indicates the strongest level of prediction, makes it simple to compare and explain the relative contributions of each predictor. Thus, in this study, work overload ($\beta = .448$), perceived stress ($\beta = .271$), and lack of pedagogical content knowledge ($\beta = .216$) were found to be strong and significant predictors of EE, respectively. The other predictors, such as lack of motivation and lack of social value, were found to influence EE significantly, but they were not as strong as the aforesaid three predictors. The rest of the predictors did not significantly influence the EE independently.

Table 2. Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis of the Predictors of Depersonalization

Model Summary						
R = .785a		R Square= .616		Adj. R Square = .580		Std. Error = 4.770
ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	sig.
	Regression	3069.006	8	383.626	16.859	.000b
1	Residual	1911.467	84	22.756		
	Total	4980.473	92			
Coefficients						
Predictors			Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
			B	Std. Error	Beta	T
	(Constant)		31.301	10.369		3.019
	Lack of motivation		.045	.109	.028	.408
	Work overload		.332	.121	.264	2.748
	School maladministration		.031	.127	.018	.242
	Low salary and lack other benefits		.512	.160	.241	3.202
	Low social value		.973	.260	.267	3.745
	Lack of job satisfaction		.284	.132	.193	2.153
	Lack of proper pedagogical knowledge		.350	.141	.247	2.480
	Perceived stress		.412	.120	.293	3.433

Dependent Variable: Depersonalization

As depicted in Table 2, Adj. R square = .580, $F(8, 84) = 16.859$, $P < 0.05$. This suggests that all the predictors in the model shared 0.580 for the variation that happened in the outcome sub-variable DP, or the predictors together put 58 % influence on DP. The remaining 42 % of the influence may come from other factors that were not considered in this study. Also, the predictors such as perceived stress ($\beta = .293$), low social value ($\beta = .267$), and work overload ($\beta = .264$) have a high beta value compared to the rest of the predictors. Thus, these three factors are found to be strong and significant predictors of DP. The variables such as lack of appropriate pedagogical knowledge, low salary, lack of other benefits, and lack of job satisfaction also have a significant influence on DP, but their influence is not as strong as the above-mentioned three predictors. On the contrary, the contribution of the variables, such as lack of motivation and maladministration, was little to DP development compared to the other predictors.

Table 3. Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis of the Predictors of Reduced Personal Accomplishment

Model Summary						
R = .766a		R Square= .587	Adj. R Square = .548	Std. Error = 4.092		
ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	sig.
	Regression	1998.315	8	249.789	14.918	.000b
1	Residual	1406.480	84	16.744		
	Total	3404.796	92			
Coefficients						
Predictors		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	sig.
(Constant)		30.259	8.894		3.402	.001
Lack of motivation		.379	.094	-.293	4.048	.000
Work overload		-.173	.104	-.166	-1.665	.100
School maladministration		-.245	.109	-.175	-2.250	.027
Low salary and lack other benefits		-.010	.137	-.006	-.072	.943
Low social value		1.323	.223	-.439	5.933	.000
Lack of job satisfaction		-.669	.113	-.551	-5.920	.000
Lack of proper pedagogical knowledge		.007	.121	-.006	.057	.955
Perceived stress		-.294	.103	-.253	-2.862	.005

Dependent Variable: Reduced Personal Accomplishment

Table 3 demonstrates the Adj. R square = 0.548, $F(8, 84) = 14.918 = P < 0.05$. These figures show that all the predictors in the model contributed 54.8 % to the variation that happened on the outcome sub-variable, PA. The finding obtained from the study also revealed that the strong predictors of PA include lack of job satisfaction ($\beta = -.551$), low social value ($\beta = -.439$), and lack of motivation ($\beta = -.293$). These predictors brought a strong and significant negative influence on PA. The other predictors, such as perceived stress and maladministration, also had a significant independent influence on PA but were not as strong as the stated predictors. Nonetheless, the other two variables (work overload and lack of appropriate pedagogical competence) had little effect on PA independently.

Additionally, the study found that job burnout was influenced by various contextual and individual factors, including poor academic achievement, poor behavior, lack of interest in learning, high workload, low pay, and low social value. Teacher 6 expressed disappointment in students' lack of academic zeal and the social environment, which discouraged focus on education. He also complained about students' behavior to their parents, but no improvement was observed. The social environment discouraged students from acquiring knowledge and skills, preventing them from becoming responsible, self-sufficient citizens. Teacher 7 emphasized the workload and responsibility of teaching 70 students, averaging 25 periods per week. She also mentioned her motherhood and home responsibilities, which consumed her time. Teacher 8 felt unbalanced, and poor compensation made their job disappointing. Teacher-5 argued that educational challenges are beyond school administration and called for regional government intervention. For the majority of the respondents, work overload is the top challenge for EFL teachers in the study context, attributed to a shortage of teachers and large class sizes. Some participants also had extra duties like homeroom teaching and extracurricular activities. There is a small difference in workload distribution among schools, with some having 20-period teaching per week and most having 30-period teaching and extracurricular activities.

According to the findings, school mismanagement results in teachers being unfairly evaluated and treated by school leaders who lack effective management of the workplace. Insufficient resources, poor physical conditions, and lack of staff engagement in school related discussion contribute to a hostile work environment, demoralizing teachers and causing burnout. Administrators lacked attention to teachers' comments, which further exacerbated the issue. The majority of EFL teachers reported they have insufficient monthly income and no additional benefits, with no efforts to reduce burdens. Market inflation negatively impacts their living conditions, and their social value decreases due to low income and poor living conditions. Teachers often dress poorer than students and the community, and trust between teachers and the community is eroded, impacting their professional lives. Environmental factors also decrease EFL teachers' job satisfaction.

Finally, the study found that most teachers lack pedagogical competence in their target language, with gaps in primary skills and needing on-the-job training. Environmental factors, such as high workload, misconduct, and limited resources, contributed to persistent stress among participants. Additionally, the misconduct of the pupils and a lack of resources contributed much to the studied teachers' burnout experience.

Discussion

EFL Teachers' Burnout

The study aimed to investigate EFL teachers' job burnout and the factors that form a causal association and make a prediction of the outcome variable and its dimensions. In other words, the study intends to examine the teachers' burnout in their jobs and to determine the possible influence brought by each of the predictors on the outcome variable and its attributes. For this purpose, the data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guideline. Then, both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques were employed to analyze the data. The findings depict that the majority of the studied EFL teachers were suffering from job burnout caused by various environmental and personal factors. This section, therefore, interprets and discusses the results obtained from the study.

The findings from the quantitative component of the study indicated that the majority of EFL teachers underwent a high level of burnout with its three facets. It was found that the majority, 80 (86.02%), of EFL teachers in the study context suffered from EE. This finding is in line with the findings of previous studies (such as De Silva, 2015; Mukundan & Khandehroo, 2010 Özkara, 2019), which reported several EFL teachers underwent a high level of EE. Also, the present study revealed that the studied EFL teachers' EE is triggered by school-related factors such as high workload, maladministration, students' ill behavior, poor working environment, and lack of resources (textbook, teacher's guide, desks, staff room, teachers' lounge, well-equipped libraries, etc.). This suggests that the contribution of the challenges that stem from occupational settings to the development of EE is very high. In this regard, the finding of the present study is in agreement with the finding of a study conducted by Lou and Chen (2016), which reported that students' incompetence and management-related stressors led EFL teachers to develop EE and burnout.

The participants of the interview also reflected that they often experienced EE due to factors related to students, parents, and schools. Most of them mentioned students' factors such as lack of interest, carelessness, disrespect, late coming, absenteeism, not completing the tasks given, etc., that triggered their emotional strain. These teachers, therefore, underwent negative stimuli that happened in their work environment and led them to develop a negative emotion, EE. In addition, the school-related factors

such as high workload, poor learning facilities, shortage of textbooks, and lack of rewards brought mental fatigue that led them to frustration and reduced efficacy. Societal factors such as lack of follow-up of their own children, lack of support, and low value to teachers and the teaching profession contributed to their EE.

The study also revealed that 68 (73.12%) of the teachers studied underwent high-level DP. This factor is an immediate reaction developed to the strain of EE: meaning an emotionally exhausted and physically fatigued teacher is usually detached from the community he/she works with and prefers to avoid contact with his/her students and other coworkers. This is supportive of the findings of Jacobson (2016) who noted that DP is a reaction developed by a practitioner to recover from the strain of EE. The finding of the present study also supports the finding of Benita et al. (2018), which indicated that teachers could develop DP and cynicism due to various environmental and personal stressors. The researchers further indicated that DP brings adverse effects on teachers' working behaviors and the teaching-learning process. The problem also influences students' behaviors and creates a disruptive classroom atmosphere because teachers in the state of depersonalization cannot interact with students properly and cannot address their needs meaningfully. This condition can lead the students to stop paying respect to their teachers and cease to obey them. Thus, it is possible to infer that DP can seriously harm the quality of the target language education and students' achievement in the study area because teaching is naturally an interpersonal and caring occupation that can easily be influenced by the nature of interaction that exists in the classroom between teachers and students. The interview findings on this issue also supported the quantitative finding. Most of the participants stated that they distanced themselves from the students and school leaders. With regard to this, Maslach et al. (2001) stated that if a worker once felt EE, they intend to distance themselves from the community (students, colleagues, and parents) where they work.

Concerning the third dimension of PA, the finding of the study indicated that a large number of teachers, 34 (36.6%), were less successful in their work, and an equal proportion, 33 (35.5 %), of them also underwent moderate levels of PA. This suggests that most EFL teachers in the project area underwent a low level of personal accomplishment and an almost equal number of teachers also experienced a moderate level of PA. This implies that unless some intervention is introduced, EFL teachers who underwent a moderate level of PA possibly downgrade to low PA because there are abundant triggering factors (e.g., work overload, ill-mannered students, large class size, lack of resources, less concerned parents, lack of fairness, etc.) in the study context. In this sense, the present study's finding partially supports the findings of Genç (2016) and Kamtsios (2018), who reported that teachers' reduced PA mainly results from work overload, students' ill behavior, unfriendly work environment, and lack of support from school leaders and other coworkers. Therefore, it is possible to deduce that EFL teachers in the study area underwent inefficacy due to work-related environmental factors such as high workload, lack of cooperation and cohesion among staff, etc. The findings from the interview also showed that the teachers in the study area perceived

that their occupational setting was unfriendly, their colleagues were unsupportive, and their PA was low. This mindset blocks teachers' reasonable thinking which helps them to solve their problems. In addition, it causes them to blame themselves for not being in the right place to work and leave their profession. This experience, in turn, increases teachers turnover, aggravates workload, and harms EFL education in the study area.

In general, the overall mean score obtained on the three facets of burnout revealed that the majority (65.2 %) of the studied EFL teachers suffered from a high level of burnout and its three dimensions. In this regard, the present finding is in agreement with the finding of Mukundan and Khandehroo (2010), which showed the prevalence of a high level of burnout with its three facets among EFL teachers. It is also partially similar to the finding of Roohani and Dayeri (2019), which reported that a low reward made EFL teachers demotivated, frustrated, and ineffective in their work. Compared to the studies conducted on teachers' burnout in different parts of the world and the rates reported by these studies, the finding of the present study shows that the rate of burnout in the present study area is very high. For instance, the indicated rate (65.2 %) of burnout in the current study is much higher than the rate of burnout (26%) observed among Taiwanese primary school teachers (De Silva, 2015). Likewise, it is also a higher rate compared to the rate (one-third) of burnout in Australian teachers and the rate (40%) of UK teachers, respectively (Smith, 2000; Byrne, 2003, as cited in De Silva, 2015). These show that the prevalence rate of the problem has great disparity from place to place. The possible reasons for the observed variation can be attributed to socio-cultural, socio-economic, and/or occupational settings dissimilarity that exists between the aforesaid studies and the present one.

Factors Associated with EFL Teachers' Burnout

The other key issue the study dealt with was to determine the level of association that existed among the hypothesized factors and EFL teachers' job burnout. The study, thus, intended to identify the factors that made associations with the outcome variable and to find out factors that predict the three facets of burnout more. To achieve this, questions are set as:

What factors are associated with EFL teachers' job burnout?

Which factors predict EFL teachers' burnout on their job more?

To address these questions, multiple regression analysis were employed. The results obtained indicate that all the postulated factors made a strong and significant association with the outcome variable and its dimensions. A case in point, variables such as perceived stress, low social value, and work overload predict EE and DP more strongly than others. Also, variables such as job dissatisfaction, low social value, and lack of motivation strongly explained reduced PA than the rest of the predictors. Thus, the overall results obtained are discussed as follows.

Factors Associated with Emotional Exhaustion

The finding of multiple linear regression analysis (MLRA) showed that all predictors in the model explained 79.4% of the participants' EE. The remaining (20.6%) of the influence was caused by some other factors that were not accounted for in the current study. The study also identified the major factors that contributed much to EFL teachers' EE; hence, the predictors of work overload ($\beta = .448$), perceived stress ($\beta = .271$), and lack of pedagogical content knowledge/LPCK ($\beta = .216$) were found to be strong and significant predictors of EE respectively. Thus, a unit of change on the level of work overload brought 0.448 change on EE; a unit of change on the level of perceived stress had an effect of 0.293 on EE; a unit of change on the level of LPCK 0.216 change on EE. The other variables, such as lack of motivation, low social value, low salary, and lack of other benefits, also had a significant influence on EE. The remaining two variables (job dissatisfaction and maladministration) had little effect on the factor independently.

In this regard, the present study is in agreement with the findings of various researchers (e.g., Genç, 2016; Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2016; Maroofi & Ghaemi, 2016; Özkara, 2019). These studies reported that EE was caused by different environmental and personal factors. For instance, the finding of Özkara (2019) revealed the presence of a significant and negative relationship between EE and self-efficacy, which is in line with the finding of the present study that showed the studied EFL teachers underwent EE that reduced their PA. Likewise, the findings of Genç (2016) indicated the presence of an inverse relationship between learned resourcefulness and EE. Concerning this, the present study shows that a perceived lack of suitable pedagogical content knowledge was one of the strong and significant predictors of EE (see Table 1). Therefore, it is possible to say that the majority of EFL teachers in the study context suffered from EE due to environmental and personal stressors.

Factors Associated with Depersonalization

The results of the regression analysis indicated that all the independent variables brought a 58 % influence on the participants' DP dimension. The factors that arose a strong influence on DP include perceived stress ($\beta .293$), low social value ($\beta .267$), and work overload ($\beta .264$). To put it differently, a unit of change on perceived stress caused a 0.293 change on DP; a unit of change on lack of social value brought a 0.267 change on DP; a unit of change on work overload brought 0.264 variation on DP respectively. From these findings, it is thus inferred that the best predictors of DP are perceived stress, lack of social value, and work overload, respectively. On the other hand, maladministration and lack of motivation had little effect on DP independently.

Concerning this, the studies (e.g., Genç, 2016; Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2016; Jacobson, 2016; Maroofi & Ghaemi, 2016; Özkara, 2019) reported that DP is a factor that is inflicted by several environmental and personal stressors. For instance, Genç (2016) showed that teachers' self-efficacy is negatively associated with the other two dimensions of burnout. This result, thus, is consistent with the present finding, which indicates that LAPCK had a significant association with DP (see Table 2). The result of the current study is also similar to the study finding of Nayernia and Babaya (2019), which reported that language proficiency had a significant negative relationship with DP. Moreover, the present study supports the finding of Kamtsios (2018), which indicated that workload, time pressure, and students' misbehavior were the most prevalent factors that led EFL teachers to DP and the other two dimensions.

Factors Associated with Reduced Personal Accomplishment

The finding on the factor of PA indicated that all predictors together had a 54.7 % influence on PA. The rest 45.3 % of the influence might have come from other factors that were not considered in this study. The other important aspect of the model is that the constant regression coefficient Beta (β) that showed dissatisfaction (β . 551) strongly influenced PA; that is, a unit of change in this predictor can cause a .551 change in the level of PA. Then, a unit of change on lack of social value brought a .439 change in PA, and a unit of change on lack of motivation contributed to the reduction of .293 in PA. Therefore, from these findings, it is deduced that the best predictors of PA are job dissatisfaction, lack of social value, and lack of motivation, respectively. Regarding this, the finding of the present study is, in one way or another, consistent with the findings of other researchers (e.g., Genç, 2016; Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2016; Maroofi & Ghaemi, 2016; Jacobson, 2016; Özkara, 2019). These studies reported that environmental and personal factors imposed a negative influence on EFL teachers' PA. For instance, Özkara (2019) reported the presence of a negative relationship between PA and affective factors. Likewise, the findings from Genç (2016) suggested that there was an inverse relationship between learned resourcefulness and low PA.

Conclusions and Implications

The problem of job burnout has become a serious threat among EFL teachers of public primary schools in the study context due to the existence of several risk factors in the work environment. This study, thus, was conducted to investigate EFL teachers' burnout and examine the level of influence brought by the hypothesized factors on this psychological strain. To achieve these, the study employed a survey design of the descriptive study with quantitative dominant over qualitative sequential explanatory

methods. The finding revealed that the majority of EFL teachers experienced burnout due to several environmental and personal factors. Based on the findings, suggestions are made to help the teachers protect themselves from burnout, and possible interventions are indicated to improve the teaching-learning process. It also has a different implication for EFL teachers, who are the main contributors to the teaching-learning process, because job burnout affects their performance and overall educational success. The problem hinders their proper preparation and the teachers' rapport with students, colleagues, and school leaders. Thus, EFL teachers must be given special concern. Their protection enables the protection of the entire educational process.

To reduce the impacts of the problem, it is suggested that EFL teachers receive on-the-job training in emotional, cognitive, and behavioral coping strategies, which reduce stress and improve their mental health. Emotional coping mechanisms, for instance, involve finding something positive out of negative experiences, which helps them maintain better emotional control amid stress. The other is the use of cognitive coping strategies, which let the teachers use reason and logic to remain calm while giving themselves space to vent their feelings. Finally, behavioral coping strategies involve relaxation techniques like going to a natural setting, exercising, listening to music, etc. These methods help the teachers deal with the problem and lessen their bodily stress. Also, the training enhances teachers' understanding of the problem, problem-solving techniques, and the importance of a healthy lifestyle, ultimately improving their mental health and students' academic performance.

Moreover, teacher training institutions should incorporate courses on coping techniques and emotional intelligence into EFL methodology courses to prepare trainees for workplace challenges and overcome similar challenges in their professional lives in the future. The findings of the study further showed that environmental factors like work overload, poor management, insufficient pay, and a lack of social value. To improve the situation, a collaborative effort is needed from various stakeholders. For instance, the regional and zonal education bureaus should work closely to provide a manageable workload, ensuring fair administration and giving reasonable compensation to the EFL teachers in the study area. These efforts help the teachers manage their stress at work, motivate them to have a good attitude about what they do, demonstrate commitment to their daily activities, and enhance the teaching-learning process as a whole.

Though the study provides many useful insights about EFL teachers' job burnout and other related issues, it suffers from some limitations. As it was conducted in a specific setting and on limited samples, the findings from the study cannot be generalized to a wider population of EFL teachers who have been working in public primary schools in the region and nationwide. Thus, further study should be carried out on a large scale to understand the magnitude and expansion of the problem in the region and nationwide.

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- Support initiatives to educate researchers on issues of publication ethics and other ethical aspects of the journal.
- Take responsibility for the process of all articles submitted to the Journal, and develop mechanisms of confidentiality and peer evaluation up to the point of publication or rejection by the journal.

Other principles to follow include:

Peer Review Process and Editorial Decisions. The decision to publish or not shall be established via the process of peer evaluation, according to the “double blind” method in order to guarantee that the evaluation process that is free of conflict of interest between the parties. This rigorous procedure allows peer reviewers to value the technical quality, originality, and scientific contribution of the articles, among other aspects, and at the same time provides authors with the means to improve the article. For this revision process, a sufficient number of peer reviewers will be provided, selected from qualified area experts, with the intention of allowing for a more critical, expert, and objective editorial decision- making process.

Editing and Publication Schedule. The Editor provides for the fulfillment of the editing and publication schedule of articles accepted for publication. Upon the publication of each issue, the Editor and the editorial team accept responsibility for the promotion and distribution of the journal to its readers, subscribers, authors, peer reviewers, and other organizations with whom the institution holds agreements, as well as the data bases and national and international indexing services.

General Editor Obligations and Responsibilities

Authors must present their articles in the link indicated on the OJS-web page, according to the guidelines for the presentation of articles established by the journal. Authors are responsible for the ideas expressed in the articles, and for the ethical appropriateness.

Originality, plagiarism and exclusivity. Authors must explicitly state that the article is original in its creation, and that every effort has been taken to respect the intellectual

property of those third parties cited within. Articles must not be reprints, nor published in other journals. Further, authors must declare that the findings are original in nature, that no plagiarism exists, nor distortion or manipulation of the facts.

Exclusivity. Articles submitted to the journal must not be simultaneously submitted to other publications.

Citations and references. Authors must ensure that they have received express permission for the use of material they do not own, including the reproduction of charts, graphs, maps, diagrams, photographs, etc. All sources must be cited appropriately, with complete references provided.

Authorship. Articles with more than one author should order authors' names in hierarchical fashion, indicating by this the degree of function, responsibility, and contribution to the article. By the same token, mention must be made to any individuals who have made significant scientific or intellectual contributions to the research, composition, and editing of the article.

Responsibility. All authors submitting articles must assume full responsibility for their work, and ensure that it presents an exhaustive review and discussion of the most recent and relevant literature.

Research ethics. Research studies must use methodology that ensures that subjects are treated with respect and dignity. In addition to those principles of the code of conduct of the American Psychological Association (APA), GIST highlights the following: discussion of the limitations of confidentiality and the safekeeping of the same, minimization of the intrusion and invasiveness in individuals' privacy, conservation of data and informed consent to research, record, or film. Further, the names of institutions or individuals should be avoided, even if the author has gained permission for their use. If their mention is considered necessary, the author must submit signed authorization for their inclusion. The names of the researchers and participants shall likewise be omitted from the article. It is suggested that authors use pseudonyms, for example in case studies.

Conflict of interest. The Editor shall not consider articles that possibly represent a real or potential conflict of interest, resulting from financial or other relationships of competition or collaboration between authors, companies, or institutions mentioned in the article.

Errors in articles published. Any error or imprecision shall be communicated by the editorial team, and the necessary corrections in the online version of the article made.

Obligations and General Responsibilities of Peer Reviewers:

In the revision process, peer reviewers shall adhere to the following principles:

Confidentiality. Peer reviewers shall not share any information with third parties related to the article or its publication process. In such case that an external opinion may be necessary, reviewers shall seek express written authorization from the Editor in Chief, explaining the reasons. By the same token, reviewers shall not use the content of non-published articles for their own benefit or that of others, except with the express

authorization of the authors. The violation of the principle of confidentiality constitutes bad practice by the reviewers.

Contribution to quality. Individuals who commit to evaluating articles submitted to the Journal shall carry out a critical revision, without bias, using clear, non-offensive language, with the intention of guaranteeing scientific and literary quality, according to the area of expertise.

Time management. Although the Journal has a maximum time allotted for the revision process, articles should be evaluated as soon as possible in the hopes of optimizing the revision and editing process. At the same time, peer reviewers who feel that they are unable to fulfill their function as evaluators, either because of lack of expertise, time or possible conflict of interest, shall communicate this immediately to the Editor or editorial team through regular channels.

Detection of errors and bad editorial practices. Reviewers shall pay particular attention to gaps in references to literature or authors that they feel need to be included. At the same time, if in the process of revision, it is possible to detect bad practices on the part of authors, peer reviewers are under the obligation to inform the Editor so that he or she may proceed in accordance with the ethical principles of the journal.

Additional Information

Compensation. The author will receive three copies of the edition in which his/her article shall appear.

Concerns. Communicate with the Editor through e-mail or by telephone, please. Institución Universitaria Colombo Americana, International: (57-1) 281-1777 ext. 1296; In Colombia: (05-1) 281-1777 ext.1296

Waiver. Every article shall be subject to the review of the Editorial Committee. The Editor reserves the right to make formal modifications to articles through the editing process.

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