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CONTENT

REVIEW ARTICLE

EFL students' perceptions of AI-assisted writing tools: A systematic narrative hybrid review

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Abstract

This study explores EFL students' perceptions of AI-assisted writing tools through a systematic narrative hybrid review of 19 open-access studies published between 2020 and 2025 by employing a structured selection process presented via a PRISMA flow chart. As AI tools like ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Turnitin become more prevalent, understanding their impact on students' writing skills, self-directed learning, and academic integrity is essential. Data were collected from ERIC, ULAKBİM, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate, using a multi-stage search. Using SWOT and descriptive content analysis, the study examines AI tools' benefits, challenges, and pedagogical implications in EFL writing. Findings suggest that AI improves efficiency, accuracy, idea generation, and personalized learning, yet concerns include over-reliance, plagiarism risks, and ethical issues. By addressing these factors, the study suggests the need for best practices in AI integration into ELT curricula. It emphasizes the need for teacher training, AI literacy programs, and ethical guidelines to ensure responsible AI use while maximizing its benefits.

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Keywords
AI-assisted writing, AI literacy, EFL student perceptions, Ethical guidelines, SWOT, descriptive content analysis.

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Introduction

The swift progress of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has had a profound impact on multiple fields, particularly education, where it has been integrated into numerous teaching and learning processes. AI technologies have enhanced personalized learning, adaptive assessment, and content generation, making education more efficient and tailored to individual needs. In English language teaching (ELT), AI-driven applications have introduced fresh opportunities for both teachers and students, particularly with the rise

of AI-assisted and AI-powered writing tools. AI-assisted writing tools support the writing process by enhancing human efforts without replacing them entirely. These tools can help with tasks such as grammar correction, vocabulary enhancement, and idea generation, yet human input remains crucial. For instance, AI-assisted tools might suggest improvements or corrections to a piece of writing, but the learner still plays an active role in shaping the content and making final decisions (Aue & Lee, 2023). In contrast, AI-powered tools are often designed to autonomously generate content, analyze text, or assist in language learning with minimal human intervention. These tools can automate different stages of the writing process, improving efficiency but also sparking concerns about excessive reliance on technology.

This section examines the history and development of AI in educational settings, and its integration into ELT, especially its impact on writing skills by using AI-assisted writing tools. It also highlights both the benefits and challenges that these technologies bring to language learners and educators.

Historical background of artificial intelligence and its impacts on education

The roots of Artificial Intelligence (AI) date back to the mid-20th century, when early researchers began investigating methods to build machines capable of mimicking human intelligence. Initial AI endeavors concentrated on creating rule-based systems and symbolic reasoning, where machines were programmed to carry out tasks according to predetermined rules and logical frameworks. These foundational approaches are often referred to as "symbolic AI" or "good old-fashioned AI" (GOFAI). The goal was to imitate human cognitive functions, like problem-solving and decision-making, by manipulating symbols and abstract ideas. (Russell & Norvig, 2016). These systems laid the groundwork for the future evolution of AI, although they were limited in scope and flexibility. In the years that followed, the emergence of machine learning (ML) algorithms brought a major transformation to AI research. Instead of depending on predefined rules, machine learning allowed systems to learn from data, continuously enhancing their performance as they gained more experience. This transition from rule-based to learning-based systems opened the door to more sophisticated AI applications. The introduction of neural networks, computational models modeled after the human

brain's structure and functions, significantly broadened the potential of AI. Deep learning models, a type of neural network, performed exceptionally in tasks such as visual recognition, voice processing, and comprehending natural language. (Nilsson, 2010). The acceleration of AI development has been fueled by the exponential increase in computational power and the availability of vast amounts of data. These factors have made it possible for AI systems to analyze and process information on a previously unimaginable scale.

Today, AI is not just about automating tasks but also about augmenting human capabilities, improving decision-making processes, and enabling new forms of interaction between humans and machines. With the ongoing advancement of AI, its influence on various sectors, including education, is becoming more profound. It has transformed education through tailored learning experiences, dynamic assessments, and innovative content generation, providing fresh approaches to student engagement and teacher support (Luckin et al., 2016). Moreover, AI-driven tools used in education are now capable of delivering instant feedback, generate customized learning materials, and even simulating complex classroom environments, transforming how education is delivered and experienced across the globe. As AI research continues to progress, we can expect to see even more transformative applications that will shape the future of education and other industries.

The increasing importance of digital literacy

With the improvement of computer technology and the emergence of various digital applications that we are exposed to and use in our daily lives the 21st century has brought a new term, ‘’digital literacy’’ which involves critically evaluating information, communicating through digital tools, and practicing ethical behavior online (Hague & Payton, 2010). Also, it includes not only the ability to navigate and create digital content but also the capacity to engage responsibly with emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (Ng, 2012). With the rise of AI, there is a growing need for AI literacy—an understanding of how AI systems work, their societal impacts, and how to interact with them effectively. Ng (2012) emphasizes that digital literacy encompasses cognitive,

technical, and social-emotional skills, all of which are also essential when engaging with AI technologies. Integrating AI literacy into digital literacy equips individuals with the tools to not only consume AI-driven content but also to question and shape how AI influences their digital environments, education, and daily decision-making.

Artificial intelligence in English language education with a special focus on writing skills

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly influenced education, especially in English language teaching (ELT). Overall, AI has reshaped the educational environment by introducing adaptive learning platforms, intelligent tutoring technologies, and automated evaluation tools. These AI-driven systems offer customized learning experiences and instant feedback, enabling students to progress at their own pace (Chen et al., 2020). For example, intelligent tutoring systems utilize algorithms to assess student progress and deliver personalized learning resources (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Although AI offers many advantages, issues such as data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the dynamics of teacher-student interaction continue to be key concerns (Selwyn, 2019). Nevertheless, AI continues to enhance accessibility, engagement, and learning outcomes, thus reshaping modern education (Holmes et al., 2021).

In the realm of ELT, AI has been increasingly utilized to support language acquisition through applications such as chatbots, speech recognition systems, and automated feedback mechanisms. These technologies provide learners with interactive and immersive learning experiences, helping them develop language skills more effectively (Godwin-Jones, 2019). AI-powered platforms like Duolingo and Grammarly enable learners to practice language skills, offering instant corrections and suggestions to enhance learning (Xu et al., 2022). While AI has proven beneficial in ELT, scholars emphasize the importance of balancing human interaction with AI-assisted learning to ensure comprehensive language development (Ranalli, 2021). AI writing tools have emerged as significant assets in language education, offering support in improving writing skills. Applications such as Grammarly, QuillBot, and ChatGPT offer automated evaluations of grammar, coherence, and writing style (Bai & Wang, 2023). These AI-driven assistants help learners enhance writing accuracy and fluency by offering real-

time suggestions (Hao & Wang, 2021). Nevertheless, worries persist about excessive dependence on AI tools and the possible reduction in critical thinking abilities (Kessler, 2020). Teachers emphasize that AI writing tools should be considered supplementary resources, not replacements for human involvement, and encourage their responsible use in language learning (Zhang & Yu, 2021). As these applications keep advancing, additional research is necessary to evaluate their lasting effects on students' writing skills and cognitive involvement. AI technologies, especially those targeting writing skills, have transformed English language teaching by providing tailored, effective, and easily accessible learning opportunities. While there are challenges and concerns surrounding their integration, to shed light on the information in the literature, this study aims to answer the following questions:

- What are the key strengths and weaknesses of AI writing tools based on EFL students' perceptions?
- What opportunities and challenges do AI writing tools present for students?
- How can students maximize the benefits of AI writing tools while overcoming their disadvantages?

Methodology

This study employs a systematic narrative hybrid review as its research methodology. A systematic narrative hybrid review is a type of review that combines both systematic and narrative review methods to synthesize existing research. The systematic aspect of this approach involves a structured and transparent process for selecting and evaluating studies, ensuring that the review is comprehensive and minimizes bias. It includes a clear search strategy, predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, and a rigorous assessment of the quality of the studies included (Pope et al., 2007). The narrative aspect allows for a more flexible and descriptive synthesis of the findings, offering a broader understanding of the topic by integrating qualitative insights from the studies (Snilstveit et al., 2016). While systematic reviews offer a reproducible framework for identifying relevant studies, narrative reviews provide deeper insights into contextual nuances and emerging trends. The hybrid nature of this methodology offers a balanced approach, enabling researchers to capture a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the topic

(Dixon-Woods et al., 2006). A hybrid approach combines the structured methodology of a systematic review with the interpretive depth of a narrative review. This balance helps researchers maintain transparency while also exploring complex ideas and patterns across studies (Snyder, 2019). Moreover, the systematic elements ensure a comprehensive and unbiased review of the literature, while the narrative synthesis allows for an exploration of meanings, themes, and contextual dynamics (Grant & Booth, 2009). A systematic narrative hybrid review for this study allows for a comprehensive analysis of diverse studies on AI-assisted writing tools in English language teaching (ELT). The combination of systematic rigor and narrative synthesis enables the study to highlight not only the research outcomes but also in-depth insights into learners' perceptions and experiences. By using this approach, the review offers a comprehensive insight into the role and influence of AI in ELT writing instruction from the students' point of view. The systematic part of the study ensures that a wide range of studies were chosen systematically as there are clear inclusion and exclusion criteria. Furthermore, the narrative part of the study provides a deeper understanding of qualitative insights, contextual factors, and student voices. As a hybrid review provides a structured reliability of a systematic approach, while the interpretive power of narrative reviews is particularly suited for educational research focused on human experiences, perceptions, and beliefs. The study followed a deductive (top-down) process of content analysis to synthesize and analyze existing literature and theoretical frameworks. This approach starts by selecting relevant theories or conceptual frameworks that will guide the review process. The researchers employed these theoretical lenses to create a set of predefined categories or codes, which are then applied to the body of literature being reviewed. The goal is not to generate new data but to categorize and interpret existing studies in relation to the chosen theories. By doing so, the researchers' aim was to assess how well-established theories applied to the collected studies identify gaps, confirm earlier findings, or propose new theoretical directions. This method provides a structured way to critically review and synthesize the existing body of knowledge, focusing on understanding the consistency or divergence of findings across different studies rather than generating new empirical insights (Booth, et al., 2016).

Selection of the studies

The databases ERIC and Ulakbim, along with Google Scholar (a widely-used academic search engine rather than a database) were searched to access a broader range of relevant studies. The advanced search functions were used with the filters set to open-access articles published between January 1, 2020, and January 20, 2025. Search terms included word strings such as “AI,” “AI writing,” “AI-assisted writing,” or “AI tools” in combination with “EFL,” and additional keywords such as “learner beliefs,” “student perspectives,” “learner perspectives,” or “student beliefs.” These keywords were first searched in the titles, and then in the abstract sections. Additionally, ResearchGate was consulted as an alternative source to retrieve full-text versions of articles that were unavailable through ERIC and Ulakbim. Other academic databases such as Web of Science and Scopus were not included in the search due to institutional limitations regarding full-text access and search functionality. These databases were chosen due to their wide accessibility and comprehensive research coverage in education and technology (Bozkurt, 2020). As a result, a total of 19 studies were selected after this multi-stage screening process, ensuring alignment with the research objectives. This iterative search strategy aligns with best practices in literature reviews, as recommended by Snyder (2019), who highlights the importance of gradually refining search terms to ensure relevant and high-quality study selection.

Inclusion criteria

- Open-access, ensuring free and full access for analysis.
- Published between January 2020 and January 2025 to reflect current trends and technological developments.
- Written in English to maintain consistency in language and ensure accurate analysis.
- Conducted in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts, aligning with the study's focus.
- Focused on student perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, or experiences, excluding

purely technical evaluations.

- Investigated the use of AI, AI writing tools, AI-assisted writing, or generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT, Grammarly).
- Published in peer-reviewed academic journals, ensuring scholarly rigor.
- Provided empirical evidence (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods).
- Contained relevant keywords in the title or abstract, facilitating keyword-based screening.

Exclusion criteria

- Not open access (e.g., behind paywalls).
- Published before 2020.
- Written in languages other than English.
- Focused on ESL, native English, or bilingual immersion contexts.
- Centered on teacher-only perspectives or tool developers' viewpoints.
- Dealt with technical performance or tool design, not student experience.
- Included both student and teacher views without clear student-specific findings.
- Theses, dissertations, reports, or conference proceedings (grey literature).
- Full-text access not provided.
- Lacked relevant keywords in the title or abstract related to AI and writing.

Table 1.

Summary of article selection process

Database-Source	Search Strings Used	Articles Found
Ulakbim	-"AI writing student perspectives EFL" (36) -"AI writing learner perspectives EFL" (17) -"AI writing student beliefs EFL" (8) -"AI writing learner beliefs EFL" (4)	65
ERIC	-"AI writing student" (67) -"AI writing learner" (27) -"AI writing perspective" (10)	104
Google Scholar	-"AI student perspective writing"	7

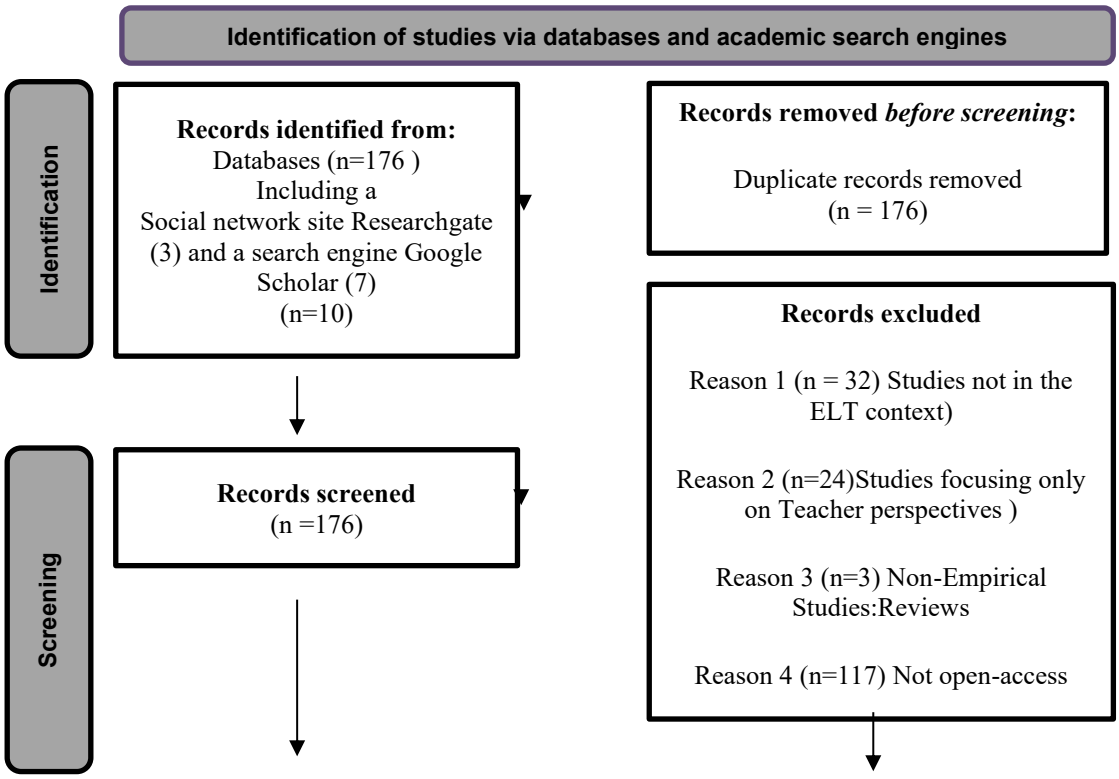
ResearchGate	-Used to access full texts not available in ERIC/Ulakbim	(Not additional)
Total Texts Scanned		176
After Title & Abstract Review	Relevant articles identified	27
After Full-Text Analysis	Articles meeting final inclusion criteria	**19**

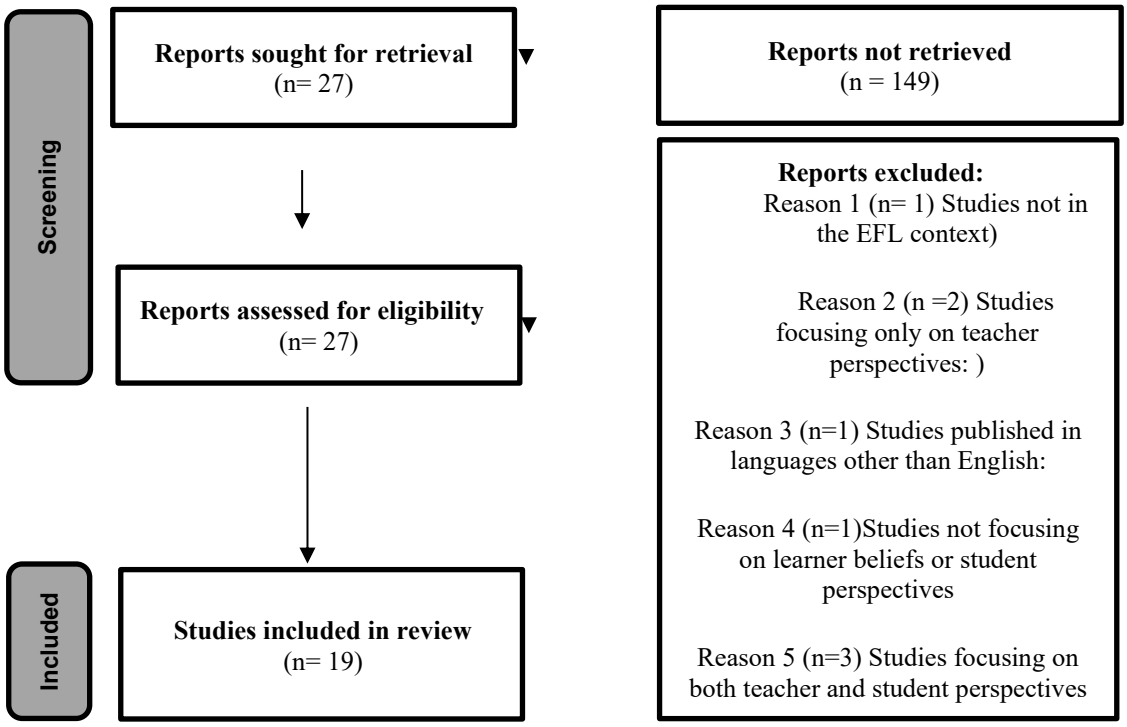
Table 1. below provides a concise summary of the article selection process, including the databases (Ulakbim, ERIC), search engine (Google Scholar) and academic social site (ResearchGate) used, keyword strings applied, the number of articles retrieved at each stage, and the final number of studies included after full-text analysis. It outlines the systematic approach taken to ensure the relevance and quality of the studies selected for the review.

The PRISMA chart below shows the flow of the selection process in detail.

Figure 1.

PRISMA flow chart showing the selection process of the studies





Selected based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, Table 2 below presents the articles examined in this study, including information on the authors, AI tools referenced, the countries of origin, and the source type (article). It showcases a range of AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Google Translate, across different countries like China, Japan, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia, reflecting the extensive adoption of AI in education.

Table 2.

Articles analyzed in the study

N	Authors	AI Tools Mentioned	Country
1	Kim, J., Yu, S., Detrick, R., & Li, N. (2024)	ChatGPT	China
2	Gayed, J. M., Carlon, M. K. J., Oriola, A. M., & Cross, J. S. (2022)	AI-based writing assistant (AI KAKU)	Japan
3	Artiana, N., & Fakhrurriana, R. (2024)	ChatGPT	Indonesia
4	Malik, A. R., Pratiwi, Y., Andajani, K., Numertayasa, I. W., Suharti, S., Darwis, A., & Marzuki, M. (2023)	Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Indonesia
5	Thangthong, P., Phiromsombut, J., & Imsa-ard, P. (2024)	Grammarly, Quillbot	Thailand
6	Ozfidan, B., El-Dakhs, D. A. S., & Alsalim, L. A. (2024)	ChatGPT, Grammarly, Google Translate	Saudi Arabia
7	Liang, J., Huang, F., & Teo, T. (2024)	Grammarly	China
8	Duong, T.-N.-A., & Chen, H.-L. (2025)	AI chatbot (WAB)	Vietnam

9	Polakova, P., & Ivenz, P. (2024)	ChatGPT	Czech Republic
10	Launonen, P., Talalakina, E., & Dubova, G. (2024)	ChatGPT	Finland
11	Gasaymeh, A.-M.M., Beirat, M.A., & Abu Qbeita, A.A. (2024)	ChatGPT, Jasper AI, Copy.ai, Writesonic, Rytr, Wordtune, Grammarly, ShortlyAI, QuillBot, INK Editor, Scribe	Jordan
12	Kramar, N., et al. (2024)	Google Translate, Turnitin, Grammarly, ChatGPT	Ukraine
13	Teng, M. F. (2024)	ChatGPT	China
14	Friatin, L. Y. (2025)	Canva AI Magic Writer	Indonesia
15	Alkamel, M. A. A., & Alwagieh, N. A. S. (2024)	ChatGPT	Yemen
16	Anani, G. E., Nyamekye, E., & Bafour-Koduah, D. (2025	ChatGPT, Grammarly	Ghana
17	Nadhifah, A. S., Syukur, H. N., Haryanto, M. F., Luthfiyyah, R., & Rozak, D. R. (2024)	AI tools (not specifically mentioned)	Indonesia
18	Yelliza, Siska, M. K. Ikhsan, & Satria, W. (2024)	Diffit, Brisk, Mendeley	Indonesia
19	Tran, H. N., & Nguyen, L. T. (2024)	ChatGPT	Vietnam

Data analysis

The data analysis in this study employs a two-pronged approach that integrates SWOT analysis and descriptive content analysis, aimed at evaluating AI-assisted writing tools in academic contexts, specifically in EFL writing instruction. This combined methodology allows for a comprehensive exploration of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with AI tools, as well as a detailed categorization and synthesis of qualitative findings from the selected studies.

SWOT analysis

SWOT analysis serves as the primary framework for evaluating the AI-assisted writing tools. This strategic assessment tool helps identify internal and external factors influencing the use of AI in academic writing. The internal strengths include factors like efficiency, improved writing quality, and increased accessibility for non-native speakers. Weaknesses, on the other hand, encompass over-reliance on AI, concerns regarding the loss of creativity, and ethical issues related to AI-generated content. The external opportunities that arise from AI integration in academic writing include personalized learning experiences, enhanced collaboration among students, and broader

access to writing support. Meanwhile, the threats identified through SWOT analysis include academic integrity issues, such as plagiarism, and digital equity concerns, particularly in under-resourced educational settings (Gürel & Tat, 2017). Through this framework, the study highlights the advantages and challenges of integrating AI tools in writing instruction, offering insights on their effective use and potential risks.

Descriptive content analysis

Descriptive content analysis was employed to analyze and categorize qualitative data from the reviewed literature systematically. This qualitative research technique involves categorizing, structuring, and interpreting text to identify recurring themes and trends (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The themes that emerged in the literature, such as "Efficiency in the Writing Process," "Support for Non-Native Speakers," "Over-reliance on AI," and "Ethical Concerns," were mapped into the SWOT framework to provide a more structured and comprehensive understanding of the impact of AI-assisted writing tools. The content analysis follows a top-down approach, beginning with predefined themes based on the literature and gradually expanding to more specific subthemes as the data is processed.

Integration of SWOT and content analysis

By combining SWOT analysis and descriptive content analysis, the study provides a holistic assessment of AI-assisted writing tools in academic contexts. SWOT analysis offers strategic insights into the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of AI tools, while content analysis provides a systematic, qualitative exploration of the key themes associated with AI integration in writing instruction. The integration of these two methodologies ensures a well-rounded and rigorous analysis, offering both practical and theoretical implications for educators, policymakers, and researchers in English language teaching.

The data analysis process is both transparent and replicable, as it follows a clear methodological approach that can be applied in future studies. As in qualitative research, the concept of trustworthiness is pivotal to ensure the rigor and validity of a study, the systematic categorization of themes and verification applied to the study's ensured dependability and confirmability, along with reinforcing the accuracy and consistency

of the findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) introduced four criteria to assess trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To enhance credibility, the study employed cross-verifying process for the categorization of subthemes using ChatGPT, ensuring consistency and minimizing researcher bias. Transferability was addressed by providing a detailed description of the research context, data sources, and analysis procedures, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the findings to similar EFL contexts. Dependability was reinforced through a transparent and systematic analysis process, utilizing well-established methods such as SWOT analysis and descriptive content analysis, which can be replicated in future studies. Finally, confirmability was strengthened by relying on data-driven theme development and external verification through AI support, ensuring that the findings reflect the data itself.

Findings

This section delineates the principal findings of the study, offering a comprehensive analysis of the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools into academic writing. Initially, an overview of the distribution of articles over the years is presented, revealing patterns in scholarly interest and research development. Subsequently, the AI tools referenced across the selected studies are identified and analyzed, followed by an examination of the frequency and geographical distribution of countries represented in the corpus. Particular attention is given to the diversity of AI tool utilization across different national contexts, highlighting variations in adoption, application, and educational integration.

The findings further explore the perceived benefits of AI-assisted writing tools, particularly in terms of enhancing writing efficiency, improving language proficiency, and increasing accessibility for a broader range of learners. Conversely, critical challenges and ethical concerns are addressed, including issues related to plagiarism, questions of authorship authenticity, and the potential erosion of critical thinking skills among students.

In addition, the section examines student perceptions of AI's role in academic writing, encompassing both supportive and critical perspectives. A detailed content analysis of AI tools is conducted through the integration of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, providing a structured evaluation of AI's role within academic writing practices. The section concludes with recommendations for the ethical and responsible use of AI technologies in academic settings, emphasizing the necessity of balancing technological innovation with the preservation of academic rigor and integrity.

Table 3.

The AI tools mentioned in the selected studies

AI Tools	Frequency	Percentage (%)
ChatGPT	11	57.89
Grammarly	6	31.58
Google Translate	2	10.53
AI-based writing assistant (AI KAKU)	2	10.53
Brisk	1	5.26
Diffit	1	5.26
Canva AI Magic Writer	1	5.26
Turnitin	1	5.26
Scribe	1	5.26
INK Editor	1	5.26
QuillBot	1	5.26
Wordtune	1	5.26
Shortly AI	1	5.26
Rytr	1	5.26
Writesonic	1	5.26
Copy.ai	1	5.26
Jasper AI	1	5.26
AI chatbot (WAB)	1	5.26
Mendeley	1	5.26

As seen in Table 3 above, ChatGPT is the most commonly mentioned AI tool, appearing in 11 articles, representing 57.89% of the total mentions. This suggests ChatGPT is widely recognized and utilized in the educational context of the study. Grammarly is , mentioned in 6 articles (31.58%), indicating that it is a popular tool, especially for writing assistance. Google Translate and AI KAKU are mentioned in 2 articles (10.53%), suggesting it's still a relevant tool for translation and language support in education, though not as widely used as ChatGPT or Grammarly. Several other tools, such as ShortlyAI, Brisk, Diffit, Canva AI Magic Writer, Turnitin, Scribe, INK Editor, QuillBot, Wordtune, and others, are each mentioned in just 1 article, making up a

smaller portion of the tools referenced (5.26% each). These tools are either less commonly used or serve niche purposes in specific academic or professional contexts. The diversity of tools in the table shows that while ChatGPT and Grammarly dominate, there is still a variety of AI tools that continue to be explored across different research contexts.

Table 4.

The frequency of countries in the selected studies

Countries	Frequency
Indonesia	5
China	3
Vietnam	2
Japan	1
Thailand	1
Saudi Arabia	1
Czech Republic	1
Finland	1
Jordan	1
Ukraine	1
Yemen	1
Ghana	1

As seen in Table 4 above, Indonesia has the highest occurrence with five articles, indicating it is the most active country in the study regarding the use of AI tools in educational contexts. China comes second with 3 articles, suggesting a significant but somewhat smaller presence in comparison to Indonesia. Vietnam follows with 2 articles, showing some engagement with AI tools in education, though less prevalent than Indonesia and China. Other countries, such as Japan, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Czechia , Finland, Jordan, Ukraine, Yemen, and Ghana, are each represented by 1 article, reflecting a smaller yet diverse group of countries exploring AI tools in education. Overall, the table highlights that Indonesia and China are the most prominent countries in the study, while other countries are represented with a single article each, demonstrating a global interest in AI's educational applications but with varying levels of involvement.

Table 5.

Diversity of AI tools across countries

Countries	AI Tools Mentioned	Tools List
Jordan	11	ChatGPT, Jasper AI, Copy.ai, Writesonic, Rytr, Wordtune, Grammarly, ShortlyAI, QuillBot, INK Editor, Scribe
Indonesia	5	ChatGPT, Grammarly, Google Translate, QuillBot, Mendeley
China	4	ChatGPT, Grammarly, Google Translate, AI-based writing assistant (AI KAKU)
Ukraine	4	Google Translate, Turnitin, Grammarly, ChatGPT
Saudi Arabia	3	ChatGPT, Grammarly, Google Translate
Ghana	2	ChatGPT, Grammarly
Vietnam	2	ChatGPT, an AI chatbot (WAB)
Thailand	2	Grammarly, Quillbot
Japan	1	AI-based writing assistant (AI KAKU)
Czech Republic	1	ChatGPT
Finland	1	ChatGPT
Yemen	1	ChatGPT

According to Table 5 above, Jordan stands out with 11 tools listed, showing a diverse use of AI tools including ChatGPT, Jasper AI, Writesonic, and others for various writing and editing tasks. Indonesia has the second highest number of AI tools listed (5), including well-known tools like ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Google Translate, as well as others such as QuillBot and Mendeley. China and Ukraine follow with 4 tools, including ChatGPT, Turnitin, Grammarly, Google Translate, and a local AI-based writing assistant called AI KAKU. Saudi Arabia is mentioned with 3 tools, while Vietnam, Thailand, and Ghana each mention 2 tools. Vietnam uses ChatGPT and an AI chatbot (WAB), while Thailand uses Grammarly and QuillBot, and Ghana uses Chatgpt and Grammarly. Japan, Czechia, Finland, and Yemen have the fewest tools mentioned, AI KAKU in Japan and ChatGPT in Yemen, Czechia and Finland.

The themes of the data were integrated in accordance with the SWOT analysis frame, while the subthemes were created thematically via gathering similar and repeated codings that represent all the small units of the examples derived from the study. The subthemes extracted from the studies were also pre-determined and a top-down process was followed where the subthemes were compared with the existing literature, which also ensures the reliability of the study.

The table below provides a structured analysis of the role of AI-driven writing tools in writing contexts using the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) framework. It categorizes the various ways AI tools influence the writing process, drawing on existing literature to support each point. The table serves as an overview of key themes that will be discussed in greater detail in the findings section.

Table 6.

Content analysis of AI tools in academic writing with the integration of SWOT analysis

Themes	Subthemes	Examples gathered from the studies
Strengths	Efficiency in the writing process	AI tools like ChatGPT and Grammarly help accelerate drafting, editing, and refining content, allowing students to complete assignments more quickly (Artiana & Fakhrurriana, 2024; Kim et al., 2024).
	Improvement in writing quality	AI-powered tools improve sentence structure, coherence, and fluency in academic essays (Malik et al., 2023; Polakova & Ivenz, 2024).
	Support for non-native speakers	AI tools assist non-native speakers by suggesting appropriate word choices and improving sentence structure (Duong & Chen, 2025; Kim et al., 2024).
	Idea generation and overcoming writer's block	AI tools assist in brainstorming, providing outlines, and suggesting alternative phrasings, making the writing process less stressful (Gasaymeh, Beirat, & Abu Qbeita, 2024; Ozfidan et al., 2024).
	Support for academic integrity	AI tools help with plagiarism detection, citation generation, and multilingual writing, ensuring the originality and accessibility of content (Malik et al., 2023; Kramar et al., 2024).
Weaknesses	Impediment of autonomous writing skills	AI-driven writing tools can impede students' capacity to cultivate autonomous writing abilities, analytical reasoning, and original thought (Kim et al., 2024; Malik et al., 2023; Teng, 2024).
	Inaccuracy and lack of contextual depth	AI-generated content may contain inaccuracies or lack the depth needed for specialized academic fields (Kim et al., 2024; Kramar et al., 2024; Malik et al., 2023).
	Struggles with complex topics and interdisciplinary research	AI tools often fail with nuanced arguments or interdisciplinary topics, limiting their usefulness in higher education (Malik et al., 2023; Ozfidan et al., 2024).
	Ethical concerns	Concerns about plagiarism and authorship arise when students rely on AI-generated content, with tools like QuillBot potentially enabling academic misconduct (Kim et al., 2024; Thangthong et al., 2024).
	Struggles with individual writing styles	AI tools may provide generic or inappropriate suggestions that do not fit individual writing styles or academic disciplines (Ozfidan et al., 2024; Malik et al., 2023).
Opportunities	Personalized writing assistance	AI can provide tailored feedback based on students' needs, improving writing quality and acting as "co-writing" assistants (Polakova & Ivenz, 2024).
	Support for	AI tools foster collaboration, allowing students to refine their

	collaborative learning	writing through peer feedback and teamwork (Duong & Chen, 2025; Thangthong et al., 2024).
	Ethical training and responsible AI use	Workshops and training programs can teach students how to use AI tools responsibly, focusing on avoiding over-reliance and ensuring academic integrity (Kim et al., 2024; Polakova & Ivenz, 2024).
	Cross-cultural academic collaboration	AI tools can help bridge language barriers and foster cross-cultural collaboration in academic writing (Alkamel & Alwagieh, 2024; Kramar et al., 2024; Malik et al., 2023).
	Development of specialized tools for disciplines	Future AI advancements may lead to tools specifically designed for academic writing in different disciplines (Kramar et al., 2024).
Threats	Academic integrity issues	AI tools raise issues related to plagiarism, dishonesty, and the risk of students submitting AI-generated content as their own work (Artiana & Fakhrurriana, 2024; Gayed et al., 2022; Kim et al., 20249.
	Over-reliance on AI tools	Excessive dependence on AI tools such as ChatGPT and Grammarly may impede the growth of critical thinking and writing abilities (Malik et al., 2023; Thangthong et al., 2024).
	Bias and inaccuracy in AI-generated content	AI-generated content may be biased or inaccurate, leading students to adopt incorrect or misleading ideas, especially in specialized academic fields (Artiana & Fakhrurriana, 2024; Malik et al., 2023).
	Resistance to AI adoption	There is resistance from educators and students, with concerns about the loss of traditional academic practices and the authenticity of AI-generated content (Launonen et al., 2024; Polakova & Ivenz, 2024).
	Access and equity issues	Unequal access to AI tools in rural or underprivileged areas creates disparities in academic performance, worsening the digital divide (Gayed et al., 2022; Ozfidan et al., 2024).
	Security and privacy concerns	Students and educators are concerned about data privacy and the risks of sharing sensitive academic information with AI platforms (Liang et al., 2024; Thangthong et al., 2024).
	Loss of writing skills	Overuse of AI tools could result in a decrease in essential writing and editing skills, as students may rely on technology instead of practicing these skills themselves (Liang et al., 2024; Thangthong et al., 2024).
	Technological limitations	Technical limitations such as inaccurate suggestions, glitches, or slow performance may diminish the effectiveness of AI tools (Duong & Chen, 2025; Kim et al., 2024).
	Ethical and manipulation concerns	There are ongoing debates over the ethical implications of AI-generated content, including manipulation and fairness (Ozfidan et al., 2024; Polakova & Ivenz, 2024).

The strengths of AI tools in improving academic writing efficiency, precision, and cognitive assistance

AI-powered writing tools have emerged as transformative aids in academic writing, offering a range of benefits that enhance efficiency, writing quality, and user engagement. One of the primary strengths of AI tools is their ability to accelerate the

writing process by assisting with drafting, editing, and refining content (Artiana & Fakhrurriana, 2024; Kim et al., 2024). By providing immediate feedback and suggestions, these tools help students complete assignments more quickly and effectively (Launonen et al., 2024). Another significant advantage of AI writing tools is their role in improving writing clarity, organization, and fluency. Research has shown that AI-powered platforms enhance sentence structure, coherence, and logical flow in academic essays (Malik et al., 2023; Polakova & Ivenz, 2024). Additionally, they help students expand their vocabulary and improve grammatical accuracy, reducing errors and making writing more polished (Thangthong et al., 2024; Liang et al., 2024). For non-native speakers, AI tools offer substantial language support by suggesting appropriate word choices and refining sentence structures, thus bridging the gap between different proficiency levels (Duong & Chen, 2025; Kim et al., 2024). Beyond structural improvements, AI tools also serve as valuable aids for brainstorming and helping to break through creative barriers. AI tools alleviate cognitive load through brainstorming aids and real-time suggestions, streamlining the writing process (Gasaymeh et al., 2024; Ozfidan et al., 2024). In particular, ChatGPT has been acknowledged for its contribution to improving student motivation, engagement, and self-directed learning by providing tailored feedback that fosters continuous improvement (Polakova & Ivenz, 2024; Teng, 2024). Furthermore, AI tools contribute to academic integrity and research support by assisting with plagiarism detection, citation generation, and multilingual writing. Tools like Grammarly, Turnitin, and Google Translate help students refine their academic work while ensuring originality and accessibility to diverse sources (Kramar et al., 2024; Malik et al., 2023). Their scalability also makes them valuable for large classes, offering personalized assistance without overwhelming instructors (Launonen et al., 2024). Overall, AI-powered writing tools have revolutionized the academic writing landscape by improving efficiency, language accuracy, structural coherence, and user confidence. Their accessibility and adaptability make them indispensable resources for students across various proficiency levels and disciplines, fostering more effective and independent writing practices.

Challenges of generative AI in academic writing: Impact on critical thinking, originality, and ethics

Based on multiple SWOT analyses from different studies conducted across various countries, several key weaknesses of AI writing tools, including ChatGPT, Grammarly, and AI-assisted paraphrasing tools, have been identified. Excessive use of AI tools may reduce students' ability to develop independent writing skills, critical thinking, and creativity, as highlighted in studies from China and Indonesia (Friatin, 2025; Kim et al., 2024; Malik et al., 2023; Teng, 2024). Some students struggle to modify AI-generated text to align with academic writing expectations, leading to standardized or formulaic outputs (Artiana & Fakhrurriana, 2024). The reliance on AI tools could discourage students from fully engaging in the writing process, affecting personal voice and originality (Gayed et al., 2022, Japan et al., 2025). Additionally, AI-generated content may contain inaccuracies, misleading information, or lack contextual depth, particularly in specialized academic fields (Kim et al., 2024; Kramar et al., 2024; Malik et al., 2023). Some AI tools struggle with complex topics, interdisciplinary research, or nuanced arguments, which limits their reliability in higher education settings (Malik et al., 2023; Ozfidan et al., 2024). Grammarly and Google Translate may provide overly simplistic suggestions or literal translations that fail to capture the intended academic meaning (Kramar et al., 2024). Ethical issues also emerge around plagiarism, authorship, and the proper use of AI-generated content in academic work (Kim et al., 2024; Ozfidan et al., 2024; Teng, 2024). Paraphrasing tools like QuillBot have been flagged as potential enablers of academic misconduct, as they can be misused to disguise plagiarism (Thangthong et al., 2024). AI-generated writing often lacks deep analytical insights, human-like feedback, and the ability to assess qualitative aspects of academic writing (Polakova & Ivenz, 2024). Students unfamiliar with AI tools may face difficulties in navigating their features effectively, leading to underutilization or improper use (Gasaymeh et al., 2024; Gayed et al., 2022). Some AI tools, such as Canva AI Magic Writer, require highly specific commands to generate effective responses, which can be challenging for users unfamiliar with prompt engineering (Duong & Chen, 2024). Moreover, AI tools do not always adapt well to individual writing styles or academic disciplines, resulting in generic or inappropriate suggestions (Malik et al., 2023; Ozfidan

et al., 2024). Machine-based assessments may overlook key aspects of writing quality that human evaluators prioritize, such as argument strength, coherence, and logical flow (Gayed et al., 2022). Some AI tools focus more on grammar and vocabulary but do not enhance complex writing elements like style, voice, or content depth (Thangthong et al., 2024). While AI-powered writing tools offer substantial benefits, their limitations highlight the importance of integrating them strategically into academic settings. Excessive dependence on AI may impede students' growth of independent writing abilities, while ethical issues regarding AI-generated content remain a topic of discussion. Future studies should aim to create AI tools that enhance, rather than replace, critical thinking and creativity in academic writing.

Emerging opportunities of AI in improving academic writing skills and fostering collaboration

AI tools offer numerous opportunities for integration into educational curricula, particularly in writing courses, where they can enhance skills like grammar checking, idea generation, and feedback (Anani et al., 2025; Gayed et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2024). These tools can support individualized learning, fostering personalized development for students (Launonen et al., 2024). AI's capacity to offer personalized writing support, adjusting feedback to students' needs, can enhance writing quality and can be used as co-writing assistants, giving feedback based on individual students' writing styles and levels (Polakova & Ivenz, 2024). Teachers can incorporate AI tools to enhance classroom learning, providing additional support and fostering collaboration, while also encouraging peer feedback and collaborative learning to help students refine their writing (Duong & Chen, 2025; Friatin, 2025; Thangthong et al., 2024). Ethical guidelines for AI's use can address concerns like plagiarism detection and academic integrity, with workshops and training programs helping students understand how to use AI responsibly, avoiding over-reliance on the technology (Kim et al., 2024; Ozfidan et al., 2024; Polakova & Ivenz, 2024). Future advancements in AI tools, such as refining grammar-checking algorithms and adding adaptive learning features, promise to enhance their effectiveness (Anani et al., 2025; Gayed et al., 2022). Additionally, the development of specialized AI tools for academic writing in different disciplines is

expected (Kramar et al., 2024). AI's language translation capabilities can foster cross-cultural academic collaboration, breaking down language barriers and helping students from diverse backgrounds develop their writing skills, promoting inclusivity (Alkamel & Alwagieh, 2024; Kramar et al., 2024; Malik et al., 2023). Continued research can refine AI's role in academic writing, with long-term studies helping to gauge its effectiveness over time (Artiana & Fakhrurriana, 2024; Launonen et al., 2024; Polakova & Ivenz, 2024). In addition, AI tools can support pre-service teachers in honing their writing skills, fostering self-development, and improving their teaching (Nadhifah et al., 2024). Finally, the expanded use of tools like ChatGPT beyond writing to support speaking and listening skills can further support overall language learning (Polakova & Ivenz, 2024). These opportunities highlight AI's groundbreaking impact on education, providing personalized, scalable, and ethical solutions to improve learning outcomes in diverse educational settings.

Possible risks and ethical issues of AI tools in academic writing and academic integrity

Multiple studies have raised concerns about the application of AI tools in academic writing, highlighting several key threats. One major issue is academic integrity, with fears of plagiarism, cheating, and the temptation for students to present AI-generated content as their own work (Artiana & Fakhrurriana, 2024; Gayed et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2024). Excessive dependence on AI tools such as ChatGPT and Grammarly may also impede students' development of critical thinking, writing skills, and problem-solving abilities, potentially undermining their creativity and analytical skills (Malik et al., 2023; Thangthong et al., 2024). Furthermore, AI-generated content may be biased or inaccurate, leading to students adopting incorrect ideas, which is particularly problematic in both L2 writing and academic contexts that require factual accuracy and objectivity (Artiana & Fakhrurriana, 2024; Liang et al., 2024; Malik et al., 2023). Resistance to AI adoption among educators and students has also been noted, with concerns about authenticity, ethics, and the loss of traditional academic practices (Launonen et al., 2024; Polakova & Ivenz, 2024). Additionally, unequal access to AI tools, especially in rural or underprivileged areas, creates disparities in academic

performance, exacerbating the digital divide (Gayed et al., 2022; Ozfidan et al., 2024). Security and privacy concerns related to data sharing with AI platforms, as well as the potential loss of essential writing skills due to AI's convenience, further complicate the issue (Artiana & Fakhrurriana, 2024; Gayed et al., 2022; Liang et al., 2024; Thangthong et al., 2024). Technological limitations, such as inaccurate suggestions or glitches, can also diminish the effectiveness of AI tools (Duong & Chen, 2025; Kim et al., 2024), and many studies highlight ethical issues related to fairness, potential manipulation, and excessive dependence on technology. (Ozfidan et al., 2024; Polakova & Ivenz, 2024). These challenges indicate that, although AI tools provide considerable advantages for academic writing, their responsible and effective application in education demands thoughtful attention to their ethical, practical, and educational consequences.

Maximizing AI literacy to overcome the disadvantages of AI writing tools

Students can maximize the benefits of AI writing tools while mitigating their disadvantages by using them strategically as supportive aids rather than complete substitutes for their own writing efforts (Smith & Johnson, 2022). AI-powered tools like Grammarly, ChatGPT, and QuillBot can significantly enhance writing by assisting with grammar, spelling, coherence, and structure (Brown, 2023). However, students should engage actively in the writing process to ensure they develop their own skills rather than becoming overly dependent on AI-generated content. Research suggests that while AI tools improve sentence clarity and fluency, they often lack deep contextual understanding or nuanced perspectives, particularly in complex academic writing (Lee, 2021). To overcome this limitation, students should critically evaluate AI-generated text, cross-check facts with credible sources, and refine their arguments to ensure accuracy and originality (Jones & Patel, 2022). Moreover, AI tools do not always align perfectly with a student's personal writing style or the conventions of specific academic disciplines. According to recent studies, over-reliance on AI can lead to a loss of individual voice and critical engagement in writing tasks (Miller & Garcia, 2023). Therefore, instead of passively accepting AI-generated suggestions, students should revise and modify the content to incorporate their own perspectives and critical analysis.

AI can also serve as a valuable brainstorming tool by helping students generate ideas, outline essays, and overcome writer's block (Wilson, 2022).

However, while AI can assist with organizing thoughts and structuring content, the responsibility of developing arguments, analyzing evidence, and demonstrating subject mastery should remain with the student. Ethical considerations are another crucial aspect of AI usage in academic writing. AI-generated content may raise concerns about plagiarism and academic dishonesty if used inappropriately (Roberts, 2023). To avoid this, students should ensure that all AI-assisted work is properly cited, particularly when AI is used for summarizing or paraphrasing information from other sources (Davis & Chen, 2021). Additionally, plagiarism detection tools should be used to verify the originality of AI-assisted writing. Another challenge is that AI-generated text, while grammatically correct, may lack deep analytical insights, critical perspectives, or logical coherence in complex discussions. Scholars recommend that students seek human feedback from teachers, peers, or writing tutors to refine their work further and ensure it meets academic standards (Anderson & White, 2023). Gaining AI literacy is essential for maximizing the benefits of these tools (Smith, 2022). Many educational institutions are beginning to offer guidance on responsible AI usage, and students should take advantage of such training to learn how to integrate AI effectively without diminishing their own intellectual engagement (Baker & Kim, 2023). By viewing AI tools as supportive resources rather than substitutes, students can enhance their writing efficiency, improve the quality of their work, and maintain high levels of originality, critical thinking, and ethical integrity.

Conclusion and discussion

As AI-assisted writing tools continue to gain prominence in English language teaching (ELT), their integration must be carefully managed to balance their advantages with potential challenges. The results of this study emphasize that EFL students view AI writing tools as valuable resources for improving writing skills, especially in areas like grammar correction, vocabulary enrichment, and idea generation (Bai & Wang, 2023). However, concerns persist about their ability to reduce critical thinking, creativity, and

independent problem-solving skills if not utilized responsibly (Kessler, 2020). A key strength of AI-assisted writing tools lies in their capacity to offer tailored and instant feedback, supporting learners in developing writing fluency and accuracy (Hao & Wang, 2021). These tools also facilitate self-directed learning, enabling students to iteratively refine their work based on AI-generated suggestions (Xu et al., 2022). However, the study also underscores the risks of over-reliance, which may reduce student engagement in the writing process and increase the likelihood of plagiarism or ethical concerns related to academic integrity (Zhang & Yu, 2021). To fully leverage the advantages of AI-assisted writing tools and minimize potential risks, a well-organized implementation is crucial. This includes the integration of AI literacy programs, teacher preparation, and ethical standards to promote responsible use. Educators should guide students in critically evaluating AI-generated content, recognizing potential biases, and using these tools as complementary resources rather than replacements for human cognition (Ranalli, 2021). Furthermore, fostering discussions on ethical considerations such as originality, authorship, and transparency in AI-assisted writing can help maintain academic integrity (Selwyn, 2019). Fair access to AI tools is another key consideration, ensuring that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic status, can benefit from these technological advancements. (Holmes et al., 2021). The research indicates that AI can be effectively integrated into ELT writing curricula to enhance students' writing skills while maintaining academic integrity.

Future studies should concentrate on long-term research to evaluate the sustained effects of AI-assisted writing tools, investigate their use in specific disciplines, and determine optimal strategies for incorporating AI into writing education. By focusing on these areas, educators can enhance the advantages of AI while minimizing challenges, and promoting a balanced strategy that encourages both language growth and critical thinking in EFL writing instruction. Ultimately, AI writing tools should be viewed as an opportunity to enhance student learning while preserving essential cognitive and linguistic skills. When used responsibly, these technologies can complement traditional writing instruction, fostering both linguistic proficiency and digital literacy in the modern classroom.

Ethics Committee Permission Information

As this study is based on a review of existing literature, it did not require ethical approval or participant consent.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Academic major as a variable in EFL instructors' speaking assessment preferences in preparatory programs

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Abstract
Five departments in Turkiye train English language teachers and EFL instructors at universities. The variation in educational background might affect their assessment practices. This descriptive study investigates whether such differences exist by examining the speaking assessment preferences of 82 EFL instructors working in university preparatory programs. Data were collected via an electronic questionnaire featuring statements on different CEFR-based assessment types. The Kruskal-Wallis test revealed two statistically significant differences in the participants' assessment preferences based on their academic majors. Overall, instructors favor speaking assessments that use language in authentic contexts, apply continuous and formative evaluation, remain objective, and utilize external assessment over self-assessment. They believe such methods foster more reliable and comprehensive measures of language ability. Statistically significant differences were found in criterion-referencing and guided judgment, suggesting a heightened focus on these types in pre-service and in-service teacher education programs to equip instructors with diversified assessment strategies.

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Academic major, descriptive study, EFL, speaking assessment, assessment preferences.

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Introduction

Teaching speaking is an essential part of teaching a second or foreign language. McDonough (1993) claims that speaking is the skill through which an individual's language proficiency is judged at first sight. On many occasions, language users are only evaluated by their speaking skills. However, in many educational contexts, due to different assessment types, learners either do not feel encouraged to develop their speaking skills or fail to get proper feedback on the weaknesses or strengths of their speaking skills. There is not only one effective way of assessment. According to Heaton (2003), speaking is a crucial ability, although evaluating performance objectively is not always easy. Similarly, according to Brinke et al. (2007), assessments are the primary

element of education; as a result, there are essential aspects to consider while organizing and carrying out speaking instruction and evaluation.

One of these factors is choosing an appropriate assessment type. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which guides English teachers in Europe and provides synergy in teaching practices, guides the assessment types (Council of Europe, 2001). From various assessment alternatives, the choice is left to the teachers, and a list of things to consider in speaking assessment is provided in the framework. It is stated that users of the framework should reflect on which type of assessment is appropriate by considering the learners' needs in the context and the appropriateness and feasibility of the assessment type in the educational culture. Further, it is claimed that users of the framework should also consider the extent to which teachers know these assessment techniques and the extent to which they have been trained in using them (Council of Europe, 2001).

In Turkiye, English language teachers in primary and secondary level education and English as Foreign Language (EFL) instructors at the tertiary level graduate from five primary academic majors: English Language Teaching (ELT), English Language Literature (ELL), Linguistics (LNG), American Culture and Literature (ACL), and Translation and Interpreting Studies (TIS). Except for the teachers from the ELT department, the graduates from the other departments must participate in a pedagogical training program to start teaching in primary and secondary-level schools. The program has general pedagogical knowledge classes. To work as an EFL instructor at a university, a Master's Degree (MA) is obligatory, whereas pedagogical training is not. As teachers' educational background might be a determinant factor in their teaching practices, it may also affect their speaking assessment preferences.

To examine which general assessment types EFL instructors prefer in Turkiye for speaking assessment and to reveal whether their speaking assessment preferences change according to their academic majors, this descriptive study has two research questions:

1. What types of assessment do EFL instructors prefer to assess speaking?

2. Is there a difference between their academic majors in Bachelor's degree (BA) and speaking assessment preferences?

Literature Review

The CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) provides a list of assessment types that can be used to evaluate each language competence individually and as a whole. Since its initial publication, the CEFR Companion Volume has expanded these descriptors—particularly for mediation and plurilingual competence—underscoring the need for updated assessment decisions (Council of Europe, 2020). Teachers must choose the best assessment type considering contextual factors and educational purposes. Recent empirical work links such decision-making directly to teachers' language-assessment-literacy levels (Kremmel & Harding, 2019).

The general assessment types are not only for speaking skills assessment. They can be used to assess four language skills separately or as integrated skills. A systematic review of integrated-skill tasks demonstrates that balanced assessment across modalities significantly enhances communicative accuracy (Zhang et al., 2024). There might be many factors to consider before conducting a speaking assessment and choosing the most appropriate assessment type might be one of them (Sasayama & Norris, 2023). Technology-enhanced formats—for example, online synchronous speaking tasks—are increasingly leveraged to diversify assessment options (Jones et al., 2023). Therefore, this study examines teachers' ideas for assessment types for speaking assessment. The following assessment types in CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) were included in the study:

Achievement Assessment / Proficiency Assessment: It evaluates what is taught because achievement assessment is used to gauge goal achievement. When assessing achievement, the viewpoint is internal. For example, it may be regarding the material covered in a textbook or the program's syllabus. However, in the assessment of proficiency, the viewpoint is external. It evaluates the abilities of students to apply knowledge or skills they have acquired in the program in real-world circumstances. Recent classroom research in Turkiye indicates that pairing proficiency-oriented speaking tasks with reflective journals can heighten learner engagement (Mutlu, 2025).

Norm-referencing Assessment / Criterion-referencing Assessment: In a norm-referencing examination, learners are ranked according to their scores. It may have a detrimental washback impact because there is competition. In a criterion-referencing assessment, there is no comparison between students and their peers. Instead, the extent to which the students have succeeded in achieving their objectives in the target language is considered. There are no grades in the criterion-referencing evaluation, but learners may receive praise for their work in the form of words and phrases like "good," "well done," and "excellent." Studies show that criterion-referenced tasks supported by transparent rubrics foster positive learner attitudes and reduce competitive anxiety (Fulcher, 2020).

Continuous Assessment / Fixed-point Assessment: The fixed-point assessment can be completed at the end of an academic term or year to determine whether the educational goals have been met. Continuous assessment can be done through projects, presentations, and performance activities during a term or year. Mobile portfolio platforms have made such continuous monitoring of oral development more feasible in regular classrooms (Zhang et al., 2024).

Formative Assessment / Summative Assessment: The practice of gathering data on learning efficiency during a semester is known as formative assessment. It provides teachers with feedback on the effectiveness of their lessons, allowing them to make the required corrections and modifications in light of the assessment's findings. Receiving feedback on the effectiveness of teaching and learning after a semester or academic year is a summative assessment. Meta-analytic evidence confirms that formative oral-feedback cycles can improve both fluency and accuracy (Zhang et al., 2024).

Direct Assessment / Indirect Assessment: While indirect assessment evaluates knowledge or ability through some intermediary activities, direct assessment evaluates skills or knowledge directly through observation. Written dialogues in English or questions with answer options are examples of indirect speaking evaluation. Automated speech-recognition tools are increasingly integrated into indirect tasks to streamline large-scale assessment (Jones et al., 2023).

Performance Assessment / Knowledge Assessment: In performance evaluation, the assessment is carried out by watching a real-world performance. For instance,

assessing performance just based on speaking fluency is possible. Regarding knowledge assessment, however, learners' linguistic proficiency and use of control matter more. For instance, learners' usage of various linguistic structures and their capacity to answer questions can be assessed for speaking skills. Task-based tests combining performance and linguistic-knowledge components have demonstrated stronger construct validity in recent validation studies (McNamara et al., 2019).

Subjective Assessment / Objective Assessment: In a subjective assessment, one assessor makes a personal judgment about the merits of an observable performance. There may be various assessors in an objective assessment, and the learners' reactions to the performance may be constrained and regulated. Use of analytic rating scales has been shown to mitigate subjectivity and enhance inter-rater reliability (Isaacs, 2018).

Assessment through Impression / Assessment by Guided Judgment: In contrast to the assessment by guided judgment, where there are standards and a defined assessment process, the evaluation through impression does not have any explicit criteria for examination. The CEFR Companion Volume now advocates guided-judgment approaches to increase transparency in speaking assessment (Council of Europe, 2020).

Holistic Assessment / Analytic Assessment: In a holistic assessment, the performance is evaluated holistically without focusing on various linguistic characteristics, whereas in an analytical assessment, performance sub-skills are evaluated, and the focus may be on multiple linguistic factors. Machine-learning–assisted scoring systems are increasingly paired with analytic rubrics to bolster score reliability (Jones et al., 2023).

Assessment by Others / Self-assessment: The performance is evaluated by an assessor or others; however, in the case of self-assessment, the students evaluate their own or their peers' performance. Knowing one's strengths and flaws is self-assessment. Evidence from CEFR-based self-assessment implementations in Turkish secondary EFL classrooms reveals significant gains in learner reflection and oral proficiency (Yüce & Mirici, 2022).

EFL instructors' educational backgrounds, particularly their academic majors in a BA degree in Turkiye, might be a contextual factor determining their assessment

choices. Parallel findings in East Asian contexts similarly show that disciplinary training influences instructors' preferred assessment modes (Harding & Kremmel, 2019). Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate whether there are different speaking assessment preferences of EFL instructors in Turkiye and whether there are differences among them regarding their academic majors.

A comprehensive literature review revealed some studies on speaking assessment in EFL contexts. However, no studies examine EFL instructors' preferences regarding speaking assessment types. Furthermore, no other studies examine the differences among teachers regarding their educational backgrounds. Recent large-scale surveys continue to highlight this gap, calling for investigation into how CEFR-aligned categories inform university instructors' choices (Mutlu, 2025). The studies on speaking assessment are mainly on teachers' common speaking assessment practices at the university level (Hosseini & Azarnoosh, 2014), speaking assessment practices in primary and secondary education (Matin, 2013), and their relationship with teachers' experience, gender, and education contexts (Oz, 2014), the change in speaking assessment practices in different educational contexts (Cheng et al., 2004), the differences in the theory and practice regarding speaking assessment practices (Kellermeier, 2010), the feelings of the learners and teachers during and after speaking assessment (Hol, 2010), time spared for speaking assessment and practice (Gulluoglu, 2004), and teachers' perceptions for in-class speaking assessment (Thuy & Nga, 2018). None of these studies, as well as the other studies in speaking assessment, have focused on instructors' perceptions of speaking assessment types in the CEFR and the effect of educational background on their preferences. As this study is one of the first examples focusing on these aspects, it might contribute to the field.

Method

The research was conducted under a positivist philosophical stance. Park et al. (2020) state that "studies aligned with positivism focus on identifying explanatory associations or causal relationships through quantitative approaches" (p. 690). There is no intervention; therefore, the research design is descriptive. As Seliger and Shohamy (1989) state, "descriptive research involves a collection of techniques used to specify,

delineate or describe naturally occurring phenomena without experimental manipulation" (p.124). The research aims to describe naturally occurring phenomena, the speaking assessment preferences of EFL instructors and analyze the relationship of the preferences with BA degree majors. It is part of a master's thesis by the researcher (Ilhan, 2017).

Participants

In Turkiye, EFL instructors could be graduates of five academic majors with BA degrees. The MA degree is obligatory to be an instructor at the university; however, pedagogical training is not compulsory. An MA degree can be in the same department as a BA degree. Therefore, each university has EFL instructors with different educational backgrounds, which was the central curiosity behind this study.

Participants in the study were 82 EFL instructors employed by several Turkish universities. They were chosen randomly using a convenience sampling method. In convenience sampling, participants are selected based on accessibility, proximity to the study site, availability at a specific time, and willingness to participate (Dornyei, 2007). The data was gathered using an electronic questionnaire sent to the instructors through their institutional email addresses.

Table 1

Academic Majors of the Participants

	f
1 ELT	42
2 ELL	31
3 TIS	5
4 ACL	2
5 LNG	2
Total	82

The participants were graduates of five BA degree majors. There were 42 graduates from the English Language Teaching (ELT), 31 from the English Language and Literature (ELL), five from the Translation and Interpreting Studies (TIS), two from the Linguistics (LNG) and two from the American Culture and Literature (ACL) departments.

Data Collection

The study used a two-part electronic questionnaire to collect data (see Appendix 1). The first part was for demographic information. In the second part, there were 22 statements for each assessment type. The researcher took the statements directly from the definitions for the assessment types in CEFR (CEFR, 2001). Rather than giving only names, statements were created regarding the definitions, as instructors might not have had the necessary background knowledge for the assessment types. They were changed into a form that the participants could agree or disagree with through 5-point Likert-Scale. After the statements were prepared, they were checked for wording issues by another colleague working at the same institution as the researcher. The questionnaire was sent to 20 instructors who worked at a Turkish University as a pilot study before writing the final questionnaire. Changes were made to the statements to avoid misinterpretation and vagueness, and the final questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was created.

Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted in SPSS 22. Firstly, a descriptive analysis was conducted on central tendency values. As the data deviated from normal distribution, the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test, an alternative to the ANOVA, was used to analyze the data. The academic major of the instructors is the study's independent variable, whereas the teachers' preferences for assessment style are the study's dependent variable. Pallant (2010) states that non-parametric analysis techniques can produce more accurate results in small, atypical samples.

Ethical Considerations

The data was collected through an online questionnaire through Google Forms. At the beginning of the questionnaire, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, how anonymity would be assured, and how the data would be stored. They were told that their participation in the study was voluntary. There was an agreement section for the informed consent form, and participants filled it out if they volunteered to participate. There was no place for the names of participants in the questionnaire; only their academic majors and years of experience in the profession were collected. The anonymity of the participants was assured in that way. The data was kept on the personal computer of the researcher, his thesis supervisor, and the researcher’s cloud file. No

ethical harm was expected as the anonymity of the participants was ensured, and the data was kept confidential. Institutional permission was obtained from the university where the study was conducted; however, ethical committee approval was not compulsory when the study was conducted.

Findings

This section will present descriptive analysis and Kruskal-Wallis test findings in the following order. Firstly, speaking assessment preferences will be given regardless of the difference in academic major. Then, the differences among majors revealed through the Kruskal-Wallis test will be provided.

Speaking Assessment Preferences

A descriptive analysis was conducted using SPSS 22 to examine speaking assessment preferences. Measures of central tendency—mean, median—and standard deviation were employed to analyze the data without differentiating between academic majors.

Table 2

Mean Scores of Speaking Assessment Statements

	M	*Mdn*	*SD*
Achievement Assessment	3.24	3	1.00
Proficiency Assessment	4.22	4	0.84
Norm-referencing Assessment	2.10	2	1.08
Criterion-referencing Assessment	3.77	4	1.12
Continuous Assessment	4.00	4	0.86
Fixed-point Assessment	2.45	2	1.11
Formative Assessment	4.09	4	0.83
Summative Assessment	2.37	2	1.09
Indirect Assessment	2.10	2	1.17
Direct Assessment	4.06	4	0.89
Knowledge Assessment	2.84	3	1.16
Performance Assessment	3.76	4	0.86
Subjective Assessment	2.96	3	1.08
Rating on a scale	3.28	3	0.95
Rating on a checklist	3.17	3	1.16
Impression	2.52	2	1.19
Guided judgment	3.98	4	0.92
Objective Assessment	4.05	4	1.05
Holistic Assessment	3.83	4	0.91
Analytic Assessment	3.34	3	1.08
Assessment by others	4.17	4	0.78
Self-Assessment	2.55	3	1.06

According to the data in Table 2, most instructors view speaking assessments as competence tests with a high mean score (4.22). For achievement assessment, the mean score is very close to "neutral" (3.24), indicating that speaking assessment is not solely based on the coursebook and syllabus' contents. The mean score of the norm-referencing is low (2.10), which could mean that teachers disapprove of giving scores, comparing learners with their peers, and putting them in rank order for their speaking performances. They might prefer criterion-referencing assessment more (3.77), which could mean that they like to assess speaking proficiency individually by giving feedback through encouraging words or phrases such as 'that was perfect!', 'you speak fluently,' 'good,' rather than providing scores. A continuous (4.00) and formative assessment (4.09) through collecting different projects, presentations, or tasks during an academic term or year is more favorable than a fixed-point (2.45), summative assessment (2.37) for most participants. There are mediator activities and tasks to assess speaking skills indirectly (2.10), such as written dialogues and question-and-answer type questions. However, the participants in the study prefer direct assessment of speaking skills through direct observation of the performance (4.06). Some participants are neutral about subjective assessment (2.96), and many prefer objective assessment by different assessors and using specific criteria (4.05). Scale-rating and checklist-rating are not assessment types, but they are some of the things to consider in speaking assessment, and they are presented among assessment types in CEFR. Scale and checklist ratings have similar mean scores (3.28 / 3.17); however, more participants support checklist ratings consisting of 'can do' statements or 'yes' or 'no' options for subskills of speaking. Assessment by guided judgment is done through specific criteria and specific procedures for speaking assessment. In contrast, assessment through impression might mean the lack of specific criteria and procedures, and it is more subjective (2.52). Most participants support assessment through guided judgment (3.98). Between the analytic and holistic assessment of speaking, more participants support the holistic assessment (3.83). In this type of assessment, a general score for the learners' overall performance is given, and subskills of speaking are not considered. More participants support assessment by others (4.17) rather than self-assessment (2.55), which means that examiners or instructors could assess speaking instead of learners assessing themselves and their peers.

Differences in Speaking Assessment Preferences According to Majors

Two statistically significant differences were found through the Kruskal-Wallis test.

Table 3

The Kruskal-Wallis Test

	Chi-Square	*df*	*Sig.*
Achievement Assessment	5.085	4	.279
Proficiency Assessment	4.106	4	.392
Norm-referencing Assessment	7.920	4	.095
Criterion-referencing Assessment	**13.481**	**4**	**.009**
Continuous Assessment	1.686	4	.793
Fixed-point Assessment	6.115	4	.191
Formative Assessment	4.008	4	.405
Summative Assessment	9.430	4	.051
Indirect Assessment	6.059	4	.195
Direct Assessment	5.444	4	.245
Knowledge Assessment	4.610	4	.330
Performance Assessment	2.112	4	.715
Subjective Assessment	2.588	4	.629
Rating on a scale	2.425	4	.658
Rating on a checklist	8.569	4	.073
Impression	0.785	4	.940
Guided judgment	**10.109**	**4**	**.039**
Objective Assessment	4.423	4	.352
Holistic Assessment	9.318	4	.054
Analytic Assessment	1.612	4	.807
Assessment by others	4.115	4	.391
Self-Assessment	.076	4	.999

It is apparent in Table 3 that there were two statistically significant differences regarding academic majors. One of the differences was for the criterion-referencing assessment (.009), and the other was for guided judgment (.039).

Table 4

Central Tendency for Criterion-Referencing Assessment

	N	*M Rank*	*Mdn*
1 ELL	30	32.92	4
2 ELT	42	42.73	4
3 LNG	2	70.50	5
4 ACL	2	36.75	3
5 TIS	5	64.90	5
Total	81		4

The Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a statistically significant difference between participants' opinions and their majors for criterion-referencing evaluation. x^2 (4, n= 81) = 13.48, p =.009 (ELL; n= 30, ELT; n= 42, LNG; n= 2, ACL; n= 2, TIS; n= 5). With a median score of 5, two academic majors—LNG and TIS—provided the most support.

The subjects with the second-highest median scores were ELL and ELT (*Mdn* = 4). With the lowest median score for the criterion relating to speaking evaluation, ACL had the lowest mean score. (*Mdn* = 3). The pairwise comparisons through the Dunn test revealed that the biggest statistically significant difference was among instructors with ELL and TIS majors (p =.030) for criterion-referencing assessment.

Table 5

Central Tendency for Guided Judgment

	N	*M Rank*	*Mdn*
1 ELL	31	34.61	4
2 ELT	42	42.69	4
3 LNG	2	69.00	5
4 ACL	2	69.00	5
5 TIS	5	52.20	5
Total	82		4

Majors, LNG, and ACL achieve the highest mean scores (69), as Table 5 indicates. Participants from these majors could be prone to using guided judgment to evaluate the speech. With a mean score of 52.20, TIS comes in second behind the two majors. The lowest mean scores are for ELT and ELL majors, at 42.69 for the former and 34.61 for the latter. 'Agree' or 'Totally agree' were the questionnaire's median results for all the major responses. It can be assumed that everyone who participated, regardless of their majors, agrees that evaluation should be done using criteria. (ELL, n= 31, ELT, n= 42, LNG, n= 2, ACL, n= 2, TIS, n= 5); x^2 (4, n= 82) = 10.10, p =.039.) The participants who selected "neutral" may base their evaluation of speaking on their impression. The pairwise comparisons through the Dunn test revealed that the biggest statistically significant differences were among instructors with ELL and LNG majors (p =.036) and with ELL and ACL majors (p =.036) for guided-judgment.

Discussion

According to the results, it may be inferred that EFL instructors believe speaking assessments reflect what students can do or know about using language in the real world. The findings align with the findings of the recent research. Classroom surveys show that over three-quarters of secondary-school EFL teachers now design speaking tasks that deliberately mirror authentic communicative events such as job interviews, service

encounters, and academic presentations (Swaie & Algazo, 2023). Incorporating real-world activities rather than just those found in the course book or syllabus can be preferable (Herrington & Oliver, 2000). Assessment of speaking abilities should be continuous (Cheng et al., 2004). A large-scale systematic review of formative assessment in K-12 EFL contexts concluded that ongoing, low-stakes checks of oral performance consistently boost achievement and motivation compared with single end-term tests (Zhang et al., 2024). Evaluating students all at once at the end of a term may not be as beneficial. It might be preferable to assess them through several cumulative activities, such as projects or tasks, over the academic term or year (Zhou, 2013). As a result, formative rather than summative evaluation should be used as suggested by another research (Ismail et al., 2022; Sirianansopa, 2024). This trend is echoed in recent regional studies that document a steady shift from test-driven practices toward assessment for learning in EFL classrooms (Swaie & Algazo, 2023). According to the participants' responses, speaking assessments provide learners with ongoing feedback to identify the areas of difficulty. High levels of agreement on direct evaluation could indicate that instructors prefer to grade speaking through direct performance observation. Current evidence using gauge-repeatability and reproducibility analysis demonstrates that multi-rater, performance-based speaking assessments markedly increase inter-rater reliability and scoring fairness (Sureeyatanapas et al., 2024). It could be inferred that using intermediary activities will not be as efficient as direct evaluation. Scoring of the performances by various assessors might be more effective and objective. It denotes that instructors favor doing an objective speaking evaluation instead of performing an impressionistic and arbitrary assessment. Assessments made by learners' peers or themselves were considered insufficient, as teachers and examiners are more knowledgeable in assessing speaking skills. Nevertheless, controlled interventions reveal that well-scaffolded peer and self-assessment can foster self-regulated learning and critical thinking without compromising score accuracy (Kumar et al., 2023). Further studies could focus on differences between teacher, self, or peer assessment types.

Two statistically significant differences were found for two assessment types, criterion-referencing assessment and assessment through guided judgment, among five academic majors. Criterion referencing speaking assessment had a high mean score in overall speaking assessment preferences. However, the differences in the criterion-

referenced speaking assessment were found to be statistically significant among majors. The highest consensus came from TIS and LNG majors, with a median value of 5, followed by ELT and ELL. The minor support was from the ACL major. It can be concluded that there might be differences in instructors' thoughts on assessing learners' speaking skills through scores and comparing learners' speaking ability with their classmates' speaking ability. Instructors with TIS and LNG majors might think that scores do not have to be given for learners' speaking skills, and only reinforcement words or phrases, such as 'good,' 'perfect,' and 'well done,' can be enough. They might think that learners' speaking ability must be judged only by considering their proficiency without any comparison with their peers. Instructors with an ACL major neither agree nor disagree with this statement. Although teachers with ELT and ELL majors concur with the idea, they might think reinforcement words and phrases might not be enough, instead of giving scores. Some instructors with ELT and ELL majors might prefer to provide scores for speaking performance and compare the speaking abilities of individual learners with their peers. Comparable discipline-linked divergences in assessment orientation have been documented in other tertiary EFL programs, where language-focused departments favour qualitative feedback over numerical grades (Phung & Michell, 2022). This study has presented similar findings.

Participants' suggestions for directed judgment in speaking assessment suggested a statistically significant difference, such as evaluating speaking using particular criteria. At the same time, some participants with ELT and ELL academic majors did not strongly agree with the assessment type; LNG, ACL, and TIS majors supported using specific criteria when assessing learners. Assessing by impression was the reverse of the guided judgment statement. It may be inferred from the mean scores of the academic majors that some instructors with ELL and ELT educational backgrounds might prefer to assess speaking abilities based on impressions. Research on teacher cognition indicates that rubric-guided analytical judgments generally yield more trustworthy results than quick holistic 'gestalt' impressions, reinforcing the value of explicit criteria in speaking assessment (Phung & Michell, 2022). Therefore, assessing through guided judgment could be significant in speaking assessment.

Conclusion

This study sought to identify the variations in speaking assessment preferences among English teachers employed by Turkish universities' English preparatory programs. Turkiye has five academic majors that educate language teachers; thus, these practices were examined to see variations in the majors' preferences for speaking assessment types. The following responses to the research questions can be provided considering the findings.:

1. What types of assessment do EFL instructors prefer to assess speaking?

EFL instructors at the tertiary level in Turkiye might prefer a proficiency, continuous, formative, direct, and objective assessment for speaking skills. They prefer assessment by others, not self-assessment by learners themselves. They do not choose norm-referencing, fixed-point, summative, or indirect assessment types for speaking skills. Instead of assessing through impression, they might prefer to assess by guided judgment.

2. Is there a difference between their academic majors in Bachelor's degree (BA) and speaking assessment preferences?

Two statistically significant differences were found among academic majors. One was for guided judgment, and the other was for criterion-referencing assessment.

Guided judgment means assessing speaking through specific criteria. EFL instructors with academic majors, LNG, ACL, and TIS prefer to assess speaking skills through measures. The opposite of guided judgment was assessment through impression, which could mean that teachers who do not choose to assess with guided judgment might prefer assessment through impression. The results suggested that EFL instructors with an ELL background might prefer guided judgment less than those with an ELT major. The instructors with the ELL major might sometimes assess through impression more than those with the ELT major. It could be essential to provide training for instructors with ELL to assess speaking through guided judgment.

Criterion-referencing assessment is "assessing speaking to give feedback on where a learner is, irrespective of their peers' ability. This feedback can only be words such as 'well done!' or 'good job!' without any numerical scores. The opposite is norm-

referencing assessment, in which scores are given, and learners are ranked accordingly. The biggest and statistically significant difference was for the criterion-referencing assessment in the study. The results revealed that instructors with LNG and TIS majors might most use criterion-referencing assessments most. They might prioritize speaking assessment functioning as feedback on each learner's ability and as a reinforcement. Instructors with majors in ELL and ACL have the lowest mean score for criterion-referencing assessments, which could mean they might tend to do more norm-referencing assessments by giving scores to learners and putting them in the rank order. As findings revealed, instructors with an ELT major might prefer to use both assessment types for speaking assessment.

It is important to note differences to ensure collaboration and harmony among instructors from various educational backgrounds. The study has revealed two differences in the Turkish context: guided judgment and criterion-referencing assessment. Both are important for an effective speaking assessment; therefore, the differences could be lowered through in-service training or discussions with colleagues. Furthermore, especially in oral exams with specific criteria to assess, instructors with different educational backgrounds could be paired together to avoid harming the assessment process due to different ideas.

Implications, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

The study is significant because it presents the speaking assessment choices of EFL instructors at the tertiary level in Turkiye. Furthermore, it sheds light on the differences among instructors regarding their academic majors and speaking assessment choices. It is one of the first studies with this focus in the Turkish EFL context.

The study might have implications for pedagogy education. As there are five different majors for EFL instructors in Turkiye, knowing general preferences and differences might be valuable while planning pedagogical education. More focus could be given to norm-referencing and criterion-referencing assessments and guided judgment and assessment through the impression in pedagogical education programs.

The study was conducted with 82 participants, and it is descriptive. More studies with more participants are needed. The data was collected through an electronic

questionnaire, and the response rate was low, as it is the limitation of randomly e-questionnaires for randomly chosen participants. The participants were not normally distributed in the study; therefore, a non-parametric analysis was conducted. Analyzing the data by parametric tests may give more detailed results. More studies with more participants from each academic major and through a parametric analysis might be needed. Reasons for the differences among EFL instructors regarding their majors can be studied further through a qualitative or mixed-method study. The participants were EFL instructors at the tertiary level. As the difference could be observed with language teachers at primary and secondary levels, similar studies could be conducted in these contexts with English teachers.

Ethics Committee Permission Information

This study is a small part of a Master's thesis called "A study on oral assessment practices in English classes applied by language instructors" (Ilhan, 2017). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and all personal identifiers were removed or anonymized to protect confidentiality. Participation was entirely voluntary. No deception was employed, and no foreseeable risks beyond those encountered in everyday life were imposed. Ethical approval was not sought for the present study because, at the time of the study, it was not obligatory to get ethical committee.

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Appendix 1

PRACTICES OF ORAL ASSESSMENT AT TERTIARY LEVEL AT TURKISH UNIVERSITIES

This survey aims to uncover common oral assessment methods conducted formally or informally in language classes at universities and whether there is a relationship between practices and academic majors of language instructors.
Thank you for your participation.

1. SECTION: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Gender: Male **( )** Female **( )**

2. What is your academic major? ;
( ) Department of English Language and Literature
( ) Department of English Language Teaching
( ) Department of Linguistics
( ) Department of American Culture and Literature
( ) Department of Translation and Interpreting Studies
( ) Others (Please specify; _____)

3. How long have you been teaching? ; _____ years.

4. What is your age?; _____

5. Is your institution public or private? ; ( ) Public **( )** Private

6. In which degree do you have classes? ;

( ) Preparation classes
( ) Undergraduate classes
( ) Graduate classes

7. What are your students' levels?

( ) Beginner **( )** Elementary **( )** Pre-intermediate **( )** Intermediate **( )** Upper-Intermediate

2. SPEAKING ASSESSMENT PERCEPTION

1. Considering your oral assessment practices, which of these statements do you agree or disagree with? Choose one from **'strongly disagree'** to **'strongly agree'**;

	Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
Speaking assessment is what students can do in activities related to the syllabus course book. It is a kind of feedback for instruction. **(Achievement Assessment)**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Speaking assessment is what students can do/know when applying the language in the real world. **(Proficiency Assessment)**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
When providing feedback for speaking, it is better to put students into a rank order and compare them with others in class by giving numerical scores or percentages. **(Norm-Referencing (NR))**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Assessing speaking is essential to give feedback on where a student is, irrespective of their peers' ability. Feedback can be just words such as 'well done!' or 'good job!' without any numerical scores. **(Criterion Referencing (CR))**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Speaking assessment is better done cumulatively by collecting activities such as projects and tasks applied successively during a term. **(Continuous Assessment)**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
It is better and more practical to assess speaking with an activity or a task at the end of the term on a particular day. **(Fixed-point Assessment)**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Speaking assessment is ongoing feedback on the efficiency of instruction for teachers and feedback for students to be aware of their weaknesses. **(Formative Assessment)**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Speaking assessment is giving a score for students' speaking competence at the end of a term. **(Summative Assessment)**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Speaking skills can be assessed using mediator test items such as written dialogue completion or multiple-choice tests. **(Indirect Assessment)**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Assessing speaking skills can be done by observing students' performances directly. **(Direct Assessment)**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Different test items, even written ones such as filling in the blanks or multiple-choice, can be used to assess speaking and provide evidence for the extent of students' linguistic knowledge and control. **(Knowledge Assessment)**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
While assessing speaking, students should be required to provide some samples of the target language to assess them directly. **(Performance Assessment)**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
The class teacher can subjectively judge the quality of speaking performance in an assessment. **(Subjective Assessment)**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Assessing speaking skills is judging that students are at a particular level or a band on a scale from 'Very Poor' to 'Very Strong' according to their performances. **(Rating on a Scale)**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Using checklists with 'can do' statements and 'yes' or 'no' tick boxes is ideal while assessing speaking skills. **(Rating on a Checklist)**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Assessing speaking can be done without any specific criteria. Teachers can use their impressions to give a score. **(Impression)**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Assessing speaking can be done by using specific criteria. **(Guided Judgment)**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Scoring is better done by having different assessors objectively score the same performance. **(Objective Assessment)**					
Speaking skills can be assessed holistically by intuitively weighing different aspects and competencies of language. **(Holistic Assessment)**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Speaking skills can be assessed analytically by considering each sub-skill or competence of speaking apart. **(Analytic Assessment)**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Assessing speaking can be done by examiners and teachers. **(Assessment by Others)**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Assessing speaking skills can be done by students themselves or their peers. **(Self-Assessment)**	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Extramural English activities and their relationship with L2 English proficiency at a Turkish university context

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Abstract

Although Extramural English (EE) has been widely studied in various international contexts, research in Türkiye remains limited, particularly regarding the relationship between EE engagement and English language proficiency. This study aims to address this gap by profiling Turkish university students' engagement in EE activities and examining whether the frequency of such engagement correlates with English proficiency. Data were collected from 59 English-major students (average age = 19.74) at a university in Istanbul. Participants reported their weekly engagement in six EE activities via a questionnaire and submitted scores from an English proficiency exam comprising reading/listening, speaking, and writing components. Descriptive statistics and Spearman's rank-order correlations were used for analysis. Results showed that participants spent the most time on EE listening and EE watching activities. Four EE activities—listening, watching, spoken interaction, and writing—correlated positively with overall proficiency and reading/listening scores. EE reading/listening, and writing were also related to speaking scores, but no EE activity correlated with writing proficiency. EE gaming showed no significant relationships with any proficiency measure. While the popularity of EE activities in Türkiye aligns with international findings, the skill-specific correlations show a more complex picture. Implications for language learning and directions for future research are discussed.

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Keywords

English language learning in Türkiye, Informal language learning, Extramural English, L2 English proficiency.

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Introduction

In the past, foreign/second/additional language (L2) learning environments were primarily confined to formal classroom instruction where teachers designed learning based on a curriculum. However, increasing digitalisation has reshaped the concept of L2 learning environments, as learners now encounter multiple languages extensively in

their everyday life, contributing to their L2 development either intentionally or incidentally (Guo & Lee, 2023; Kusyk et al., 2023). As a result, everyday environments where individuals are exposed to the target language have become new L2 learning environments. This shift has amplified the role of informal language learning (ILL), defined as "any activities taken consciously or unconsciously by a learner outside of formal instruction that lead to an increase in the learner's ability to communicate in a second (or other, non-native) language" (Dressman, 2020, p. 4). Recognising the developments in ILL, Sundqvist (2024) repositioned her relevant concept, extramural English (EE), as the foundation of L2 learning in their model of the so-called L2 English Learning Pyramid (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). This suggests that L2 learning is primarily driven by ILL rather than formal classroom instruction.

The growing emphasis on ILL is driven by empirical evidence from previous studies which have shown that learners with little to no formal instruction can still develop high L2 proficiency through informal exposure (e.g., De Wilde et al., 2020; Puimège & Peters, 2019). In a scoping review of research on ILL published between 2000 and 2020, Kusyk et al. (2025) found that, out of 107 studies exploring the connection between ILL and L2 development, 74% reported a positive correlation, 22% showed mixed or inclusive results, and only 4% found no connection. These consistent findings highlight that ILL is an important part of L2 learning.

In their scoping review, Kusyk et al. (2025) also highlighted that research on ILL has been predominantly conducted in countries such as Sweden, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, and Mainland China. This indicates a need for broader geographical representation in ILL research. Despite its popularity in several countries, ILL research in the Turkish context is scant. To the best of our knowledge, only three published studies (Coskun & Mutlu, 2017; Ipek & Mutlu, 2022; Uztosun & Kök, 2023) and two unpublished M.A. dissertations (Bardak, 2023; Engin, 2023) have explored ILL in Türkiye. Furthermore, none of these studies has addressed whether a relationship exists between ILL and L2 proficiency. This shows that, while this field of research is well established in several countries, it remains an emerging area of investigation in the Turkish context. Consequently, additional research is required to explore whether the

positive associations identified between ILL and L2 English proficiency in other contexts are also evident in the Turkish context.

This study addresses this gap. It is the first study to examine whether the frequency of ILL activities is related to L2 English proficiency in Turkish universities. This study aims to address the following research questions.

1. How much time do Turkish university students spend on specific Extramural English activities?

2. Are there significant relationships between specific EE activities and L2 English proficiency (i.e., reading/listening, writing, speaking)?

Extramural English as a Concept of Informal Language Learning

The growing interest in ILL research, coupled with the positive findings of previous studies, has prompted researchers to conceptualise ILL, leading to the emergence of several related terms. Some of these concepts adopted a broader perspective, such as *Recreational Language Learning* (Chik & Ho, 2017) and *Informal Second Language Learning* (Arndt & Woore, 2018) – while others narrow the focus to technology-mediated activities, including *Language Learning in Digital Wilds* (Sauro & Zourou, 2019). Among these related concepts, three are English-specific: *Online Informal Learning of English* (Sockett, 2013), *Informal Digital Learning of English* (Lee & Dressman, 2018), and *Extramural English* (Sundqvist, 2009). Given that the present research is not limited to online and digital activities but considers a broader range of out-of-class English language experiences, the concept of Extramural English (EE) is adopted.

EE, a term proposed by Sundqvist (2009), refers to English learned outside of formal school contexts – literally, 'English outside the walls'. Two key variables define EE. The first concerns the initiating agent of the activity: EE must be voluntarily initiated by the learner, rather than assigned by teachers or parents. The second variable concerns the physical location of the learning – EE typically takes place outside the classrooms. However, given technological advancements since 2009, it is important to

acknowledge that EE can now also occur within the classroom, for example, a student could watch English videos during breaks.

In her original conceptualisation, Sundqvist (2009) also emphasised that EE may or may not involve a deliberate intention to learn English. In other words, learners can engage in EE both intentionally and unintentionally, and even encounter it incidentally, for example, reading an English advertisement in a store. Examples of EE activities include, but are not limited to, watching films or series, listening to music, playing video games, and browsing English-language websites (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016).

Theoretical Framework

Given the varied nature of EE activities, the concept aligns with several theories of second language acquisition (SLA) (see Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016; Toffoli & Sockett, 2010). Firstly, EE reflects several of Krashen's (1982) hypotheses, particularly the input and affective filter hypotheses (Toffoli & Sockett, 2010). EE activities provide people with rich, comprehensible input while lowering their affective filters, as they are typically done for enjoyment without affective pressure. Secondly, EE also supports Swain's output hypothesis (1995) (Toffoli & Sockett, 2010), since certain activities (e.g., playing board games, writing text messages) prompt people to produce spoken and written outputs. Moreover, interactive EE activities (e.g., online gaming, phone conversations) align with Long's (1981) interaction hypothesis, highlighting the importance of negotiation of meaning in making input comprehensible. Furthermore, EE activities involving interaction with others are grounded in a socio-constructivist view of learning, which emphasises that knowledge is constructed with others (Toffoli & Sockett, 2010) and can be understood within a sociocultural framework where learning is mediated by social interaction (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). Taken together, these perspectives demonstrate that the concept of EE, depending on the activity, is theoretically grounded in several foundational theories in SLA.

In addition to the hypotheses summarised above, EE is also closely tied to affective factors in L2 learning. The voluntary nature of EE activities and the fact that they are not initiated through formal education increase the likelihood that people are

driven by intrinsic motivation, as proposed by self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). As Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016) emphasise, individuals engage in EE activities because they find them enjoyable and personally rewarding, rather than due to external pressure or obligations. This, in turn, helps reduce negative emotions such as anxiety and fosters positive emotions like enjoyment (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Given the empirical findings in learner psychology, such engagement appears to be a beneficial L2 learning experience.

Furthermore, EE activities that are carried out intentionally to improve L2 competence align with Papi and Hiver's (2024) Proactive Language Learning Theory. This theory highlights learners' active roles in identifying linguistic weaknesses, setting goals, and planning actions to address these gaps. From an EE perspective, a learner who feels little confidence in their oral communication skills and chooses to create opportunities for speaking practice during their free time exemplifies the principles of proactive language learning. Considering these insights, EE draws on multiple arguments from established and contemporary theoretical frameworks, which may help explain why it has consistently benefited L2 learning.

Previous Research on the Benefits of Informal Language Learning for L2 Learning

Several studies have reported positive relationships between ILL and L2 proficiency, as shown in two recent review articles. Zhang et al. (2021), in their review of 33 studies, found that among the 23 studies focusing on the effectiveness of ILL for L2 learning, 19 reported positive effects, three reported negative outcomes, and one had mixed findings. These effects included gains in grammar, vocabulary, and the four main language skills – reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Similarly, Kusky et al. (2025), in a systematic review of 206 studies on ILL between 2000 and 2020, reported that 74% found positive associations with L2 development, 22% found mixed or inconclusive results, and only 4% reported no connection. These findings show the empirical consensus on the beneficial impacts of EE on L2 English development.

Several studies have explored this relationship across different learner populations and contexts. In Flanders, Belgium, Wouter et al. (2024) examined learners

aged 11-16 and found that even those who had not yet received formal English instruction could perform listening tasks at the A2 level, suggesting the potential of EE to foster early L2 development. Specific EE activities, such as *watching non-subtitled TV* and *communicating with friends and family*, were predictors of listening and reading proficiency. Complementing this, De Wilde et al. (2020), also in Flanders, found that *using English on social media* and *speaking English* predicted proficiency across all four language skills and vocabulary knowledge. *Gaming* also significantly contributed to overall proficiency.

Parallel findings emerged in other contexts. Leona et al. (2021) reported that EE activities involving entertaining media and familial EE exposure increased young learners' vocabulary knowledge in the Netherlands. In a study of Norwegian university students, Busby (2021) found that engagement in EE was a stronger predictor of vocabulary knowledge than formal classroom instruction. Tam and Reynolds (2023), studying Cantonese speakers in Macau, found that EE reading activities were the strongest predictor of English vocabulary size, although the overall correlations were small. Similarly, Warnby (2022) found positive correlations between academic vocabulary knowledge and engagement in EE activities such as watching movies, reading, listening, and gaming among Swedish upper-secondary school students. Kaatari et al. (2023) also investigated the link between EE and writing development in Sweden. They reported that reading activities were associated with greater adverbial modification, while conversation and watching activities contributed to lexical diversity. In Spain, Lázaro-Ibarrola (2024) grouped young learners based on their EE engagement and found that those with higher engagement scored significantly better on A2-level speaking and reading tests and had higher overall exam scores. In Hong Kong, Tsang and Lam (2024) followed junior-secondary students of varying proficiency levels and found strong positive correlations between EE engagement and performance on reading and listening exams among average- and high-proficiency learners, though not for low-proficiency learners. This suggests that learners' proficiency levels may moderate the benefits of EE. While these studies offer robust evidence that EE contributes to L2 English proficiency across diverse contexts and learners of different ages, research on EE in Türkiye remains limited. Consequently, it is still unclear whether the benefits of EE observed internationally also apply to the Turkish context.

To the best of our knowledge, the first published study on EE in Türkiye was conducted by Coskun and Mutlu (2017). The study aimed to develop a scale for measuring EE use and examined whether Turkish high school students differed in the frequency of EE engagement based on gender and self-perceived English proficiency. EE activities were categorised according to the four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The findings revealed that Turkish students reported engaging in listening-related EE activities occasionally, while reading, writing, and speaking activities were rarely done. Female students reported significantly higher EE engagement than male students, and a positive relationship was found between self-perceived English proficiency and EE frequency. In contrast, Ipek and Mutlu (2022) found that male university students engaged in EE activities more frequently than females. Their study also showed that the EE frequency was correlated with academic achievement. Focusing on affective variables, Uztosun and Kök (2023) examined the relationship between EE frequency and L2 skill-specific anxiety and communication apprehension in a Turkish university context. Their findings demonstrated that EE engagement negatively predicted listening anxiety, speaking anxiety, and communication apprehension, indicating that more frequent EE engagement may help reduce anxiety in specific L2 English skills.

As these studies illustrate, research on EE in Türkiye has so far been limited in scope and number. Most existing studies have approached the concept from a descriptive perspective, focusing on variables such as gender, academic achievement, perceived L2 proficiency, and affective factors. Notably, no study has yet investigated the relationship between EE engagement and L2 English proficiency. The present study aims to address this gap by providing empirical evidence on whether EE frequency is statistically associated with L2 English proficiency among university students in Türkiye. In doing so, it attempts to contribute to the national and international literature on ILL and, as suggested by Kusyk et al. (2025), extend our understanding of EE in an underdeveloped context.

Methodology

This quantitative study employed a correlational design, as its primary aim was to explore the relationships between different variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). To achieve this, a cross-sectional design was adopted using a survey methodology, enabling the examination of associations between specific variables at a single point in time (Cohen et al., 2007). The data was collected at a university in Istanbul following institutional ethical approval. Before completing the questionnaire, participants provided written consent after receiving detailed information about the study's purpose. They were informed that their responses would remain confidential and be used exclusively for research. The questionnaire did not include sensitive questions, and all data were collected anonymously, ensuring no personally identifiable information was recorded or shared.

Participants

A convenience sampling technique was employed to select the research setting and recruit participants. The first author gained access to the institution based on its availability and ease of access (Cresswell & Creswell, 2023). The study involved 59 students of L2 English, including 40 females and 16 males, and 3 participants opted not to disclose their gender. The participants' ages ranged from 17 to 46 years, with an average of 19.74 years (SD = 4.83). The median age was 19, and the mode was 18. They were at the beginning of their university studies and enrolled in a department focussed on English language teaching English literature.

Data Collection Tools

The study utilised an online questionnaire structured into three sections: (a) time spent on EE activities, (b) self-reported scores from an English proficiency exam, and (c) demographic details such as age and gender. The first section was adapted from Sylvén and Sundqvist (2012) and Sundqvist and Uztosun (2024), where participants were instructed to write how many hours they spent on six EE activities during a typical term week, excluding weekends and holidays. The activities included: (i) playing English-language games, (ii) watching English-language films, TV series, and videos, and (iii) listening to English songs, podcasts, or audiobooks, (iv) reading English books, short

stories, online content, (v) writing in English, including emails, social media posts, notes, and (vi) engaging in spoken interactions English, either online or in person with acquaintances or strangers. These activities were included in the questionnaire because they are among the most popular ones identified in previous research (Zhang et al., 2021), and each targets specific L2 English skills.

The second section of the questionnaire required participants to report their scores from an English proficiency test that was organised in three sessions: (i) reading and listening, (ii) writing, and (iii) speaking. The exam was not developed for research purposes but was administered at a university at the beginning of every school year to determine whether students possessed the necessary English proficiency to commence undergraduate studies without attending preparatory courses. The test aligned with the B2 level of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2020). According to the regulations of the participating university, each session was weighted equally and contributed 25% to the total score, with a maximum achievable score of 100. In the first session, students completed listening comprehension tasks, which were followed by reading passages with multiple-choice questions. The second session assessed writing proficiency through an essay task based on given prompts. The final session evaluated speaking skills using a structured three-part format, where an interlocutor and an independent rater assessed participants. Two independent raters evaluated each exam component, and any discrepancies were resolved through consensus. The researchers were not involved in any test development or grading stage. In this study, while the total exam scores (i.e., the sum of scores gained in three sessions) were considered as indicators of general L2 English proficiency, session scores were used to indicate the proficiency in the specific language skill.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 29). Multiple criteria were considered to examine the distribution of the data, including the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and z-scores for skewness and kurtosis (Field, 2013). The findings indicated that exam scores did not follow a normal distribution, as reflected in significant p-values from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test ($p < .001$) and skewness and kurtosis z-scores surpassing the threshold of 2.58 (Mayers, 2013). Due to the non-

normal distribution of the data and small sample size, multiple regression and Pearson correlation analyses were deemed unsuitable, and Spearman's rank-order correlation was employed to investigate the relationship between time spent on EE activities and L2 English proficiency (Mayers, 2013).

Findings

Time Spent on EE Activities

The descriptive analysis provided insights into the amount of time Turkish L2 English university students dedicated to each EE activity included in the questionnaire. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics on Time Spent on EE Activities

EE Activity	Mean	SD	Mode	Median	Maximum
Listening	12.27	15.63	10	8	100
Watching	10.48	9.16	10	8	50
Gaming	6.75	9.53	0	3	50
Reading	4.83	4.74	2	3.50	21
Writing	2.45	3.29	0	1.50	18
Spoken Interaction	2.40	4.64	0	1	27

** Hours spent per week*

As shown in Table 1, EE activities related to listening and watching were the most common activities, whereas activities involving spoken interaction in English and writing in English were the least popular.

The relationship between Time Spent on EE Activities and L2 English Proficiency

Spearman's rank correlation analysis was conducted to examine the potential relationship between the amount of time spent on EE activities and L2 English proficiency. To interpret the strengths of these relationships, we followed the guidelines for Pearson r as outlined by Mayers (2013), where correlation coefficients greater than .5 are considered large, those between .3 and .5 represent a medium, and coefficients below .3 indicate a small correlation. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

The Relationship Between Time Spent on EE Activities and L2 English Proficiency

		Gaming	Watching	Listening	Reading	Writing	Spoken Interaction
1	Correlation Coefficient	,118	,303*	,363**	,137	,272*	,329*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,388	,023	,006	,315	,044	,015
	N	56	56	56	56	55	54
2	Correlation Coefficient	-,166	-,014	-,070	,022	,119	,044
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,223	,919	,607	,872	,387	,753
	N	56	56	56	56	55	54
3	Correlation Coefficient	,127	,134	,447**	,279*	,296*	,213
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,350	,324	<,001	,037	,028	,123
	N	56	56	56	56	55	54
4	Correlation Coefficient	,105	,278*	,375**	,180	,329*	,352**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,430	,033	,003	,172	,012	,007
	N	59	59	59	59	58	57

Note: 1 = Reading and Listening proficiency, 2 = Writing proficiency, 3 = Speaking proficiency, 4 = General L2 English proficiency

As displayed in Table 2, general L2 English proficiency exhibited a significant positive correlation with all types of EE activities, with the exception of activities involving gaming and reading. Specifically, medium-level correlations were observed between general L2 English proficiency and EE activities related to listening ($r = .37$, $p < .50$), spoken interaction ($r = .35$, $p < .50$), and writing ($r = .32$, $p < .50$). In contrast, the relationship with watching-related activities was small ($r = .27$, $p < .50$)

A medium-level correlation was also found between the time spent on listening-related EE activities and speaking proficiency ($r = .44$, $p < .01$). Speaking proficiency also showed small correlations with reading- ($r = .27$, $p < .05$) and writing-related ($r = .29$, $p < .50$) EE activities. Moreover, reading/listening proficiency correlated at medium levels with EE activities involving watching ($r = .30$, $p < .05$), listening ($r = .36$, $p < .05$), and spoken interaction ($r = .32$, $p < .05$). In contrast, the correlation with writing-related activities was small ($r = .27$, $p < .05$).

Discussion

The Frequency of EE Activities

The present study examined the time participants devoted to six types of EE activities. The sum of the mean scores indicated that participants reported spending 39.18 hours per week on these six EE activities. The standard deviation scores were relatively high (all above 3.29), particularly for the most popular activities: *EE Listening* (*S.D.* = 15.63), *EE Watching* (*S.D.* 10.48), and *EE Gaming* (S.D. = 9.53). These large standard deviations suggest substantial variation among individuals in how frequently they engage in EE, aligning with the findings of Sylvén and Sundqvist (2012).

More than half of the total reported time was spent on two specific EE activities: *EE Listening* and *EE Watching*. The heavy reliance on just two activities may indicate that Turkish university students have a relatively limited repertoire of EE engagement. This suggests that while these learners are highly engaged in certain EE activities, their overall EE engagement lacks variety. Such a narrow range of EE activities could potentially limit their exposure to diverse language skills and reduce opportunities to engage with a broader spectrum of EE experiences.

The popularity of *EE Listening* activities is consistent with a number of previous studies across diverse contexts. For instance, listening to music was found to be the most frequent EE activity among children in Belgium (aged 11) (De Wilde et al., 2020; De Wilde & Eyckmans, 2017), learners in Catalonia (aged 12 to 39) (Muñoz, 2020), Flemish learners (aged 15 to 16) (Peters, 2018), and junior-secondary school students in Hong Kong (aged 12) (Tsang & Lam, 2024). These consistent findings suggest that Turkish university students exhibit similar EE tendencies to international learners in their preference for EE listening. These findings are not surprising, given that listening to music is widely perceived as enjoyable, highly accessible, and typically does not require intense cognitive effort. As such, it represents a high-frequent form of EE engagement that is both intrinsically motivating and easily integrated into daily life.

Several previous studies also supported the popularity of *EE Watching* activities. For instance, Brevik (2019), in a study focusing on Norwegian high school students who performed poorly on the national Norwegian test but well on the English test, found that

all participants reported using English primarily for watching TV series and films. In the Danish primary school context (aged 8 to 10), Jensen (2017) similarly reported that watching TV, YouTube, cinema, and other web-based services were among the most common EE activities. Videos and movies also ranked among the three most popular EE activities in studies conducted with junior-secondary school students in Hong Kong (Tsang & Lam, 2024) and young learners in Belgium (De Wilde et al., 2020). Although *EE Watching* typically demands more mental effort than *EE Listening*, its accessibility in daily life, the wide range of content available, and the general enjoyment people derive from watching audiovisual materials likely explain its popularity in Türkiye, as in many other contexts.

On the other hand, participants reported engaging less frequently in EE activities that require social interaction, writing, and reading in English. This finding aligns with previous research, such as Peters et al. (2019) and Muñoz (2020), which also reported low levels of engagement in *EE Reading* and *EE Social Interaction*, respectively. These parallels suggest that Turkish students' preferences for EE engagement are similar to those observed among learners in some other countries. In examining factors that influence individuals' engagement in EE activities, Zhang et al. (2021) identify interactivity as a factor, noting that warm, interactive environments encourage more frequent use of the target language in communicative ways (Lee, 2019; Leona et al., 2021). The low frequency of engagement in spoken interaction among Turkish students may therefore indicate a lack of accessible and psychologically safe environments in which they can use English interactively, or a limited ability to create such opportunities on their own.

The Relationship between EE Frequency and L2 English Proficiency

The present study found significant positive relationships between general L2 English proficiency and four EE activities: *EE Listening, EE Spoken Interaction, EE Writing*, and *EE Watching*. These four activities also positively correlated with reading/listening proficiency. In contrast, *EE Gaming* and *EE Reading* did not show significant correlations with either general L2 English proficiency or reading/listening proficiency.

When comparing the correlations between EE activities and different measures of L2 English proficiency, *EE Listening* and *EE Writing* emerged as the most strongly

associated activities, correlating with three out of four proficiency measures. Among them, *EE listening* appeared to relate to L2 English proficiency more strongly: the strongest correlation in the entire dataset was found between *EE Listening* and speaking proficiency. This result diverges from (De Wilde et al., 2020), who found a negative correlation between listening to music and L2 English proficiency. Unlike their findings, the present study suggests that, in the Turkish context, EE activities involving listening to English and writing in English are positively related to general L2 English proficiency, including reading, listening, and speaking.

The study also showed that *EE Watching* was significantly related to general L2 English proficiency, as well as reading/listening proficiency. This finding aligns with Tsang and Lam (2024), who reported that watching videos significantly correlated with reading and listening proficiency among average- and high-proficiency student groups in Hong Kong. A similar conclusion was drawn by Wouters et al. (2024), who found that watching TV with no subtitles predicted both reading and listening proficiency in the Belgian context. Taken together, these findings suggest that the Turkish context may share certain commonalities with other countries when it comes to the relationship between EE watching and L2 proficiency, although further cross-contextual comparisons would help to confirm this.

In a similar way, *EE Spoken Interaction* was found to be associated with general L2 English proficiency, as well as reading/listening proficiency. These results are consistent with De Wilde et al. (2020), who identified speaking activities as particularly beneficial for children aged 10–13 in terms of L2 English development. Wouters et al. (2024) also found that communicating with friends and family in English predicted higher listening proficiency. These positive relationships suggest that EE communication is related to enhanced L2 development, particularly in the development of overall language proficiency and reading and listening proficiency.

However, the study also revealed some unexpected results: certain EE activities did not correlate with the language skills they involve. For example, *EE Spoken Interaction* did not significantly correlate with speaking proficiency. Similarly, *EE Reading* and *EE Writing* did not significantly correlate with reading/listening and writing proficiency. Several factors may explain these findings. First, data on skill-

specific EE activities were gathered through a questionnaire rather than a validated scale. As a result, we cannot claim that the listed activities fully captured participants' EE engagement in each L2 skill. The questionnaire provided only sample activities, which may not have reflected participants' broader EE repertoires. Future studies should employ validated scales to obtain more valid and representative data. Second, the data were not normally distributed, and the presence of outliers – individuals with extremely high or high levels of EE engagement – may have influenced the results. As studies like Brevik (2019) suggest, focusing specifically on outliers could offer valuable insights into the benefits of EE engagement. Finally, the proficiency exam used in this study was not designed for research purposes. As such, the exam's assessment of each skill may not have aligned closely with the nature of the EE activities reported by participants. Future research would benefit from using proficiency tests specifically developed for research purposes, ensuring a closer match between test content and the language skills practiced through EE activities.

Lastly, the results regarding *EE Gaming* were also noteworthy. No significant relationships were found between *EE Gaming* and any measures of L2 English proficiency. This contradicts the findings of De Wilde et al. (2020), who argued that gaming can offer rich and beneficial language input, but aligns with the results of a large-scale study conducted in the Spanish context (Muñoz, 2020) which showed that, compared to other EE activities, gaming was the least associated with English classroom grades. The absence of correlation in the current study mirrors the findings from Spanish but diverges from those in Belgium, suggesting that L2 English learning benefits of gaming may be context dependent. Further research is needed to explore why EE Gaming appears to play differing roles in L2 development across various countries.

Conclusions and Implications

The present study addressed the gap in EE research in Türkiye. It aimed to explore how much time Turkish university students spend on specific EE activities, identify the most and least popular ones, and examine whether the frequency of EE activities is associated with L2 English proficiency. The findings also allowed for comparisons with existing

research in other countries, providing insights into whether the patterns observed elsewhere are applicable to the Turkish context.

The results revealed both similarities and differences between the Turkish context and international findings. In line with previous research, participants reported that *EE Listening* and *EE Watching* were the most popular activities. However, their overall EE repertoire appeared limited, with approximately half of their weekly EE time devoted to these two activities. This narrow focus may be concerning, as a diverse EE repertoire enables learners to benefit from a broader language input and practice range. Therefore, teachers and teacher educators are encouraged to expand students' awareness of EE by introducing a wider range of interacting and meaningful activities that students can incorporate into their everyday lives.

The least frequent EE activities were reported to be *EE Reading, EE Writing*, and *EE Spoken Interaction,* with participants spending fewer than five hours on the first and fewer than three hours on the latter two. Given that both *EE Writing* and *EE Spoken Interaction* showed significant correlations with general L2 English proficiency and specific language proficiency (i.e., reading/listening and speaking), these activities appear to be underutilised. In light of the challenges in the English language teaching in Türkiye, such as limited focus on speaking and listening and a reliance on audiolingual and grammar-translation methods (Gürsoy et al., 2013; Haznedar, 2012), promoting these EE activities may help compensate for shortcomings of formal instruction. Encouraging regular engagement in *EE Reading*, *EE Writing,* and *EE Spoken Interaction* could provide valuable opportunities to develop communicative competence in English.

The findings also showed that *EE Listening, EE Spoken Interaction, EE Writing*, and *EE Watching* were significantly associated with reading/listening proficiency and general L2 English proficiency. Of these, *EE Listening* and *EE Writing* were positively correlated with all components of the proficiency exam except for writing. These results suggest that these activities are associated with L2 development and should be promoted. Teachers can help students identify EE activities that align with their interests and raise awareness of the potential benefits, thereby motivating them to engage more frequently and purposefully.

At the same time, the study revealed several unexpected findings that deviate from existing literature. Specifically, some EE activities did not correlate with the language skills in which they were most directly involved. For example, *EE Spoken Interaction, EE Writing*, and *EE Reading* did not correlate with speaking, writing, or reading/listening proficiency, respectively. These results contradict previous research suggesting that both writing and gaming can support language learning. It is difficult to determine the reasons for these discrepancies. They may stem from contextual factors specific to Türkiye or the limitations of the current study. Further research is needed to better understand the roles of *EE Writing* and *EE Gaming* in L2 English development, particularly through more focused, in-depth investigations of these activity types.

Limitations and Further Research

This study has several limitations. First, the data were collected through self-report questionnaires, which may not accurately reflect participants' actual engagement with EE activities. Second, the questionnaire included a selection of EE activities, and participants may have engaged in additional EE activities that were not represented in the instrument. Another key limitation is the relatively small sample size, which restricted the statistical power and made it impossible to conduct more rigorous analyses, such as structural equation modelling or regression analysis.

In light of these limitations, there are several avenues for further research. There is a need for more extensive EE research in the Turkish context, involving learners from different age groups and educational backgrounds. Studies with large sample sizes are particularly needed to provide more robust evidence of the relationship between EE engagement and L2 English proficiency. Additionally, qualitative research is necessary to explore some of the more unexpected findings, particularly the limited role of *EE Gaming, EE Writing*, and skill-specific activities. In-depth investigations could help clarify how Turkish learners engage with English across various EE activities and why certain activities may or may not contribute to L2 English development. We hope that this study can serve as a stepping stone for future research into EE in Türkiye and contribute to the growing body of knowledge in this field.

Ethics Committee Permission Information

This research study was conducted with the Research Ethics Committee approval of İstanbul Medeniyet University, dated 11.09.2023, and numbered 2023/06-05.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Decreasing EFL learners' intercultural communicative anxiety levels through a blended environment

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Abstract

Language classes should focus not only on linguistic skills but also on developing essential cultural and intercultural competencies, as fostering intercultural communicative competence has become a key objective in modern foreign language education. In this context, blended learning environments that combine face-to-face classroom practices with technology-enhanced activities offer promising opportunities to reduce learners' intercultural communication anxiety. This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of blended intercultural instruction on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' intercultural communicative anxiety levels. A two-group quasi-experimental research design was employed, involving an in-class discussion group and an online discussion group. Data were gathered through a background questionnaire and the Intercultural Communicative Anxiety Scale (ICAN). Findings revealed that students in the online discussion group experienced a significantly greater reduction in intercultural communicative anxiety compared to those in the in-class discussion group. These results suggest that well-structured blended environments, which provide supportive and low-pressure contexts for interaction, can be effective in lowering anxiety and enhancing intercultural learning. Implications for language instruction and curriculum design are also discussed.

Keywords
English language teaching, intercultural communication, anxiety, blended learning.

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Introduction

In recent decades, a significant shift in language teaching has been the recognition of culture as a core element of language learning and instruction (Kramsch, 1995). Teaching culture, often referred to as the "fifth skill," enhances the overall learning process by fostering both linguistic and intercultural development (Vernier et al., 2008). Consequently, the development of intercultural communicative competence has

emerged as a central objective in foreign language education (Byram, 1997). To achieve fluency in a target language, students must go beyond mastering vocabulary and grammar to understand the sociocultural norms that native speakers observe in communication (Neff & Rucynski, 2013). The relatively new intercultural approach seeks to equip learners with the skills necessary to engage effectively with individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

For holistic cognitive and emotional growth, educational systems must be sensitive to cultural values and experiences. Learning-teaching interactions should be designed to reflect the cultural and social diversity of the educational context. The concept of culturally responsive pedagogy highlights the importance of fostering inclusive learning environments that support students from diverse beliefs, ethnicities, and social groups (Sleeter, 2011).

Anxiety, a key affective factor in language learning, is defined as a specific set of behaviors, beliefs, and self-perceptions triggered by the demands of the learning process (Horwitz et al., 1986). It manifests as feelings of nervousness and stress, often accompanied by a strong desire to eliminate the source of anxiety (MacIntyre, 2017). Intercultural communication anxiety, in particular, can impede learners' ability to engage effectively in intercultural exchanges. Blended learning environments that combine face-to-face instruction with technological tools (Sharma & Barrett, 2007) offer promising opportunities to mitigate such anxiety by facilitating more flexible and supportive learning experiences. Internet-mediated communication (IMC) further enhances these opportunities by enabling access to diverse communities that use the target language (Sarıçoban & Balaman, 2012).

In Turkey, which falls within Kachru's (1990) expanding circle, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners face limited opportunities for intercultural communication in English. These constraints contribute to high levels of foreign language anxiety (Aydin, 2018) and intercultural communication anxiety (Özdemir, 2017), both of which hinder effective communication. Additionally, the scarcity of authentic intercultural interactions limits the development of critical intercultural skills, further exacerbating students' anxiety levels. In contexts where intercultural opportunities are rare (Hsu & Beasley, 2019), blended online intercultural activities

offer valuable alternatives. These activities can facilitate meaningful intercultural interactions, providing learners with opportunities to practice and improve essential intercultural skills that are prerequisites for effective communication.

This study investigates the potential of blended learning environments to address the intercultural communicative anxiety of EFL learners, offering insights into how technology-mediated strategies can support learners in overcoming communication barriers and enhancing intercultural competence.

Theoretical Background

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) refers to the ability to adapt effectively to intercultural contexts by integrating individual, social, communicative, and strategic dimensions. It is rooted in the concept of communicative competence, developed by Hymes (1972), which encompasses linguistic, paralinguistic, sociolinguistic, and non-verbal dimensions of effective communication within a cultural context (Fantini, 2020). For decades, communicative competence has served as a foundational framework in language teaching. Intercultural communicative competence, however, extends this framework by focusing specifically on cross-cultural interactions and is considered a subdimension of communicative competence (Deardorff, 2006).

Gudykunst (2002) defines intercultural communication as the exchange of information between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Similarly, Chen and Starosta (1998) conceptualize ICC as the ability to navigate cultural differences successfully. They identify three critical dimensions: intercultural awareness (cognitive processes), intercultural sensitivity (emotional processes), and intercultural adroitness (attitudes and behaviors). Byram (1997) further expands on this framework, identifying five core components of intercultural competence as *attitudes (savoir-être)* that means demonstrating openness, curiosity, and impartiality toward other cultures, *knowledge (savoirs)* that is understanding the customs, practices, and behaviors of other social groups, *skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre)* that means the ability to interpret cultural artifacts or events and relate them to one's cultural context, *skills of discovery and interaction (savoir apprendre/faire)* which is acquiring new cultural

knowledge and applying it in interactions, and *critical cultural awareness (savoir s'engager)* that is critically evaluating cultural practices and perspectives using objective criteria.

Anxiety is a critical affective factor in language learning and has been widely studied in the field (Aydin, 2018). Horwitz et al. (1986) define anxiety in this context as a set of beliefs, behaviors, and self-perceptions that emerge naturally during the learning process. Anxiety is typically categorized into three types: 1.Trait anxiety: A stable characteristic inherent to an individual. 2. State anxiety: A temporary emotional response triggered by specific situations (Spielberger, 1972). 3. Situation-specific anxiety: Fear tied to specific scenarios, such as public speaking or exams (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Anxiety can also be classified as facilitating anxiety, which motivates learners to perform better (Scovel, 1978), or debilitating anxiety, which impairs performance by fostering avoidance behaviors (Phillips, 1992). Creating learning environments that promote a balance by encouraging the facilitating anxiety while minimizing the debilitating anxiety and thus positively impacting language acquisition.

Despite the importance of ICC in language education, learners often experience intercultural communication anxiety, a psychological barrier that hinders effective intercultural interaction. This anxiety is defined as the unease experienced when communicating with individuals from different cultures or countries (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997). Gudykunst and Kim (2003) argue that unfamiliar cultural contexts can evoke anxiety due to the perception of others as "strangers." Such anxiety can manifest as avoidance behaviors, often stemming from language deficiencies or cultural unfamiliarity, ultimately impairing communication. Language learners with high levels of intercultural communication anxiety are less likely to engage in meaningful interactions and may struggle to develop their communicative competence.

Blended learning combines traditional classroom instruction with digital tools to create flexible, engaging, and effective learning environments (Sharma & Barrett, 2007). This approach is particularly beneficial in contexts where opportunities for authentic intercultural interactions are limited (Sarıçoban & Balaman, 2012). By leveraging technology, blended learning facilitates interaction with diverse cultural contexts, potentially reducing intercultural communication anxiety. Coryell and Clark

(2009) found that participants in an online intercultural language course expressed enthusiasm in overcoming anxiety associated with previous face-to-face and online interactions. Supporting this, Ku and Chen (2015) reported that students involved in intercultural wiki-based learning activities experienced significant reductions in both social and foreign language anxiety. Similarly, Lee and Song (2019) demonstrated that telecollaboration produced improvements in intercultural communication competence, both affective and behavioral, comparable to those achieved through study abroad experiences. Adding to this body of research, Khukhlaev and Bratkina (2021) emphasized that anxiety and uncertainty were directly linked to the effectiveness of intercultural communication, further underlining the importance of addressing emotional factors in such contexts.

Several models guide the implementation of blended learning environments. For instance, Sharpe et al. (2006) emphasize the blending of time (synchronous vs. asynchronous activities), environment (classroom vs. home), pedagogy (collaborative vs. autonomous learning), and technology (wikis, blogs, or discussion forums). Similarly, Graham (2006) categorizes blending at four levels: activity, course, program, and institution. Other models, such as those proposed by Horn and Staker (2011), include the face-to-face driver model, rotation model, flex model, online lab model, self-blend model, and online driver model. These models vary in the degree of integration between online and traditional components.

Sharma and Sarkar (2020) explored students' perceptions of blended learning's effectiveness in reducing anxiety. Using a survey model, the study found that most students believed blended learning was beneficial in lowering anxiety levels. Similarly, Bai et al. (2020) investigated college students' attitudes toward autonomous learning in a blended setting. They discovered that although learning anxiety is negatively related to learning motivation, both learning anxiety and self-efficacy indirectly influence autonomous learning behavior through learning motivation in blended environments. Furthermore, Alghofaili (2022) reported that blended learning played a significant role in enhancing the impact of intrinsic motivation on reducing language anxiety in English.

Purpose of the study

Despite the growing importance of intercultural instruction, limited research has examined the impact of blended learning environments on the intercultural communication anxiety levels of EFL learners, particularly in the Turkish context. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining how blended intercultural instruction influences EFL learners' intercultural communication anxiety. It aims to explore whether blended learning environments are significantly more effective than traditional settings in reducing anxiety levels. By bearing the aforementioned concerns in mind, this study seeks to answer the following research question.

Does the use of blended intercultural activities affect the level of intercultural communication anxiety among EFL learners?

By exploring this question, the study aims to advance the field of language education by shedding light on how blended learning can enhance intercultural competence and reduce communication anxiety.

Methodology

Research design

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design with two groups to investigate the influence of blended instruction, developed based on the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) model, on the intercultural communicative anxiety (ICA) levels of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Quasi-experimental research designs rely on naturally occurring differences in the key independent variable, aiming to replicate experimental conditions by comparing groups where some individuals are exposed to a treatment and others are not, though this exposure is not assigned randomly (Gopalan et al., 2020). This design was chosen for its suitability in examining cause-and-effect relationships in naturally occurring settings, where random assignment to experimental and control groups might not be feasible or ethical. Specifically, a quasi-experimental approach allowed us to explore the impact of the blended intercultural instruction while working within the existing structure of EFL

classrooms. This aligns with our primary objective of assessing the effect of this specific instructional approach on ICA levels.

The methodology involved quantitative data collection techniques. Quantitative data were gathered through the Intercultural Communicative Anxiety (ICAN) scale, an instrument developed by the researchers. This scale was administered to both groups before and after the intervention to measure changes in ICA levels. In addition, a background questionnaire was used to collect demographic information such as participants' age, gender, and Foreign Language Exam (FLE) scores, as well as their prior intercultural communication experiences. This allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the participants' profiles and potential confounding variables.

The study was conducted during the fall semester of the 2022-2023 academic year. After the initial data collection, students were randomly assigned to either online or in-class discussion groups within the framework of the blended instruction. The instructional phase, which incorporated the ICC model and lasted for five weeks, then commenced. Following this intervention, the Intercultural Anxiety Scale (ISS) was re-administered to evaluate the impact of the blended instruction on participants' intercultural anxiety levels. The pre- and post-intervention scores from the ICAN and ISS scales were analyzed using appropriate statistical methods to determine the effectiveness of the blended instruction. Further details on the specific statistical analyses employed will be provided in the Data Analysis section.

Setting and participants

The participants were freshman pre-service English Language Teaching (ELT) students enrolled in the English Language Teaching Department at a state university during the spring semester of the 2022-2023 academic year. A total of 56 students participated in the study. The participants had a mean age of 19.2 years, with ages ranging from 18 to 29. Of the participants, 38 (67.9%) were female, and 18 (32.1%) were male. The mean FLE score was 68.7, with scores ranging from 59 to 78. The FLE, administered by the Student Selection and Placement Center, consisted of 80 multiple-choice questions assessing grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension skills. Regarding intercultural communication experiences, 51 (91.1%) participants stated that they had interacted with at least one foreign person in English, while 5 (8.9%) had not.

Procedure

Participants were provided with information about the study's objectives, significance, and methodology before its commencement. Relevant content on intercultural communication and its assessment was delivered in classroom sessions. Ethical approval was obtained from the university's Ethical Review Board, and participants were informed of the study's ethical guidelines, ensuring their privacy and confirming that the study posed no psychological, social, or political risks. Additionally, participants signed a consent form indicating their voluntary participation in the study. The study followed these steps: (1) administration of the pre-test, (2) random assignment of participants into in-class or online discussion groups, (3) five-week instruction phase, and (4) post-test administration.

Instruction

Both groups participated in traditional in-class intercultural instruction. On the other hand, participants in the in-class discussion group engaged in face-to-face discussions within the classroom, while those in the online discussion group participated in discussions via Zoom with students from various countries, including Taiwan, Indonesia, Mexico, Poland, and Turkey. Each online session lasted at least 40 minutes. Online discussion sessions were organized by the instructor, considering the availability of participants from other countries. Consequently, a fully flexible blended learning approach was not feasible. The summary of the instruction process is presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Intercultural Instruction Aiming to Decrease Intercultural Anxiety Levels

	Steps	Discussion Topics	Objectives	Based on
Week 1	-Giving theoretical information about the concept of culture. -Forming small groups to complete sentences written by the teacher related to culture. -Sharing their ideas with the class	Festivals in Türkiye and around the world	To enhance understanding of the concept of culture and foster fundamental cultural awareness.	"attitudes (savoir ^etre)"
Week 2	-Providing theoretical insights into cultural knowledge, identity, gender	Foods in Türkiye and worldwide	to increase the knowledge related to the culture and	knowledge (savoirs)"

	roles, individualistic versus collectivistic cultures, and variations in power distance across cultures.		develop cultural awareness	
Week 3	-Giving theoretical information about the relationship between culture, language, and thought, different speech communities, differences between spoken and written language, and understanding language in context.	Famous quotes belonging to famous people in both Türkiye and worldwide	to increase students' interpretational and relational skills of IC	"skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre)",
Week 4	-Giving theoretical information related to the basics of nonverbal communication, similarities and differences between verbal and nonverbal communication, the definition of physical time and space across cultures, and the concept of high context/low context communication.	Gestures and body language in the Turkish language and other languages	to increase learners' discovery and interactional abilities related to IC.	"skills of discovery and interaction (savoir apprendre/faire)"
Week 5	-Giving theoretical information about the concept of culture shock, the stages of culture shock, and the concept of stereotyping. -Matching activity about stereotyping.	Stereotypical images belonging to Turkish people and others	to increase students' critical cultural and intercultural awareness levels	"critical cultural awareness (savoir s'engager)"

Data collection tools

The study employed the Intercultural Communicative Anxiety Scale for EFL learners (ICAN), developed by the researchers. The scale demonstrated high reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.92. The ICAN scale consists of 16 items categorized into three factors: "Communicative Difficulty" (7 items), "Communicative Willingness" (5 items), and "Communicative Uncertainty" (4 items). Participants rated items on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Items 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12, which assess communicative willingness, were reverse-coded. The total score on the scale can range from 16 to 80, with higher scores indicating greater levels of intercultural communicative anxiety.

Data analysis

The quantitative data were computed utilizing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. As the sample size in each group was less than 30, non-parametric tests were applied (Saka, 2005). The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to analyze within-group differences, while the Mann-Whitney U test was employed to compare differences between groups.

Results

The pre-test results regarding group differences in intercultural anxiety levels among EFL learners were initially analyzed. There was no statistically significant difference between the in-class discussion group ($M = 60.14$, $SD = 8.51$) and the online discussion group ($M = 62.36$, $SD = 8.30$) in terms of the total intercultural communicative anxiety scores at the pre-test stage ($U = 331$, $p > .05$). A detailed analysis of the individual items revealed no statistically significant differences in the Intercultural Communicative Difficulty dimension, with no difference between the in-class discussion group ($M = 26.54$, $SD = 4.44$) and the online discussion group ($M = 28.29$, $SD = 3.79$) in terms of intercultural communicative difficulty at the pre-test ($U = 304$, $p > .05$). Similarly, no significant differences were found between the two groups in terms of the Intercultural Communicative Willingness construct (in-class discussion group: $M = 16.79$, $SD = 2.58$; online discussion group: $M = 17.03$, $SD = 2.59$; $U = 696$, $p > .05$) or the Intercultural Communicative Uncertainty factor (in-class discussion group: $M = 16.82$, $SD = 2.72$; online discussion group: $M = 17.04$, $SD = 2.53$; $U = 377$, $p > .05$).

The pre- and post-test ICAN scores for the online discussion group were then analyzed. A significant decrease was found in the Intercultural Communicative Difficulty construct, with the pre-test score ($M = 28.29$, $SD = 3.77$) decreasing to the post-test score ($M = 20.46$, $SD = 3.33$), which was statistically significant ($Z = -4.274$, $p < .001$). Similarly, the Intercultural Communicative Willingness construct showed a sharp decrease from the pre-test ($M = 17.04$, $SD = 2.59$) to the post-test ($M = 11.71$, $SD = 3.27$), which was also statistically significant ($Z = -1.541$, $p < .001$). A significant decrease was also observed in the Intercultural Communicative Uncertainty construct, with the pre-test score ($M = 17.04$, $SD = 2.53$) decreasing to the post-test score ($M = 13.29$, $SD = 3.45$). However, this change did not reach statistical significance ($Z = -1.223$, $p > .05$). Finally, the total scores on the Intercultural Communicative Anxiety

scale showed a significant decrease from the pre-test (M = 60.14, SD = 8.50) to the post-test (M = 57.96, SD = 10.79) (Z = -3.613, p < .001). In conclusion, the intercultural anxiety levels of EFL learners in the online discussion group significantly decreased as a result of the intercultural instruction.

Table 2.

Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test results of the online discussion group for ICANS

Constructs	Items	Z	Sig	Negative Ranks	Positive Ranks	Ties	Total
Intercultural Communicative Difficulty	8,9,10,11,12,13, 16	-4.274	**.00**	25[a]	3[b]	0[c]	28
Intercultural Communicative Willingness	1,2,3,7,14	-3.956	**.00**	23[a]	3[b]	2[c]	28
Intercultural Communicative Uncertainty	4,5,6,15	-3.613	**.00**	21[a]	5 [b]	2 [c]	28
Intercultural Communicative Anxiety Total		-4.259	**.00**	25 [a]	3 [b]	0 [c]	28

Note: [a]Post < Pre; [b]Post > Pre; [c]Post = Pre.

Post-test results regarding group differences in intercultural anxiety levels among EFL learners were analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U test. As shown in Table 3, a statistically significant difference was found between the in-class discussion group (M = 57.96, SD = 10.79) and the online discussion group (M = 46.36, SD = 7.70) in terms of the total intercultural communicative anxiety post-test scores (U = 145, p < .001). A more detailed analysis of the individual items revealed statistically significant differences in the Intercultural Communicative Difficulty dimension, with the in-class discussion group (M = 26.11, SD = 5.12) scoring higher than the online discussion group (M = 20.46, SD = 3.33) at the post-test (U = 153, p < .001). Similarly, a statistically significant difference was found in the Intercultural Communicative Willingness construct, with the in-class discussion group (M = 15.57, SD = 3.75) showing higher scores than the online discussion group (M = 11.71, SD = 3.28) at the post-test (U = 177, p < .001). Lastly, a statistically significant difference was observed in the Intercultural Communicative Uncertainty factor, with the in-class discussion group (M

= 16.29, SD = 3.01) scoring higher than the online discussion group (M = 13.29, SD = 3.45) at the post-test (U = 203, p < .001).

Table 3.

Post-test Mann-Whitney U results of ICANS

Constructs	Items	*U*	Sig	Mean Ranks (Online discussion Group)	Mean Ranks (In-class discussion Group)	Total
Intercultural Communicative Difficulty	8,9,10,11,12,13,16	152.50	**.00**	19.95	37.05	56
Intercultural Communicative Willingness	1,2,3,7,14	176.50	**.00**	20.80	36.20	56
Intercultural Communicative Uncertainty	4,5,6,15	202.50	**.00**	21.73	35.27	56
Intercultural Communicative Anxiety Total		144.50	**.00**	19.66	37.34	56

Discussions and Conclusions

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of blended activities designed according to Byram's (1997) Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) Framework on reducing intercultural anxiety levels among EFL learners. The research question addressed whether blended intercultural instruction would affect EFL learners' intercultural anxiety levels. To assess this, pre-test and post-test results were analyzed for both the in-class and online discussion groups. In the in-class discussion group, the results indicated a slight reduction in intercultural communicative anxiety across the dimensions of Intercultural Communicative Difficulty, Intercultural Communicative Uncertainty, and the overall Intercultural Communicative Anxiety scale. Conversely, there was a slight increase in the Intercultural Communicative Willingness construct, suggesting that in-class activities led to a minimal reduction in anxiety levels. However, the results from the online discussion group, which participated in the same in-class

instruction but engaged in online discussions with participants from other countries, demonstrated more significant improvements in reducing intercultural anxiety. This group exhibited substantial gains, with reductions in communicative difficulty, increased willingness to communicate, decreased intercultural uncertainty, and, overall, a significant reduction in intercultural anxiety.

These findings align with previous research, such as Coryell and Clark (2009), who found that participants in an online intercultural language course showed enthusiasm in overcoming anxiety linked to previous face-to-face and online interactions. Ku and Chen (2015) also found that students engaging in intercultural wiki-based learning activities significantly reduced their social anxiety and foreign language anxiety levels. Similarly, Lee and Song (2019) discovered that telecollaboration, as opposed to study abroad, led to comparable improvements in intercultural communication competence, including affective and behavioral factors. Khukhlaev and Bratkina (2021) further highlighted that anxiety and uncertainty were directly related to the effectiveness of intercultural communication.

A primary motivation for conducting this study was the limited opportunities pre-service EFL teachers had for intercultural communication in the target language. These future educators will be tasked with teaching students not only the language but also the cultural dimensions associated with it. Therefore, integrating technology into language classrooms is essential. The findings suggest that blended instructional methods can be effectively incorporated into Foreign Language Education (FLE) curricula, providing a meaningful way to address both language and cultural education.

Several practical implications emerge from these findings. First, providing language learners with structured opportunities to communicate with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds can significantly enhance their intercultural competence and reduce anxiety. For example, incorporating virtual exchange programs or telecollaborative projects into the curriculum where learners interact with peers from other countries through guided tasks has been shown to foster cultural awareness and improve language skills (Çalıkoğlu et al., 2025).

Second, the integration of online tools such as discussion forums, video conferencing platforms, and collaborative writing tools (e.g., wikis or shared

documents) into language classes can facilitate meaningful intercultural interaction. These tools should be purposefully implemented through carefully designed activities that promote reflection, critical thinking, and guided dialogue, ensuring that learners engage in deeper intercultural exchanges rather than superficial conversation.

Third, encouraging participation in extracurricular activities such as cultural clubs, international student events, and online intercultural workshops can provide informal yet impactful settings for learners to apply their language skills and develop intercultural competence. For instance, mentorship programs pairing local and international students or participating in intercultural simulation games can help bridge cultural gaps and build confidence in communication.

Lastly, a more nuanced understanding of learners' sociological and psychological profiles, including factors such as cultural background, personality traits, and anxiety levels, is essential for designing effective intercultural communication instruction. This exploration could be conducted through pre-course surveys, interviews, or reflective journals, which would allow educators to tailor content and strategies to meet diverse learner needs more effectively.

Given that this study used a quasi-experimental design with two groups, future research should explore different research designs that incorporate various data collection and analysis techniques. Additionally, while this study applied Byram's (1997) intercultural model, other models of intercultural communicative competence should be explored in future studies. Furthermore, this research focused on a blended approach that incorporated the Zoom application. Future studies might investigate the potential of other web tools to support intercultural instruction. Finally, the relationship between demographic variables such as age, gender, proficiency levels, and intercultural experiences should be further explored in studies involving larger participant samples.

Ethics Committee Permission Information

This research study was conducted with the Research Ethics Committee approval of Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University, dated 20.11.2019 and numbered 2019/72.

Conflict of Interest

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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This study is a part of the first author's PhD dissertation titled "*An Investigation of EFL Learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence in a Blended Learning Environment*" and submitted to the Graduate School of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Türkiye. The second author is the supervisor of the first author.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Teaching English to visually impaired learners in Türkiye – Experiences of EFL instructors in higher education

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Abstract

"There are always two sides to every story," as noted by the American philosopher Jonathan Edwards. It is, therefore, crucial to consider the perspectives of both parties, especially when dealing with a complex phenomenon. In the context of this research, that perspective involves the EFL instructors who taught visually impaired learners. Due to insufficient preparation stemming from a lack of adequate background knowledge on how to engage with individuals with visual impairments and what considerations are necessary when teaching them EFL, it is unsurprising that instructors have encountered difficulties in instructing visually impaired learners. This study investigated the overall experiences of the EFL instructors who taught visually impaired learners, challenges they faced and accommodations and assistive strategies they used. The participants consisted of four EFL instructors working at higher education institutions in Türkiye. The data were collected through an observation of a class hour of one of the instructors and semi-structured interviews with all participants. The findings revealed that the instructors felt anxious, emotional and were in self-doubt at the beginning, and gradually developed confidence and appreciation as a result of the experiences they gained through teaching, reading the relevant literature, and the continuous feedback they got from their learners. Instructors also implemented a number of strategies to deal with the challenges they faced. The study concluded with implications for language teaching and suggestions for further research.

Keywords

Teaching English as a foreign language, inclusive education, special educational needs, visually impaired learners, higher education.

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Introduction

The practice of foreign language teaching has been around for thousands of years. The first documented descriptions of language teaching methods in Europe date back to the 5th century AD (Hilgendorf, 2025). However, the earliest focus on teaching foreign languages to visually impaired learners came almost a century ago. Morrissey (1931), a teacher who was also visually impaired, published his work, “Teaching Foreign Languages in Schools for the Blind”, marking the first written resource dedicated to

providing foreign language education for visually impaired individuals. This work also encouraged educators to acknowledge the presence of visually impaired learners in language classrooms (Jedynak, 2018). From this, it can be inferred that scholarly attention to foreign language education for the visually impaired has existed for only about a century. Thus, the past hundred years can be seen as a transitional period during which individuals, academics, and educators began to explore methods and solutions for teaching foreign languages to visually impaired students. However, the field has not captured the attention of many researchers from the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) society. Consequently, it is likely that many instructors worldwide find themselves having to learn how to teach visually impaired learners only when faced with the need to do so, often without any prior training, knowledge, or experience. A study revealed that EFL instructors working with visually impaired students in Türkiye tended to use the same methods and materials designed for sighted learners, despite research highlighting the distinct needs of visually impaired individuals. Instructors encountered several difficulties but continued with familiar approaches, mainly due to their lack of formal training in teaching English to students with visual impairments (Başaran, 2012). This lack of preparation can pose challenges for both instructors and learners, as evidenced by numerous examples documented in the literature globally.

As of 2024, seventy-five English Language Teaching (ELT) departments operate in both state and private universities across Turkey. Prior to the 2018-2019 academic year, these departments did not include any courses specifically addressing Special Educational Needs (SEN) training focused on teaching visually impaired learners or SEN in general within their curricula. During the 2018-2019 academic year, some changes were implemented in ELT programs at the undergraduate level nationwide, and courses on SEN training were introduced into the updated curriculum. These courses are offered by the Department of Educational Sciences and are intended for all teaching programs collectively rather than being tailored specifically for ELT. In other words, the courses provide general knowledge about students with SEN, leaving instructors from different disciplines responsible for adapting the content to suit their own fields. Consequently, it is possible that many EFL instructors, if they have received any, rely on the general SEN training provided within the scope of Educational Sciences, which might leave instructors puzzled.

Support for EFL instructors working with visually impaired learners appears to be limited not only in formal education settings but also in terms of professional development opportunities. Although instructors can attend seminars and conferences to follow current trends and enhance their skills, training programs specifically designed for teaching English to students with visual impairments are still lacking. One contributing factor may be that SEN is not a primary focus in most EFL teacher training programs, and professionals with expertise in this area are relatively few.

In-service training opportunities addressing the needs of students with SEN are also limited in many institutions. When such training is offered, it often covers general aspects of SEN rather than focusing on the particular strategies and adaptations required for visually impaired learners in English language classrooms. This situation can make it more challenging for EFL instructors to adjust their instruction to support all learners effectively.

As of 2020, 8317 visually impaired learners are registered to tertiary level education programs in Türkiye (yok.gov.tr, 2020). ELT curricula in Türkiye included courses for inclusive practices for students with SEN only after 2018. Considering the recent changes, it is possible to say that there might not be a considerable number of instructors who have received formal training on inclusive practices for the visually impaired learners. In this case, a particular question arises:

-What strategies do the EFL instructors without any formal training on SEN follow in their classes to teach visually impaired learners?

Review of Literature

SEN in the context of EFL remains an under-researched area. Adding to the complexity, there is a disconnect between fields: SEN specialists focusing on teaching visually impaired learners often lack expertise in teaching English, while English instructors are typically untrained in working with visually impaired students. This can create challenges in providing foreign language education for visually impaired learners that are not as prevalent for sighted learners. Monthei (2013) highlights a key challenge faced by blind immigrants and refugees learning English: their English teachers, while skilled in language instruction, often lack training in Braille or in working with visually impaired learners. On the other hand, Braille instructors typically do not have the

expertise to teach English as a second language. Another recent study provides a relevant example where two English instructors, one of whom specialized in ELT and the other in SEN, experienced challenges in addressing the needs of the visually impaired students effectively (Febtiningsih et al., 2021). This illustrates the need for cross-disciplinary expertise to address this gap efficiently.

For most instructors, meeting visually impaired students in their classrooms was their first exposure to such learners (Durna, 2012). A lack of sufficient awareness and uncertainty about how to interact with visually impaired learners may contribute to a slower learning process and outcomes that do not fully reflect students' potential. It is possible that when educators are unsure of how to adapt their teaching methods or communicate effectively, the overall learning experience becomes less productive. This possibility has been suggested in various studies, which point to the importance of targeted training and support in improving educational outcomes for students with visual impairments. In a study by Topor and Rosenblum (2013) involving 66 instructors of English to students with visual impairments, 30% of participants reported feeling inadequately prepared to teach these learners. Similarly, Hernandez Giraldo et al., (2018) observed, after conducting research with a blind learner in a public school, that English instructors are generally unprepared to teach visually impaired students due to insufficient training in the field. A study by Susanto and Nanda (2018) revealed that many instructors lack knowledge about SEN and have a limited understanding of visual impairments. A study at a university in El Salvador, revealed the English instructors did not receive any training to teach EFL to visually impaired students (Alvarenga de Alas et al., 2020). A recent auto-ethno-biographical study highlights the challenges faced by EFL instructors teaching blind students which include inadequate institutional support, limited professional preparation for teaching students with visual impairments, and a lack of familiarity with Braille and inclusive instructional design (Villalba, 2022).

In terms of foreign language education, visual impairment can be a major cause of a number of challenges due to the nature of foreign language teaching, particularly the dependency on visuals. An explanation for this important aspect of language teaching is provided below:

"A key feature of language teaching is that while in other courses communication is used to teach the course content, in foreign languages content is used to teach communication. The non-verbal methods of communication are key players in the teaching of meaning, while in most classes where languages are taught, vision plays a dominant if not an exclusive role". (Christidou, 2016, p. 216)

The reliance on visual aids to create context and convey information in language classes may present challenges for visually impaired learners. Research highlights the significant role of vision in understanding and interacting with the world, with studies indicating that sighted children acquire approximately 80% of their curriculum through visual means which highlights the importance of equipping visually impaired students with compensatory skills, such as tactile methods, to navigate and engage with their environment as effectively as their sighted peers (BLENNZ, 2015). A study involving 32 visually impaired students and 12 EFL instructors identified the inability to use visual aids or environmental cues as one of the challenges listed for teaching visually impaired learners (Lovi, 2013). This dependency can create a disadvantage for visually impaired EFL learners compared to their sighted peers. Thus, there is a pressing need to develop alternative teaching materials and strategies that can effectively replace visuals in a meaningful way.

In SEN terminology, "accommodation" refers to a broad range of strategies, techniques, methods, and adaptations designed to meet the needs of individuals requiring specific arrangements to accomplish a task. These adjustments may involve modifying the content, style, or timing of a task—or, in some cases, eliminating the task altogether. A simple example can illustrate the concept. Imagine a visually impaired student participating in a language class with sighted peers. If the teacher displays a picture of a family eating together to stimulate speaking practice, they might describe the image aloud. This includes mentioning visual details like the people's clothing, their ages or physical appearances, and items in the environment such as wall decorations. This adaptation transforms the visual material into an accessible format for the visually impaired learner. In a study, visually impaired learners evaluated the methods and materials used in their English classes and emphasized the importance of individualized accommodations tailored to the needs of visually impaired learners, noting that a one-

size-fits-all solution does not exist, as each learner's requirements vary, much like individual responses to medical treatments (Şimşek, 2021). The degree of visual impairment can influence how learners acquire and practice language skills. For instance, partially sighted students might use large-print materials, while those with total vision loss require tactile or auditory alternatives. Even partially sighted students may sometimes prefer audio-tactile options if they find long texts challenging to read.

All students respond positively to personalized care and support from their instructors, as feeling acknowledged and valued enhances motivation and helps them reach their full potential. For visually impaired learners, such efforts can make a significant impact. It is not uncommon to encounter EFL instructors who genuinely strive to empathize with the challenges faced by visually impaired learners and try to adapt their teaching strategies accordingly. In fact, most instructors express positive attitudes toward having visually impaired students in their classes (Omer, 2015). Similarly, visually impaired learners have shared positive experiences with instructors who demonstrate understanding and employ appropriate teaching methods and accommodations tailored to their needs (Attachoo & Sittihikul, 2021). However, an opposite scenario is also possible. A study conducted in Indonesia at a high school for visually impaired learners, involving two English instructors, listed teaching writing as challenging, together with a lack of teaching resources and strategies and insufficient teacher qualifications (Febtiningsih et al., 2021). In such cases, visually impaired learners seem to be dependent on their instructors' willingness to make instructional, material, and assessment accommodations.

Methodology

Research Design

The study was planned and conducted as a qualitative multiple case study. The study also followed a narrative design, and semi-structured retrospective interviews were conducted with the instructors during which the instructors shared their memories and experiences. Although the term "narrative" is often associated with fictional works like novels or non-fictional accounts such as memoirs and biographies, it also appears in non-literary contexts within social sciences, including psychology, sociology, history, linguistics, sociolinguistics, and education. In educational research, narrative research

is defined as “the description and re-storying of the narrative structure of varieties of educational experience”. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1989 p. 4) This approach focuses on individuals and their personal experiences, providing insights into the story itself (Creswell, 2012, p. 502). Essentially, in narrative inquiry, researchers aim to understand and reflect on a problem through the first-person accounts of those who have experienced the phenomenon being studied. Riessman (2008, p.15) further summarizes that “interview participants tell stories, investigators construct stories from their data.” The following questions were addressed in this study.

1. What are the general experiences of the EFL instructors who teach learners with visual impairments in Türkiye?
2. What are the challenges faced by EFL instructors while teaching EFL to students with visual impairments?
3. What are the adaptive strategies, methods, techniques, and materials provided by EFL instructors while teaching EFL to students with visual impairments?

Participants

The participants of this study are visually impaired learners who began learning English as a foreign language in elementary school and have continued their education at state and private universities in Türkiye. In addition to student participants, interviews were conducted with the parents of one student, four English language instructors with experience teaching visually impaired learners, and an expert in the field. These additional interviews aimed to deepen understanding and support the credibility of the students' accounts. While the study includes multiple participant groups, it mainly focuses on the experiences of the four teacher participants. All participant names used in this article are pseudonyms selected by the individuals themselves. The student participants include Eylül, Bahar, Almila, Nil, and Yasemin, while the teacher participants are Murat, Leyla, Maya, and Neva. Among the instructors, Murat and Leyla taught Eylül, whereas Maya and Neva worked with Almila. For this reason, the article primarily centers on the experiences of these four instructors and two students, providing insight into English language teaching practices for learners with visual

impairments at the university level. Detailed profiles of students and instructors are presented in Tables 1 and 2 below:

Table 1.

Participant Information Related to the Instructors

Name (Pseudonym)	Education Level	Teaching Experience	SEN Training	Experience with Visually Impaired Learners
Leyla	MA in ELT	7 years	• No formal SEN training, • attended several seminars on SEN	• Taught Eylül in multiple courses
Murat	MA in Linguistics (Ongoing)	8 years	• No formal SEN training	• Taught Eylül at both prep and departmental levels • prepared exams for Eylül
Maya	MA in ELT	6 years	• No formal SEN training, • Did voluntary work for visually impaired learners	• Taught Almila online • invigilated during Almila's exams
Neva	MA in ELT	2 years	• No formal SEN training	• Taught Almila • invigilated during Almila's exams

As can be seen in Table 1, the participants all had MA in ELT and had various teaching experiences ranging from 2 to 8 years.

Table 2.

Participant Information Related to the Students

Name (Pseudonym)	Current Education Level & Department	Visual Impairment Status	English Learning Background
Eylül	• Junior undergraduate student • Department of Psychology (30% English curriculum), • Private university	• Total visual impairment due to premature birth complications	• Started learning English in 4th grade; continued through high school • Attended one-year English prep school before starting department • Completed General English and ESP courses at her department
Almila	• Junior undergraduate student • Department of Law (30% English curriculum) • Private university	• Born with nyctalopia (night-blindness) • Near blindness (10% vision)	• Started learning English in 4th grade; continued through high school • Attended one-year English prep school before starting department • Currently taking courses for Academic English offered by her university

Data Collection

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used to balance control over data collection with flexibility, allowing participants to share their memories freely. Interview forms were created as a framework, with broad questions to encourage open sharing, and specific follow-up questions would be posed if necessary. Participants were not given the interview questions in advance to maintain the authenticity of their responses. The interviews with students were conducted in Turkish and the interviews with instructors were conducted in English, with an option to switch to Turkish, and held online for flexibility and to accommodate participants in different locations. Three 60-minute interviews were held with each student, focusing on their EFL learning experiences, challenges, and coping strategies during elementary school, high school, and university education. One 60-minute interview was held with each instructor focusing on their experience, challenges, and adaptive strategies regarding teaching EFL to visually impaired students. Additionally, a 50-minute lecture observation of one of the instructors' (Neva) classes, at which one of the student participants (Almila) was enrolled, was included to verify and enhance the credibility of the interview data. The focus was not on evaluating teaching but on observing how accommodations for a visually impaired student were implemented and the interactions between the student and teacher. A brief assessment of the classroom environment was also part of the observation, which was guided by a form prepared in advance. The instructor was informed of the observation and note-taking during the observation. The notes from the observation provided additional information and insight for data collection and analysis.

Data Analysis

This study was designed as a narrative inquiry, where the researchers re-constructed and re-negotiated participants' stories. In this approach, the researchers took a top-down perspective in narrative analysis, acting as a story analyst who aimed to present the experiences of visually impaired individuals from a holistic viewpoint. First, the interviews were transcribed. Next, the researchers conducted categorical content analysis, by dividing the data into smaller units, and categorizing the data according to recurring themes. These themes were compared, listed, and discussed in relation to the research questions and existing literature in the field. During the coding process, the

researchers first performed open coding, followed by axial coding. All the data analysis was conducted manually. Finally, the research questions served as chapter titles, with each chapter addressing a specific question, supported by the results of the coding process. To ensure the credibility of the data analysis, inter-rater reliability was assessed by having a third researcher independently code a portion of the interview transcripts. The codes generated were then compared to identify consistency in theme identification and interpretation. Any discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus. This process helped enhance the reliability and validity of the thematic analysis. Finally, the data were analyzed using holistic content analysis, where participants' stories were retold as a whole, which was then presented in the findings section. Each participant's story was reported in dedicated chapters within the findings and discussion sections.

Researcher Positionality

The researchers did not teach the students taught by the participants in the study. However, one of the researchers was responsible for preparing accommodations for Eylül's English exams. As a result, one of the researchers approached the study from an emic perspective, drawing on personal, insider experience within the research context, while the other adopted an etic perspective, providing an external, more objective viewpoint. Both researchers are sighted and do not have a visually impaired family member or a relative.

Trustworthiness

The researchers aimed to create a triangulation through including multiple parties of the research phenomenon during the data collection process. Visually impaired students, parents of one of the visually impaired students taught by the participants, and an expert in teaching English to students with visual impairments were interviewed and consulted. In addition, the insight coming from the lesson observation also contributed to the triangulation of the data.

Findings and Discussion

Experiences of Instructors

While Leyla and Murat previously taught Eylül, Maya and Neva taught Almila. Except for Maya, this was their first experience teaching a visually impaired student. None of the instructors received formal training in teaching students with SEN, particularly those with visual impairments. These findings are consistent with those reported in previous studies, including those by Durna (2012), Monthei (2013), Topor and Rosenblum (2013), Hernandez Giraldo et al. (2018), Susanto and Nanda (2018), Alvarenga de Alas et al. (2020), Febtiningsih et al. (2021), and Villalba (2022).

Maya, however, had some experience working with visually impaired students during her undergraduate studies as part of a community service course. This course, though, did not focus on teaching English to visually impaired learners; instead, it involved helping them with school subjects, homework, and reading. Lacking formal training in SEN, the instructors sought to make up for this gap by researching information online about how to teach visually impaired learners. Over time, they felt that their experiences transformed them both personally and professionally as English instructors. Throughout their teaching experiences with visually impaired students, the instructors went through phases of mixed emotions and thoughts, especially when comparing their initial feelings at the beginning of the semester or year with how they felt afterward. Table 3 below illustrates the instructors' evolving thoughts and emotions regarding their experiences teaching English to visually impaired learners, highlighting the transition in their perspectives.

Table 3.

Changing Thoughts and Emotions of EFL Instructors Regarding their General Experiences with Teaching EFL to Visually Impaired Learners

	EFL Instructors			
	Leyla	**Maya**	**Neva**	**Murat**
Initial Thoughts & Emotions	• Getting emotional • Confusion • Hesitation • Anxiety	• Feeling of shock	• Expectation of a heavy workload • Hesitation • Anxiety • More responsibility	• Anxiety
Closing Thoughts & Emotions	• Appreciation • Confidence	• Appreciation • Confidence	• Confidence	• Appreciation • Motivated

Leyla often described herself as a sensitive and emotional person, attributing this to her exceptional ability to empathize with others. While she saw her emotional nature as both a strength and a weakness, it sometimes hindered her ability to focus on situations due to being overwhelmed by emotions. However, she also valued this trait for enabling her to understand and relate to others' perspectives, such as empathizing with Eylül's experiences as a visually impaired individual.

Leyla, The Interview.

> *"My weakness and my strength I think it's the same like I always like I'm an emotional person and I think that I really empathize with the people quickly…. I put my myself in her shoes and I always think that Uh, imagine myself that I can't see anything at the moment. How can I do it better? How can I like improve? We have a specific task? Right now, we have to do it and how can I, how could I do it if I cannot see anything at all….?"*

Leyla's experience underscores the importance of empathy in supporting visually impaired learners. After a year with Eylül, she grew more confident, realizing her initial stress was due to lack of training. Leyla now feels better equipped for future visually impaired students and admires Eylül's superior listening and speaking skills.

Despite having no formal training, Maya often relied on prior experience with visually impaired learners. She figured out in the middle of the term that Almila, one of her students during the Covid-19 lockdown, was partially sighted. Maya had not been informed, and online classes with rarely used cameras made it difficult to identify Almila's condition. Even when cameras were on, Almila's glasses did not fit the stereotypical image of a learner with visual impairment. Maya later learned about Almila's condition from a colleague and attributed the delay to departmental oversight and Almila's reluctance to disclose her impairment, possibly due to peer concerns. Maya admitted that she primarily relied on her personal insight and experience as an EFL teacher who had previously worked with visually impaired learners. She openly stated that she did not make use of online resources, such as articles, videos, or supporting materials, related to SEN or visual impairment. Like Leyla, Maya emphasizes the importance of effective communication between EFL instructors and visually impaired students. She believes that fostering trust is crucial, though it may require time to develop. Consequently, she suggests that visually impaired students should remain with instructors they have established strong relationships with, rather than switching to new instructors each term.

Maya, The Interview

> *"It is also bad for student, by the way, because I am an experienced teacher with visually impaired students, and I can help them really well. Right? But if they change the teacher, it is hard to build the communication and rapport between teacher and student and also, they feel kind of teacher feels like ashamed of asking."*

Neva primarily taught EAP courses and first encountered Almila in one of these classes. Before teaching the class, she was informed that a visually impaired student would be present. Neva admitted that initially, she felt nervous and anxious, anticipating a heavy workload due to the adjustments she thought she would need to make for Almila. She assumed she would have to provide extra materials to accommodate Almila's needs, which she believed would add to her workload. However, she later realized that her concerns were unfounded. In her interviews, Neva shared that having a visually impaired student in her class made her feel a greater sense of responsibility.

She constantly aimed to ensure that she was doing everything possible to provide Almila with a high-quality education. In her interviews, Neva expressed feeling unsure about the language she used in the classroom. She explained that she made an effort to avoid words related to visual actions, such as "see."

Neva, The Interview

> *"I don't want to say anything wrong. For example, I am ignoring verb see. I am avoiding using it. Uh, for example, I'm trying not to say as you see, uh. What else? That's all, I guess. And actually, that's something our coordinator suggested to me at the very beginning of our course, because I asked her what I should do in this case because I also stated Uh, I had no uhm any, uh, I mean educational training related to this area and she stated that she uh she had read articles on this. So, she suggested me not to use see, I mean related any verbs related to seeing actually in general, so I don't know I'm doing right or wrong. Uh, because I don't want to behave offensively against Almila, and so I'm avoiding using it."*

Neva and her coordinator thought they were being considerate by avoiding the verb "see" with visually impaired learners. However, experts in SEN, especially those working with visually impaired individuals, suggest using such verbs without hesitation. Visually impaired people often use "see" in everyday language, like saying, "I didn't see your message." "Seeing" can mean reading, understanding, or being aware of something, not just the physical act of sight. Avoiding these verbs may inadvertently emphasize the disability instead of treating visually impaired individuals as equals.

Murat acknowledged that at the start, he was concerned due to his lack of training and experience in SEN, as well as his personal worries about how Eylül's nature as a visually impaired individual might impact their relationship during lessons.

Murat, The Interview

> *"Before meeting with her, I thought that it was going to be hard, you know? No, because I didn't have, uh, an experience like that. So, I thought that her personality will have a great effect on the way she learns from me because, uhm, if she was, how can I say it delicately? If she was an introvert, a sad person, a person that*

focuses on the hardships and bad aspects. And then I couldn't have done most of the things that we have achieved together."

Although it is sometimes assumed within sighted communities that visual impairment may lead to sadness, many visually impaired individuals—particularly those who are born blind or who lose their vision at an early age—do not necessarily experience emotional distress as a direct result of their condition. Those who lose sight later may struggle more with their condition. In Eylül's case, Murat appreciated her lively personality and strong listening and speaking skills. Their mutual trust and communication helped build a positive relationship, and Eylül's enthusiasm for speaking activities motivated Murat to improve his lessons. As a result, it can be seen that instructors and learners mutually influence each other's motivation to engage more in English lessons. This dynamic is a key factor that shapes the overall experiences of both visually impaired learners and their instructors.

Challenges

The EFL instructors faced a variety of challenges while teaching English to visually impaired learners. The table below outlines the challenges that the instructors discussed in their interviews.

Table 4.

Challenges Faced by the Instructors of EFL while Teaching the Visually Impaired Learners

Challenges	*f*
Hesitation	3
Unpreparedness	2
Problems with time management	1
Lack of Braille materials	1
Time demanding	1
Long reading passages	1
Lack of knowledge & experience	1
Informing peers	1
Problems with LMS systems	1
Describing videos	1
Including abstract concepts in the lessons	1

The challenges faced by the EFL instructors varied from one to another, as the affective factors influencing these challenges were either personal or related to the institutions they worked at. In other words, each instructor experienced different challenges during their time teaching English to visually impaired students. There were only two common challenges mentioned by the two instructors: "hesitation" and "unpreparedness." Other challenges were mentioned by only one instructor in their interview.

Maya was unsure whether to include abstract concepts like colors in her lessons, recalling a time during her community service when vocabulary included colors. Her hesitation was understandable, as she had not been trained to teach visually impaired learners and felt guilty introducing unfamiliar concepts.

-Maya, The Interview

> *"When I give the colors, by the way, I felt kind of ashamed because like pink cars, the yellow blah blah, they're all maybe like abstract concepts for them, but I don't know. I just I was saying because there were such things there. I was depicting the visuals first, tried to make them more concrete or understandable, but they were talking about colors so maybe they could understand."*

However, Maya's hesitation to include colors, while understandable, may not have been necessary. Visually impaired children learn colors through tactile materials, just as they learn abstract concepts like love, trust, or friendship. We may not touch love or smell trust, but we understand what they mean. Similarly, a visually impaired child can learn the colors of the rainbow or that the sky is blue.

Neva mentioned that balancing the pacing of the curriculum with providing accommodations for Almila was challenging. She often had to speed through lessons to stay on track with other classes, but after one lesson, Almila shared that the pace was too fast for her to keep up with. Neva's experience highlights a common challenge faced by many EFL instructors, who struggle with the heavy workload of the curriculum in their lessons.

Leyla shared that when Eylül was at the preparatory school, she did not have a Braille version of the coursebook. Although her parents attempted to convert the book

into Braille, they were unable to do so. As a result, Eylül had to use the regular print version of the book with her parents' assistance. Even if she had had the Braille version, Eylül struggled with spelling in English, which would have created another challenge in using the book. In her interview, Leyla mentioned that the Learning Management System (LMS) of the coursebook was not helpful for Eylül. Many of the activities and assignments, such as matching and dragging items to answer questions, were not suitable for her. Additionally, it was unclear whether the remaining activities were compatible with screen-reading technology. This highlights a critique of large publishing companies for not providing accessible formats for both sighted and visually impaired learners.

Maya shared another challenge she faced in her lessons, which was describing videos. While describing static images like pictures and illustrations was manageable, she found it much harder to describe videos.

Maya, The Interview

> *"One second, videos could be a challenge. OK, because pictures you can depict them but videos. You should stop them. We should at the time interrupt others, like maybe understanding that. That was a little bit challenging."*

This challenge highlights accessibility issues within major publishing houses. Visually impaired individuals can follow videos by listening to descriptions of the setting and actions. However, describing the video while it is playing in a classroom with sighted students can be disruptive. Publishing houses should provide video descriptions as an option, allowing visually impaired students to watch the video on their computers with headphones during lessons. Modern technology offers simple solutions for such issues, but large publishing houses have yet to prioritize making their resources more accessible.

Almila is partially sighted and was able to read until high school, but her vision deteriorated after that. For longer texts, she cannot rely on larger print or glasses. Since Almila does not know Braille, she requires a reader. Neva mentioned that reading aloud during their classes took much longer than she had anticipated. In Neva's case, Almila could be encouraged to use a screen reader for independent reading. However, many visually impaired individuals don't prefer screen reading technology due to its robotic,

mechanical voice. In this situation, audio recordings of the reading materials could be provided by support units instead. Similarly, Maya mentioned that during online education, she faced difficulty with reading long passages aloud from the book.

Maya, The Interview

> *"And also, the long passages. If they're too long. I was actually reading them a lot because I you know, although I make that, made them bigger in the screen, I thought that maybe it could be helpful. So, I was also teaching. Reading, uh, that was kind of challenging, but other than that they were all fine."*

In Maya's case, it is clear that the coursebook they used lacked audio versions of the reading texts, which would have been beneficial for both her and Almila. This highlights a flaw in the approach of large publishing houses, which fail to make their products more accessible.

Murat explained that most of the course content covered topics familiar to both sighted and visually impaired communities. However, he found some abstract concepts in certain units challenging, as he was unsure how to help Eylül clearly grasp these ideas.

Murat, The Interview

> *"Let's say if we had 10 or 12 units uh during that term, face to face term uhm, I think only one or two units were problematic for me because I had a bit of a hard time to try to make her visualize what we are talking about in her mind, but on topics like going on a holiday, or even going to a festival or sports, she had a lot of experiences and she was really talkative about her experiences, so I didn't have any problems."*

Despite his concerns about how to realistically represent abstract concepts, Murat did not let them stop him. He made efforts to find solutions and ultimately chose to discuss those topics with Eylül in class, which proved to be the right approach.

Accommodations, Adaptive Strategies, Methods, Techniques, and Materials

The EFL instructors employed various adaptive strategies, methods, techniques, and materials to address the challenges they encountered while teaching English to visually

impaired learners. The table below outlines these items based on how often they were mentioned by the instructors in their interviews.

Table 5.

Adaptive Strategies, Methods, Techniques, and Materials Provided by EFL Instructors While Teaching the Visually Impaired Learners

Adaptive Strategies, Methods, Techniques, and Materials	*f*
Describing visuals	4
Getting peers to assist	3
Providing repetitions	1
Taking a photo of the board	1
Changing the seating arrangement	1
Providing materials prior to classes	1
Providing detailed instructions	1
Slowing down	1
Excluding from skills	1
Checking on the student	1
Zooming content	1
Using a clear & audible voice	1

The most common accommodations provided by the EFL instructors for their visually impaired learners included describing visuals and seeking assistance from peers. Additionally, the instructors adapted their lessons and strategies to meet the specific needs of their visually impaired students. The instructors most frequently described visual content to their visually impaired students during lessons. All of the instructors reported regularly describing photos, images, and similar materials. Sometimes these descriptions were given while teaching the entire class or introducing a topic, while at other times, descriptions were provided after sighted students had been given time to complete tasks.

EFL instructors frequently received help from other students when teaching visually impaired learners. Leyla, Maya, and Neva typically asked Eylül's and Almila's desk mates to assist with task instructions and visual descriptions. In contrast, Murat mentioned that although he did not specifically assign a deskmate to help Eylül, her friend took the initiative to assist her. Leyla used group work in reading activities to give Eylül a group of friends who could assist her with the text. Similarly, Neva often incorporated pair work in her lessons rather than individual tasks. Even when students

worked independently, Neva would have one of Almila's peers help her, particularly with reading and writing activities.

Pair and group work activities are highly recommended in language classrooms because they promote collaboration, cooperation, and give students opportunities to communicate while practicing the language. In classrooms with visually impaired learners, these activities are even more beneficial, as they not only offer the same advantages but also provide meaningful peer assistance to the visually impaired students. Visually impaired learners, particularly those who rely on oral accommodations, often need to hear task instructions, descriptions, or questions. Maya mentioned that she would provide Almila with repetitions whenever she requested them. This supportive approach is important because visually impaired learners may sometimes feel hesitant to ask for repetition. Instructors should not always wait for students to ask but should take the initiative to offer repetitions when necessary.

Leyla mentioned that after each lesson, she asked her students to take a photo of the board and share it on the class's WhatsApp group. This allowed Eylül's parents to download the photo later and help Eylül review the lesson notes. Eylül did not request her teacher to read the board aloud during lessons, as she preferred not to take notes while listening to the teacher. As a solution, Leyla came up with the idea of having students take photos of whatever was on the board.

Leyla, The Interview

> *"And again, as she couldn't see the board. I told the other students to take the photograph of the board and send the photographs on the WhatsApp group and in the evening there, her parents uh, like again were telling her what I wrote on the board if I wrote some vocabulary items or something, her parents were telling her mm-hmm to write down all the vocabulary items to her notebook."*

Leyla's approach can be particularly useful when lesson time is limited or when instructors must follow a demanding curriculum. In her interview, Leyla also noted that she occasionally adjusted the seating arrangement to ensure that Eylül always had a peer sitting next to her to work with. Over time, students may feel tired if they are the ones consistently helping. To prevent both sighted and visually impaired students from

feeling uncomfortable when asking for or providing assistance, regularly changing the seating arrangement can be beneficial.

Neva shared that she sent Almila the lesson materials for the academic writing class via email before the lessons. Almila's vision had deteriorated during high school, and while she could once follow lessons with larger print, she now finds it tiring and time-consuming to read long texts this way. Although she can still use larger print and zoom, Neva does not provide materials in that format. Instead, she emails the documents to Almila so she can use her screen reader to access them before class. This approach was also evident during the lesson observation. However, during the lesson observation, it was noted that Almila did not use a screen reader to study the academic letter document but instead worked on it with one of her assigned groupmates.

In his interview, Murat frequently emphasized the importance of giving clear, detailed instructions for tasks. Even after noticing that one of Eylül's classmates was assisting her with task details, Murat continued to provide instructions before each activity. This was the right approach because, regardless of peer assistance, teacher guidance remains crucial for a student's performance. Additionally, peers may sometimes misinterpret the instructions and unintentionally mislead visually impaired learners. Therefore, Murat chose not to rely solely on Eylül's peer for accommodations, even though the student often volunteered to help.

The fast pace of a demanding curriculum can be a challenge for visually impaired learners. In such environments, instructors often need to move quickly to keep up with the schedule and avoid falling behind. Neva noted that Almila once gave her feedback about the fast pace of the class, prompting Neva to adjust the sequence of activities in an attempt to address the issue.

Neva, The Interview

> *"After that conversation I try to you know slow down. Actually, maybe doing the exercises mostly on Wednesdays and then leaving less exercise on Saturdays because you know, as the number of exercises increase."*

Neva's case highlights the importance of the feedback instructors receive from their visually impaired students when addressing such challenges. Therefore, it is crucial

for instructors and students to establish a routine where they regularly exchange feedback regarding their needs.

Eylül faced challenges with spelling English words, which affected her performance in writing classes. Leyla, her writing instructor, shared that she overlooked Eylül's spelling errors and did not deduct points for them.

Leyla, The Interview

> *"I didn't think that this is a need for her (in her department) and therefore I tried not to, uh, cut some points because of spelling."*

However, Leyla's approach might not have been entirely correct. Eylül may need to improve her spelling skills, especially since 30% of her department's curriculum is taught in English, and she may be expected to read and write in English. Additionally, as Eylül aspires to become an academic, spelling will be important when writing articles. While Eylül could use a dictation software, it would be challenging for her to verify if the software transcribes the words correctly. Moreover, Eylül should develop her spelling skills to avoid relying solely on exam assistants for writing. Excluding spelling instruction may not be beneficial in the long term. Instead, extracurricular spelling practice could be assigned as homework, or Eylül could receive private spelling training after class from one of her instructors.

Neva explained that she frequently checked in with Almila to ensure she was able to follow the lessons comfortably. This illustrates the value of immediate feedback from students, which is particularly crucial for visually impaired learners. These learners are more sensitive to factors such as light, noise, or rapid pacing, which can impact their learning experience more intensely than their sighted peers. Asking visually impaired students for prompt feedback during lessons can help instructors make necessary adjustments and accommodations more effectively.

Maya shared that during online lessons, she used screen sharing to allow students to follow along with the book. Knowing Almila was partially sighted, Maya often zoomed in on the content to help her, and when that was not enough, she worked with Almila in a separate room, reading aloud while the other students worked. This approach highlights how online tools enabled Maya to support visually impaired learners privately

while managing the rest of the class. Online meeting platforms offer valuable flexibility for instructors and can help address challenges like fast pacing by providing optional revision sessions. For visually impaired learners, this support is crucial, especially when study partners are not provided by support units.

During the lesson observation, it was noted that Neva used a clear, audible voice while teaching. She also made sure to stay close to Almila throughout the lesson. Although Neva typically moved around the classroom while teaching, she avoided going to the back, likely to ensure Almila could always hear her. This thoughtful approach helped Almila follow the lesson more easily, while also ensuring that other students could hear the teacher clearly, even from the back of the classroom.

These findings align with those of Omer (2015) and Attachoo and Sittihikul (2021), who also observed that teachers tend to hold positive attitudes toward visually impaired learners and make efforts to provide personalized accommodations to support their learning needs.

Implications for Teaching

The findings of the study suggest several important implications for improving EFL instruction for visually impaired learners. One of the most critical issues was the lack of formal training and coursework on SEN in ELT programs in Türkiye, which led instructors to face various challenges in the classroom. This highlights the need for both pre-service and in-service training focused on inclusive practices. Additionally, the study emphasizes the value of peer support, effective communication, and collaborative planning with visually impaired students. These strategies can enhance classroom inclusivity and instructional effectiveness. A more detailed overview of these implications and corresponding suggestions is presented in Table 6.

Table 6.

Implications for Teaching

Finding	Implication
Importance of consistent teacher-student relationships	Maya emphasized the value of continuity. Stable relationships support trust and better learning experiences. Consider minimizing instructor changes for visually impaired learners when possible.
Instructors avoided common verbs like "see"	Neva avoided visual verbs out of concern. Over-cautious language use can unintentionally limit natural communication. Consider encouraging authentic language use, guided by student feedback, not assumptions.
Emotional sensitivity can be an asset	Leyla's empathy evolved into strength. Reflective teaching transforms emotional sensitivity into effective pedagogy. Consider promoting reflective practice and peer sharing among instructors.
Lack of accessible teaching materials	Challenges such as a lack of Braille materials, inaccessible LMS platforms, long reading passages, and undescribed videos point to systemic gaps in material accessibility. Consider collaborating with publishers for accessible resources (audio, Braille-ready, screen-reader-friendly). Provide instructors with guidelines to adapt materials.
Limited use of assistive technologies	Students like Almila could not fully use Braille or screen readers. Students may become overly dependent on instructors. Consider training staff in assistive technology (screen readers, audio tools); provide recorded texts or AI voice alternatives.
Instructors avoided teaching abstract/visual concepts	Avoiding such concepts can limit student learning. Consider teaching abstract ideas with context and metaphor; do not oversimplify content.
Instructors solved problems creatively without formal training	Murat and Leyla adapted successfully. Teacher autonomy can lead to effective adaptation. Consider fostering a culture of shared strategies and support among peers. Recognize and encourage innovation.
Systemic gaps in publishing standards	Materials are not inclusive. Lack of accessible content leads to inequity in learning opportunities. Consider advocating for policy change and publishing reform to ensure all EFL materials meet accessibility guidelines.
Absence of SEN training led to hesitation	İnstructors reported feeling unprepared. Lack of training prevents instructors from meeting student needs confidently. Consider integrating hands-on SEN modules into pre-service and in-service teacher education.
Instructors' emotional readiness is a key factor	Instructors' emotional reactions—ranging from guilt to anxiety—highlighted the emotional labor of inclusive teaching.
Describing visual content is essential	Describing images, visuals, and video content to ensure visually impaired students are included in meaning-making is useful for the students.
Balancing fairness and flexibility is crucial	Excluding critical skills such as spelling entirely may hinder long-term academic goals.
Visually impaired students mostly rely on auditory means	It is crucial for the visually impaired students to be able to hear the instructors clearly during the classes since they cannot rely on visual cues.
Instructors rely on peer support most of the time to assist visually impaired learners with task completion.	Peer support is a key factor for visually impaired learners' learning experiences.
Sharing materials in advance allows learners to prepare	Sending materials ahead of lessons allows learners using screen readers or assistive tools to prepare.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study examined the experiences and challenges faced by EFL instructors and the assistive strategies they used to accommodate the SEN of the visually impaired learners, emphasizing the importance of accessible materials and assistive technologies. Future studies could explore the effectiveness of collaborative efforts between educational institutions and publishers in developing and implementing accessible teaching materials, such as screen-reader-compatible texts and Braille-ready documents. Additionally, research is needed to evaluate the impact of systematic assistive technology training for both educators and students on academic autonomy and learning outcomes of visually impaired learners.

The study found that participants lacked formal training in teaching students with SEN, and for most, meeting a visually impaired student in their own classroom was their first such experience, resulting in several challenges. In light of this, one possible direction is to examine how visually impaired learners are currently taught English skills at various educational levels and whether there have been any improvements compared to previous studies, including this one. Additionally, research could focus on teaching specific skills such as spelling, reading, and writing.

The findings also highlighted that major publishing houses have largely failed to provide effective accessibility services for visually impaired learners. Consequently, investigating accessibility issues in relation to ELT materials and resources could be another valuable area of research.

The findings indicated that the peers of visually impaired learners can significantly influence their overall performance in the English classroom. However, there is limited research on the impact of peers on visually impaired learners' experiences in EFL education. Therefore, future researchers may want to explore studies involving both visually impaired learners and their peers.

Ethics Committee Permission Information

This research study was conducted with the Research Ethics Committee approval of Gazi University, dated 19.04.2022 and numbered 08.

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