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TEACHING & TESTING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

# TNT ELT 2025



*Editors:*

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**PROCEEDINGS OF THE 1<sup>ST</sup>  
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## **PREFACE**

The selected papers you are about to read are the proceedings of the 1st Teaching & Testing ELT Conference, themed “Developmental Approaches to Teaching and Testing,” which was held in Melaka, Malaysia, from 21 to 22 August 2025. These papers cover a range of areas, including language teaching methods, AI-driven strategies, modern assessment, high-impact classroom practice, learning methods and materials, and language studies. We hope you find these papers useful.

Editors

22 January 2026

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# Exploring Learners' Perceptions of the Talk Show Method in ESL Conversation Classes

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## Abstract

The Talk Show Method (TSM) is a creative approach to English language teaching in which teachers and students simulate the dynamics of a television talk show. The method encourages participation, reduces anxiety, and integrates all language skills within a realistic communicative context. This study investigated elementary and intermediate learners' perceptions of the TSM after participating in two conversation classes in a language institute in Maryland, USA. Data were collected qualitatively through students' written reflections and went through inductive thematic analysis. The study showed that learners at both levels responded positively to the TSM. Learners found the experience engaging and genuine, and they appreciated the sense of cooperation it created in the class. Some learners, however, mentioned that they occasionally struggled to follow parts of the discussion or felt nervous when speaking. Overall, the results suggest that the method can help learners participate more actively, work together confidently, and communicate in a classroom that gives them a central role in learning.

**Keywords:** conversation courses, oral skills, developing presentation skills, learner engagement, talk show method

## Introduction

Over the past several decades, English language teaching (ELT) has witnessed continuous experimentation with methods that address both the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning. Despite these developments, many classrooms remain overly dependent on textbooks and teacher-dominated instruction. The Talk Show Method (TSM) was proposed to bridge this gap by transforming the traditional classroom into a lively and participatory communicative space where learners use English in an authentic and creative way (Nimehchisalem, 2013).

TSM is modeled on the structure of a television talk show and uses that familiar format as a learning tool in the language classroom. It places learners in active roles such as the host, guest, or audience member so that they build conversation together instead of only responding to the teacher. This approach draws learners into active communication and, as noted by Krashen (2009), allows them to forget that they are in a learning situation. When this happens, the class can reach a state of flow, a condition in which interaction becomes effortless and genuinely meaningful (Aubrey, 2017; Csikszentmihalyi, 1993; Egbert, 2004).

Although TSM was conceptually and procedurally detailed in earlier work (Nimehchisalem, 2013), empirical research examining learners' reactions and experiences with the method has been limited. The current study, therefore, explores learners' perceptions of the TSM in conversation classes to determine how it influences their engagement, confidence, and understanding of language learning.

### **The Talk Show Method**

The TSM has its roots in both cognitive and social learning theories. From a cognitive point of view, learning involves how people make sense of new ideas and fit them into what they already know (Ormrod, 2020). In social learning theory, learning takes place through the observation of others and through participation in shared activities within a group (Bandura, 1976). People notice how others act, try to do the same, and in that process develop new understandings. From this perspective, the TSM connects what happens in the mind with what happens in interaction. Language learning in this method is seen as both a social and a mental process. Learners pay attention to what they want to express, think through how to say it, and use the language to communicate with real people in meaningful situations.

In this method, language is viewed in a practical way. A person does not simply know a language because they can recall its grammar rules or vocabulary. Real knowledge of language also means understanding what fits a situation and being able to read between the lines when people speak or write (Hymes, 1972). In a TSM classroom, learners develop both linguistic and pragmatic competence as they negotiate meaning, respond spontaneously, and adjust to social cues during the simulated talk show.

A central feature of TSM is its attention to learners' affective factors. Drawing on Krashen's (1987) affective filter hypothesis, TSM aims to lower anxiety by giving learners new identities, such as an expert guest or a television host, under which they can speak more freely. These temporary identities act like a mask that helps learners worry less about making mistakes and take more chances when speaking. The sense of play that comes with acting out roles, together with moments of humor and creativity, makes the classroom atmosphere more relaxed and enjoyable (Cook, 2000).

Procedurally, a TSM session resembles a real talk show. The teacher usually acts as the host, a learner serves as the guest, and classmates form the audience or home viewers. During a session, the host starts by greeting everyone and explaining what the talk will be about. The guest responds, and the two exchange a few ideas before the rest of the class joins in.

Learners who listen as the audience sometimes raise a question or share a short comment. Occasionally, another learner steps in to act as a reporter or a second host, and that change of role makes the discussion move in a new direction. Afterward, the class takes time to think about the language they used, talk over new words they heard, and note what made their communication clear or effective. After the show, the group reflects on how language was used, reviews useful vocabulary, and talks about what made communication work well. Through this process, learners work with all four language skills and show their understanding in different ways such as speaking, writing, and using digital tools.

## **Method**

### **Context and Participants**

This study was conducted at a language institute in Maryland, USA. Two intact classes participated: an elementary group (n = 8) and an intermediate group (n = 11). The participants were adults with an average age of about twenty-four, and their first languages were either Spanish or Portuguese. Each group attended conversation classes over a three-week period, meeting four times a week for 90 minutes per session. During these sessions, approximately 20 minutes were devoted to talk-show-based activities, giving learners repeated exposure to the method.

### **Instruments and Data Collection**

After the three weeks of classes, the researcher teacher asked the learners to write their reflections about their experience with TSM. Some wrote only a few lines and others a full paragraph. In their reflections, they mentioned what they enjoyed, what they found less easy, and whether they felt the activity had helped their English in any way. These reflections were then used as the main set of qualitative data for the study.

### **Data Analysis**

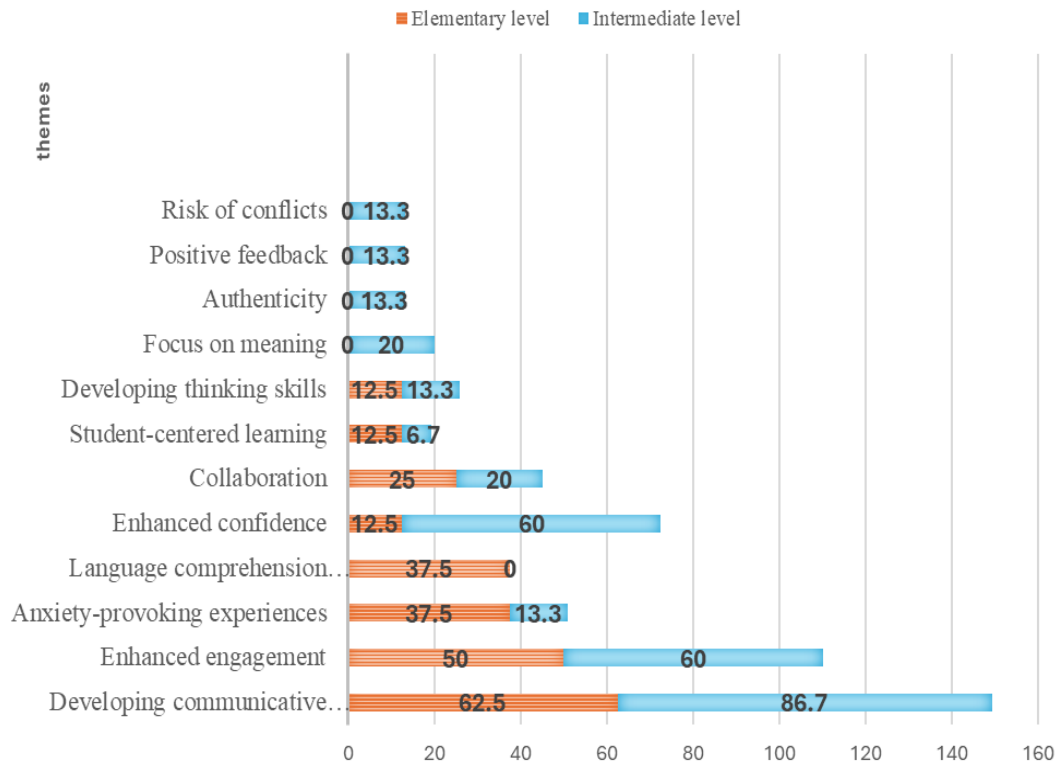
The data were examined through inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) that focused on identifying recurring ideas and patterns in the learners' reflections. Reflections were read multiple times, coded for recurring ideas by both researchers, results were compared and discussed for trustworthiness, and categorized into themes. The frequency of themes was later summarized to illustrate general trends across proficiency levels.

## **Results**

### **Overview of Themes**

Eight major themes emerged from the elementary group and fifteen from the intermediate group (see Figure 1). Across both levels, the learners demonstrated a generally favorable attitude toward the TSM, describing it as engaging, interactive, and confidence-building.

**Figure 1: Themes Emerging from Elementary and Intermediate learners' Perceptions of the TSM**



### Positive Perceptions

Several themes reflected the learners' appreciation of the method's authenticity and relevance. Many students mentioned that the TSM reminded them of a podcast or a real talk show, which gave the activity a sense of realism not usually found in classroom work. Because the activity felt real to them, learners seemed more alert and interested during class. It also allowed them to take a more active role in how they learned. Some learners spoke of the class as a team sharing opinions in a supportive environment and a fun space to know each other as classmates. Their words point to a shift in how the class operated, with learners working together and showing more respect for one another, an outcome that matches the aims of learner-centered education.

A recurring theme was "enhanced confidence". Several learners shared that the activity helped them fight against fear and talk in front of people, adding that they felt less afraid of speaking in English. Their comments support Nimehchisalem's (2013) view that the role-based design of the method gives learners a way to cope with the anxiety that often comes with using a foreign language. The opportunity to speak as an imaginary expert seemed to encourage "risk-taking" and "self-expression". TSM also increased "engagement" and "motivation". Some learners said that the class turned into a space where they could raise their voice and talk about their passion and knowledge, and that it encouraged them to talk.

Their remarks show that the method drew on learners' own interests and experiences, which helped them feel more motivated from within to participate and express themselves. Another theme involved "development of communicative competence". Learners explained that they needed to ask smart questions, listen carefully, and guide the conversation, which shows that the task called for real negotiation of meaning. In doing so, they became better at taking turns in conversation, responding quickly, and listening carefully. These skills form the core of real communicative ability.

### **Challenges and Mixed Views**

Most learners shared positive views, though a few mentioned some difficulties they experienced. Some learners said it was difficult to keep up with what their classmates were saying. A few learners said their English was not strong enough yet, which made it easy for them to lose track of the conversation at times. For those at lower levels, the fast pace and sudden changes in the discussion made understanding even more difficult. Some learners mentioned feeling tense when it was their turn to speak, explaining that being in front of classmates could be embarrassing or that they sometimes felt frozen. Their comments suggest that even though the TSM helps reduce anxiety by allowing learners to speak through a role, the act of performing can still be stressful for a few learners. Teachers can help learners manage this challenge by starting the activity step by step and offering regular encouragement and support along the way. Another concern was that sensitive or controversial topics could come up during discussions, as one of the learners mentioned this possibility. This shows why teachers need to guide topic selection carefully and create a classroom atmosphere that is respectful and welcoming for everyone.

### **Discussion**

The findings show that learners found the TSM both mentally stimulating and emotionally engaging, and that it encouraged them to use English in real communication. This result supports the ideas behind TSM outlined by Nimehchisalem (2013), who described the method from a socio-cognitive point of view. In this perspective, learning happens through mental activity as well as through social exchange. When learners spoke about teamwork and sharing ideas, their reflections brought out the social side of this perspective. Learners mentioned that working together in class helped them learn from each other and feel more connected as a group. Their remarks about becoming better thinkers reflected the cognitive aspect of the learning process. Altogether, these reflections suggest that the talk show setting joined social interaction with individual thought, giving learners opportunities to use new language forms in meaningful ways within real communication.

The reported increase in motivation and participation also resonates with the affective orientation of TSM. Nimehchisalem (2013) stressed that affective variables such as self-confidence and anxiety strongly influence language learning, and that role-based

dramatization can serve as a protective frame within which learners feel safe to experiment with the language. The current learner comments about feeling “less afraid of speaking” and perceiving the class as a “supportive environment” confirm this principle in practice. When learners were given imaginary roles such as host, guest, or viewer, the classroom became a safer and more relaxed space where nervousness could turn into creative effort. A few learners still mentioned moments of embarrassment or hesitation, which shows how delicate this balance can be. This suggests that teachers need to give learners time and steady support as they build confidence through role play.

Another point that stood out was the sense of authenticity and the way learners built practical communication skills. Several of them said the activity felt like being in a real talk show or podcast, and they seemed to enjoy how real the experience felt. Nimehchisalem (2013) notes that the TSM supports the development of pragmatic competence by placing learners in social situations where communication carries real meaning rather than having them rely on artificial classroom drills. Learners need to respond to questions from the audience, manage turns in conversation, and understand meanings that are only implied. These experiences help them learn to use language in ways that are appropriate, not only correct. When learners mentioned listening carefully, asking good questions, and guiding the discussion, their words showed that they were building this kind of awareness. Instead of repeating memorized sentences, they joined in real conversations that required them to think and respond to what others were saying. Such abilities lie at the heart of communicative competence and show that learners were using the language with clear purpose and awareness.

The findings also show that the TSM gives clear attention to bringing different language skills together within one communicative setting. Learners needed to read or listen to background material, speak freely during the talk show, and at times write short questions or messages afterward. As Nimehchisalem (2013) points out, this kind of natural integration helps learners retain what they learn and apply it in new situations. Learners’ comments about stronger speaking and listening skills show that using several skills together in one communicative task led to deeper involvement with the language. In some language classes, skills are not integrated. The talk show activity, however, worked in a more natural way. It showed how people use language in everyday life, listening and speaking at the same time to share real ideas and make themselves understood. Furthermore, the students’ remarks about developing thinking skills and expanding knowledge indicate that TSM goes beyond linguistic outcomes to promote critical and reflective thinking. When learners take part as guests or hosts, they have to plan what to say, think through different ideas, and respond to questions within a short time. This process reflects Nimehchisalem’s (2013) view that the TSM promotes discovery learning, where learners accept responsibility for building their own knowledge. The sense of control and involvement that appeared in their reflections, such as calling the class a team sharing opinions, shows that the method supports both autonomy and collaboration, which are key for long-term language development.

A number of learners mentioned that the activity was not always easy for them. Some said it was hard to follow what others were saying, a few felt uncomfortable when topics became personal, and others admitted they sometimes felt nervous during the session. These

comments show how complex it can be to use the TSM in real classrooms. Nimehchisalem (2013) had already noted that teachers need to guide topic choices and pay attention to learners' readiness, and the present findings seem to confirm that point. Such challenges are not necessarily signs of weakness in the method. They are part of what happens in a communicative class that values real interaction rather than complete control. Teachers can respond to these issues by planning with care and helping students before and after each session. Such support should help learners strengthen their language skills while also gaining confidence to express themselves without fear.

Overall, the learners' perceptions affirm that TSM embodies a flow experience in the sense described by Csikszentmihalyi (1993) and referenced by Nimehchisalem (2013). When learners are so absorbed in communication that they momentarily forget they are performing in a foreign language, they reach an optimal state for language acquisition. The talk show's combination of structure, spontaneity, and social interaction appears to create precisely such conditions. The findings indicate that the TSM can act as a bridge between classroom practice and the development of learner identity. Through performance that remains meaningful, learners have the chance to try out new voices and explore different identities in English. This finding agrees with Nimehchisalem's (2013) view that the method helps learners take a more active part in learning by using language to share ideas and relate to others. In their reflections, many learners talked about feeling a sense of ownership and enjoyment, and some mentioned new confidence in speaking. These comments suggest that while they were improving their English, they were also beginning to see themselves differently, as people who could use the language with success and comfort.

Looking at what learners wrote, it seems that the TSM was effective not only in practice but also in the ideas that support it. Many learners mentioned that working with others, feeling supported, and using several language skills together made the learning experience more enjoyable. A few also described some difficulties they faced, but these did not seem to reduce the value of what they learned from the activity. Instead, such comments remind teachers to shape the method to fit their own classrooms. If used with care and awareness of learners' needs, the TSM can help them grow in their language and in their confidence to communicate.

## **Conclusion**

This small qualitative study shows that the TSM can be an effective and learner-centered way to teach conversation in ESL classes. Several learners said that the TSM made classroom discussions smoother and encouraged a more open atmosphere. As learners get used to speaking with classmates, they became more relaxed, which in time increased their confidence. Teachers can adjust the method according to their learners' needs and the aims of each course. In these activities, learners listen, speak, read, and write as part of one process. Bringing these skills together often helps reduce students' anxiety and makes them more willing to participate in class. At the same time, the findings point to some important teaching considerations. Teachers need to guide learners in selecting topics that fit the class context

and do not make anyone feel uncomfortable. They also need to pay attention to language level and give quieter learners chances to join in step by step. Since the method relies on role play, teachers need to find a balance between letting learners talk freely and keeping enough structure to guide learning.

In future studies, researchers could examine the TSM using experimental or mixed-method designs to see how it helps learners build confidence, use English more naturally, and retain what they learn over time. It would also make sense to include people from different age groups and language backgrounds, as this could show more clearly how the method fits different kinds of classrooms. These studies could help teachers learn more about how the method works in different kinds of classrooms and with students who bring different experiences and abilities.

The TSM can be seen as a practical and creative way to teach English through communication that feels real and meaningful. It brings imagination into ordinary conversation and helps build a classroom atmosphere that is open, lively, and genuinely engaging. In such a classroom, students have the chance to speak and listen in English and to think through ideas while enjoying the process of learning the language.

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# Functional Analysis of Lexical Bundles in the Rhetorical Moves of Introduction Sections in Scopus-Indexed Linguistics Articles

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## Abstract

Lexical bundles and rhetorical moves are indispensable building blocks of discourse. The introduction section, as the first part of a research article, plays a pivotal role in constructing successful writing. Since less attention has been paid to the bundle-driven move analysis, this study seeks to examine the lexical bundles present in the rhetorical moves of introduction sections across 50 Scopus-indexed research articles in the field of applied linguistics. It also explores the functional features of the 3 to 5-word lexical bundles. Based on Swales' (1990) CARS model, all bundles reflecting each move were extracted and categorized using Hyland's (2008a) functional classification of lexical bundles in academic writing. The results showed that participant-oriented bundles were the most dominant, with 68 occurrences across all rhetorical moves in the introduction sections, followed by research-oriented and text-oriented bundles, each with 26 instances. Moreover, a total of 120 lexical bundles used across the three moves reflected their rhetorical purposes: Move 1 features research- and text-oriented bundles to situate the study and identify gaps, with fewer participant-oriented bundles; Move 2 uses only participant-oriented bundles to emphasize the researchers' role; and Move 3 is dominated by participant-oriented bundles to highlight the study's contributions, with some text-oriented bundles linking it to broader research. The findings of this study provide a practical list that fits for choosing lexical bundles to realize each move and raise the academic writers' awareness of using lexical bundles properly.

**Keywords:** lexical bundles, rhetorical moves, introduction sections, research articles, applied linguistics, Scopus

## Introduction

High-quality writing is crucial for research articles intended for prestigious, Scopus-indexed journals, as it helps communicate the research effectively to an international audience (Geng & Wei, 2023). Previous studies have analyzed rhetorical moves across different sections of articles from Scopus-indexed journals, with the abstract section being particularly popular (e.g., Geng et al., 2024; Maporn & Chaiyasuk, 2023; Indarti, 2022). However, the

introduction—considered the first section of a research article (RA)—plays a pivotal role in shaping the reader’s initial impression, potentially influencing their decision to continue reading (Grant & Pollack, 2011). This section often acts as a guide for editors, reviewers, and readers, positioning the research in terms of its scope and significance. Furthermore, the introduction is expected to offer essential motivation and highlight the study’s contributions to its audience (Ahlstrom, 2017). Properly employing rhetorical moves in the introduction is highly significant. To indicate a move, certain lexical bundles (LBs) can be taken into consideration as they are the “most frequently occurring sequence of words”, and they serve as lexico-grammatical blocks to combine texts in a language or register (Biber, 2006, p.134). As a type of formulaic language, lexical bundles are ubiquitous in technically fulfilling rhetorical and discourse-related functions. The bundle-driven move approach will thus assist writers in forming their ideas in a coherent written manner. However, there is a lack of studies analyzing the functional features of lexical bundles found in the rhetorical moves of introduction sections in Scopus-indexed RAs in applied linguistics. Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap. The findings of this study will facilitate academic writers in selecting lexical bundles with certain functional features to realize rhetorical moves and craft a well-structured, high-caliber introduction that aligns with international standards.

## **Methods**

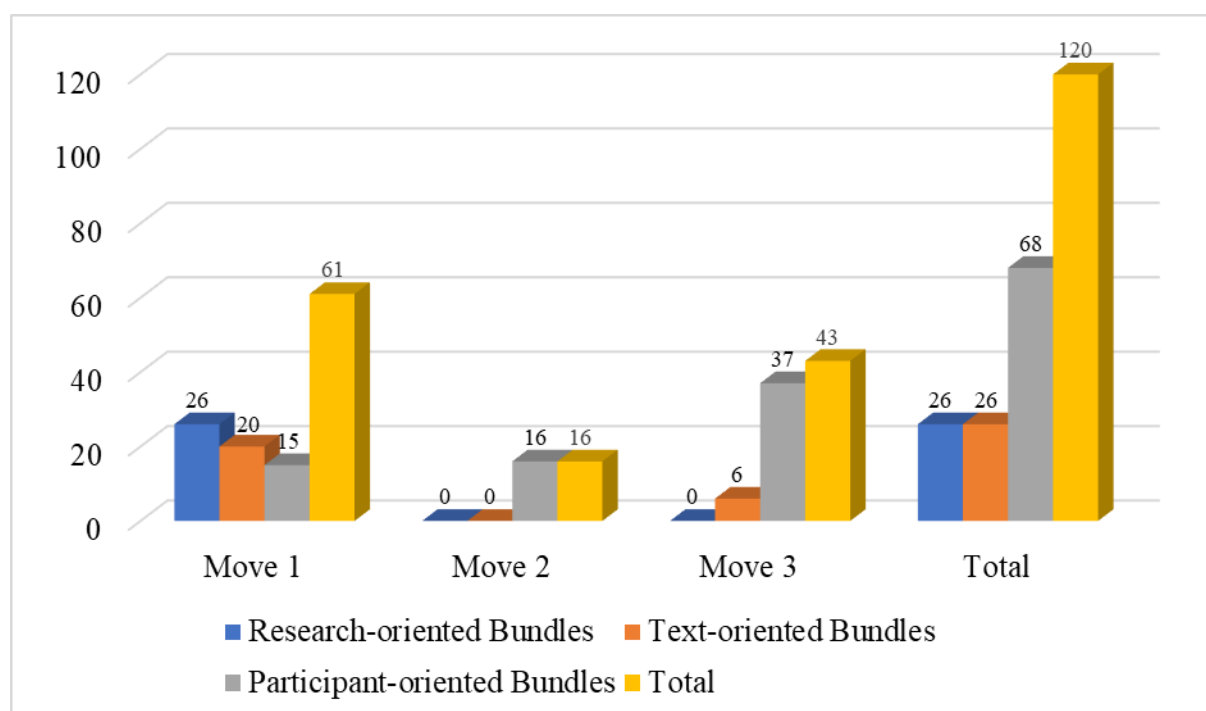
A total of 50 linguistic introductions (written in English) from Scopus-indexed research articles were selected to build the corpora. The lexical bundles were extracted from the segmented texts including each rhetorical move based on Swales’ (1990) CARS model. The frequency cut-off point (Min. N-Gram Frequency) was set as two based on the corpus size after normalization, and then the 3 to 5-word bundles were extracted by using the latest AntConc software. For analyzing the functional features of lexical bundles, Hyland’s (2008a) classification was adopted, and these bundles are made into a list by each category.

## **Results and Discussion**

It can be seen from Figure 1 that in Move 1 (establishing a territory), the distribution includes 26 research-oriented bundles, 20 text-oriented bundles, and 15 participant-oriented bundles, amounting to 61 bundles. In Move 2 (establishing a niche), only participant-oriented bundles are used with 16 instances in total. In Move 3 (Occupying the niche), participant-oriented bundles dominate with 37 occurrences, text-oriented bundles appear 6 times, and no research-oriented bundles are found.

Overall, participant-oriented bundles are the most frequently used, with 68 occurrences across all moves, followed by research-oriented and text-oriented bundles, each with 26 instances. The total number of lexical bundles used across the three moves is 120. These patterns likely reflect the rhetorical purposes of the moves.

**Figure 1: Functional Classification of LBs in 3 Moves in 50 Linguistic RAs**



In Move 1, the prevalence of research- and text-oriented bundles suggests a focus on establishing credibility, situating the study within a broader scholarly discourse, and providing a solid foundation in existing research. These types of bundles allow authors to present the background, justify the relevance of the topic, and set the scene for their study. The relatively limited presence of participant-oriented bundles here implies a restrained use of personal or authorial stance, as this move is primarily about engaging the research community rather than foregrounding the researchers' role.

In contrast, Move 2's exclusive use of participant-oriented bundles may indicate an intentional rhetorical strategy where authors highlight their active role in addressing gaps or extending the conversation. This Move positions the researchers as contributors, making a case for the study's novelty or relevance. The frequent use of participant-oriented bundles here can thus create a sense of ownership, emphasizing the researchers' specific intervention in the field.

Finally, the dominance of participant-oriented bundles in Move 3 reinforces the importance of positioning the authors' contribution. By using these bundles, researchers clarify their study's distinct value, aligning with the goal of demonstrating the work's impact and establishing a niche. The presence of some text-oriented bundles here also suggests an attempt to connect this specific research contribution with broader disciplinary conversations.

## Conclusion

This study examined the functional classification of lexical bundles (LBs) in the rhetorical moves of 50 Scopus-indexed research article introductions in applied linguistics. The results show that participant-oriented bundles are most frequent, particularly in Move 2 and Move 3, while research- and text-oriented bundles are more common in Move 1 to situate the study within the existing literature. These findings highlight the importance of strategically using different types of bundles to trigger rhetorical moves, offering practical insights for academic writers. Limitations include the small corpus and discipline-specific focus, suggesting a need for future research across broader fields and larger datasets. The results have pedagogical implications for helping writers effectively structure their introductions and meet international publication standards.

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# Digital Narratives and ESL Learners' Willingness to Communicate (WTC)

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## Abstract

This study examines the impact of digital narratives onto learners' Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. The research was conducted with 8 ESL learners at a public university in Malaysia, encompassing first, second, and third-year students enrolled in compulsory English language courses like 'English for Academic Purposes' and English for Professional Purposes. Semi-structured interviews were employed as the primary research method, with participants selected on a voluntary basis. The interviews were conducted in either English or Bahasa Malaysia, depending on the participants' language proficiency and preference, and each interview lasted between 30 to 40 minutes. The findings indicate that the widespread online phenomenon of "bashing" has contributed to significant fear and anxiety among learners regarding the possibility of making linguistic errors during online ESL lessons. This anxiety is further exacerbated by the potential for classroom mistakes to be shared and amplified on digital platforms in which could lead to public humiliation. The study highlights the paradoxical nature of technology in language learning: while it provides valuable opportunities, it simultaneously poses a threat to students' WTC in the target language due to the risks associated with online exposure. These findings highlight the importance of addressing the psychological impacts of digital narratives on language learners in the 21st century.

**Keywords:** willingness to communicate (WTC), Digital Narratives, ESL

## Introduction

In second language (L2) education, speaking ability is often seen as the goal. However, research shows that proficiency alone does not guarantee language use. Learners with strong vocabulary and grammar may still avoid speaking due to anxiety, low self-confidence, or fear of negative judgment. Willingness to Communicate (WTC), defined as a learner's readiness to speak when given the chance, has emerged as a more accurate predictor of actual communication (MacIntyre et al., 1998). In Malaysia, where English is taught as a second language in a multilingual society, learners face added pressures. English is tied to academic success and global identity but using it in public can lead to fears of being mocked or seen as showing off (Gill, 2005; Pillay, 2011). Many students grow up speaking Malay, Mandarin, or Tamil and must manage both linguistic challenges and social perceptions. Digital platforms

have further shaped how learners use English. YouTube, social media, and messaging apps offer new ways to practise, but they also carry risks. Mistakes can be shared widely, leading to online ridicule. These digital experiences termed as digital narratives play a key role in shaping WTC. This study explores how such narratives influence ESL learners' choices to speak or remain silent, highlighting the emotional and social dimensions of communication in tech-driven contexts.

## **Literature**

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) refers to a learner's readiness to initiate communication in the target language, shaped by social, affective, and linguistic factors (MacIntyre et al., 1998). In multilingual Southeast Asian classrooms, learners often face added pressure from peer comparison and language hierarchies, where speaking English may invite judgment, particularly when their usage deviates from native-like norms (Riasati, 2012). In collectivist cultures like Malaysia, where maintaining social harmony and avoiding embarrassment are key, fear of negative evaluation becomes a major barrier to WTC (Yashima, 2002; Riasati, 2012). In these contexts, learners may choose silence despite adequate proficiency, due to the perceived risks of being labelled or excluded. Studies in Malaysian ESL classrooms show that using English can be associated with showing off or distancing oneself from one's peer group (Kaur & Embi, 2011). This reinforces the idea that WTC is shaped not only by individual confidence, but also by social dynamics and classroom norms. Recent research suggests that digital tools may both support and challenge WTC. Shen et al. (2024) found that digital storytelling enhanced confidence and willingness to speak, while Fan (2022) reported reduced anxiety in social media integrated classrooms. However, Peng (2024) noted that fear of online evaluation can still limit WTC. These findings highlight the dual role of digital spaces in shaping communication choices among ESL learners.

## **Methodology**

This study adopted an instrumental case study design to examine how digital narratives influence ESL learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) within a Malaysian public university. Eight undergraduate students enrolled in English proficiency courses participated voluntarily, representing diverse academic and linguistic backgrounds. Semi-structured interviews, conducted in either English or Bahasa Malaysia based on participant preference, explored their digital practices perceptions of speaking English in online settings. The data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis. An inductive approach was used to identify themes emerging directly from participants' accounts, offering insight into how digital experiences shape communicative behaviour. Pseudonyms were used to maintain participant anonymity.

## Results and Discussion

The findings from this study identified five main themes that explain how digital narratives influence ESL learners' willingness to communicate (WTC). The following section presents the five themes, supported by direct excerpts from the interviews, to illustrate the relationship between digital engagement and WTC.

### Digital Tools as Enablers of Language Practice and Confidence

The findings revealed that digital platforms such as YouTube, social media, and online games played a significant role in supporting learners' English language development. These tools provided opportunities for independent practice, exposure to authentic input, and increased comfort with the target language. For example, Rebecca described how she used online videos to prepare for an interview, stating, *"Last time I needed to attend an interview, so I practised a lot. YouTube helps a lot."* Similarly, Aisyah attributed her early exposure to writing in English to her deliberate use of social media platforms: *"I used full English since I was 12 on social media... my mother would check my grammar."* In the context of interactive digital environments, such as online gaming, learners also found natural opportunities to use English in real-time communication. Hashim explained, *"I play games... most players are not Malaysians... I have to use English automatically."* These experiences reflect the role of digital spaces in lowering communicative pressure, allowing learners to engage with English in informal yet meaningful ways. These findings align with previous research suggesting that digital media can enhance learners' perceived competence and promote spontaneous language use (Fan, 2022; Shen et al., 2024).

### Digital Anxiety and Fear of Public Failure

Despite the positive impact of digital tools, several learners expressed deep concerns about the risks of public exposure and negative social evaluation. Participants noted that fear of making mistakes in front of peers whether in class or online, discouraged them from speaking English. Fahmi reported, *"They will laugh... give you that look,"* highlighting the emotional discomfort triggered by peer reactions in classroom settings. Maryam emphasized the fear of being publicly shamed beyond the classroom: *"They might upload your mistakes... and it goes viral."* These fears indicate that learners' WTC is closely linked to their perceived risk of social embarrassment, particularly in environments where classroom teasing can spill over into digital spaces. This supports earlier studies by Riasati (2012) and Roed (2003), which found that learners often avoid communication when they feel vulnerable to ridicule or negative peer evaluation.

## Online Bashing

Findings indicated that the teasing culture prevalent in ESL classrooms was not confined to face-to-face interactions but was increasingly shaped by digital behaviours, particularly through what learners referred to as “online bashing and trolling.” The term, commonly used in social media contexts to describe acts of criticizing or mocking others publicly, was adopted by students to describe both direct and indirect forms of public shaming related to English language use. Ana offered insight into how this digital culture affected learners emotionally: *“Bashing is something like teasing. If you are used to your friends make fun of you, then it’s okay. But if you are the sensitive type of person, bashing will be hard for you. Your mistakes will be reaped many times.”* The impact of this teasing extended beyond discomfort. Learners perceived online bashing as a serious threat to their willingness to communicate, both in the classroom and online. For example, Fahmi explained how the fear of immediate peer judgment discouraged him from speaking in class:

Researcher: *If you described yourself as weak in English, why not try to practice it in the ESL class?*

Fahmi: *No. Other people will start bashing.*

Researcher: *Bashing? In class or out of class?*

Fahmi: *In class.*

Researcher: *Will that happen immediately? Like right after you made the mistakes?*

Fahmi: *Yes. They will laugh at you. They will give you that look. They troll and sometimes they call you bad names.*

Such accounts suggest that even minor verbal mistakes could trigger peer ridicule, with repercussions extending into digital spaces. The fear of being mocked or imitated online, especially when content is recorded or retold, discouraged students from taking communicative risks. Further clarification on how bashing can escalate came from Ana, who elaborated on how teasing in the classroom could spiral into a wider social issue:

Researcher: *Can you explain what this bashing and trolling trend is?*

Ana: *Well, after class, if just now you got teased in class, it will be carried away outside of class.*

Researcher: *So, the teasing just got out of hand. So bashing and trolling is similar to teasing?*

Ana: *Yes. Others outside your class will start to think of you as showing off. Sometimes you don’t know them. They might tease you as well. Or people will repeat your exact words (mistakes) over and over again.*

This perceived lack of control over one's digital presence intensified the emotional consequences of making errors in English. For many students, the classroom was no longer a safe space when mistakes could be remembered, repeated, and even broadcast beyond their peer group. Saufi emphasized the persistent influence of social media: "*You always have to remember about the social media. Like in Twitter. They use that platform to bash others sometimes.*" Likewise, Maryam directly connected her reluctance to speak with the possibility of going viral: "*I don't really talk. They might upload your mistakes onto Facebook and Twitter, and it goes viral.*" These responses illustrate how social networking sites (SNS) may act as a discouraging force, reducing learners' willingness to communicate due to heightened fears of public failure and long-lasting digital repercussions. The emotional weight carried by the possibility of becoming a target online undermines learners' engagement, confidence, and sense of safety within the ESL classroom.

## **Conclusion**

This study highlights the significant role digital narratives play in shaping ESL learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) in English. Digital platforms ranging from YouTube and Instagram to online gaming and social media offer learners informal, accessible avenues for language practice that can boost their confidence and perceived communicative competence. However, these same tools also expose learners to heightened risks of public ridicule, peer judgment, and negative self-evaluation, particularly when mistakes are shared and scrutinized online. In environments where maintaining face and social harmony are paramount, such as in Malaysian multilingual classrooms, these digital pressures can impede communication by amplifying learners' anxiety and reluctance to speak, regardless of their underlying linguistic competence. The findings imply that educators and curriculum developers must go beyond traditional language instruction to address the dual nature of digital engagement. It is essential to create classroom environments that acknowledge and incorporate students' digital experiences using digital storytelling or reflective activities to make learning more relevant and authentic, while also implementing strategies to ensure emotional safety. Equipping learners with digital literacy and coping strategies can help them manage online risks and build resilience against public scrutiny. By approaching technology integration intentionally and with sensitivity to its emotional impact, educators can foster a supportive, inclusive learning atmosphere that encourages robust, sustainable WTC both inside and outside the classroom.

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# From Netflix to Notebooks: The Formal and Informal Learning Resources of IEP Students

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## Abstract

As international student mobility continues to rise, identifying the learning resources that meaningfully support academic achievement and personal development is increasingly important. This study examines the formal and informal learning tools that international students perceive as most effective during their educational journey in host countries. The research focuses on students enrolled in an Intensive English Programme (IEP), which supports learners by enhancing their English language skills to ensure they meet the university's English proficiency standards for higher education. Based on an analysis of reflective essays written by 50 IEP students, the study examines the role of English-language media—such as books, movies, or TV shows—in supporting language development and personal growth. In their essays, students describe the media they engaged with, explain their reasons for selecting it, discuss how it contributed to their English learning, and share personal reflections and insights. Key findings highlight the importance of online platforms and culturally responsive materials, while also underscoring the relevance of peer-shared content, open-access media, and multilingual resources aligned with learners' identities and preferences. The study argues that the effectiveness of learning tools depends not only on their accessibility but also on their cultural relevance, emotional resonance, and adaptability to learners' needs. By amplifying student voices, this research contributes to more inclusive academic support frameworks and offers recommendations for educators and policymakers aiming to enhance the holistic learning experiences of international students.

**Keywords:** international students, Intensive English Programme (IEP), informal learning tools, English language media, culturally responsive pedagogy

## Introduction

In the context of increasing global student mobility, the linguistic, cultural, and academic integration of international students has become a critical area of focus in higher education. For instance, in one university situated in southern Malaysia, it is estimated that five thousand international students are coming from various countries, with varying levels of English proficiency. Hence, the Intensive English Programs (IEPs) serve as transitional academic

spaces for non-native English speakers and play a pivotal role in preparing students for the communication demands of university life.

The Intensive English Programme (IEP) is designed and structured to provide a comprehensive language learning experience across the four core skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Each skill is allocated 4 hours of face-to-face instruction per week over eight weeks, totalling 32 hours per skill. Supplementing these classroom hours, students are also expected to engage in 2 hours of online learning per week through the allocated online learning platform. This adds 16 hours per skill for further development. The curriculum incorporates two main textbooks: *Cambridge Unlock Series* and *National Geographic Reflect Series*—with *Book 1* dedicated to Listening and Speaking, and *Book 2* focused on Reading and Writing. Instruction is delivered by a team of four qualified instructors per class, maintaining an average class size of 17 students to ensure individualised attention. The IEP accommodates students at various proficiency levels, specifically B2, B1, A1, and A2, providing tailored support to meet diverse language learning needs

While the structured curriculum of IEPs provides essential language instruction, international students often supplement their formal learning with informal resources, especially English-language media such as films, television series, YouTube channels, and books. Moreover, the popularity of streaming platforms and user-generated content has significantly expanded the availability of English-language resources beyond the classroom. However, formal academic support systems often overlook the pedagogical value of these informal tools. There is a notable gap in the literature addressing how international students themselves perceive and utilise such resources in shaping their language development, self-expression, and cultural acclimatisation.

This study addresses this gap by exploring the self-reported experiences of IEP students with both formal and informal learning tools. It pays special attention to the role of English-language media in facilitating linguistic progress and personal identity formation. By analysing student-generated reflective essays, the study offers learner-centred insights into how these resources function in real-world contexts.

## **Methods**

This qualitative study employed a thematic analysis approach to examine 50 reflective essays written by international students enrolled in an IEP at a mid-sized English-medium university. The participants represented diverse linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds, providing a rich dataset that reflects multiple perspectives and learning experiences.

The reflective essay was a required component of the students' coursework and invited them to describe:

- The English-language media or materials they used (formal or informal),
- Their reasons for choosing those resources,
- The perceived impact on their English learning and personal growth,

Students were encouraged to be honest, introspective, and specific in their essays. The essays were collected with ethical clearance and anonymised to ensure confidentiality.

A thematic coding framework was developed through iterative reading of the data, allowing patterns, contrasts, and emergent categories to be identified. Codes were developed inductively, with recurring themes grouped under four broad categories: (1) type of learning resource, (2) motivation and affective response, (3) perceived language gains, and (4) identity and cultural alignment.

## **Results**

The analysis revealed several dominant themes that highlight how students perceive and engage with both formal and informal learning resources.

### **1. Informal Media as a Motivator for Linguistic Engagement:**

Students reported that watching movies, YouTube videos, and TikTok content significantly increased their interest in learning English. These informal platforms supported vocabulary development, accent imitation, and listening comprehension, offering authentic contexts.

### **2. Identity Construction through Relatable Narratives:**

Learners connected deeply with the characters and themes in narrative media such as ‘The Pursuit of Happyness’, ‘Harry Potter’, and ‘Earth’. These media experiences enabled students to engage in identity work by seeing themselves in characters who embody resilience, imagination, and belonging—an example of what Gee (2000) describes as Discourse and Affinity-identity, where learners construct who they are through participation in cultural narratives and recognition within shared discourse communities.

### **3. Strategic Learning and Autonomy through Media:**

Several students described a self-directed learning process enabled by their engagement with media. They actively sought out English-translated books, kept vocabulary journals, and chose media content that aligned with their learning needs—demonstrating autonomy and learner agency.

### **4. Reframing Non-Native English Models as Valuable:**

Students expressed appreciation for YouTubers and influencers who were themselves non-native English speakers. These figures were viewed as more relatable and inspiring, offering simplified and empathetic explanations grounded in shared learning struggles. This dynamic reflects what Thorne (2003) describes as “cultures of use,” where digital platforms foster new forms of intercultural communication and distributed expertise.

## 5. Formal Learning Materials Still Valued but Limited:

While informal media were praised for their engagement and flexibility, students acknowledged the structure and depth of formal materials such as academic textbooks, writing templates, and teacher feedback. However, they often viewed these tools as less emotionally engaging or adaptable to their learning styles.

## **Discussion**

The findings suggest that international students in IEPs do not separate formal and informal learning; instead, they construct a hybrid approach that draws from multiple sources to meet both academic and emotional needs. This reflects what Benson (2011) describes as socially situated learner autonomy, where students exercise agency by weaving together institutional resources and personally meaningful tools from outside the classroom. The effectiveness of a learning resource, from the students' perspective, hinges not only on its pedagogical design but also on its relevance, relatability, and emotional value.

This has important implications for language educators and program designers. First, there is potential to bridge formal and informal learning by integrating popular media into curriculum design. Teachers might consider including media critique assignments, discussion prompts based on TV episodes, or projects that encourage students to share and reflect on their favourite learning tools.

Second, the role of emotional engagement in language acquisition needs to be more fully acknowledged. Informal tools help students not just “learn English,” but live it—by embedding language in real, affective contexts that matter to them.

Finally, institutions should support a more personalised and learner-led approach to language learning. This could include developing resource banks of student-recommended media, fostering peer mentoring or media clubs, and recognising the value of bilingual and multicultural resources in promoting inclusivity and retention.

## **Conclusion**

This study foregrounds the voices of IEP students in articulating what truly supports their English language development. By embracing a broader understanding of learning, one that values informal media, emotional resonance, educators can more effectively support international students in both their academic and personal transitions.

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# Barriers to Flipped Classroom Implementation in Tertiary Institutions

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## Abstract

The development of technology has paved the way for the integration of various innovative teaching tools in educational settings. One such tool is the flipped classroom model, which has gained attention for its potential to enhance student learning by reversing traditional teaching methods. In this model, students are expected to study instructional materials outside of class, allowing classroom time to be used for more interactive, discussion-based activities. This research aims to explore the barriers experienced by students during the implementation of the flipped classroom and to identify their needs in relation to this approach. A total of eight respondents participated in this study through semi-structured interviews. The data collected were analyzed thematically, revealing several key challenges. These include students' failure to read or prepare the assigned materials prior to class, difficulties in understanding the content, excessive screen time, the use of reading materials that are not aligned with learning objectives, and a strong preference for conventional teaching methods. Based on these findings, several suggestions were provided to help improve the implementation process. The study holds significant value for educational administrators, course coordinators, instructors, and students, as it provides insights that can support the design of a more effective and student-centered flipped classroom experience in tertiary education.

**Keywords:** flipped classroom, challenges, suggestions, ESL, students

## Introduction

A flipped classroom is excellent for tertiary students, since they prepare for topics for the actual class. Apart from, practicing this learning model in teaching and learning it is beneficial as it enhances an engaging teaching-learning process. Flipped classroom model is important to change education into more student-centric (Shaffi et al., 2023). This learning model allows more time spent teaching each student individually rather than the entire class; the instructor can personally cater to students' needs. However, students do face barriers in flipped classroom. Flipped classroom in higher education resulted great results but there are some concerning challenges (Shaffi et al., 2023). Suggestions to overcome the barriers will result in effective implementation of flipped classroom.

## Related Literature

The flipped classroom model is an instructional method and a type of hybrid or blended learning. FCM involves using technology, such as videos and recordings, to teach theoretical concepts outside of the classroom setting (Elhafid, 2024). Flipped classroom is a teaching approach that integrates technology by including materials outside classroom such as videos (Mandasari & Wahyudin, 2019). The flipped classroom model, is well-known in tertiary institutions as it gives space for including online resources (Sun & Sun, 2024).

## Methods

Semi structured interview was conducted to explore what are the barriers and suggestion to improve flipped classroom. The questions used for the semi-structured interview is adapted from previous researcher (Alamri, 2019).

## Results and Discussion

Students were asked on problems they encountered in a Flipped Classroom. The answers from the students cover the following aspects didn't study the materials given by teacher, unreliable internet connection, issue in information comprehension, too much of screen time, unrelated reading materials and preference towards traditional teaching methods. The following table (Table 4.7) highlights the problems that respondents encounter in a Flipped Classroom in a detailed manner.

**Table 1: Problems encountered in a Flipped Classroom**

Subthemes	Codes
Didn't study the materials given by teacher.	"Problems would be since students are given the freedom to learn at home, some of them would take advantage of it and would not study the materials given by the teacher."
Unreliable internet connection	"Main issue is unreliable internet connection."
Hard to comprehend information	"Sometimes, I need real-time, one-on-one teaching from the teachers to understand the lesson holistically."  "Other than that, there are some terms and concepts that I find a bit challenging and require a detailed explanation from the teacher itself during the lesson."
Too much of screen time	"...It is more likely to be a problem if I become too comfortable spending too much time on screen and less time interacting with people face to face."

Unrelated reading materials from internet	“I do not know whether the information that I read/acquire before the lesson are related to the topics that I will learn in the classroom.”
Preference towards traditional classroom technique (personal coaching from teacher)	“Sometimes, I need real-time, one-on-one teaching from the teachers to understand the lesson holistically.”

Concerns on increase screen time are also recorded. Previous study, by Joseph et al. (2019), in an early care and education (ECE) context revealed that parents and early care and education (ECE) providers are concerned on increase in screen time due to its undesirable language and food associations

Preference towards traditional teaching methods also lies as a problem in flipped classroom efficiency. Previous study on comparison between online course and traditional teaching, reveals that students performed better in, and had higher levels of preference toward, traditional face-to-face formats (Spencer & Temple, 2021). However, literature offers a mixed and complicated findings on students’ preference in teaching methods. Previous scholars have conducted research and proved with solid findings that students prefer traditional method of teaching (Barak et al., 2016); Blau et al., 2018).

Furthermore, students were asked on suggestions to improve Flipped Classroom. Their answer varies and covered several aspects such as variety of reading materials, custom-made videos, engaging pre- lesson, assist students with accessibility of extended reading materials and clear instructions. The following table, (Table 4.8) shows clearly the suggestions to improve flipped classroom.

**Table 2: Suggestions to improve Flipped Classroom**

Category	Answers
Variety of reading materials	“Offer as much variety in learning materials as possible. The more variety of materials available, the more likely it is that students will remain interested.”
Custom-made videos in line with learning objectives	“As a future teacher, I believe I should consider making my own videos to supplement other people's videos rather than relying solely on others' videos. This is to make sure students achieve better understanding”.
Engaging pre-lesson	“Teacher can practice to include more engaging activities during pre-lesson.”

Assist students to access extended reading materials	<p>“Teachers can prepare tutorials on how to use learning materials at home.”</p> <p>“...give some hints on what to read so the students are able to find accurate information for their extended reading”</p>
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One of the ways suggested by respondents to improve flipped classroom is to provide variety of reading materials. The instructors can consider using authentic materials in lessons. Flipped learning approach allows for a great amount of engagement with authentic materials outside of the classroom and emphasizes the interaction between students through completing tasks and projects including communicative and collaborative tasks. (Kawinkoonlasate, 2019). Furthermore, technology tools such as e- learning, YouTube, Dropbox, and Google Classroom could be used as learning materials to facilitate instructors in a flipped classroom; with the help of these tools, instructors can provide a more individualized learning experience for all students (Kawinkoonlasate, 2019).

Teachers should incorporate custom-made videos in flipped classroom to improve its efficiency. Flipped classroom is apt to practice adaptive learning as it delivers custom learning experiences that address the unique needs of an individual through just-in-time feedback, pathways, and resources (rather than providing a one- size- fits-all learning experience) (Ilie, 2019).

Students do express their suggestion on providing engaging pre-lesson to improve flipped classroom. This suggestion is also supported by findings from previous study by . Rafon & Mistades, (2020) where the respondents quoted that he/she enjoyed doing and participating in the activities in an engaging lessons and found it impactful. When the students are actively engaged, there is greater chance of grasping the lesson. (Rafon & Mistades, 2020). In addition, suggestion on assisting students with accessibility of extended reading materials and clear instructions is also suggested by respondents. In a flipped classroom context, the teacher plays a role to provide teaching aid or learning topics or videos that is accompanied by clear instructions and steps (Rachmawati et al., 2019).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, flipped classroom implementation is accompanied with some barriers. Effective suggestions lie to solve the problems encountered.

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# Reassessing Assessment: Humanistic Assessment in Tertiary EFL Writing

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## Abstract

Assessment in tertiary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing classrooms plays a vital role in shaping pedagogy and student learning. However, traditional summative assessment often overlooks learners' individual needs, self-regulation, and emotional well-being. In response, there is a growing shift toward humanistic, learner-centered assessment, emphasizing formative strategies such as self-assessment, peer feedback, and dynamic assessment. Despite these global trends, research on how tertiary-level English writing teachers in China perceive and implement humanistic assessment remains limited. This study investigates tertiary EFL writing teachers' perceptions and practices of humanistic assessment in Sichuan Province. Using a mixed-methods approach, it integrates survey data, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations to examine: (1) teachers' understanding of humanistic assessment, (2) the extent to which formative strategies are applied, and (3) barriers to implementation in an exam-oriented system. Findings reveal that while educators recognize the benefits of humanistic assessment, including improved writing proficiency, autonomy, and motivation, institutional constraints and insufficient professional training hinder adoption. The study highlights the need for targeted teacher training programs and institutional policy reforms to promote holistic, student-centered assessment. By reframing assessment through a humanistic lens, this research contributes to innovative EFL writing assessment practices.

**Keywords:** humanistic assessment, formative assessment, tertiary EFL writing, teacher perceptions, assessment practices

## Introduction

Assessment is central to tertiary EFL writing instruction, yet it has long been dominated by summative, product-focused approaches (Weigle, 2002). These methods prioritize grades over learning, often neglecting students' cognitive development, metacognitive skills, and emotional well-being (Hyland & Hyland, 2019). In contrast, humanistic education emphasizes formative, learner-centered assessment that supports autonomy, reflection, and growth (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Freire, 2020). Strategies like self-assessment and peer feedback promote continuous development and engagement (Carless, 2015). However, in

China's exam-oriented tertiary system, assessment reform remains difficult due to entrenched practices and limited teacher training (Rea-Dickins, 2007; Xu & Brown, 2016). Exploring EFL teachers' perceptions and implementation of humanistic assessment is therefore vital to advancing more holistic and student-driven writing instruction.

### **Problem Statement**

Traditional EFL writing assessment in tertiary education prioritizes summative evaluation, focusing on grades and standardized test rather than the learning process (Brown, 2020; Weigle, 2002). This approach overlooks cognitive development, self-regulation, and creativity, reinforcing rote learning and exam-driven instruction, particularly in China (Xu & Brown, 2016). Moreover, it negatively impacts students' emotional well-being, increasing anxiety and diminishing motivation (Carless, 2015; Guo & Xu, 2021). Despite growing support for humanistic and formative assessment, institutional constraints and insufficient teacher training limit their adoption (Brown & Harris, 2014; Rea-Dickins, 2007). A shift toward learner-centered assessment is essential to foster both academic growth and emotional well-being in EFL writing instruction.

### **Research Objectives and Research Questions**

#### **Research Objectives**

This study aims to:

Examine tertiary EFL writing teachers' perceptions of humanistic assessment.

Identify current assessment practices in tertiary EFL writing classroom.

Explore the challenges and barriers that hinder the adoption of humanistic assessment in tertiary EFL writing instruction.

Provide recommendations for implementing humanistic assessment strategies to enhance both academic and emotional development in EFL writing.

#### **Research Questions**

How do tertiary EFL writing teachers perceive humanistic assessment?

What assessment practices are currently used in tertiary EFL writing classrooms?

What challenges and barriers do tertiary EFL writing teachers face in adopting humanistic assessment approaches?

What strategies can be implemented to enhance the adoption of humanistic assessment in tertiary EFL writing instruction?

## **Methodology**

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to examine tertiary EFL writing teachers' perceptions, practices, and challenges regarding humanistic assessment, aiming to offer practical recommendations. A sequential explanatory design guides the process, beginning with a quantitative survey of approximately 200 instructors, followed by semi-structured interviews with 6–10 teachers and classroom observations in 3–5 classes. Participants are drawn from universities in Sichuan Province using purposive sampling to ensure diversity.

Data collection includes a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire, interviews in Chinese (audio-recorded and transcribed), and structured non-participant observations focusing on formative feedback, student autonomy, and process-oriented strategies.

Quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data will undergo thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns. Ethical protocols—including informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity—will be rigorously observed.

## **Expected Results**

This study aims to demonstrate that although several university EFL writing instructors acknowledge the significance of humanistic assessment, such as promoting student autonomy, emotional well-being, and writing confidence, its practical implementation is constrained. The survey and interviews are expected to reveal disparity between teachers' favorable attitudes and their actual classroom practices, frequently attributable to institutional restraints, large class numbers, standardized testing pressures, and insufficient professional training. Furthermore, classroom observations are expected to demonstrate that conventional, product-focused assessment methods remain predominant, while humanistic approaches are applied inconsistently or only in part. The survey may reveal a significant desire among educators for more explicit rules, training, and assistance to use humanistic assessment more efficiently.

## **Conclusion**

This study seeks to improve comprehension of humanistic assessment in tertiary EFL writing by analyzing instructor attitudes, existing practices, and implementation challenges. The findings are anticipated to underscore its capacity to enhance writing skill and foster students' emotional development. The project will provide practical insights for educators and policymakers, promoting student-centered assessment that supports holistic development.

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# A Corpus-Based Frequency Comparison of Lexical Bundles in EFL Textbooks and the British National Corpus

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## Abstract

Lexical bundles are a key indicator of native-like English and the cornerstone of coherent English discourses. The use of lexical bundles is positively correlated with non-native EFL learners' English proficiency, and the presentation of bundles in textbooks directly influences learners' bundle acquisition. This study adopts a corpus-based approach, focusing on Chinese secondary school EFL textbooks. Based on a self-constructed textbook corpus and using the British National Corpus (BNC) as a reference, it compares the frequency usage patterns of the most frequent three- and four-word lexical bundles in non-native EFL textbooks and authentic English. The results indicate that the frequency of these target bundles in EFL textbooks is higher than in authentic English, with a tendency for overemphasis, particularly in longer bundles (four-word bundles). Additionally, these textbooks fail to include high-frequency bundles used in authentic language. This discrepancy results in EFL learners having insufficient exposure to those widely used bundles in authentic language, which may adversely affect their practical language use, particularly in terms of naturalness and fluency. This study provides insights into the optimization of EFL textbooks in terms of lexical bundle presentation and instructional design, offering practical guidance for lexical bundle teaching in EFL contexts.

**Keywords:** corpus-based, lexical bundles, EFL textbooks, BNC, frequency comparison

## Introduction

In corpus linguistics, lexical bundles are defined as statistically recurrent multi-word sequences that fall within the broader category of formulaic language (Biber et al., 1999; Granger & Paquot, 2008; Zhang, 2025). They typically range from bigrams to seven-word clusters (e.g., the trigram "and this is a"). Lexical bundles are ubiquitous in language use (Martinez & Schmitt, 2012), and fluent communication relies on them (Lewis, 1993). They are recognized and processed more quickly than non-bundled sequences (Tremblay et al., 2011; Northbrook & Conklin, 2019), and they serve as compensatory devices for memory limitations (Wray & Perkins, 2000). Moreover, lexical bundles facilitate fluent and accurate language comprehension, production, and real-time social interaction (Hussain et al., 2021; Martinez & Schmitt, 2012). In conclusion, lexical bundles deserve focused attention in non-

native English instruction. They constitute the core of language teaching and can be regarded as the smallest units of instruction (Lewis, 1993).

The significant role of English textbooks in language acquisition has been widely recognized worldwide (e.g., Zhang & Liu, 2022). This role is particularly salient in contexts where English is a second or foreign language (Kachru, 1992). For many learners, especially those in secondary education who are beginners, textbooks constitute the primary, most direct, and often the only source of exposure to formal English input (Alzahrani, 2020; Bezemer & Kress, 2016).

At the same time, lexical bundles are difficult for non-native English learners (Granger, 2014), who often struggle to fully grasp the usage patterns typical of native speakers. Even learners with high English proficiency face this challenge (Pérez-Llantada, 2014). The difficulty is particularly salient in EFL contexts and constrains the quality of learners' language output (Zhang et al., 2025).

Therefore, it is hypothesized that lexical bundles in EFL textbooks may be problematic, in that they either fail to exhibit high-frequency usage or the high-frequency bundles they do present do not correspond to those commonly found in authentic language use.

Through the literature review, it becomes clear that previous corpus-based research on lexical bundles in EFL contexts across different educational levels remains limited (Hoang & Crosthwaite, 2024; Zhang et al., 2025). Given that China has the largest population of EFL learners worldwide, evaluating lexical bundles in Chinese EFL textbooks is particularly significant, as it provides valuable insights into non-native EFL contexts (Zhang et al., 2025).

## **Methods**

The present study adopts a corpus linguistics approach, focusing on Chinese secondary school English as a foreign language (EFL) textbooks. A self-compiled corpus, the Chinese Secondary School EFL Textbooks Corpus (CSTC), was constructed based on the latest editions of eight textbooks published by the People's Education Press (PEP, 2019), including five junior secondary school volumes and three senior secondary school volumes (Compulsory Volumes One to Three). The CSTC consists of 191,926 tokens (running words) and 7,768 types (distinct words).

For comparison, an authentic native English corpus was selected, namely the British National Corpus (BNC), specifically the BNC Baby written register version, which excludes the spoken component and comprises approximately three million words.

This study focuses on frequency by examining three- and four-word lexical bundles, comparing their distributional patterns in the Chinese EFL textbooks with those in the BNC, in order to evaluate the extent to which the textbooks reflect authentic language use.

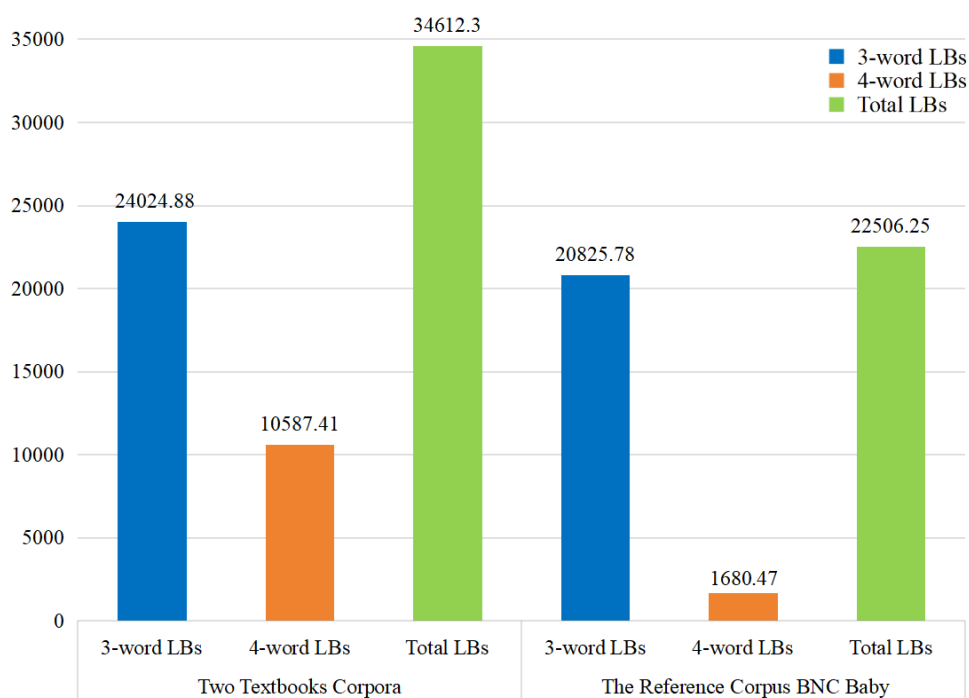
## Results and Discussion

The comparison of overall frequency is based on bundle tokens. To account for differences in corpus size, raw frequencies were normalized to occurrences per million words (pmw). The normalized results are reported in Table 1 and illustrated in Figure 1.

**Table 1: Comparative Frequency of Target Lexical Bundle Statistics by Length in Textbook and the Reference Corpus**

Corpora	LBs	Raw statistics		Normalized statistics	
		Types	Tokens	Types	Tokens
<b>Textbooks corpus</b>	Three-word LBs	305	4,611	1589.15	24024.88
	Four-word LBs	107	2,032	557.51	10587.41
	Total	412	6,643	2146.66	34612.30
<b>BNC Baby</b>	Three-word LBs	1,065	61,357	361.48	20825.78
	Four-word LBs	93	4,951	31.57	1680.47
	Total	1,158	66,308	393.05	22506.25

**Figure 1: Comparison of Normalized Bundle Tokens in Textbook and the Reference Corpus**



Based on the above data analysis, it is evident that the frequency (tokens) of lexical bundles in the textbooks is considerably higher than that in the BNC. The cross-corpus frequency comparison further indicates that Chinese EFL textbook writers tend to rely heavily on highly formulaic language structures when presenting content. Compared with authentic language use in the BNC Baby, textbook discourse exhibits a higher degree of formulaicity, which reflects an artificial emphasis on lexical bundles. This tendency is particularly pronounced in the case of longer bundles (e.g., four-word bundles).

The quantitative analysis of lexical bundles in the target textbook corpus reveals that three-word bundles (4,611 tokens) are substantially more frequent than four-word bundles (2,032 tokens) in Chinese secondary school EFL textbooks. This trend is consistent with findings from EFL textbooks in other contexts (Priyatno et al., 2023) and corroborates previous research on lexical bundle distribution, which demonstrates that shorter bundles occur more frequently across discourses (Biber et al., 1999; Cortes, 2013).

From a pedagogical perspective, the predominance of three-word bundles in Chinese EFL textbooks reflects a strategic design choice intended to balance learners' cognitive processing capacity with instructional effectiveness. Secondary school EFL learners generally possess limited grammatical knowledge and underdeveloped proficiency in handling complex syntactic structures. In this context, shorter bundles, such as trigrams, are cognitively less demanding due to their syntactic simplicity and higher frequency of occurrence. These features make them easier for learners to process, store, and reproduce. As Northbrook and Conklin (2019) note, shorter bundles are particularly accessible for lower-level EFL learners, facilitating the initial stages of formulaic language acquisition and supporting the development of bundle awareness, which is essential for fluent language use.

## **Conclusion**

This study examined the distribution of lexical bundles in Chinese secondary school English textbooks through a corpus-based frequency comparison with the British National Corpus (BNC). By comparing the frequency patterns of lexical bundles in the textbook corpus with those in a native English reference corpus, the study aimed to evaluate the extent to which textbooks reflect authentic language use. A frequency analysis of the extracted target lexical bundles revealed a notable mismatch between pedagogical input and authentic usage. The findings indicate that lexical bundles in Chinese EFL textbooks generally occur at a higher frequency than in authentic English, reflecting a tendency toward pedagogical overemphasis. This tendency is particularly pronounced in longer bundles, such as four-word bundles. As a result, EFL learners may have limited exposure to widely used authentic bundles, which could hinder their ability to produce language that is natural and fluent. Overall, this study provides empirical evidence for the gap between textbook input and authentic usage, offering valuable implications for the design and selection of lexical bundles in EFL teaching materials. It also highlights the importance of integrating corpus-informed approaches to better support learners' development of natural language proficiency.

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# Using Authentic Materials in Teaching the Translation Course for Diploma Students at Kolej Profesional Mara Indera Mahkota

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## Abstract

The use of authentic materials in a classroom is what many teachers involved in ESL or EFL have discussed in recent years. Most agree that authentic materials are beneficial to the language learning process. This study analyzed the effectiveness of using authentic materials in the teaching of Translation Course among college students. The one group quasi-experimental method was used in this study. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether authentic materials help the students to improve their understanding of using translation procedures. The samples consisted of 30 college diploma students. The study revealed that authentic materials, which are unsolicited, spontaneous, or natural, encompass a broad range of learning styles. The results underscored the vital role of authentic materials as tools for enhancing students' translation skills. There was a statistically significant improvement in the performance of students who used authentic materials to learn translation techniques. In summary, the findings indicated that authentic materials were effective in aiding students in translation course, particularly in mastering translation procedures.

**Keywords:** translation, ESL, quasi-experimental, authentic, EFL

## Introduction

In recent years, the field of translation education has increasingly emphasized the importance of contextual and culturally relevant learning materials. As mentioned by Gilmore (2007) and Berardo (2006) when discussing the pedagogical value of authentic materials. Traditional translation instruction often relies on contrived or overly simplified texts that do not reflect the complexities of real-world language use. This gap between classroom practice and professional translation demands has prompted educators to explore more authentic approaches to teaching.

Authentic materials – texts and media originally created for native speakers in real-life contexts – offer a promising alternative. These materials expose students to natural language, idiomatic expressions, and cultural nuances, thereby enhancing both linguistic competence

and cultural literacy. In the context of diploma-level translation courses, where students are preparing for practical roles in multilingual environments, the use of authentic materials may provide a more engaging and effective learning experience.

This study investigates the impact of using authentic materials in teaching the Translation course at Kolej Profesional MARA Indera Mahkota. Specifically, it aims to determine whether such materials can improve students' translation performance, contextual understanding, and motivation. Ballance (2023) and Rogers & Révész (2019) rationalized the design of quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest to be employed to assess the effectiveness of this instructional approach.

This study investigates the impact of using authentic materials in teaching the Translation course at Kolej Profesional MARA Indera Mahkota. Specifically, it aims to determine whether such materials can improve students' translation performance, contextual understanding, and motivation.

### **Research Objectives**

To evaluate the effectiveness of authentic materials in improving translation accuracy among diploma students.

To explore students' engagement and motivation when exposed to authentic materials.

To identify students' perceptions of the relevance and practicality of authentic materials in translation tasks.

### **Research Questions**

How do authentic materials affect students' translation performance?

What are students' attitudes toward the use of authentic materials in translation learning?

To what extent do authentic materials enhance student engagement and contextual understanding?

Recent scholarships continue to affirm the pedagogical value of authentic materials in translation and language education. Zvarych et al. (2024) found that integrating authentic materials in foreign language instruction significantly enhances learners' linguistic competence and cultural awareness, especially when balanced appropriately with non-authentic content. Their study suggests that while high exposure to authentic materials fosters contextual understanding, it must be moderated to avoid overwhelming learners.

Korda (2023) explored the use of authentic translation projects in postgraduate education, demonstrating that students engaged in real-world translation tasks developed stronger critical thinking, collaboration, and self-reflection skills. This supports the notion that

authentic materials not only improve technical translation ability but also cultivate professional competencies.

Barzani et al. (2022) investigated Kurdish EFL students' attitudes toward authentic materials and found that learners perceived them as more engaging and relevant compared to textbook-based content. These findings align with earlier research by Albiladi (2019), which highlighted the motivational benefits and contextual richness of authentic texts in ESL classrooms.

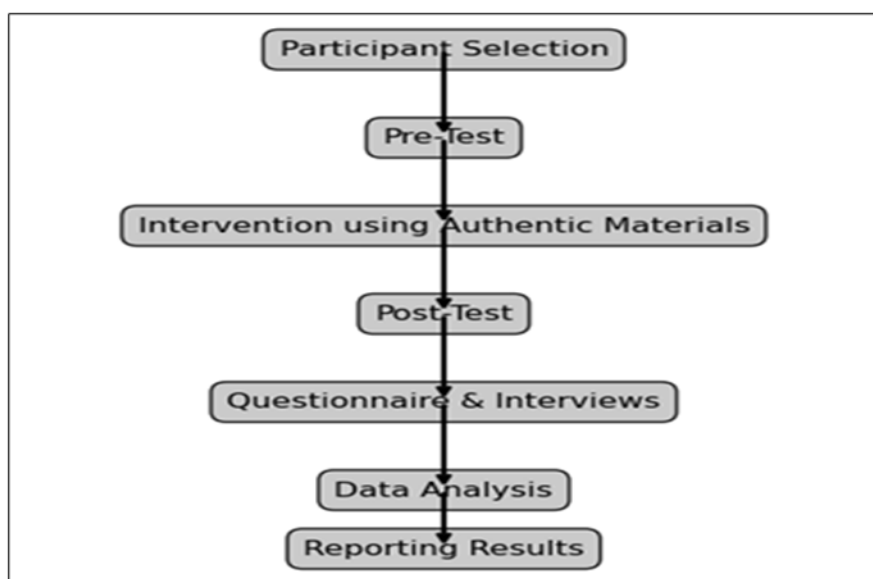
Despite these advantages, some studies caution against excessive reliance on authentic materials, especially for lower proficiency learners. Zvarych et al. (2024) recommend a balanced approach, suggesting that a mix of 50% authentic and 50% non-authentic materials yields optimal results. This study builds on these insights by applying authentic materials in a diploma-level translation course in Malaysia, using a quasi-experimental design to evaluate their impact on student performance and engagement.

## Methods

This study employed a quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design to evaluate the effectiveness of authentic materials in teaching translation. The research was conducted at Kolej Profesional MARA Indera Mahkota, involving a single group of diploma students enrolled in the Translation course.

The study began with participant selection, where 30 diploma students enrolled in a Translation course were chosen through purposive sampling. These students had prior exposure to translation tasks, ensuring their relevance to the research objectives.

*Figure 1: Methodology Flowchart: Quasi Experimental One-Group Study*



Next, a pre-test was administered to assess their baseline translation skills, focusing on accuracy, context handling, and cultural understanding. This served as a benchmark for later comparison. The core of the study involved a six-week intervention using authentic materials, such as newspaper articles, advertisements, and manuals, which were integrated into lesson plans to simulate real-world translation scenarios.

Following the intervention, a post-test similar in format to the pre-test was conducted to measure improvements in translation performance and identify specific areas of growth. To gain insights into student perceptions, questionnaires with Likert-scale items and semi-structured interviews were used to gather feedback on engagement, confidence, and preferences regarding the materials.

The collected data were then subjected to analysis, with quantitative data evaluated using descriptive statistics and qualitative data analysed thematically to uncover recurring patterns and insights. Finally, the reporting of results included improvements in test scores, student feedback, observed classroom behavior, and recommendations for future teaching practices.

## Results and Discussion

The analysis of pre- and post-test scores revealed a significant improvement in students' translation performance following the integration of authentic materials into the instructional process. On average, students' scores increased by 18.33%. This substantial gain highlights the effectiveness of using real-world texts—such as newspaper articles, advertisements, and manuals—in enhancing students' translation skills.

The improvement was not only quantitative but also qualitative in nature. Students demonstrated notable progress in key areas such as contextual accuracy, where they were better able to preserve meaning across languages; idiomatic expression, where they showed improved ability to translate phrases naturally and appropriately; and cultural sensitivity, where they became more adept at recognizing and adapting to cultural nuances embedded in the source texts.

**Table 1: Overall Pre-Test and Post-Test**

	Statistic	Pre-Test	Post-Test
N	Valid	30	30
	Missing	0	0
Mean		61.06	79.39
Median		60.83	79.68
Mode		52.43	53*
Standard Deviation		4.5	4.66
*Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown			

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for students' performance in translation tasks before and after the use of authentic materials in instruction. A total of 30 students participated in both the pre-test and post-test, with no missing data. The mean score increased from 61.06 in the pre-test to 79.39 in the post-test, indicating a substantial improvement of 18.33 points. This suggests that the integration of authentic materials—such as newspaper articles, advertisements, and manuals—had a significant positive effect on students' translation abilities.

The median scores also reflect this improvement, rising from 60.83 in the pre-test to 79.68 in the post-test. These values represent the middle scores in each dataset and closely align with the respective mean scores, indicating a relatively symmetrical distribution of student performance. The mode scores, which represent the most frequently occurring values, were 52.43 in the pre-test and 53 in the post-test. Although multiple modes existed in the post-test, the smallest value is shown, suggesting a broader spread of scores and possibly more individualized progress among students.

The standard deviation values—4.5 for the pre-test and 4.66 for the post-test—indicate that the scores were fairly consistent among students, with only a slight increase in variability after the intervention. This suggests that while most students improved, the extent of improvement varied slightly across the group. Overall, the data strongly supports the conclusion that using authentic materials in translation instruction enhances students' performance, engagement, and contextual understanding. The marked increase in mean and median scores, along with consistent distribution patterns, highlights the effectiveness of this approach in fostering real-world translation skills.

**Table 2: Questionnaire Results**

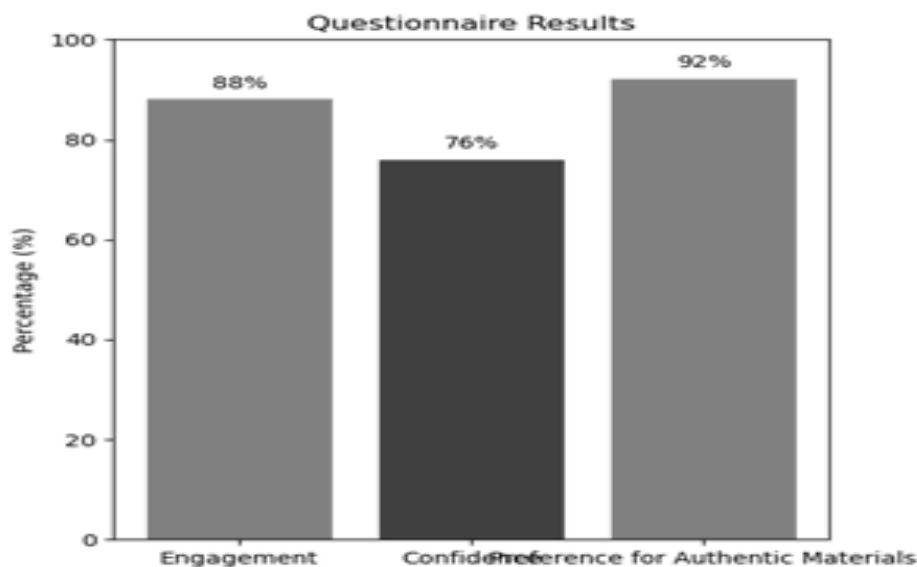


Table 2 explains the results from the questionnaire and qualitative data collection strongly support the effectiveness of using authentic materials in translation instruction. Quantitatively, the questionnaire revealed that 88% of students agreed that authentic materials made lessons more engaging, while 76% reported increased confidence when translating real-world texts.

Furthermore, a significant 92% of students expressed a preference for authentic materials over traditional textbook-based content, indicating a clear shift in student attitudes toward more practical and relevant learning resources.

Qualitative findings from classroom observations and semi-structured interviews further reinforced these insights. One of the most prominent themes was increased engagement; students were noticeably more active, participative, and responsive during lessons that incorporated real-world texts such as news articles and advertisements. This heightened involvement suggests that authentic materials foster a more dynamic and interactive learning environment. Another key theme was improved contextual understanding. Students demonstrated a stronger grasp of linguistic nuances, including tone, register, and cultural references—skills that are crucial in effective translation. This improvement was particularly evident in their ability to adapt language appropriately for different audiences and contexts.

Additionally, students exhibited positive attitudes toward the learning process. Many expressed that authentic materials made translation tasks feel more relevant and practical, bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world application. One student remarked, “Translating actual news articles and ads helped me understand how language works in real life. It’s more challenging, but also more interesting.” Another shared, “I used to struggle with tone and context. Now I feel more confident translating texts that people actually read.” These reflections highlight the motivational and educational value of authentic materials, suggesting that their integration into translation pedagogy not only enhances skill acquisition but also fosters a deeper appreciation for the discipline.

The results of this study suggest that the use of authentic materials significantly enhances translation performance among diploma students. The observed improvement in post-test scores aligns with previous research (Zvarych et al., 2024; Korda, 2023), which emphasizes the pedagogical value of real-world texts in language education. Students demonstrated greater contextual awareness and cultural sensitivity, which are essential skills in professional translation. The high levels of engagement and preference for authentic materials reported in the questionnaire further support the idea that learners find such materials more relevant and motivating. These findings indicate that authentic materials not only improve technical translation skills but also foster a deeper connection to the learning process. However, the study also acknowledges limitations. Without a control group, it is difficult to isolate the effects of the intervention from other variables such as student motivation or external learning influences. Future research could address this by incorporating a comparative group or extending the study across multiple institutions.

## **Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that authentic materials can be a powerful tool in translation education, particularly for diploma-level students preparing for real-world language tasks. The quasi-experimental design revealed measurable improvements in translation accuracy

and student engagement, suggesting that authentic texts provide both linguistic and motivational benefits.

Educators are encouraged to incorporate a variety of authentic materials into their translation curricula, ensuring that students are exposed to diverse genres and contexts. Future studies should explore long-term impacts and compare different types of authentic materials to determine which are most effective for specific learning outcomes.

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# Challenges and Strategies in Enhancing English Proficiency: Insights from UTM's Intensive English Programme

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## Abstract

This study investigates the challenges faced by instructors at the Language Academy, UTM Johor Bahru, in teaching the Intensive English Programme (IEP) to international students with limited English proficiency. Proficiency in English is essential for these students to engage effectively with their academic studies, placing significant pressure on IEP instructors to facilitate rapid language development within a short timeframe. Hence, the primary objective of this study is to identify key instructional difficulties when teaching international students with limited English proficiency and to explore the pedagogical methods that enhance learning in an intensive, short-term setting. Seventeen IEP instructors participated, providing insights into their experiences across a 240-hour, 10-week module-based curriculum covering Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. This study highlights key instructional challenges, including varied proficiency levels, compressed teaching durations, and diverse learner needs. Innovative teaching strategies, such as Video Reflection, Reflective Writing, Language Games and Collaborative Projects, are also examined for their effectiveness in enhancing student engagement and resourcefulness in teaching. Despite constraints such as large class sizes and limited resources, most students achieve the required benchmarks for progression, as demonstrated by their performance in the Cambridge Linguaskill test. This study contributes to the broader field of English Language Teaching (ELT) by demonstrating how strategic, learner-centred approaches can lead to positive outcomes, even within time-constrained, resource-limited environments. The insights gained offer practical implications for improving intensive English programs globally and stress the value of flexibility, innovation, and support in fostering language acquisition among diverse learner populations.

**Keywords:** intensive English programme, language skills improvement, instructional challenges, pedagogical strategies, learner engagement

## **Introduction**

English language proficiency plays a crucial role in the academic success of international students. At Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), the Intensive English Programme (IEP) was established to equip students with the linguistic competence necessary for their academic journey. Spanning 240 hours over 10 weeks, the IEP covers Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing skills. However, instructors tasked with delivering this programme often encounter challenges such as varied student proficiency levels, large class sizes, limited resources, and compressed instructional time.

The challenges faced by UTM instructors mirror those documented in international contexts. Prior research (Goss, 1999; Cheng, 2004; Fareh, 2010) has highlighted common issues in English language teaching, including inadequate teacher preparation, low student motivation, and managing diverse, large classrooms. In light of this, the present study aims to examine these challenges within UTM's IEP and to document the instructional strategies used to address them. Jon et al. (2021) identified several persistent challenges in English language instruction within the Indonesian context, including discrepancies between teacher and student expectations, limited teacher proficiency, insufficient implementation of communicative language teaching methods, and students' inadequate vocabulary development.

As highlighted by the University of San Diego (2024), the adoption of evidence-based strategies for teaching English language learners not only contributes to improved student learning outcomes but also yields practical benefits for educators. These include greater efficiency in lesson planning, enhanced capacity to monitor student progress and achievement, and the professional fulfilment derived from supporting learners in acquiring a complex second language.

## **Methodology**

The study involved 17 instructors who had taught in the IEP at UTM. Data were collected using a structured Google Form survey comprising six sections: demographics, teaching challenges, instructional strategies, classroom resources, student engagement, and professional development. The instrument included a combination of Likert-scale and open-ended questions.

Quantitative data were manually tabulated to determine the frequency of responses, while qualitative responses were subjected to thematic analysis. This mixed-methods approach enabled a comprehensive examination of the instructors' experiences and practices, revealing both common patterns and nuanced insights.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Challenges in Teaching IEP Students**

Survey results indicate that language barriers and academic skill deficiencies are the most persistent challenges. Over half of the instructors reported these issues as “always” or “often” a challenge. Limited English proficiency among students affects their ability to construct basic sentences, often necessitating the use of translation tools like Google Translate, which undermines authentic language practice. Similarly, students' lack of academic readiness impedes their ability to engage with classroom tasks, affecting overall progress.

Motivation levels were also a key concern, with several instructors reporting student passivity, low enthusiasm, and emotional disengagement. These motivational issues are frequently linked to language anxiety and cultural adjustment challenges. Instructors further noted the difficulty of addressing diverse educational backgrounds, which demands ongoing differentiation in lesson planning and delivery.

While cultural differences and adjustment issues were not as frequently rated as “always” a challenge, instructors acknowledged their subtle yet cumulative effects on classroom dynamics. Emotional stressors such as homesickness and cultural shock can affect attendance, participation, and learning focus.

Regarding technology integration and resource limitations, instructors reported these as “sometimes” challenging. While many were open to using digital tools, limited training and inconsistent access to suitable resources hinder optimal implementation. Additionally, some instructors noted being overwhelmed by the abundance of resources without guidance on how to tailor them to their learners' needs.

Teacher training and support were rated by many as an area needing improvement. Several instructors expressed a need for more targeted professional development, particularly in methods suited for teaching students with low English proficiency and diverse linguistic backgrounds.

### **Strategies for Teaching Language Skills**

Instructors identified several strategies as highly effective in promoting English language acquisition. Visual aids emerged as the most favoured tool, with 15 instructors rating them as “Very” or “Extremely Effective.” Charts, videos, and images helped bridge language gaps and enhanced comprehension, especially for visual learners.

Digital tools and online platforms were also highly rated, with 15 instructors affirming their effectiveness. These tools offer flexibility, interactivity, and access to up-to-date content that can be customised to student needs. Group work, cited by 12 instructors as very effective, was valued for promoting peer interaction and mimicking real-life communication scenarios.

Real-life contexts for language use and linking content to students' prior experiences also received strong support. Instructors noted that contextualised learning improved student retention and relevance, thereby increasing engagement. However, while most agreed on the value of adapting lessons to suit student proficiency levels, fewer rated this as "Extremely Effective," possibly reflecting the challenges of differentiated instruction in large or mixed-ability classrooms.

These findings suggest that while instructors employ a range of modern, communicative methods, they still face difficulties in personalising instruction due to institutional or classroom constraints.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that while the Intensive English Programme at UTM is not without its challenges, instructors have adopted flexible and responsive teaching practices that support student learning and development. Most students successfully achieved the required Linguaskill benchmark, indicating the programme's overall effectiveness.

Going forward, further enhancement of the IEP should focus on equipping instructors with culturally responsive pedagogical skills and strategies specifically designed for low-proficiency learners. Streamlining access to resources and integrating relevant digital tools will also be essential. Sustained efforts to engage students through personalised, real-world, and interactive learning experiences can lead to better academic outcomes and a smoother transition into university life.

The findings presented in this study offer practical guidance for institutions implementing intensive English programmes, particularly in multicultural, resource-limited contexts. Emphasising adaptability, innovation, and instructor support is key to improving English language education for international students globally.

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# Innovating beyond the Syllabus: Exploring Writing Pedagogies in Malaysian ESL Classrooms

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## Abstract

This study investigates Malaysian ESL teachers' awareness and implementation of the process writing approach, guided by Brown's (2001) four-stage framework: pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. Employing a qualitative multiple-case study design, the research explores how the approach is understood, applied, and perceived in real classroom contexts. Specifically, it addresses three key questions: (1) To what extent are ESL teachers aware of the process writing approach and its principles? (2) How is the approach implemented in classrooms. (3) What challenges do teachers face in implementing process writing approach? The study was conducted in two phases using qualitative methods. In the first phase, a single instrumental case study was conducted over six weeks involving a Year 5 ESL teacher and her students. Data was collected through classroom observations, teacher and students' interviews, and analysis of student writing samples. The teacher integrated various process-oriented strategies such as brainstorming, outlining, feedback, and drafts into writing lessons. Both the teacher and students reported enhanced engagement and improved writing outcomes, although time constraints and syllabus demand posed implementation challenges. In the second phase, findings were shared with 40 ESL teachers and education officers through focus group discussions. While participants expressed general support for the process approach, many cited difficulties aligning it with the topic-driven national curriculum. Findings highlight a disconnect between teachers' pedagogical preferences and systemic curricular constraints. The study recommends a shift toward a thematic writing approach within the national syllabus to better support process-oriented instruction. These insights contribute to ongoing discussions on writing pedagogy in Malaysian ESL contexts and offer implications for curriculum development, teacher training, and classroom practice.

**Keywords:** process writing approach, ESL teaching, Malaysian classrooms, writing pedagogy, qualitative case study

## Introduction

Writing is a complex activity that requires mastery of language, content and thinking skills (Barton et al., 2023). Therefore, it is essential to provide early exposure and build a strong foundation in writing at the primary level to support children's writing skills and overall language development (Sari et al., 2024). Thus, this study investigates Malaysian English as a

Second Language (ESL) teachers' awareness and classroom implementation of the process writing approach, with specific reference to Brown's (2001) four-stage framework: pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing.

Specifically, the study addresses three central research questions:

To what extent are Malaysian ESL teachers aware of the process writing approach and its theoretical principles?

How is the process writing approach implemented in ESL classrooms, and what instructional strategies are utilized?

What challenges do ESL teachers face in implementing the process writing approach effectively?

## **Methods**

The study employed a qualitative multiple-case study design. The data collection occurred in two distinct phases. In the first phase, a single instrumental case study was conducted over a six-week period, focusing on a Year 5 ESL teacher and her class in a suburban Malaysian school. Methods included classroom observations, interviews with the students and the teacher, as well as textual analysis of student writing samples. Findings from the first phase of data collection informed the development of the focus group discussion protocol, which was then used in the second phase with forty selected teachers from the northern and southern states, as well as two School Improvement Specialist Coaches (SISCs).

The study aims to identify solutions to the challenges that emerge from observed patterns in the data. To achieve this, a grounded theory approach is employed to analyze and interpret the findings, allowing theory to be developed inductively from the participants' experiences and perspectives. Strauss and Corbin's (2008) grounded theory approach is employed, utilizing a systematic coding process that involves open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Phase One: Instrumental Case Study**

The first phase of the study, conducted over six weeks, involved an instrumental case study of a Year 5 ESL teacher and her class in a suburban Malaysian school. The findings indicate that students' writing showed marked improvement in their second drafts. Notably, higher-performing students demonstrated the ability to respond effectively to the teacher's written comments, suggesting a solid understanding of the feedback provided. On the contrary, lower-performing students expressed a stronger preference for oral consultation sessions, which they found more accessible and helpful in understanding how to revise their writing.

Of particular interest were the two weakest students in the class, both of whom showed the greatest score improvement between their first and second drafts. Interview data revealed that these students were especially enthusiastic about the additional oral feedback and the opportunity to produce a revised draft. Classroom observations further noted that these students ignored written comments when the first draft essays were returned. However, following the teacher's individualized consultation sessions, a change in engagement was observed. One student expressed visible excitement and remarked that she finally understood how to improve her writing. This interaction highlighted the value of oral clarification in supporting struggling learners.

Previously, the teacher's instructional approach consisted of brainstorming, essay writing, returning the essay with written feedback, and student corrections. The addition of oral feedback and consultation marked a significant evolution in her practice. These findings informed the development of interview protocols for Phase Two of the study.

### **Phase Two: Interviews with Teachers and SISCs**

Research Question 1: To what extent are Malaysian ESL teachers aware of the process writing approach and its theoretical principles?

All participating teachers and School Improvement Specialist Coaches (SISCs) claimed that they implemented the process writing approach. Typically, their instructional sequence begins with reading comprehension activities, followed by language-focused exercises aligned with the textbook and the national Scheme of Work (SOW). Teachers also provide input on writing formats before assigning essay topics. Essays are returned with written feedback, usually addressing mechanical aspects of writing. Students are then expected to revise their work accordingly, and in some instances, corrections are re-marked.

While this practice reflects elements of the process writing approach, it tends to emphasize form over content and revision, with limited engagement in the recursive aspects that define the approach. This limited engagement with the recursive nature of writing processes constrains students' opportunities to develop metacognitive and revision skills (Carless, 2023).

Research Question 2: How is the process writing approach implemented in ESL classrooms, and what instructional strategies are utilized?

When asked about structured oral feedback sessions or opportunities for students to seek clarification, most teachers acknowledged that such sessions were not formally incorporated into their teaching routines. Teachers shared the following:

T21: "I do tell them to come and see me if they have questions. If the students do not understand what I wrote in the returned essay, they can come to me."

T33: "I do not dedicate specific period to discuss the feedback with the students, but they are encouraged to discuss with me whatever they do not understand."

After sharing the earlier case study findings—where weak students expressed appreciation for being individually called in for consultation—teachers were asked to reflect on the importance of such sessions. Their responses included:

T9: "It would be ideal, yes. But we have to finish our syllabus. We do not have time."

T15: "We have about 9 to 10 topics. We have to follow the SOW."

T21: "We must write in our lesson plan which SOW do we use that day. We do not have enough times to implement the consultation session."

These responses highlight how time constraints and syllabus demand limit the implementation of student-centered strategies. While teachers understand the benefits of process writing, contextual barriers often reinforce traditional approaches, hindering recursive engagement and personalized feedback (Haider, 2012; Carless, 2023; Chong, 2022).

Research Question 3: What challenges do ESL teachers face in implementing the process writing approach effectively?

Beyond time limitations and adherence to the national syllabus, teachers highlighted the lack of writing practice among students as a key challenge. While recognizing students' limited writing proficiency, many teachers responded by increasing the quantity of writing assignments rather than focusing on the quality of writing through revision and feedback.

This perspective was echoed in the interviews with SISCs:

SISC 1: "When I go to school, I will listen to the teachers' complaint and help them find the solutions to their problems. As for the writing issues, most teachers complain that their students are not able to write good sentences."

Researcher: "So, how do teachers solve the problems?"

SISC 1: "They gave more writing exercises to their students."

These findings suggest a disconnect between recognizing writing challenges and implementing evidence-based strategies. Instead of engaging students in iterative writing processes, instruction often focuses on getting students to complete writing tasks, rather than helping them improve through feedback, revision, and reflection. As Audrey and Molotja (2023) note, writing is infrequently taught explicitly, partly due to limited teacher training and rigid adherence to annual teaching plans.

## **Conclusion**

This study investigated Malaysian ESL teachers' awareness, implementation, and challenges in applying the process writing approach, drawing on Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory framework. Findings from the instrumental case study and follow-up interviews reveal that while teachers demonstrate a surface-level application of process writing, the approach is not fully realized in classroom practice. Students, particularly those with weaker writing

skills, benefited significantly from guided revision and oral feedback, with the most substantial improvement observed in their second draft writing.

The findings highlight a disconnect between teachers' recognition of writing challenges and the strategies used to address them. While aspects of the process writing approach are present, instruction often emphasizes task completion over revision and feedback. This is largely driven by a topic-based teaching approach, which pressures teachers to cover numerous essay tasks, prioritizing quantity over quality. Time constraints, syllabus demands, and limited teacher training further hinder recursive engagement. It is recommended that a thematic-based approach be adopted to allow more time for students to engage in the writing process, focusing on development rather than just the final product.

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# **Narrating through Screens: Digital Storytelling as a Method to Improve ESL Learners' Speaking Skill**

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## **Abstract**

This study intends to investigate the effectiveness of using digital storytelling as a pedagogical method to improve English as a Second Language (ESL) learners' speaking skills in a local higher education institution. In line with the notions of 21st-century learning and communicative language instructions, the study employed a quasi-experimental mixed-method design to ascertain the effectiveness of using the digital storytelling method and the challenges learners encountered during its implementation. The participants consisted of 50 first-year ESL learners from a local higher education institution. For the quantitative component, a pre- and post-assessment was administered, and a questionnaire was distributed. The assessment focuses on fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation with reference to a rubric adapted from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). A semi-structured interview was also conducted to identify challenges these ESL learners face in which addresses the qualitative component of this study. The results revealed that there are significant improvements in the ESL learners' speaking skills, which adds on to the benefits of employing digital storytelling. Nonetheless, concerns related to digital literacy and the difficulties faced by ESL learners with language proficiency were also highlighted.

**Keywords:** digital storytelling, ESL learners, speaking skill, CEFR

## **Introduction**

### **Background of the Study**

Communicating effectively in English in academic and professional settings is imperative in today's globalised world. Governmental and private higher education institutions in Malaysia also acknowledge English as the medium of instruction. To ensure that ESL learners are given the opportunity to practice using the target language and gain communicative competence, educators need to implement appropriate teaching and learning activities (Muhammad et al., 2020). Therefore, the Malaysian education system encourages the integration of technology in teaching and learning, emphasising 21st-century learning (Shin Yee & Kim Hu, 2022). According to Yuniarati et al. (2022b), this situation motivated educators worldwide to use their creativity to select, provide, and utilise the digital platforms in language learning. Although the integration of technology in language education is apparent and creates vast opportunities for learners to improve their ability to communicate, it

is well known that this skill is one of the most challenging to develop and master. This conclusion is supported by Nadesan & Shah (2020), which revealed that learners find speaking skills challenging.

In order to optimize and utilize technology in teaching and learning, educators introduced digital storytelling (DST) method as a way to enhance motivation and engagement among learners' (Nair & Yunus, 2022). Tiba et al. (2015b) view DST as an expression of the ancient art of storytelling, leveraging digital media to create media-rich stories. Therefore, applying DST allows learners to engage in intentional use of the English language while concurrently working on their technological skills. Despite the numerous benefits of applying DST in classrooms that were highlighted in previous studies (Arroba & Acosta, 2021; Yuniarti et al., 2022b), there is still limited research in the HEI context, specifically for first-year learners in the Malaysian context. Therefore, this study intends to investigate the effectiveness of the DST method in improving ESL learners' speaking skills and the challenges they may face when using it.

### **Statement of the Problem**

ESL learners in Malaysian HEIs are still having issues becoming proficient in the English language, despite years of English instruction. Educators who conduct teaching and learning using the traditional method may not incorporate opportunities for learners' to exercise and practice their speaking skills. Furthermore, learners may suffer psychological difficulties, such as language anxiety and fear of judgement, which further impede their oral communication (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Although the promise of DST in English language acquisition is evident, its effectiveness in Malaysian HEI remains scarce. Learners still experience difficulties in limited digital literacy and unfamiliarity with using multimedia tools. Hence, there is a need to examine the effectiveness of this pedagogical method in improving the first-year ESL learners' speaking skills, as well as identify the challenges they face during its implementation. In the absence of this comprehension, DST may remain inadequately leveraged in ESL teaching and learning.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research has implications for both the classroom and the real world. It contributes to the expanding corpus of literature on technology-enhanced language learning, notably in Malaysia, from a pedagogical perspective. It shows how DST is able to assist ESL learners and even help them improve their speaking skills.

The findings obtained would be beneficial for the stakeholders and policymakers to further understand how DST can be incorporated into language learning. This knowledge would assist them to make more informed decisions when designing or revising the curriculum. When it is evident that DST works, it is simpler to create learning environments that are not just inclusive but also advantageous for students with diverse needs and skill levels. As a

result, language teaching and learning can be more effective and directly help learners improve their speaking skills.

### **Research questions**

The study aims to investigate the following questions:

How effective is digital storytelling as a pedagogical method in improving ESL learners' speaking skills?

What challenges do ESL learners face when using digital storytelling in their language learning?

### **Methods**

For this study, the researcher employed a quasi-experimental mixed-method research design. The respondents selected for this study are 50 first-year ESL learners from a HEI in Petaling Jaya, Selangor. The selection of respondents was conducted through purposive sampling, ensuring that they fit the criteria of being first-year learners, non-native English speakers, and currently enrolled in the English course for the semester. For the quantitative section of this research, the researcher included pre- and post-intervention speaking assessments. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is used as a benchmark to identify the learners' speaking proficiency. The rubrics used in CEFR have been employed by other researchers to evaluate learners' speaking performance, and it is regarded as having globally accepted parameters for language assessment (Raju et al., 2024). After the intervention, a 5-point Likert-scale structured questionnaire was distributed to gauge the learners' experience in using digital storytelling methods. Then, a semi-structured interview was conducted to gain the lived experience of these learners and understand the challenges faced when using digital storytelling.

### **Results and Discussion**

The results showed that after using DST in the classroom, the ESL learners' speaking skills got better in terms of fluency, pronunciation, and grammar. The results of the pre- and post-assessments showed measurable improvements that back up earlier research on how DST can help students' oral language skills (Nair & Md Yunus, 2022). Data indicate that the motivation and heightened classroom participation of learners (Ramalingam et al., 2022), as documented in other studies, correspond with their greater engagement during English classes when DST is employed.

Several problems were also discovered, with learners acknowledging difficulties in the technical aspects of generating digital stories, particularly those with minimal digital literacy. This set of students finds it especially challenging to make and tell digital stories. Hence,

learners take time to complete the task given. This conclusion concurs with the findings of Fitri et al. (2022), who observed that DST fosters creativity among learners while hindering those with insufficient familiarity with digital technologies. To maximise the advantages of integrating DST, educators must offer adequate support to proficiently navigate and manage digital platforms.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study validates the efficacy of DST as an effective educational instrument for improving ESL learners' speaking skills in the higher education context. Quantifiable improvements are prevalent in ESL learners' fluency, vocabulary, and pronunciation when DST is used in the English language classroom. Although the vocabulary outcomes are favourable, issues such as insufficient digital literacy and time limitations should be addressed to ensure the effectiveness of this method in the long term.

It is recommended that educators and pertinent stakeholders incorporate DST into ESL teaching methodologies while ensuring that appropriate methods of instruction or training are provided to the educator and learner. Future studies may investigate the impact of DST on additional skills, such as listening or writing in the English language.

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# Emotional Barriers to Academic Writing: Understanding the Affective Costs of Dissertation Writing Anxiety

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## Abstract

Dissertation writing anxiety (DWA) is a persistent challenge for ESL postgraduate students, yet existing academic writing models primarily emphasize cognitive and linguistic factors, often overlooking its affective dimensions. DWA is marked by recurring negative emotions that interfere with the writing process. This study employs a multiple-case study design to examine the experiences of four ESL postgraduate students through in-depth interviews, audio journals, document analysis, and supporting instruments. Thematic analysis reveals that DWA affects emotional regulation, initiating either a debilitating or facilitative psychological loop that can impede or sustain writing progress. The emotional burden of DWA is closely linked to cognitive dissonance, as students struggle with performance appraisal and self-perceptions of writing ability. Additionally, dissertation writing as a cognitively and socially situated process amplifies affective challenges, with activities such as conceptualizing research, engaging with one's writing, and collaborating with supervisors influencing anxiety levels. The study argues for a comprehensive writing model that integrates affective dimensions alongside cognitive and linguistic considerations to better support ESL learners. By addressing the emotional barriers inherent in dissertation writing, institutions can implement targeted pedagogical interventions to foster writing resilience, alleviate anxiety, and improve dissertation completion rates among ESL postgraduates.

**Keywords:** dissertation writing anxiety, affective costs, ESL postgraduate students, emotion regulation, cognitive dissonance

## Introduction

Dissertation Writing Anxiety (DWA) refers to persistent negative emotions, such as fear, self-doubt, and frustration, that disrupt writing momentum, impair focus, and undermine confidence (Wan Osman et al., 2024). Unlike temporary writer's block, DWA is a chronic, deeply rooted barrier shaped by linguistic insecurity and the social dynamics of academia. In Malaysia, fewer than 50% of postgraduate students complete their degrees on schedule (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2016). While this statistic reflects broader systemic challenges, the emotional dimensions of dissertation writing remain largely overlooked. Most existing writing models emphasize cognitive and linguistic competencies, often neglecting the equally vital affective and social experience (Hayes, 1996). This study explores how DWA influences writing behaviors and self-perceptions among ESL postgraduates,

advocating for an affect-inclusive approach in academic support to build resilience, foster sustained writing progress, and potentially improve timely degree completion.

## **Related Literature**

Hyland (2003) emphasizes that academic writing is not merely an individual cognitive activity but a socially situated practice shaped by interactions with supervisors, peers, and institutional expectations. For ESL postgraduates, linguistic challenges and cultural pressures intensify feelings of inadequacy and fear of judgment. These emotional reactions can lead to self-doubt, perfectionism, and withdrawal, ultimately disrupting writing progress and undermining self-efficacy (Wan Osman et al., 2025). This study adopts Hayes' (1996) Social-Cognitive Model of Writing as its conceptual framework. Hayes' model integrates cognitive processes and affective influences to explain how writers plan, generate, and revise text while managing motivational and emotional states. While traditional writing support focuses heavily on language accuracy and structure, Hayes' framework highlights the interplay of cognition, emotion, and context in shaping writing behavior. Addressing these emotional dimensions is essential for fostering resilience and promoting timely dissertation completion among ESL postgraduates (Sidhu et al., 2021).

## **Methods**

This study employed a multiple-case study design to investigate DWA among ESL postgraduate students at a Malaysian technical university. Four participants were purposefully selected based on the following criteria: level of trait writing anxiety, English language proficiency, academic writing experience, and dissertation writing progress. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, personal document analysis, audio journals, and supporting instruments. Data analysis followed a cyclical approach (Mackey & Gass, 2016) and incorporated Stake's (2006) case study analysis methods to generate cross-case thematic insights.

## **Findings and Discussion**

Analysis revealed that dissertation writing anxiety (DWA) triggered two emotional loops among ESL postgraduate students: debilitating and facilitative. In the debilitating loop, DWA led to avoidance behaviors such as procrastination, perfectionism, and withdrawal from supervision. Participants reported feelings of guilt and loss of confidence, reinforcing further avoidance and stalling progress. In contrast, some students experienced a facilitative loop, where DWA was reframed as motivation. Small writing milestones provided a sense of achievement, increased motivation, and strengthened self-efficacy, sustaining writing momentum.

These patterns can be interpreted through three theoretical lenses. Cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) explains the psychological discomfort students felt when their actual writing performance fell short of their self-expectations, often triggering harsh self-criticism and identity conflict. Emotion regulation (Gross, 1998) was central to whether anxiety

hindered or supported progress; adaptive strategies such as positively reframing feedback and accepting setbacks as part of the process helped sustain writing, whereas maladaptive strategies like avoidance and excessive self-editing led to emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, viewing writing as a socially situated practice (Hyland, 2003) highlighted how interactions with supervisors and peer comparisons shaped emotional responses. Fear of judgment and internalized academic expectations intensified DWA, and critical feedback was often perceived as a personal failure rather than constructive guidance.

Participants identified key anxiety triggers during three main dissertation stages: conceptualizing research, engaging with early drafts, and receiving feedback. Uncertainty about research direction, self-critical evaluation of drafts, and feelings of being "left behind" when comparing progress with peers all contributed to heightened anxiety. These findings suggest that traditional writing support, which emphasizes language accuracy and structural coherence, overlooks crucial emotional dimensions. Ignoring these affective factors risks undermining students' writing fluency, confidence, and persistence.

Addressing these issues calls for an affective-inclusive support model that integrates emotional regulation strategies into academic writing instruction, shifts feedback culture toward more responsive and affirming practices, and helps students develop resilient writer identities. By supporting the student behind the writing, institutions can foster not only academic success but also healthier emotional engagement with the dissertation process.

## **Conclusion**

This study highlights that dissertation writing anxiety (DWA) is not merely a cognitive or linguistic issue but a deeply emotional experience that significantly shapes writing behaviors and academic identities among ESL postgraduate students. The findings underscore the need for institutions to move beyond traditional language-focused support and adopt affective-inclusive approaches that integrate emotional regulation strategies and foster emotionally responsive feedback cultures. By addressing the emotional realities of writing, universities can help students build resilience, sustain momentum, and increase the likelihood of timely completion. Supporting the student behind the writing ultimately empowers scholars to engage with their work confidently and finish their dissertations not in fear, but with a sense of growth and possibility.

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# Enhancing English Speaking Skills through TikTok-Based Project Learning among UTM Intensive English Programme Students

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## Abstract

This article examines how video-sharing platforms can be effectively used to enhance English language learning through project-based learning (PBL). PBL is an instructional approach that engages students in meaningful, real-world tasks that require critical thinking, collaboration, and communication to produce a final product. Integrating video platforms, such as TikTok, into PBL provides students with interactive tools to plan, create, and share their projects in engaging and authentic ways. In this approach, instructors play a crucial role in designing clear tasks, providing examples, guiding students throughout the video creation process, and giving constructive feedback to help them refine their language use. Focusing on international students enrolled in the Intensive English Programme (IEP) at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), this study aims to examine how collaborative video projects can promote active language use among students. Additionally, it explores how creating and sharing short videos can support collaborative learning and enhance students' speaking confidence and proficiency. As part of the PBL activity, students were assigned a task to create short speaking-focused TikTok videos in English through a 4-hour lesson. The students were required to present their videos to gain feedback from their peers and instructors. Data was collected through a post-project survey to evaluate the changes in students' speaking confidence and proficiency. The findings suggest that, with appropriate support from instructors and well-planned lessons, using video platforms can help students gain more confidence and improve their English communication skills.

**Keywords:** Intensive English Programme (IEP), Project-based Learning (PBL), collaborative learning, language learning, TikTok

## Introduction

In recent years, collaborative learning has become a widely used approach to increase students' engagement, peer support, and communication in language classrooms. According to Li (2025), working on tasks together helps learners take shared responsibility and interact meaningfully, especially in English programmes at the tertiary level. At the same time, many educators are adopting project-based learning (PBL) to provide more meaningful and student-

centred experiences. PBL model developed by Dong and Warter-Perez (2009) addresses the unique learning needs of underprepared minority students in an urban educational setting. Unlike traditional lessons, PBL encourages students to work on real-world tasks that involve critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork. This approach is particularly useful in speaking classes, where students build confidence and fluency through regular practice and peer interaction (Almulla, 2020; Jaya & Mortini, 2023).

As digital media continues to evolve, platforms such as TikTok are being used more frequently in educational settings. Although TikTok is often viewed as a source of entertainment, it is now being explored for its potential in enhancing language learning. For example, a study by Julianti and Pratiwi (2023) found that students who created TikTok videos in English showed notable improvement in speaking skills and classroom participation. In another study, Susanto and Purwoko (2022) introduced a structured project model using TikTok that helped learners organise, record, and present speaking tasks more effectively. Suryatiningsih et al. (2025) also highlighted that the platform supports speaking and listening development while encouraging responsible digital behaviour and creative collaboration.

This small-scale study examines how collaborative video projects using TikTok can encourage active use of English among students in the Intensive English Programme (IEP) at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). It also explores how creating and sharing short videos can build students' confidence, and enhance their speaking proficiency. While previous research has demonstrated the benefits of TikTok-based PBL in improving language outcomes, there is still limited focus on international undergraduate students in structured English programmes. In particular, the role of collaborative video-making in improving speaking confidence, language proficiency, and the use of peer feedback remains underexplored. This study fills this gap by investigating these aspects through a 4-hour collaborative TikTok speaking task involving IEP students. The findings aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of how video projects can support English language development in higher education contexts.

## **Methods**

This study employed a quantitative research design using a survey questionnaire to investigate students' perceptions of using TikTok as a tool for PBL to enhance English speaking skills. The primary aim was to evaluate the learning experience of students who participated in a collaborative video project as part of the IEP at UTM. The participants were 36 IEP students from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds, who had completed a collaborative video project using TikTok. These students were at the A1 to B2 levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), based on their placement test results.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to capture students' feedback and perceptions regarding the project. The questionnaire consisted of three sections; Section A: Demographic Background; Section B: Lesson Feedback which focused on students' views on the content and collaboration; and Section C: TikTok for English Learning which assessed students' perceptions of TikTok as a language learning tool. Most items in Sections B and C used a 3-point Likert scale ranging from "Yes", "Somewhat" and, "No". The survey was

administered online via Google Forms at the end of the collaborative project. Participation was voluntary and no grades were affected by their responses. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and means. This analysis was used to summarise students' perceptions of the lesson experience and the effectiveness of TikTok as a language learning tool. Responses from open-ended items were categorised thematically to provide supporting qualitative insights.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Promote Active Language Use**

The results from the survey questionnaire indicate a generally positive student response towards the collaborative project. Overall, 71.5% of the respondents expressed positive perceptions of the lesson, particularly in relation to speaking practice and collaborative learning. The majority agreed that the project was engaging, encouraged teamwork, and provided meaningful opportunities to practise English speaking in an authentic context. Moreover, 86.1% of respondents showed pleasure that working collaboratively encouraged them to speak more frequently in English. Many appreciated the interactive and creative nature of the tasks, highlighting that working in groups helped reduce anxiety and improved their confidence in using English orally. These findings suggest that project-based activities, particularly those utilizing digital tools like TikTok, can create meaningful contexts for language use. They also highlight how collaboration not only enhances linguistic output but also builds students' confidence and motivation. The collaborative nature of the projects significantly promoted active language use by making English speaking feel more natural and less intimidating through peer interaction.

### **Enhance Students' Confidence and Proficiency**

The data suggests that a majority of students responded "Positively" or "Somewhat positively" to the use of TikTok in their language learning, both as a platform and through the creative process of video-making. The relatively low percentage of negative responses indicates general acceptance and perceived benefit of this approach. Besides, 47.2% of respondents expressed a positive perception of learning through video creation, while 44.4% responded "Somewhat", and only 8.3% indicated a negative response. This suggests that the majority of students found value in the collaborative video-making process, either directly or partially supporting their language learning experience. In addition, 77.8% of respondents agreed that feedback received during or after the video sharing process was helpful, reinforcing the role of peer and instructor input in enhancing language accuracy and confidence. This aligns with the idea that authentic communication and audience interaction can be powerful motivators in language learning.

### **Qualitative Analysis of Open-Ended Responses**

#### **I) Active Language Use through Video Creation**

Many students reported that the project provided an opportunity to practise English more actively compared to regular classroom tasks. The process of planning, rehearsing, and

recording their videos encouraged them to use the language meaningfully and creatively. One student stated:

“We had to think carefully about what to say and how to say it, so I learned how to make better sentences.”

Another student reflected on how the project helped with vocabulary retention:

“I remember the words better because I used them while speaking in the video.”

## II) Boosting Speaking Confidence

The students expressed that recording videos helped reduce their fear of speaking in front of others, as they were able to rehearse and re-record until they were satisfied with the outcome. The participants noted:

“I was nervous at first, but I felt happy after recording. It helped me speak better without fear.”

“In my opinion, creating and sharing TikTok videos helps me learn English because it makes me practice speaking and thinking in English.”

Others shared that the creative nature of the task made the speaking activity more enjoyable and less intimidating:

“It’s better than standing in front of the class. I had more fun and felt more relaxed.”

“Creating and sharing TikTok videos helps me learn English by making it fun to practice, learn new words, improve my pronunciation, and build confidence.”

This suggests that using TikTok for language production can provide a safer space for speaking practice.

## III) Challenges in Group Collaboration

While the majority of responses were positive, a few students highlighted challenges during the groupwork process. In particular, some noted that collaboration was less effective when group members relied on their first language instead of English.

“It was hard to practise English because some friends used their own language during the group task.”

“Personally, I prefer to do presentations rather than creating and sharing TikTok videos.”

This concern points to the need for intentional grouping strategies and clearer task guidelines to maximise English use during peer collaboration.

## Conclusion

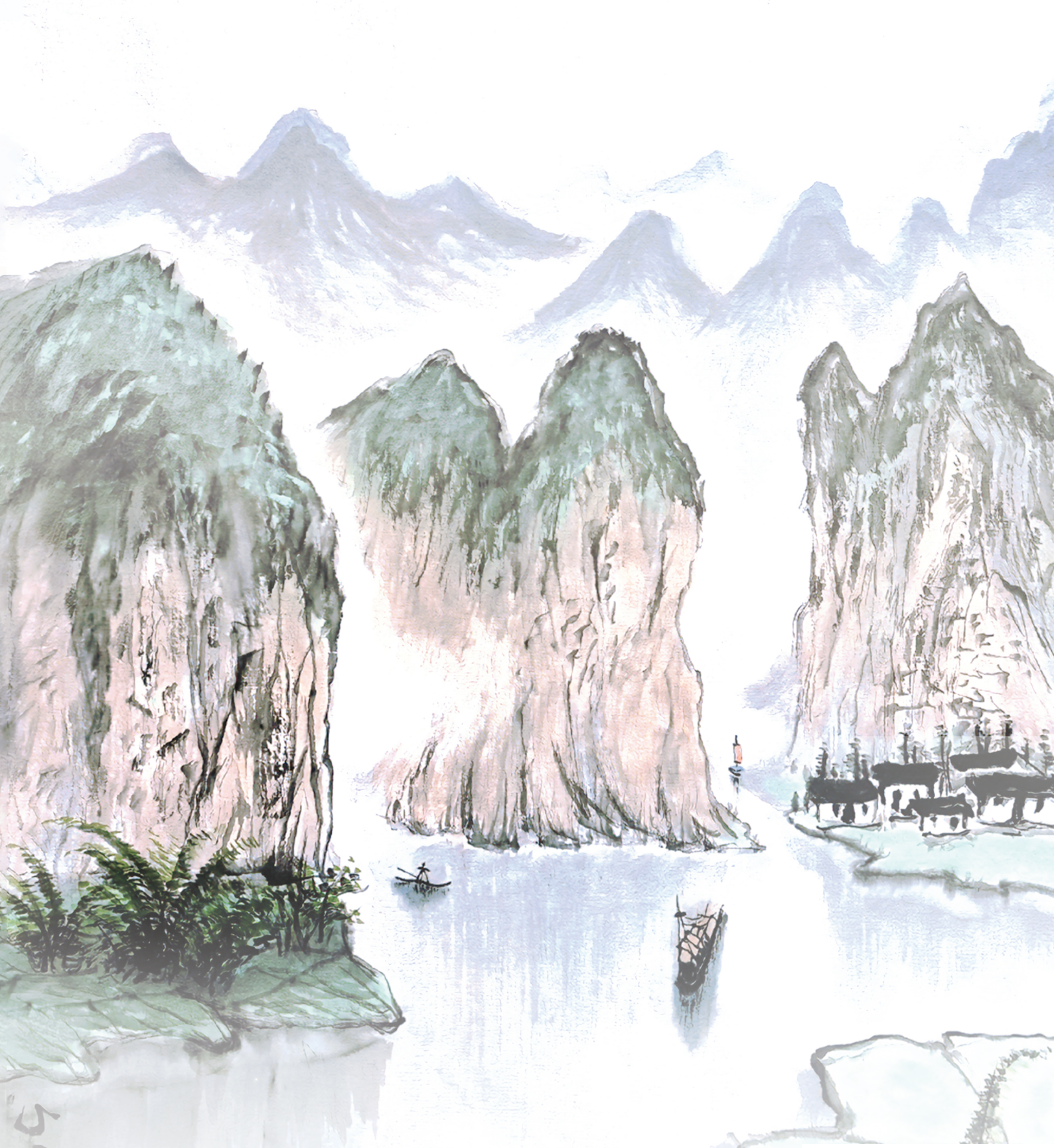
The integration of TikTok as a tool for PBL has shown promising results in enhancing English speaking skills among IEP students at UTM. The majority of participants responded positively to the collaborative video project, citing increased speaking opportunities,

improved confidence, and reduced anxiety when using English. However, managing group collaboration among students from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds is seen as a challenge. Despite this issue, the overall findings affirm that PBL can improve students' communication skills, enhance their confidence and encourage active language use. With appropriate instructional guidance and structured tasks that account for diverse student needs, platforms like TikTok can be effectively incorporated to support speaking proficiency in English language classrooms.

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