

# Korea TESOL Journal

Volume 20, Number 1  
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Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages



# **Korea TESOL Journal**

**Volume 20, Number 1**



**Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages**

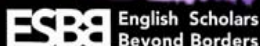
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# Korea TESOL Journal

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## Korea TESOL Journal

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The *Korea TESOL Journal* is a peer-reviewed journal, welcoming previously unpublished practical and scholarly articles on topics of significance to individuals concerned with the teaching of English as a foreign language. The *Journal* focuses on articles that are relevant and applicable to the Korean EFL context. Two issues of the *Journal* are published annually.

As the *Journal* is committed to publishing manuscripts that contribute to the application of theory to practice in our profession, submissions reporting relevant research and addressing implications and applications of this research to teaching in the Korean setting are particularly welcomed.

The *Journal* is also committed to the fostering of scholarship among Korea TESOL members and throughout Korea. As such, classroom-based papers, i.e., articles arising from genuine issues of the English language teaching classroom, are welcomed. The *Journal* aims to support all scholars by welcoming research from early-career researchers to senior academics.

Areas of interest include, but are by no means limited to, the following:

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## About Korea TESOL

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Korea TESOL (KOTESOL; Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) is a professional organization of teachers of English whose main goal is to assist its members in their professional development and to contribute to the improvement of English language teaching (ELT) in Korea. Korea TESOL also serves as a network for teachers to connect with others in the ELT community and as a source of information for ELT resource materials and events in Korea and abroad.

Korea TESOL is proud to be an affiliate of TESOL (TESOL International Association), an international education association of over 10,000 members with headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, USA, as well as an associate of IATEFL (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language), an international education association of over 4,000 members with headquarters in Canterbury, Kent, UK

Korea TESOL had its beginnings in October 1992, when the Association of English Teachers in Korea (AETK) and the Korea Association of Teachers of English (KATE) agreed to unite. Korea TESOL is a not-for-profit organization established to promote scholarship, disseminate information, and facilitate cross-cultural understanding among persons associated with the teaching and learning of English in Korea. In pursuing these goals, Korea TESOL seeks to cooperate with other groups having similar concerns.

Korea TESOL is an independent national affiliate of a growing international movement of teachers, closely associated with not only TESOL and IATEFL but also with PAC (the Pan-Asian Consortium of Language Teaching Societies), consisting of JALT (Japan Association for Language Teaching), ThaiTESOL (Thailand TESOL), ETA-ROC (English Teachers Association of the Republic of China/Taiwan), FEELTA (Far Eastern English Language Teachers' Association, Russia), and PALT (Philippine Association for Language Teaching, Inc.). Korea TESOL is also associated with MELTA (Malaysian English Language Teaching Association), TEFLIN (Indonesia), CamTESOL (Cambodia), ELTAM/Mongolia TESOL, HAAL (Hong Kong), MAAL (Macau), ELTAI (India), and most recently with BELTA (Bangladesh English Language Teachers Association). Korea TESOL also has partnership arrangements with numerous domestic ELT associations.

The membership of Korea TESOL includes elementary school, middle school, high school, and university-level English teachers as well as teachers-in-training, administrators, researchers, materials writers, curriculum developers, and other interested individuals.

Korea TESOL has ten active chapters throughout the nation: Members of Korea TESOL are from all parts of Korea and many parts of the world, thus providing Korea TESOL members the benefits of a diverse, inclusive, and multicultural membership.

Korea TESOL holds an annual international conference, a national conference, workshops, and other professional development events, while its chapters hold monthly workshops, annual conferences, symposia, and networking events. Also organized within Korea TESOL are various SIGs (special interest groups) – e.g., Reflective Practice, Classroom Management, Social Justice, Christian Teachers, Research, Women and Gender Equality, Young Learners and Teens – which hold their own meetings and events.



Visit <https://koreatesol.org/join-kotesol> for membership and event information.



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# Research Papers

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# Perceptions, Integration, and Learning Needs of ChatGPT Among EFL Teachers

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**Heekyung Lee**

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This study examined EFL secondary school teachers' perceptions, integration, and learning needs regarding ChatGPT in language education. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected by administering a survey to 41 teachers from 40 schools in Korea. Findings revealed that teachers perceive ChatGPT as valuable for language education, particularly for instant feedback and materials generation. Approximately 70 percent of teachers have utilized ChatGPT in various teaching-related activities, expressing a strong interest in AI integration. Many anticipated their role shift towards facilitating personalized learning experiences, with AI technology playing an important role. Consequently, teachers seek to develop expertise not only in English education but also in AI literacy. However, teachers also expressed concerns, including students' overreliance on AI tools and the potential for cheating. Therefore, this study highlights the importance of implementing comprehensive teacher training to address the needs and concerns of teachers, ensuring the successful integration of AI in language education.

**Keywords:** ChatGPT, secondary school, EFL, perception, integration, learning needs

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid emergence of AI technology, exemplified by inventions like ChatGPT, has brought innovation to various fields in an unprecedentedly short period, and the field of language education is no exception. Since the public introduction of ChatGPT in November 2022, researchers have been intrigued by the potential of AI technology in language education and have explored its various possibilities. Early

studies have outlined anticipated benefits and concerns, setting the stage for subsequent empirical investigations (Baidoo-Anu & Ansah, 2023; Hong, 2023; Kasneci et al., 2023; Rasul et al., 2023; Rudolph et al., 2023). These early discussions paved the way for in-depth examinations of ChatGPT roles in language education, including writing assistance, research aids, grammar checkers, and more. Despite these valuable contributions, the existing studies have predominantly focused on university settings, and the roles of ChatGPT in EFL secondary school settings are relatively unexplored.

Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by investigating how Korean EFL secondary school teachers perceive and utilize ChatGPT in their teaching activities. The following research questions guide this inquiry:

- RQ1. How do Korean secondary school English teachers perceive the utility of ChatGPT in enhancing their teaching practices?
- RQ2. In what ways do these teachers incorporate ChatGPT into their teaching activities?
- RQ3. What are these teachers' learning needs and concerns regarding integrating ChatGPT into their language classrooms?

Addressing these questions aims to provide essential insights for teacher training and equip language educators with practical knowledge to enhance language instruction in an EFL secondary school setting.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Use of ChatGPT in Language Education**

Since its public introduction, ChatGPT has sparked substantial discussion regarding its myriad advantages and challenges in educational applications. On the positive side, ChatGPT, functioning as an adaptive large language model, stands out as a powerful tool for providing students with prompt and individualized feedback, which is conducive to student-centered learning (Hong, 2023; Kasneci et al., 2023; Rasul et al., 2023). Additionally, educators can harness ChatGPT to innovate their teaching methodologies. They can experiment with approaches such as flipped learning and discussion-based classes, allowing increased time to

engage with students and offer constructive feedback (Rudolph et al., 2023). Furthermore, the model proves beneficial for educators in creating lesson plans, developing activities (Kasneci et al., 2023), and simplifying the grading process (Tajik & Tajik, 2023), resulting in significant time and effort savings for teachers (Rasul et al., 2023). Moreover, as a large language model, ChatGPT offers considerable authentic language input to language learners based on its vast language data and adaptive technology (Hong, 2023).

However, integrating ChatGPT into educational settings is not without challenges. Many researchers express concerns about potential issues such as copyright infringement and plagiarism arising from the use of ChatGPT (Hong, 2023; Kasneci et al., 2023; Rasul et al., 2023; Rudolph et al., 2023). These concerns are anticipated to lead to changes in the education field, necessitating innovation in evaluation methods (Cotton et al., 2023; Moqbel & Al-Kadi, 2023; Rasul et al., 2023). In addition, large language models have the potential to present inaccurate information as fact (Baidoo-Anu & Ansah, 2023; Rudolph et al., 2023; Van Dis et al., 2023) and amplify existing biases (Kasneci et al., 2023), so fact-checking and verification processes will be essential when utilizing ChatGPT (Van Dis et al., 2023). Furthermore, scholars caution against learners over-relying on the model (Kasneci et al., 2023), emphasizing the potential detrimental impact on their ability to construct their own knowledge (Rasul et al., 2023).

This academic discourse surrounding the potential uses of ChatGPT in education has led to various empirical studies. Kovačević (2023) advocated for the versatile application of ChatGPT in the context of English for specific purposes (ESP), emphasizing its efficacy in generating customized texts and crafting language exercises for the specific target language use (TLU) domains. Han et al. (2023) explored the integration of ChatGPT into EFL college writing courses, revealing positive student satisfaction and multifaceted benefits, including translation assistance, brainstorming support, grammar aid, and draft revision. Schmidt-Fajlik (2023) investigated ChatGPT's utility as a grammar checker in a Japanese university setting while comparing its effectiveness with Grammarly and ProWritingAid. Widiati et al. (2023) also illuminated the positive impact of AI writing tools, including ChatGPT, on enhancing writing quality among EFL college students in Indonesia.

Despite these advancements, the current research on ChatGPT in

language education predominantly exists in theoretical realms or is confined to higher education settings. Therefore, a critical need exists to extend investigations into diverse educational settings, including secondary school language education, to comprehensively understand the implications and potential of ChatGPT in varied educational contexts.

## **Technology Use in EFL Secondary School Settings**

In most EFL contexts, opportunities for students to engage with the target language outside the classroom are limited (Hong, 2023; Wulandari, 2019). However, technological advancements have facilitated EFL students to learn English more efficiently within more meaningful and authentic contexts. Various studies have explored the impact of different technological interventions in EFL secondary school classrooms. A comprehensive review of recent research on technology utilization in EFL secondary school settings, alongside an exploration of teachers' or students' perceptions, will provide valuable insights for the current study.

Integrating technology in the EFL classroom provides students with more authentic language input and a richer language learning environment. For instance, Yang (2020) found that incorporating TikTok into English classes in a Chinese secondary school enhanced the authenticity of language materials, enriched classroom activities, and positively influenced students' motivation. Binmahboob (2020), in a study on the use of YouTube among secondary school teachers in Saudi Arabia, revealed that technology, such as YouTube, contributes to diversifying the learning environment and increasing learners' motivation. In a study of Thai secondary school teachers' perception and experience of using technology in classrooms, teachers reported frequent use of internet-based tools such as Kahoot, Quizizz, and Padlet, which were perceived to add variety to traditional lessons and help students become more engaged in language learning (Boonmoh et al., 2021). Meanwhile, Chang et al. (2020) reported that lessons utilizing augmented reality (AR) technology helped to create more authentic English situational context environments, which increased students' motivation, learning satisfaction, and learning performance in a study of junior high school students in Taiwan.

One notable application of AI technology in language learning is evident in a study employing a chatbot. Han (2020) investigated the impacts of voice-based AI chatbots on Korean EFL middle school

students' speaking competence and their related affective domains, revealing positive changes in students' beliefs, motivation, and a reduction in anxiety toward English learning. Another study by Park (2019) explored the use of AI-based grammar checkers among Korean high school students, suggesting that while these tools may not address all error types, they can facilitate improvements in grammatical accuracy for English learners.

The literature demonstrates a diverse array of technologies already integrated into EFL secondary contexts, with teachers generally holding positive perceptions of these tools. The use of technology in EFL language learning not only provides students with varied and authentic language input but also introduces innovation into traditional teaching methods, positively impacting students' affective domains.

However, despite the growing use of technology in EFL secondary school settings, there remains a research gap regarding the specific utilization and perceptions of adaptive large language models such as ChatGPT. To address this gap, the current study aims to offer a detailed snapshot of how Korean secondary school English teachers are utilizing ChatGPT and their perceptions of this emerging technology. This investigation will serve as a foundational step toward further empirical studies in the EFL secondary school context.

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

In this study, 41 secondary school English teachers from 40 schools in Korea participated. Surveyed participants were recruited exclusively from an online community designed for secondary school English teachers, serving as a dedicated virtual platform for educators to address queries about English teaching activities and share relevant information. For the study, an advertisement was posted within this online community for a week (from September 7 to 13, 2023), outlining the objectives of the study and providing the survey link. Subsequently, interested teachers voluntarily participated in the survey, supplying details such as school information, names, and email addresses during their involvement. To confirm respondents' current teaching status, the author cross-referenced this information with details available on each school's official website.

While the participant selection method did not employ random sampling, these participants were considered suitable for the study – a snapshot capturing English teachers’ interests and usage patterns concerning ChatGPT. Participants exhibited diverse teaching experience: 5 years or less (19.5%), 6–10 years (29.3%), 11–15 years (14.6%), 16–20 years (22%), 21–25 years (7.3%), and more than 25 years (7.3%). The majority were high school teachers (75.6%), while middle school teachers accounted for 24.4%.

## **Instruments**

To comprehensively capture participants’ perceptions, implementation, and learning needs regarding ChatGPT, a survey using a questionnaire was employed as an efficient and accessible mode of data collection. The questionnaire comprised 20 questions, excluding administrative questions, and was divided into three main sections: Perceptions of ChatGPT, Integration and Implementation, and Learning Needs. Also, the survey strategically employed various types of questions, including multiple-choice and open-ended questions, and Likert scale questions to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. Currently, researchers increasingly prefer to combine qualitative and quantitative methods so as to benefit from the strengths of both methods (Nimehchisalem, 2018, p. 31). In this study, multiple-choice questions enabled a structured approach for gathering responses, thereby facilitating quantitative analysis. Likert scale questions were included to quantitatively measure participants’ attitudes and opinions, while open-ended questions provided qualitative insights and a deeper understanding of participants’ viewpoints.

The questionnaire items and response options were crafted by drawing upon insights from prior research studies (Baidoo-Anu & Ansah, 2023; Hong, 2023; Kasneci et al., 2023; Rasul et al., 2023; Rudolph et al., 2023) outlining the potential benefits and concerns of ChatGPT. The questionnaire design also incorporated the author’s firsthand experience as an EFL secondary school teacher. Additionally, the study found inspiration in Binmahboob (2002) and Emre (2019), whose investigations examined EFL teachers’ perceptions regarding the effectiveness of YouTube in enhancing students’ speaking skills, and the prospective teacher’s views on obstacles to integrating technology in education. After extracting the topics that comprised the questionnaire, each question was constructed by referring to the question-wording method proposed by

Nunan (1992). Lastly, the questionnaire underwent a comprehensive review process involving three beta testers: a TESOL professor, an EFL teacher, and an ESL teacher. Their valuable insights and suggestions contributed to the refinement and improvement of the survey.

## **Data Collection**

The survey was conducted using an online platform; given that all participants were located in Korea while the author was based in the US, Google Forms, a platform familiar to Korean teachers, was utilized for the online survey. Respondents expressing interest in participating in the study were granted access to the survey link. A concise overview of the research was presented at the outset on the Google Forms survey, accompanied by a request for consent from participants. For any survey-related questions, communication took place through email and text messages. The survey was carried out over one week, from September 7 to 13, 2023.

## **Data Analysis**

Since the survey included both the quantitative and the qualitative sections, each type of data was analyzed based on quantitative and qualitative analyses, respectively. For the quantitative portion, including multiple-choice and Likert scale items, frequency analysis and descriptive statistics were used. Frequency analysis was employed for multiple-choice items, presenting frequencies and percentages to show the distribution of responses across options. For Likert scale items, descriptive statistics such as mean, median, and standard deviation were provided to summarize participants' perceptions of the given topic. Responses from open-ended questions were qualitatively analyzed using Nunan's (1992) keyword analysis. Initially, all responses were meticulously reviewed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content. Then, repetitive keywords and phrases were identified and organized into thematic categories. That is, the author generated categories from the statements made by respondents. Each response was classified based on these themes, and the frequency was counted and presented.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

EFL Secondary School Teachers’ Perceptions of ChatGPT

Initial Impressions About Using ChatGPT in Language Teaching

Upon their first encounter with the concept of integrating ChatGPT into language teaching, a significant 73% of survey respondents expressed enthusiasm and intrigue, indicating a strong interest in exploring its potential. Another 14.6% conveyed curiosity mixed with uncertainty, while 9.8% reported a mix of worry and hesitation. Only one participant expressed skepticism about the tool’s usefulness. This indicates that most teachers are highly interested in this new AI tool, suggesting the potential for widespread use of this technology in teachers’ educational settings in the future.

TABLE 1. Initial Impressions About Using ChatGPT in Language Teaching (Select one)

Statements	N (41)	%
Intrigued and excited to learn more.	30	73.2
Curious but uncertain about its practicality.	6	14.6
Worried and hesitant.	4	9.8
Skeptical about its usefulness in language teaching.	1	2.4
None of the above.	0	0

Current Familiarity with Using AI Technologies in Teaching-Related Activities

Participants’ familiarity with AI technologies in teaching-related activities varied across the spectrum, as indicated in Table 2. A minority (4.9%) expressed minimal familiarity (Rating 1), while 14.6% had a modest acquaintance (Rating 2). A significant portion (43.9%) positioned themselves at a mid-level of familiarity (Rating 3), suggesting notable exposure. Moving higher, 22% demonstrated considerable understanding and integration (Rating 4), and 14.6% exhibited the highest familiarity level (Rating 5). The results indicate a broad spectrum of participants’ exposure to the concept of integrating AI technologies into teaching. This highlights the need for tailored support and guidance to bridge the gap among teachers.

**TABLE 2. Summary of Survey Response (Perception)**

Questions	1	2	3	4	5	<i>M</i>	<i>Me</i>	<i>SD</i>
4.1.2. Current familiarity with using ChatGPT in language teaching-related activities.	2 (4.9)	6 (14.6)	18 (43.9)	9 (22)	6 (14.6)	3.27	3	1.04
4.1.3. Opinion on the efficacy of using ChatGPT in language teaching-related activities.	0	2 (4.9)	11 (26.8)	20 (48.8)	8 (19.5)	3.83	4	0.79
4.1.4. Perceived benefits of ChatGPT in students' language learning experience.	1 (2.4)	2 (4.9)	12 (29.3)	17 (41.5)	9 (22)	3.76	4	0.93

*Note.* *M* = mean, *Me* = median, *SD* = standard deviation. For Question 4.1.2, 1 = *not familiar*, 5 = *very familiar*. For Question 4.1.3, 1 = *not helpful*, 5 = *highly effective*. For Question 4.1.4, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*.

### **Opinion on the Efficacy of Using ChatGPT in Language Teaching-Related Activities**

A majority of teachers (48.8%) perceived ChatGPT as highly effective in supporting English instruction, with an additional 19.5% rating it at the highest level (see Table 2). To gain more detailed ideas regarding this question, participants were asked to identify the most significant benefits they envisioned regarding the use of ChatGPT from a teacher's perspective. As outlined in Table 3, a substantial number of participants responded that "providing instant language assistance and feedback to students" is the foremost benefit of utilizing ChatGPT, given the teachers' challenge of addressing individual students' questions in a timely manner. Additionally, a comparable number of participants considered the tool's ability to generate diverse and engaging language materials particularly beneficial, which can contribute to improving the quality of lessons. This is consistent with the general consensus in the literature (Hong, 2023; Kasneci et al., 2023; Rasul et al., 2023) that ChatGPT is a valuable tool for providing students with prompt and individualized feedback.

**TABLE 3. Teachers’ Perceived Benefits of Using ChatGPT in Language Teaching (Select one)**

Statements	N (41)	%
Providing instant language assistance and feedback to students.	14	34.1
Generating diverse and engaging language learning materials.	12	29.3
Saving teacher’s time on generating prompts and resources for language activities.	7	17.1
Supporting differentiated instruction for students with varying proficiency levels.	4	9.8
Providing an extra resource for students to enhance their practical conversational abilities.	4	9.8
I don’t see any potential benefits from ChatGPT in language teaching.	0	0

**Teachers’ Perceived Benefits of ChatGPT in Students’ Language Learning Experience**

As shown in Table 2, teachers widely perceived the integration of ChatGPT into language instruction as beneficial not only for both teaching practices but also for students’ overall learning experiences. When respondents were asked a follow-up question about how ChatGPT contributes to improving students’ language learning experience, the tool’s ability to provide students with more input; exposure to diverse, authentic texts; and support in expanding vocabulary emerged as the most significant benefits. Additionally, it was also noted that ChatGPT enables students to receive immediate feedback, thereby increasing their motivation, as detailed in Table 4.

In an EFL context, students often face challenges in accessing language input beyond the classroom and textbooks (Hong, 2023; Wulandari, 2019). In these circumstances, ChatGPT could significantly enhance both the quantity and quality of students’ language input. Teachers’ responses also indicated that ChatGPT could assist in students’ review and self-study by enabling them to request more texts on similar topics of the textbook passage at their own levels. At the same time, students can get a variety of sentence examples, including vocabulary usage in various authentic contexts. Additionally, “immediate feedback and enhanced motivation” also stood out as a prominent benefit. Teachers often find it challenging to provide timely and personalized

feedback to individual students because they are dealing with a large number of students. As many participants responded, ChatGPT could help teachers address this issue by offering immediate and tailored feedback to each student’s needs. This aligns with the argument of Kasneci et al. (2023), suggesting that ChatGPT will significantly contribute to providing students with a personalized learning experience.

**TABLE 4. Teachers’ Perceived Benefits of ChatGPT in Students’ Language Learning Experience**

Views	N
More input; access to diverse, authentic texts; expanding vocabulary	8
Immediate feedback and enhanced motivation	7
Grammar check and writing improvement	4
Supporting individualized learning and self-study	4
Increased willingness to try out a new language due to reduced pressure	2
Increased conversation practice and interaction opportunities (chatbot)	5
Content-based learning (studying topics of their own interest while acquiring language)	1
Expanding background knowledge about the target culture	1

**Teachers’ Perceived Concerns About Using ChatGPT in Language Teaching**

Participants were also asked about their primary concerns or challenges regarding integrating ChatGPT into language teaching. As illustrated in Table 5, the most prevalent concern was the potential overreliance of students on AI for language learning (46.3%). This highlights the importance of adopting a balanced approach in using ChatGPT as a language education tool. Teachers must carefully consider when and to what extent ChatGPT should be incorporated into the language classroom, providing students with clear guidelines.

Moreover, participants expressed concerns about the accuracy and appropriateness of AI-generated content (24.4%). As various studies noted, ChatGPT occasionally produces inaccurate information presented as factual (Baidoo-Anu & Ansah, 2023; Rudolph et al., 2023; Van Dis et al., 2023). This issue is also intertwined with potential biases in ChatGPT outputs, acknowledged by 7.3% of the respondents. Given the limited ability of secondary school students to critically discern incorrect

information and biased opinions, teachers must inform students explicitly that while ChatGPT can be a valuable aid in language learning, it may occasionally provide inaccuracies and prejudiced perspectives. Also, students should be advised to cross-check the tool’s results with those from other sources and understand their accountability for any errors the tool may introduce (Wood & Kelly, 2023).

Lastly, a considerable number of teachers (17.1%) expressed concerns about the potential for students to cheat using ChatGPT. This aligns with prior research highlighting broader concerns about academic integrity and the risk of plagiarism associated with the integration of AI technology in educational settings (Kasneci et al., 2023; Rudolph et al., 2023; Westfall, 2023). In light of these concerns, educators are urged to design assessments and assignments where ChatGPT cannot be directly employed for cheating (Cotton et al., 2023; Moqbel & Al-Kadi, 2023). Moqbel and Al-Kadi (2023) proposed a shift from purely quantitative assessment to a blend of qualitative and quantitative assessment that focuses not solely on the final learning product. They suggested that alternative assessment, such as performance-based assessment (e.g., projects, presentations, discussions), portfolios, and self-assessment, should be the future direction of assessment in language classrooms. Cotton et al. (2023) also recommended assessments that ask students to showcase their critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills. This could involve having students make presentations, engage in group discussions that require the application of their knowledge and skills, or submit a series of drafts before the final version.

**TABLE 5. Teachers’ Perceived Concerns About Using ChatGPT in Language Teaching (Select one)**

Statements	N (41)	%
Ensuring the accuracy and appropriateness of AI-generated content.	10	24.4
Addressing potential biases present in AI responses.	3	7.3
Managing students’ overreliance on AI for language learning.	19	46.3
Balancing AI integration with traditional teaching methods and curriculum.	1	2.4
Preventing or detecting students’ potential cheating using ChatGPT.	7	17.1
I don’t see any concerns or challenges.	0	0
Other (Lack of proficiency in using ChatGPT among students).	1	2.4

## EFL Secondary School Teachers' Integration of ChatGPT into Their Teaching

### Teachers' Usage of ChatGPT in Teaching-Related Activities

When asked about their use of ChatGPT in English teaching-related activities, 68.3% of the participants affirmed its utilization. Among regular users, 56.1% reported using it “a few times a month,” followed by “several times a week” (19.5%), “once a week” (12.2%), and “infrequently” (12.2%). Approximately 70% of respondents have experience using ChatGPT, indicating a substantial proportion of educators already familiar with AI integration. However, the varying usage frequencies (32% more than once a week vs. 68.3% a few times a month or less) highlight a noticeable difference among teachers in their ability to use and preferences for integrating AI technology into language education. This variation in teachers' utilization of AI technology is directly linked to the amount of exposure students have to this AI tool, ultimately leading to differences in students' ability to utilize AI technology. Therefore, it is essential for more teachers to have an interest in emerging AI technologies and actively incorporate elements that could benefit students' learning into their teaching. Additionally, educational authorities should provide teachers with useful training on utilizing AI technology and suggest guidelines for seamlessly integrating AI technology into teaching and learning practices.

**TABLE 6. Teachers' Usage of ChatGPT in Teaching-Related Activities**

Frequency of Usage	N (41)	%
Daily	0	0
Several times a week	8	19.5
Once a week	5	12.2
A few times a month	23	56.1
Infrequently	5	12.2

### Types of Utilization of ChatGPT in Teaching-Related Activities

Table 7 outlines the varied applications of ChatGPT in teaching-related activities. The most prevalent usage reported by teachers is in creating sample sentences for vocabulary or grammar teaching. This aligns with the perceived benefits of ChatGPT, emphasizing “more input; access to diverse, authentic texts; and expanding vocabulary” in Table 4.

Moreover, the survey responses indicated that teachers frequently

utilize ChatGPT during writing classes. As shown in multiple studies, ChatGPT has already been widely recognized and utilized in higher educational settings for its utility as a writing assistant and a grammar checker (Han et al., 2023; Schmidt-Fajlik, 2023; Widiati et al., 2023). This was also evident in a secondary school setting, and such features of ChatGPT are expected to be more beneficial for students in EFL settings where writing fluency and accuracy tend to be lower compared to students in English as a second language (ESL) settings.

In addition to these, ChatGPT has been shown to serve various other purposes, such as providing information on cultural insights and background knowledge related to the topic of each lesson, creating various assessments, and customizing learning materials. This result demonstrates that ChatGPT is already effectively serving as a teacher’s assistant in several areas. It is anticipated that the utilization of ChatGPT in language teaching will continue to expand in the future.

**TABLE 7. Types of Utilization of ChatGPT in Teaching-Related Activities (Select all that apply)**

Types of Usage	N (41)	Rank
Creating lesson plans	2	10
Creating sample sentences for vocabulary or grammar teaching	28	1
Creating a reading passage	10	4
Creating a listening/speaking script	2	10
Creating a rubric	2	10
Grading students’ writing assignments	9	8
Creating formative assessment: weekly vocab quiz, grammar quiz, etc.	10	4
Creating summative assessment: midterm and final	10	4
Customizing learning materials: Tailoring learning materials based on student’s specific needs and levels	10	4
In-class activity: Engage students in chat conversations with ChatGPT	8	9
In-class activity: Writing assistance for students. Using ChatGPT to provide grammar and writing tips for students’ writing assignments	15	2
Providing cultural insights and background knowledge about the passage to students	11	3
Brainstorming creative language activities	9	8
Other	2	10

### Anticipated Shifts in English Teacher Roles

Regarding the potential impact of AI technologies (particularly ChatGPT) on the future role of English teachers, participants expressed various views. As seen in Table 8, 41.5% recognized an expected change in the role of English teachers. Interestingly, 29.3% of the respondents answered “No” or “I don’t know.” This might be because English education in the Korean secondary school context is closely tied to the university entrance exam. Due to this reality, some teachers tend to think that technological advancements will not have a significant impact on the English education situation and the roles of teachers in Korea. However, new technologies will inevitably influence our educational environment and the behavior of educational participants in some way, and we can glean clues about the direction of these changes from the responses of certain teachers.

**TABLE 8. Opinion on Evolving Roles of English Teachers in the EFL Secondary School Setting**

Opinion	N (41)	%
Yes	17	41.5
No	12	29.3
I don’t know	12	29.3

For a detailed look, Table 9 shows the perspectives of teachers expecting changes due to AI technology. The finding suggests an anticipation of a transformative role, where teachers move towards providing personalized education tailored to students’ individual interests and proficiency. At the same time, there is an expectation that students will gradually become less dependent on teachers, while teachers themselves shift to a facilitating role in the learning process. In a situation where students have access to AI tools that can instantly address their curiosity, it is clear that teachers will lose competitiveness if they attempt to impart standardized knowledge only. Moreover, with the likelihood of a gradual decrease in students’ dependency on teachers, educators need to contemplate how they can better serve as facilitators and advisors. One respondent even mentioned, “It seems that students will rely more on AI tools like ChatGPT than on teachers.” While it may not go to that extent, it is evident that students’ independent learning will become increasingly feasible. Therefore, efforts should be directed

towards managing student learning, attending to their affective factors, and providing a curriculum that encompasses various student interests and needs. Also, as mentioned by Ausat et al. (2023), the role of teachers as mentors and role models cannot be replaced by AI technology. Lastly, teachers should strive to cultivate not only their proficiency in English but also their AI technology literacy in order not to fall behind students who “are often digital natives who use technology more effortlessly and intuitively than their teachers” (Rudolph et al., 2023).

**TABLE 9. Anticipated Changes in Teacher Roles**

Views	N
Teachers get to put more effort into providing personalized education tailored to individual students’ interests and proficiency.	4
Students are becoming less reliant on teachers, and teachers will take on the role of facilitators.	3
Teachers will be responsible for warning and rectifying potential inaccuracies when students use AI technology for learning.	2
Teachers should pay more attention to students’ affective factors.	1
Teachers will need to demonstrate strengths in lesson design considering social contexts, student needs, etc.	1
Teachers will need to strive to cultivate both English proficiency and AI technology literacy.	1

**EFL Secondary School Teachers’ Learning Needs of ChatGPT**

**Teachers’ Confidence in Utilizing ChatGPT in Teaching-Related Activities**

Table 10 presents teachers’ self-reported confidence in utilizing ChatGPT in teaching-related activities. Surprisingly, a notable proportion of teachers reported a moderate to high level of confidence in using ChatGPT in their teaching practice. This suggests the potential for effective utilization of AI technology in language education. However, considering the fact that the proportion of respondents who reported slightly confident (Rating 2) and moderately confident (Rating 3) constitutes 61%, systematic support and training seem necessary.

**TABLE 10. Self-Reported Confidence in Utilizing ChatGPT in Teaching-Related Activities**

1	2	3	4	5	<i>M</i>	<i>Me</i>	<i>SD</i>
0 (0)	9 (22)	16 (39)	12 (29.3)	4 (9.8)	3.27	3	0.91

*Note.* *M* = mean, *Me* = median, *SD* = standard deviation. 1 = not at all confident, 5 = very confident.

### Previous Training Experience on ChatGPT

When asked about their professional training in incorporating ChatGPT into teaching practices, 73.2% of the respondents indicated no prior training, while 26.8% reported having received training (see Table 11). Among those with training experience, developing assessments using ChatGPT was reported as the most useful content of the training (see Table 12).

**TABLE 11. Previous Training Experience on ChatGPT**

Experience	<i>N</i> (41)	%
Yes	11	26.8
No	30	73.2

**TABLE 12. The Most Useful Content from Previous Training**

Content	<i>N</i>
How to use ChatGPT in developing assessment	5
How to use ChatGPT in a writing class (brainstorming, grammar checker, etc.)	2
How to use ChatGPT in grading	1
How to write a prompt effectively when asking questions to ChatGPT	1
Exchanging experience of incorporating ChatGPT into lessons among teachers	1
General knowledge about ChatGPT	1

### Areas of Interest for Future Training and Preferred Training Methods

In order to offer valuable guidance for future training, participants were asked to identify their top three choices from a list of topics. Table

13 displays the outcome, with “brainstorming creative language activities” emerging as the most favored area of interest. This indicates a strong inclination among teachers to create a more engaging and diverse learning environment. Additionally, topics such as “grading students’ writing assignments” and “customizing learning materials” were also highlighted. These tasks demand considerable time and effort from educators. Therefore, if there is training available on how to enhance the efficiency of these tasks using AI, it could significantly improve teachers’ productivity in their work.

**TABLE 13. Areas of Interest for Future Training (Select three)**

Types of Usage	N (41)	Rank
Creating lesson plans	1	15
Creating sample sentences for vocabulary or grammar teaching	7	10
Creating a reading passage	5	11
Creating a listening/speaking script	4	12
Creating a rubric	8	8
Grading students’ writing assignments	16	2
Creating assessments	13	5
Creating assignments	8	8
Creating effective prompts	9	6
Brainstorming creative language activities	18	1
Addressing concerns related to privacy, bias, and responsible AI usage	9	6
Understanding the basics of artificial intelligence and natural language processing	4	12
Customizing learning materials: Tailoring learning materials based on student’s specific needs and levels	16	2
Providing cultural insights and background knowledge about the passage to students	4	12
Implementing diverse in-class activities using ChatGPT	14	4
Other	1	15

Teachers’ preferred training methods, as shown in Table 14, reveal a preference for in-person workshops, followed by online webinars. This emphasizes a preference for interactive formats, indicating teachers’ desire to engage and share their knowledge and experiences with fellow teachers.

**TABLE 14. Preferred Training Methods (Select all that apply)**

Mode of Training	N (41)	Rank
In-person workshops	20	1
Online webinars	17	2
Video tutorials (one-way)	12	3
Written guides (manual, book)	11	4
One-on-one coaching	5	5

### Participants' General Feedback on ChatGPT Utilization

In the last item of the questionnaire, participants were invited to share any concerns, experiences, and suggestions regarding the use of AI tools, such as ChatGPT, in teaching. Their comments, quoted in Table 15, predominantly reflected concerns, with a recurring worry about students overly relying on AI tools and potential negative impacts on their English writing skills. Issues of information security, the diminishing role of English teachers, and students' limited ability to discern inaccurate information were also expressed. Additionally, it is also noteworthy that questionnaires and discussions of this kind can enhance teachers' awareness and motivation regarding the use of AI tools in educational settings, as mentioned by Participants 29 (P29) and 15 (P15).

**TABLE 15. Participants' Feedback on ChatGPT Utilization**

Themes	Excerpts
<b>Benefits of Using ChatGPT</b>	<p>– I find it convenient to paraphrase sentences and to check grammar. It is quite helpful for students who can't write English sentences properly when preparing for performance tests. (P1)</p> <p>– Through ChatGPT or video auto-generating apps, students were able to easily prepare their presentations. (P22)</p> <p>– Before ChatGPT was available, I used paraphrasing tools like Quillbot extensively when creating assessments. But now, I find myself heavily relying on ChatGPT because it's very convenient and offers many useful features. I find it especially helpful when creating summative assessments and developing learning materials. (P30)</p>

**Challenges or  
Concerns Encountered  
or Anticipated**

- When I asked about grammar, it still felt like the Korean grammar terminology hadn't been fully integrated, and there have been frequent instances of errors. (P2)
- I'm worried that AI tools will take over people's jobs someday, especially English teachers like me. (P4)
- I'd like to use ChatGPT for making test items but worry that students can get the same or similar ones and answers through ChatGPT results before taking exams. (P5)
- Digital citizenship, copyright issues, etc.\* (P7)
- When I first decided to let students take advantage of ChatGPT in writing class, I was concerned about their ability to critically select the proper one. Most of them didn't know how to ask questions to get what they wanted. I had to teach them how to ask questions in order to induce answers for their topics. Also, some of the students copied what ChatGPT said for their writing tasks, which was embarrassing because I had no idea about filtering their tasks. (P8)
- Although I said English teachers' roles would be more like facilitating than in the past, I'm afraid that English teachers' roles may be reduced to supervising the learning. Also, since ChatGPT can translate texts and respond to prompts or questions, I'm afraid that learning the subject itself would be considered less important than now. Therefore, I think English teachers should approach the question of why we are teaching English (as in understanding the diversity among different cultures). (P11)
- There are growing concerns that students are excessively relying on ChatGPT to complete their assignments, leading to a decline in their motivation to create original sentences. This overreliance on tools like Papago and Google Translate has already raised apprehensions among teachers regarding the reliability of writing assignments and assessments.\* (P14)
- Students might be exposed to all the contents that are not filtered. (P18)
- Many students in Korea are supposed to write an English essay on a given topic for a performance assessment. Now that ChatGPT is available, students are able to easily get the sample essay with just one sentence and click. How can we deal with this situation? (P19)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Reliability of the information provided by ChatGPT.* (P21)</li><li>– I experienced serious unreliability of ChatGPT. Once, it said ok to something, but when I asked again, it said it was wrong. The more you are competent in English, the more you cannot trust it. That means you are vulnerable if you don't know enough. You might get the wrong information, but you will never know it. I thought it would be better to just search and determine on my own sometimes. (P23)</li><li>– Although it is said that ChatGPT can be helpful in creating assessments, I have concerns about security. (P27)</li><li>– I'm concerned that as students begin to use ChatGPT, not only their language skills but also their critical thinking abilities may decline.* (P36)</li></ul>
<b>Recommendations for Future Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– To effectively use artificial intelligence as a tool for teachers without becoming overly dependent on it, teachers must be expert and confident in their teaching methods and contents.* (P26)</li></ul>
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– I just need training on it. (P29)</li><li>– This survey motivates me to use ChatGPT in my own lessons. (P15)</li></ul>

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*Note.* Asterisk (\*) = Translated by the author; P1 = Participant 1.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to investigate the perceptions, integration, and learning needs of EFL secondary school teachers regarding ChatGPT in their teaching practices. The findings indicate that the majority of teachers perceive ChatGPT as a valuable tool with widespread potential in language education. Despite variations in familiarity and exposure levels to ChatGPT, most respondents expressed curiosity about its potential application and a desire to explore this tool.

The participants have reported significant benefits of ChatGPT, including the provision of immediate language assistance, personalized feedback, and the creation of engaging materials using diverse and authentic language resources. These advantages have the potential to significantly enhance the quality and quantity of input that students receive. However, teachers also expressed concerns regarding using

ChatGPT in their teaching-related activities. The main concern was students' overreliance on AI tools, which could impede students' writing skills and assignment reliability. However, this issue can be addressed by developing learning activities and assessment methods that focus on students' learning process, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. There have also been concerns that ChatGPT sometimes provides inaccurate information and biased viewpoints. Therefore, it is crucial to educate students about the limitations of ChatGPT and assist them in cultivating critical literacy and AI literacy skills.

The study also examined the current utilization of ChatGPT, revealing that approximately 70% of surveyed teachers have employed it for teaching-related activities, primarily for creating sample sentences for vocabulary and grammar teaching and writing assistance. Notably, a significant proportion of teachers foresee a shift in their role. They anticipate that, in the future, educators will need to prioritize delivering a personalized learning experience tailored to the interests and proficiency levels of individual students. Teachers believe that ChatGPT, along with other AI tools, will play an active role in facilitating this transformation. As a result, students are expected to become less dependent on teachers, while educators will increasingly function as facilitators and advisors. In light of these changes, it becomes crucial for teachers to cultivate expertise not only in English education but also in AI technology literacy.

Regarding learning needs, teachers express a strong desire for training in generating creative language activities, creating customized learning materials, efficient grading methods, and in-class activities utilizing ChatGPT. They prefer interactive training formats, such as in-person workshops and online webinars.

In conclusion, teachers exhibit curiosity and recognition of the vast potential of ChatGPT as a valuable educational tool. Despite raising various concerns, they express a willingness to address these issues through diverse learning opportunities with fellow teachers and AI professionals. As educators grapple with the emerging challenges associated with its utilization, AI technology is expected to become a beneficial personal tutor and interactional partner for students, offering teachers an efficient assistant that significantly contributes to the improvement of language learning and teaching.

While this study was conducted in a Korean EFL secondary school context, the findings provide insights applicable to diverse EFL contexts

and ESL language educators. Future research endeavors focusing on the integration of ChatGPT are encouraged to present concrete classroom examples or artifacts to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of its instructional applications. Additionally, exploring students' perceptions, their preferred types of AI tool usage, and their learning needs will also provide valuable insights into the optimal integration of AI tools into language education.

## THE AUTHOR

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# Adapting IELTS Examinations: Video Call Speaking Tests in South Korea's COVID-19 Era

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This case study examines how IELTS Speaking examiners in South Korea adapted to the transition from face-to-face examining to online video examining in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. It uses activity theory to identify key activity systems within the transition and to identify contradictions and tensions in the process. Analysis suggests that the three main activity systems involved in the delivery of video call IELTS tests are impacted in three ways: through the implementation of new and unfamiliar technology, through strain placed on administrative test staff, and through insufficient training and onboarding of examiners. The paper ends with a call to arms to test professionals and organizations to embrace Engeström's (2001) concept of expansive transformation as IELTS testing continues its move online.

**Keywords:** IELTS, online assessment, ELT assessment, IELTS Speaking test, COVID-19

## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic compelled test organizations, universities, and colleges to rapidly adopt online evaluation methods as traditional face-to-face testing declined. The International English Language Testing System (IELTS), a globally recognized English proficiency test, was not immune from this disruption, and IELTS management was forced to seek alternatives for conducting tests while minimizing person-to-person contact (Bruce & Clark, 2023). Consequently, the swift development and implementation of video call speaking (VCS) IELTS took place in 2021 (Clark et al., 2021) with the primary objective of enhancing accessibility

to the IELTS Speaking test for individuals residing in situations where face-to-face testing was not possible (H. Lee et al., 2021). This study investigates how IELTS Speaking examiners in the South Korean context navigated the transition from in-person examining to VCS testing during and after this period of upheaval.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **The IELTS VCS Test**

Both in-person and VCS IELTS Speaking tests consist of a 13- to 14-minute interview divided into three sections. Candidates receive a score ranging from 1 to 9. Higher scores indicate greater proficiency in English, which is judged on their fluency, coherence, language, and pronunciation.

VCS IELTS Speaking is administered remotely via video call, with the examiner located at home and the candidate in a dedicated test center. Invigilators guide candidates to the designated computer terminal and provide them with headphones, signaling the start of the test.

Currently, in South Korea, examiners administer two distinct and iterative versions of in-center VCS IELTS: VCS Flexi, conducted through Zoom, and VCS Full, which employs specialized software designated by IELTS. Additionally, a third version, IELTS Online, allows candidates to take the test from home, providing an alternative for test-takers in specific countries.

### **Existing Research**

To date there has been little research into video call speaking assessment. As late as 2017, “no research into the use of this mode [video call] on a par with the standard face-to-face mode in a high-stakes test context” existed (Nakatsuhara et al., 2017, p. 16). Since then, much of the research on video call speaking assessment has been conducted by IELTS commissioned researchers (H. Lee et al., 2021; Nakatsuhara et al., 2017; and others) as IELTS maintains a synchronous, interactive human examiner as opposed to utilizing AI grading as other tests often do. Findings indicate that test-takers are generally satisfied with VCS

IELTS and that examiners are pleased with the fact that few modifications were made to the paper-based face-to-face version of the speaking test during its transition to VCS mode. Ockey and Neiriz (2021) conducted a review of the reliability, validity, and practicality of five forms of technology-mediated oral assessment, concluding video call speaking assessment to be the fairest of the assessment modes studied. The present study aims to contribute to the existing literature by presenting some examiners' viewpoints on oral video call assessment.

## Research Question

This research was guided by the following research question:

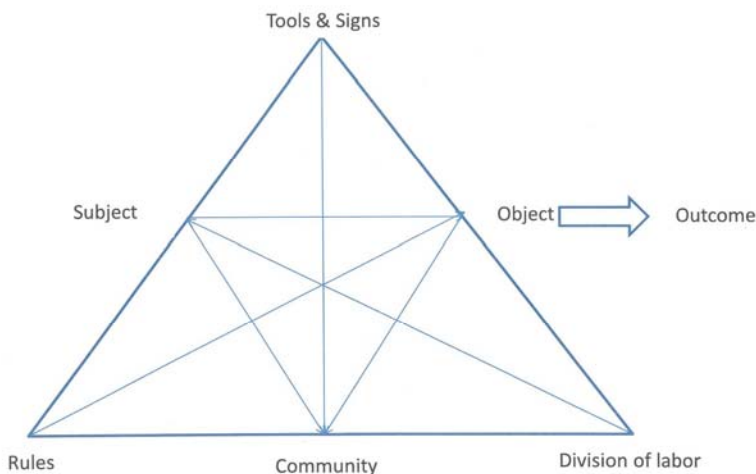
RQ: How have IELTS examiners in Korea adapted to online VCS examinations, and what obstacles have they encountered?

In this study, the number of participants was limited to three, which is believed to be broadly sufficient in that it provides a snapshot of the experiences of VCS IELTS examiners in the South Korean context.

## Theoretical Framework

Activity theory was chosen to analyze examiners' experiences of transitioning to online VCS testing because it allows consideration of the entire contextual framework in which technology is utilized (Miles, 2020). Developed by scholars, including Vygotsky (1978), Leontiev (1978), and Engeström (1987, 1999, 2001), activity theory utilizes work activities, conceptualized as "activity systems," as the fundamental unit of analysis. This approach explains how interconnected elements within an activity system interact to achieve their goal. According to Hasan (1998), the primary components of an activity system include the subject (the individual under study), the object (the intended activity), and the artifact (the mediating device used by the subject to attain the activity's objective). Communities or stakeholders, system rules, and the distribution of labor among stakeholders further mediate the object and outcome. (See Figure 1 for Engeström's (1987) visual representation of an activity system.)

**FIGURE 1. Illustration of Activity System (Engeström, 1987)**



Activity systems exist only in conjunction with other systems, which form relationships with the central activity system and exert an influence on it (K. Lee, et al., 2021). Contradiction is a central concept in activity theory, alluding to the structural tensions and conflicts that develop cumulatively within or between system elements (Engeström, 2001). Contradictions are essential in engendering change and causing the activity to evolve to a higher level of function. Four levels of contradiction exist:

1. Primary contradictions are fundamental contradictions within the main activity of the activity system itself.
2. Secondary contradictions arise between different elements of the system, such as between its subject and tools used.
3. Tertiary contradictions arise between previous and new versions of the activity.
4. Quaternary contradictions emerge when separate activity systems contradict each other.

Murphy and Rodriguez (2013) see activity theory as a tool that can allow us to grasp the integration of technology into teaching and learning and the complex changes it engenders. Engeström (2001) elucidated that when an activity system incorporates new technologies, relationships

within the system become strained, leading to “expansive learning,” essentially a collective effort to improve the system. This process involves stages of questioning, analyzing, modeling, examining, implementing, reflecting, and consolidating. By analyzing activity systems involved in the process of delivering VCS IELTS in South Korea, the present study hopes to uncover tensions leading to expansive learning.

## Method and Participants

While Yin (2002, as cited in Yazan, 2015) suggested that researchers utilize up to six sources of evidence, the scope of this case study is limited to two data sources: interviews and IELTS published research reports.

Three IELTS examiners from the South Korean IELTS examiner network (see Table 1) who have either fully transitioned to online VCS examining or do online VCS examining in addition to their face-to-face examining duties took part in hour-long interviews (see Appendix A for interview questions and sample examiner answers). All three anonymized examiners stated that VCS allows them the flexibility and additional income to do both VCS and face-to-face examining when desired and to avoid travel to test centers.

**TABLE 1. Participant Information: Demographics, IELTS Experience**

Examiner	Age	Sex	Country	Length of Time in Korea (Years)	Length of Time Examining IELTS (Years)	Still Conduct In-Person IELTS? (Years)	How Long Doing VCS Exams? (Years)	Which VCS Version Do You Do?
Examiner 1	34	M	UK/New Zealand	10	7	Yes	2	Flexi
Examiner 2	49	M	UK	12	5	No	2	Flexi, Full, Online
Examiner 3	38	M	UK	8	4	Yes	1	Flexi, Full

To gain broader insight into the development of VCS IELTS and wider perspective on examiners’ views and opinions regarding the VCS speaking test, research reports commissioned and published by IELTS were also examined.

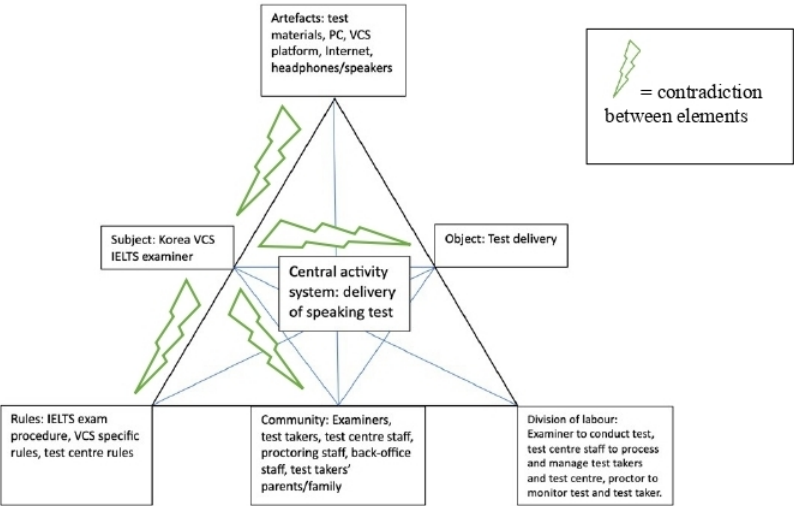
The interview data underwent analysis using a deductive approach based on the principles and theoretical propositions of activity theory. These propositions were employed to guide the examination of data (Pearse, 2019). A central activity system of speaking test delivery was identified, considered to be the main aim or “object” of the IELTS VCS speaking test from an examiners’ point of view. Neighboring activity systems of test administration and examiner training and onboarding were also identified, which were felt to strongly influence the key central activity.

RESULTS

Delivery of the Speaking Test

Figure 2 depicts the central activity system in this context, the delivery of the actual speaking test. It orients us to the major participants and elements in the system and how they interact to create contradictions that mediate the principal object of test delivery.

FIGURE 2. Central Activity System: Speaking Test Delivery



## Artifacts

The VCS examination requires various tools, such as a stable internet connection, functional hardware, and a reliable examination platform, to work harmoniously. However, issues including connectivity problems, platform crashes, and interruptions caused by computer updates have significantly affected examiner delivery of the IELTS Speaking exam. According to one examiner,

I had 20 candidates in Bangladesh, for example, and it took them over two hours to register; timings were thrown off, Zoom kept breaking down. [Examiner 2]

Interview data emphasized the impact of technology on examiners' experiences, particularly the subpar sound reproduction caused by poor connection or faulty headphones. Another examiner highlighted difficulties in clearly discerning candidates' pronunciation due to echoing on the connection:

There is a technical issue ... to do with the noise. Suddenly, I am unable to hear them, they are unable to hear me.... [Examiner 3]

Supporting this observation, the IELTS research literature indicated that examiners, in their open-ended questionnaire responses, suggested that sound quality had an effect on the ratings they gave (H. Lee et al., 2021).

Technology-related problems can be viewed as secondary contradictions within the primary activity system of delivering the speaking examination, emerging as tensions or issues between the primary activity's subject and the mediating tools within the activity system.

## Effect on Rapport with Candidate

Examiner 1 suggested that VCS testing made the process of conducting the test more impersonal. He implied that the lack of personal contact and warmth engendered by VCS testing as compared to face-to-face testing may create a different test-day experience for both examiner and candidate:

Being online feels more, kind of ... sterile as opposed to like face-to-face, where you have a little bit more of a dialogue with the candidate. [Examiner 1]

H. Lee et al. (2021) supported these findings by outlining the fact that examiners in their study “wanted a brief linguistic turn before the actual tests began in order to build rapport with the test-taker ... the VC mode does not allow for that” (p. 18).

It could be suggested that the changes to test procedure and thus examiner–candidate rapport brought about by the VCS version of the examination are primary contradictions, which directly affect the professional practice of the individual examiners.

## **Invigilators**

A secondary conflict arose between the examiners and the invigilators, those responsible for organizing candidates, ensuring systems and technology are working correctly, and test security. Interview data suggest that examiners believed that the execution of test-day protocol, such as the steps mentioned above, was markedly different between test centers and depended on the level of training the test-day staff and invigilators had been provided with:

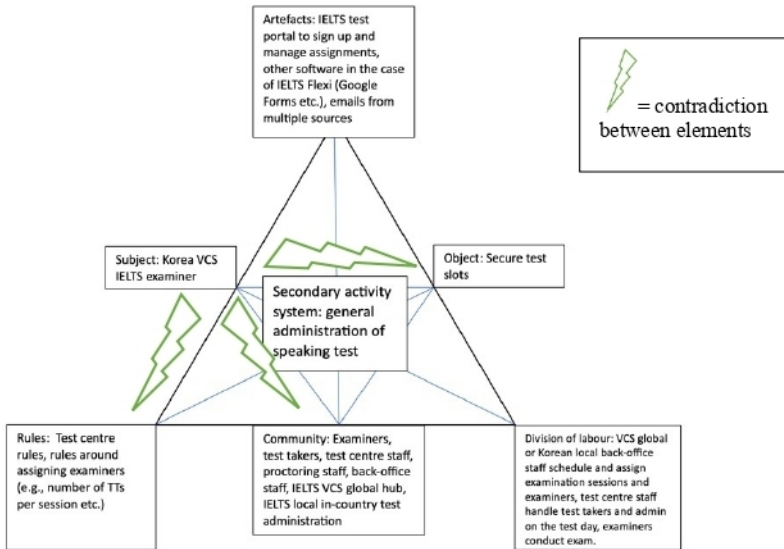
You can tell a difference in how the invigilators interact with the candidates. So sometimes the invigilator will kind of just, you know, pass them the headset and walk off ... whereas other invigilators will go in and ... make sure it's on the head properly.... Presumably, they do have a protocol for that. But obviously, it's difficult to make sure that everybody's following it. [Examiner 3]

A number of tensions and contradictions appear in this activity system – between examiners and the tools they are compelled to use, the way that VCS affects procedure and thus examiner–candidate rapport, and between the division of labor within the activity – in regard to test-day support staff, who appear to lack consistent training or whose application of test practice procedures varies from test center to test center.

## IELTS VCS Administration

Figure 3 depicts the secondary, neighboring activity system of test administration, including registering and designating candidates for test dates prior to scheduling examiners for test-day sessions. This is done by administration staff either centrally or at the British Council offices in Seoul.

**FIGURE 3. Secondary Neighboring Activity System: Test Administration**



## Emergency Correspondence

The examiners interviewed for this study all expressed tensions between office scheduling procedures and their inclination and ability to administer the speaking test to candidates as part of the central activity system.

It was noted that at the beginning of the pandemic when VCS IELTS was in its infancy, there were numerous scheduling problems. Interview data show that the examiners had all received numerous daily emails requesting cover for emergency examination sessions where there were examiner shortages, an unexpected influx of candidates or a lack

of communication between test centers. One examiner explained,

I have received innumerable emails multiple times per day ... requesting urgent need for examiners for either standby or live testing. [Examiner 1]

### **Work–Life Balance**

Examiners felt that limited consideration was given to work–life balance in relation to fixed test scheduling. Examiner 3 expressed frustration regarding the presence of significant scheduling gaps, despite freeing up entire days for examinations:

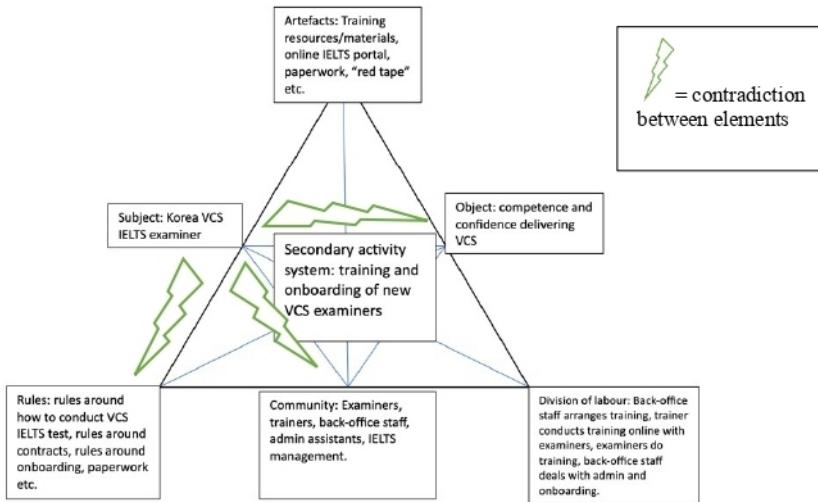
They altered the schedule numerous times and added that there would be significant gaps in your timetable.... [Examiner 3]

These issues have led to quaternary contradictions between the primary activity system and the secondary system of general test administration. Examiners believed that challenges in organizing and scheduling candidates in a timely and efficient manner had a detrimental effect on their professional practice, well-being, and the core activity of test delivery. Additionally, it diminished examiners' perceptions of the IELTS organization's professionalism. While sympathetic to the challenges faced during the pandemic, examiners experienced instances where the organization's actions impeded their ability to conduct high-quality online examinations.

### **Training and Orientation of New VCS Examiners**

Figure 4 shows the final related, neighboring activity system of training and onboarding new examiners for VCS examining, which examiners felt was rushed, causing several contradictions.

**FIGURE 4. Secondary Neighboring Activity System: Training and Onboarding of New Examiners**



## Training

Two examiners stated that the training they received for VCS IELTS was not as comprehensive as it had been earlier in their careers.

A set of "VCS FAQs" communicated to examiners by VCS FAQs (Canada) (n.d.) provided significant directives on technology-related issues, such as ensuring stable internet and access to hardware such as cameras and microphones, but very little on how the VCS test might differ from the in-person test or what kind of training and orientation examiners might expect to undergo.

One examiner felt that the training he received was insufficient or inadequate for him to fulfill his new responsibilities as an IELTS VCS examiner:

The training and training materials themselves were very much a band-aid approach. They were, if I may say so, rough and ready.  
[Examiner 1]

This appears to run counter to assertions in the IELTS-funded research that, as examiners were already familiar with the internet and able to use video conferencing programs such as Zoom, "it can be

assumed that they can transfer the knowledge and skills to the testing context with the support of a one-day training session” (H. Lee et al., 2021, p. 12).

Interview data would seem to suggest that, while one of the examiners interviewed indeed stated that the transition to VCS examining post-training was relatively smooth, the others felt that more instruction, practice, and support would have been beneficial before real-time examining with live candidates began.

### **Orientation and Onboarding**

The interviews indicated that administrative issues meant that examiners’ applications to become certified VCS examiners were often held up in interminable administrative limbo. This was an unfortunate contradiction as IELTS required many examiners to quickly be certified and trained for their new online product, while the paperwork process to onboard willing examiners was slow. Examiner 1 recounted,

The onboarding process to become certified required ... so much red tape just to even get on the system.... It was just so bureaucratic to even get your foot in the door. [Examiner 1]

## **DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS**

This study of VCS IELTS examiners in the South Korean context uncovered a range of contradictions within and between related activity systems.

Technology played a dual role, enabling the delivery of remote speaking tests while also negatively affecting the practice, leading to changes in examiner performance and perceptions of the IELTS Speaking test. In response to the pandemic, training and onboarding had to be expedited, often in a seemingly improvised manner, utilizing unfamiliar programs and platforms for both examiners and trainers. Consequently, examiners experienced apprehension, feeling ill-prepared in some cases. Similarly, test venue staff faced similar limitations in terms of expedited training, resulting in a lack of standardization among test-day invigilators and proctors. Furthermore, pandemic responses disrupted the scheduling of examiners and test timetabling, impacting the central activity of test delivery. Collectively, these issues highlight a

broader contradiction between the professional, high-stakes reputation and image of the IELTS test and the post-pandemic reality of examiner experiences on the ground.

While it is understandable that these disruptions occurred, given the emergency nature of the situation, tensions may also be attributed to the existence of two distinct versions of the VCS test (Flexi and Full) conducted on different systems. The emergency shift to VCS placed additional pressure on administrative staff to adapt to new systems and working methods and resulted in increased communication and crossover, creating more opportunities for examiner confusion.

The present study is not without limitations. In future research, the viewpoints of other stakeholders, such as administration staff, trainers, and proctors, could be considered to enrich the findings on offer. Further work could also be done on examiner response to VCS in other regions to assess if the contradictions uncovered here are geographically unique or all-pervasive.

## CONCLUSION

As suggested by Engeström (2001), for an activity system to progress and evolve, expansive learning must occur. This study of VCS IELTS examiners in the South Korean context, it is hoped, may play some small part in expansive transformation of the VCS IELTS speaking examination. While expansive transformation is generally an iterative process that unfolds over time, COVID-19 in many quarters engendered rapid, extensive, violent transformation without the usual collaboration that goes into enhancing the activity system. In the IELTS examination ecosystem, as in many industries, this created additional contradictions among those involved in the transformation processes. Kassim (2021) called for increased collaboration between researchers and language assessment practitioners, suggesting a dedicated platform for sharing first-hand experiences and technological solutions that instructors and assessment professionals can utilize. Such a platform may go some way to involving all stakeholders to ensure learning and improvement of VCS takes place efficiently and effectively.

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## APPENDIX A

### Interview Questions and Sample Answers to Interview Questions

#### Interview Questions

1. How old are you?
2. Which country do you come from?
3. How long have you been examining for IELTS (in Korea)?
5. Why did you decide to make the transition?
6. Was this an easy transition to make? Why/why not?
7. Did you find the VCS technology was easy to use?
8. Did switching to VCS change the way you examine at all?
9. In your opinion, is the VCS the same as the traditional face-to-face test? Does it produce the same outcomes? If not, why not?
10. How (if at all) has your personal well-being / mental health / physical health been impacted by changing to VCS from traditional face-to-face examining?
11. Do you have any suggestions on how you would improve delivery /implementation of the VCS IELTS video speaking test?

#### Sample Answers to Interview Questions

1. How old are you?  
→ Thirty-eight years old.
2. Which country do you come from?  
→ UK.
3. How long have you been examining for IELTS (in Korea)?  
→ Just over four years. Just in Korea. Doing VCS for one year. Main center, now global hub. Started to get more experience, another string to bow, more income. Not easy to get experience doing other things in Korea. Emailed BC and got training.
4. When did you start to do VCS examining?  
→ Started VCS one year ago.
5. Why did you decide to make the transition?  
→ Was traveling a lot pre-Covid, averaging 8–10 candidates per session,

30 candidates per month on a good month – not enough. This drained away after Covid; then the chance to do VCS came along. Does weekends. Uses portal sign-up two weeks in advance minimum. Minimum four-hour slot. Week before he is assigned candidates. Finalized 24–48 hours before. Had gaps in schedule, so gave feedback to try and close these. Works fairly well.

6. Was this an easy transition to make? Why/why not?

→ Fairly easy switch. Training session in breakout rooms. Test that they were managing everything. VCS full-integrated system; VCS flexi (fiddly on Zoom, Google Forms). THIS WAS THE FIRST ONE... INDICATOR that they are phasing it out, IOC [IELTS On Computer], slight delay – factor this in. All candidates are in exam centers – can take from home soon!

7. Did you find the VCS technology was easy to use?

→ Fairly easy to use – initial learning curve. Not tech savvy but picked it up quickly. Regular tech issues – connection drops etc. Every couple of weeks tech problem. Sound suddenly drops out. Video freezes. Went through a phase of black screen – couldn't see candidate. Flexi assigned to one center for entire slot. If there was tech problem, whole session canceled and then examiner gets unpaid. Tech issue, then still get paid. Login and see list of times to start each test. Difference between VCS and IOC – click to choose frame Part 2 and 3. Click to start, then see invigilator, confirm candidate – go and get candidate. Each center may be slightly different.

8. Did switching to VCS change the way you examine at all?

→ The switch made me a better examiner. The increased volume and variety in candidates makes one a more well-rounded examiner. A re-formulation of the Part 3 prompts was necessary. I added an instruction after Part 2 for them to put down their pencils. At the start of the test, a move-your-microphone instruction was needed to hear the candidates.

9. In your opinion, is the VCS the same as the traditional face-to-face test? Does it produce the same outcomes? If not, why not?

→ Yes, the same. Is the candidate used to speaking to a webcam? If a candidate has experience of Zoom for meetings etc., they would have an advantage. Students seem less nervous online, internet connection and

sound can cause stress, hard to interrupt candidates because of delay. Some decisions are slightly different, but in general it's comparable.

10. How (if at all) has your personal well-being/mental/physical health been impacted by changing to VCS from traditional face-to-face examining?

→ Not impaired. Free to choose a schedule. Big sessions are tough – not good for eyes in long sessions. Felt bad eyes after teaching online during the pandemic. Not many breaks – couple of 20-minute breaks. MAYBE 40-minute lunch. Posture OK. Easier not to travel – doesn't bother to travel to f2f sessions. Can see how many candidates **LIKELY** to get on VCS, so makes more sense. More flexible. Lack of travel good, doing a lot more good financially. Positive effects overall.

11. Do you have any suggestions on how you would improve delivery/implementation of the VCS IELTS video speaking test?

→ Only slight gripes. With scheduling. Too many breaks. Not a good use of time, I brought it up with my supervisor, and he said it was difficult to schedule people around the world. Try and iron out tech problems, but hard to do. Would be nice to make sure that all the test centers have decent equipment. Standardized test equipment. Invigilator interaction needs to be improved – more help from invigilators ensures a smoother, fairer test.

## APPENDIX B

### Sample Interview Transcript

**Speaker 1:** [00:02:02] And why? Can I just ask you why you decided to start doing it in the first place? For four years ago.

**Speaker 2:** [00:02:10] Um, I think it was just, you know, another. I just saw it as another string to my bow, I guess. Just something getting, getting experience, doing something else. Um, also, I quite like the idea of having some other, I mean other income on the side as well, on top of my job. Um, but yeah, just trying to, I find it... it's not always easy in Korea. Maybe not as easy as in some other countries to get experience doing other things. And so, um, I think I just emailed the British Council just. And asked, you know, do you ever train examiners? And they got back and said, oh, well, actually, we need some examiners in Daegu coming up soon. Here's the training schedule. If you're interested, apply. And you know, that's how it happened, right?

**Speaker 1:** [00:03:05] And do you I mean, that's a weird question, but do you like it? I mean, do you enjoy it?

**Speaker 2:** [00:03:12] Sometimes I do, yeah. I mean, sometimes I really do enjoy it. I don't know exactly when I would say I do and when I enjoy it less so. But, you know, sometimes... I sometimes I just feel in the mood, you know? But yeah, I do quite enjoy it, especially, I mean, the, um. Just being able to do everything from home. Yeah, yeah.

**Speaker 1:** [00:03:34] Yeah. When? Yeah. I mean, when did you start... start? You said one year ago, right? What?

**Speaker 2:** [00:03:42] Yeah, that's right. About a year ago.

**Speaker 1:** [00:03:47] Uh, okay. And why did you decide to make the trip? Because you said you don't do any face-to-face now. Is that right?

**Speaker 2:** [00:03:58] Um. I haven't done for a long time. Um. So pre-Covid, I'd say Daegu had 1 or 2 sessions a month, and I'd often get

the opportunity to go somewhere else in Korea, so I could go to Gwangju is a common center, Busan and Jeju, so. Pre-Covid. I was getting maybe 2 or 3 sessions a month and probably averaging, you know, 8 to 10 candidates per session. So the workload for a month was, you know, maybe 30 candidates in a good month. And then they mentioned that they wanted to start training.

## Standardized Language Tests: An Opportunity for Teacher Development?

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**William Tiley**

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Scholars have long espoused the value that language learning experience can have for language teachers. Additionally, in modern language education, standardized tests are seen as critically important. However, no research has been performed in the intersection of these areas – how does taking a standardized test in an additional language influence language teachers? An interview-based study was designed to explore this gap in existing literature, aiming to illuminate how the test-taking experience influences teacher methodologies and student empathy. While the benefits reported by participants in this interview study are highly varied and individualized, all participants claimed that the experience helped them grow as educators and deepened their understanding of the student experience, suggesting that going through the process of a standardized language test may be beneficial for language teachers.

**Keywords:** standardized testing, teachers as learners, teacher development

### INTRODUCTION

“A good language teacher should first and foremost be a good language learner.” (Snow, 2007, p. 3)

The benefit of language learning for teachers has been the subject of a number of studies, with scholars generally agreeing that receiving language education offers considerable benefits to teachers in their professional development. Additionally, with many universities, companies, and institutions stipulating minimum language score requirements for all

potential applicants, it is hard to ignore the role that standardized testing plays in modern language education. While such tests are often the subject of debate among language teachers, they remain a common goal for students of many languages worldwide.

Despite these two relatively established positions within language education, there has been no research on the intersection of these concepts: Can taking a standardized language test in an additional language (i.e., a language other than the teachers' first language [L1] or the language that they are teaching) be a beneficial experience for language educators? This paper will elucidate an initial study into how English teachers ( $n = 4$ ) at a Japanese university approached taking the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT), how that compared to the methodologies that they encouraged their own students to use, and if, overall, they considered taking a standardized test a valuable undertaking in their development as language teachers, both in terms of teaching methodology and developing empathy for the challenges faced by their students.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Language Teachers and Standardized Language Tests**

No direct investigations into the role that taking standardized language tests in another language can have on teacher development have been undertaken. However, Ellis (2006) states that “teachers’ successful language learning can contribute to their students’ learning” (p. 15). While Ellis does not delve into the specifics of what constitutes a “successful” language learner, the widespread reliance of academic, professional, and governmental institutions on standardized testing suggests that taking such a test could be considered to be a component of this theoretical “successful” learner – with Leung and Lewkowics (2006) describing the IELTS and TOEIC tests as “almost the household of the professional circle” (p. 222). This exposes a gap in the literature relating to the role that standardized language test experience can play in the development of language teachers, which this study aims to start addressing.

## Language Teachers as Language Learners

Research espousing the benefits that learning an additional language can have on language teachers is far more extensive and generally supports the concept that language learning experience has a positive influence on the pedagogical methods and student empathy of language teachers. In fact, some TESOL courses (including the Trinity CertTESOL) include an unknown language element for this exact reason: putting teachers in the position of a language student can give them insights into the language learning process that cannot be taught and explained in a classroom (Hyatt & Beigy, 1999; Mahboob, 2004).

In the book *From Language Learner to Language Teacher*, Snow (2007) dedicated the first chapter to detailing why a language teacher must first and foremost be a successful language learner. In particular, Snow defined a “good learner” in two ways: as someone who has gained a successful command of the target language and as someone who “knows how to learn a new language and how to teach this skill to students” (Snow, 2007, p. 4). The strengths of this “experienced” language learner are that their practical experience of learning enables them to teach students about strategies and methods based on first-hand experience.

This opportunity afforded by language learning experience has been further elucidated by many other researchers. Ellis (2006) explored the cognitive side of this, focusing on the experiential differences of L1 English-speaking teachers and those who have learned English as a second language and become teachers. Ellis concludes that the experiences of English teachers who learned English as a second language are indeed valuable to developing teacher methodologies, and also comments that, although less directly transferable, the experience of learning an additional language can greatly influence how L1 English-speaking teachers approach their classes.

In a diary study documenting their experiences of learning Korean, Cornwell and Kato-Otani (2013) explored the premise that “becoming a student will give us insights that we can never obtain as an observer or teacher” (p. 2). They concluded that the language learning experience changed their perceptions of various aspects of language tuition, with both researchers also stating that they gained a deeper understanding of student perceptions of class. Additionally, the researchers concluded that the learning experience allowed them to reflect on their own practices as language teachers and see how effective the methods they adopt are from

a student perspective. This encompassed not only classroom activities but how students approach homework and test preparation outside of class as well. Similar studies have reached broadly similar conclusions: that language learning experience allows teachers to develop their language teaching abilities and methodologies (Burden, 2007; Hyde, 2000; McDonough, 2002; Wildsmith-Cromarty, 2003). In particular, Burden (2007) found that through language learning experience, teachers gained a deeper appreciation of the valuable role that repetition and drilling can play in the language classroom, despite the negative preconceptions that the participants in the study held regarding these types of activity.

Snow (2007) did caveat the benefits of teacher language learning experience with the idea that a significant part of this development comes from self-reflection, as learners may not have a conscious awareness of the strategies they are employing at the time. This highlights the need for self-reflection in the language learning process, something that is incorporated in the unknown language element of Trinity CertTESOL training as well as numerous diary studies investigating the language learning experience. Indeed, research has suggested that language teachers may even have some difficulty applying what they have learned to their teaching (Hyatt & Beigy, 1999).

Snow (2007) also commented on how language learning experience can help teachers develop greater empathy for their students. This sense of empathy enables bonds to be formed between teachers and students, as well as aiding the teachers' decision-making and giving greater insight into student motivation. Overall, Snow likened the experience to an expedition guide who "leads an expedition but is also a member of the expedition, sharing in its joys and difficulties" as opposed to a leader who "gives orders and directions from an office far away, someone who may have long forgotten what being on an expedition is really like" (p. 8).

Other studies support the idea that teachers with language learning experience have a deeper, more empathetic understanding of the challenges their students face. In an interview-based investigation into the language learning experiences of English writing teachers by Yiğitoğlu and Belcher (2011), participants reported that language learning experience made them "sympathetic to the stress and the cognitive load of what it takes to communicate in your second language" (p. 12). The study concluded that, while the language studied by the participants was not English, the participants were "able to make the

connection between their own language learning experiences and the language learning challenges their students are facing” (p. 13).

These concepts have also been explored by English teachers learning Japanese as a second language. Participants in a study by Burden (2007) commented that their experiences studying Japanese as an additional language heightened their feelings of empathy and encouraged them to make learning tasks more meaningful and foster a sense of achievement among their students.

### **Student Perceptions of Teachers as Language Learners**

Another potential avenue of investigation is the perceptions that students have of their teachers as linguists. Mahboob (2004) investigated how students perceived teachers who spoke English as a first language and teachers who had studied English as an additional language. The findings indicated that while students viewed the oral skills and cultural knowledge of teachers who speak English as a first language favorably, teachers who had learned English at a later stage in life were perceived as having a better understanding of language learning methodologies and being better equipped to answer questions.

While it may be impossible for a teacher to fully understand the challenges associated with learning their mother tongue, Ellis (2006) postulates that experience learning an additional language can be an adequate substitute.

### **Standardized Language Testing**

In the modern language education environment, standardized testing has become increasingly important for students to be able to demonstrate their language ability on a universal scale, both for professional and academic purposes. Thus, while some controversy may exist around standardized language testing, it must still be considered an important part of modern language education.

### **Teacher Perceptions of Standardized Testing**

Standardized testing remains a common topic for debate among language teachers, with opinions ranging from highly supportive, through begrudging acceptance, to outright condemnation. This is particularly highlighted by Pearson (2019) in an article where the flaws of the

International English Language Testing System (IELTS) are thoroughly examined and in a subsequent response to the paper from Green (2019). Pearson argued that the IELTS test is not representative of modern global English and has assumed a gatekeeper role in allowing access to higher education, in addition to other issues associated with cost, retake policies, and accountability. Green then responds to these criticisms, offering perspectives gained from experience working for IELTS. The very existence of these publications speaks to the controversy that can exist around standardized testing in language teaching circles, both in terms of content and concept. While the goal of this project is not to illuminate further opinions on this topic, it should be noted that standardized testing can be a controversial subject among language teachers.

While not directly related to standardized testing, Cornwell and Kato-Otani (2013) explored the role of tests in language learning, with Kato-Otani in particular commenting at length on the role of in-class test-taking within the language learning experience, stating that the experience of becoming a learner highlighted both the values of test-taking as well as the pressures that students face.

### **Student Reflections on Standardized Testing**

One common theme in the critical perspectives of IELTS presented by Pearson (2019) is the role that students play, using the term “consenting victims” to describe the test takers. For the purposes of this study, it is also worth examining the perspectives of these “victims,” that is, the language students who are sitting the standardized tests.

Suryaningsih (2014) takes an in-depth exploration of student perceptions of both the IELTS and TOEFL tests, giving in-depth insight into how students feel about undertaking such standardized tests. The student reflections uncovered in the study are strikingly negative, criticizing the inadequate testing environment, high levels of anxiety, highly specific test content, impractical question design, overall test length and structure, and general issues related to gatekeeping, echoing the conclusions of Pearson (2019). Accordingly, it would appear that students, too, view standardized testing as somewhat of a “necessary evil,” something that must be undertaken for the purpose of academic and career advancement but is otherwise a negative experience.

## Research Questions

The findings of Suryaningsih (2014), when viewed in tandem with the existing literature on the benefits of language teachers engaging in language learning (Burden, 2007; Hyde, 2000; McDonough, 2002; Snow, 2007; Wildsmith-Cromarty, 2003), suggest that the experience of taking standardized tests in an additional language may enable teachers to develop their pedagogical methods and understand the student experience more deeply. Accordingly, the following research questions were derived to form the basis of this study:

- RQ1. Does taking a standardized test in an additional language influence language teachers' classroom methodologies?
- RQ2. Does taking a standardized test in an additional language influence language teachers' empathy towards their students?

## METHOD

### Question Design

One key obstacle in comparing learning and teaching approaches is that some skills are not transferable between preparing for the JLPT and teaching English. Specifically, the JLPT does not assess speaking or writing competencies, making direct comparison impossible. Conversely, the JLPT directly examines candidates' ability to read *kanji* (Chinese characters used extensively in written Japanese), something of which there is no equivalent in English. As a result, the interview questions focused on vocabulary, grammar, listening, reading, and test-taking skills, as these skills are directly comparable between the participants' learning habits and teaching methodologies.

Accordingly, interview questions (see Appendix) were developed to assess teachers' approaches to teaching and language tuition. Participants were initially asked some general questions about their opinions of standardized testing and their assessment of their own performance. These questions were included to determine if any participants held any particularly strong feelings that could possibly influence their perceptions of the experience, either positively or negatively.

The interviews were administered shortly after participants received their test results, approximately seven weeks after the test date. While this time difference could be considered a limitation, it also allowed participants to reflect on their performance more accurately across different areas of the test. The time difference also necessitated that the questions provided adequate space for participants to reflect in order to broaden the scope for self-awareness of participants' own experiences (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2010; Billups, 2021). Accordingly, participants were encouraged to reflect on their own practices in both language teaching and language learning in a parallel manner, similar to the methods employed by Ellis (2006), before being asked directly if the test-taking experience had influenced their approach to teaching.

With this in mind, questions can roughly be divided into two categories: questions that allow for comparison between techniques applied in both teaching and learning (specifically regarding vocabulary, grammar, listening, reading, and test-taking strategies), and questions regarding the participants' experiences in preparing for and taking the test (time management and test-taking experience). Although direct comparison between teaching and learning strategies was not possible with these questions, they still provided valuable insight into how the test-taking experience may influence teacher empathy and understanding of the practical challenges faced by their students.

Finally, some general questions were included to finish the interview to determine which areas may have influenced the participant most and to determine if the participant considered the overall experience of taking a standardized test to have been beneficial or not in regard to their teaching.

## **Analysis**

Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and then analyzed using thematic analysis (after Braun & Clarke, 2021). Transcripts were checked for any reported revelations regarding the teaching or learning process, and then coded into broader categories across all interviews. The relatively granular nature of the questions meant that these revelations could be compared on a per-participant basis, highlighting consistent challenges faced by participants across multiple skills but also collectively to assess more widespread challenges with teaching particular language skills. Thematic analysis was also used to identify

trends within participant experiences and perceptions of the student experience, while also leaving space for additional findings that may fall outside the scope of the research questions.

## Participants

Participants involved in the study were all colleagues of the author and were included in the study based on recent experiences of taking the JLPT, with all interviews being conducted within one month of the release of the test results (generally two to three months after the test date). The various levels and results of the participants are detailed in Table 1 below.

**TABLE 1. Participant Test Level and Result Data**

Participant	A	B	C	D
Level	N2	N3	N2	N1
Result	Fail	Pass	Pass	Fail

As mentioned, the participants were also asked about their perceptions of standardized testing and if they felt that the test reflected their ability. These questions were included to ascertain if the participants may have had any particularly strong personal feelings towards the assessment that would in turn affect their answers in the interview. Participants A, B, and C all generally agreed that while standardized testing is an imperfect system, there is no better alternative currently available to provide accurate indicators of student ability:

I feel there's some good, there's like a good goal to standardized tests, but I worry that we kind of end up being shackled to it and not really learning or teaching authentically. [Participant B]

Participant D, however, was much more positive about the nature of standardized testing, indicating a greater degree of support for standardized systems than the other three participants:

Standardized testing, I think, is a good thing. I think that there ought to be a minimum amount of knowledge that people should be able to surpass. [Participant D]

All participants agreed that the test was a fair reflection of their abilities, regardless of result, indicating that all participants seemed to think that the testing system was fair and representative, and suggesting that no participants held any opinions that may have influenced their interview responses in a negative way.

RESULTS

The full results of the thematic analysis are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Thematic Analysis Results

Participant	Vocab.	Grammar	Listening	Reading	Test-Taking	Study Time	Experience
A	N/A	Exercises	Exercises	Materials	N/A	Sacrifices	Stressful Reiteration
B	Materials Production	Production	N/A	Reiteration	Reiteration Time	Sacrifices Scheduling	N/A
C	Time	Materials Time Focus	Materials Reiteration	Reiteration Technique	Reiteration	Sacrifices	Frustrating Reiteration
D	Materials	Production	Materials Objectives	Time Focus	Reiteration	Sacrifices Scheduling	Stressful Frustrating

DISCUSSION

Reiteration of Concepts

Many teachers voiced opinions that the test-taking experience gave them valuable insight into practices they were already encouraging in their classrooms. This feeling of validation was expressed most frequently by Participant C, who approached the test in a very structured way and employed a number of techniques that they encouraged their students to employ:

I think it confirmed, it validated what I’ve been doing. It made me

feel good. [Participant C]

Participants A and C also expressed similar reiterative reflections when asked about the test-taking experience. They were both reminded of the challenges faced by students under test conditions and how that may affect performance. While most teachers have been through similar testing experiences before, both Participants A and C mentioned that the experience of taking a standardized test was a good reminder of the student experience:

When I was at high school and university, I always hated standardized tests, and we've all gone through the experience of feeling stressed before or during a test. So I guess it put it back in my mind because we kind of tend to forget. [Participant A]

## Study Materials

Revelations based on materials broadly fell into two categories: challenges with material selection (4 utterances), and the relationship between students and their selected study materials (2 utterances):

My way of studying vocab was successful in getting me to know those words that I studied, but my way of choosing vocab to study was not right. [Participant D]

The relationship between students and materials was a more unique revelation, voiced by both Participant A and Participant C. Both participants mentioned that in class, they encouraged students to seek out reading and listening materials related to their personal interests, but the test-taking experience caused them to reconsider this approach. Participant A mentioned that they found this approach quite restrictive, as it only exposed them to a narrow range of topics that may not adequately prepare them for the test. Additionally, Participant C mentioned that using materials related to their interests was frustrating, as they wanted to enjoy the material rather than apply it as a study aid in a focused way. While encouraging students to follow their own interests when studying is a commonly employed technique for language teachers, this suggests that there may also be some merit to deliberately working with material that falls outside of students' interests too:

If you're just reading what you like to read, ... then I'm just going to be reading those types of articles. But that's not what will appear, necessarily, on the JLPT nor on the student side. [Participant A]

## **Time**

Speed and time management was another relatively common area mentioned by the participants. The requirement to answer questions not only accurately but at speed and over a prolonged period of time presented a challenge to the participants, highlighting the value of time-restricted practice activities for Participants B, C, and D in particular:

So I think that time management, knowing how long the test is, thinking about how many questions there are so where you should be allocating time [is important]. I think it really helped to reiterate that for me. [Participant B]

## **Production**

Participant B, in particular, voiced concerns about the lack of assessment of productive (i.e., speaking and writing) skills and the disconnect between learning a language for practical purposes and preparing for a standardized test. Participant D voiced similar ideas regarding grammar; the lack of a requirement to produce the target grammar points inhibited their ability to fully use and understand the material. While this may be less applicable across other tests, especially those with spoken or written elements, this difference between functional ability and test performance is something that was raised by the participants in Suryaningsih's (2014) study.

I am aware that what I was doing was probably not the optimal way to learn to communicate. [Participant B]

## **Focus**

The importance of focusing on individual weaknesses was raised by Participants C and D, although in slightly different ways. Participant C discussed the value of giving students the encouragement and resources

to approach their own limitations independently, particularly when studying grammar. Participant D, however, commented that although they knew that working on their own weaknesses was an effective way to improve, they would often end up working on skills they enjoyed instead.

## Exercises

Participant A provided some unique insights into what they had gained from the test-taking experience, particularly in terms of the value of certain classroom activities. Interestingly, the specific activities mentioned (drill exercises and listening and reading at the same time) are often considered old-fashioned in language education, yet Participant A found them to be extremely valuable in preparation for the test. This echoes the findings of Cornwell and Kato-Otani (2013), where the merits of traditional drill exercises in particular were reported in a language-learning diary study:

I would read and listen at the same time and then go back later and just listen, and that has worked for me. I probably should recommend that method more often. [Participant A]

## Making Sacrifices and Scheduling

All participants discussed the challenges of scheduling and making sacrifices in order to create time for studying. In fact, they admitted to struggling with time management generally, with all participants saying that they felt their study time was inadequate. This experience led to participants expressing a great deal of empathy towards students, highlighting that a test for a particular class may only be one small part of the students' life and may therefore not be a priority. The importance of creating and sticking to a schedule was also brought up by Participants B and D, with both stating that their own experiences greatly reinforced the need to help students develop realistic study schedules and stick to them:

I need to tell my students “trying to squeeze in a few minutes here and there isn’t gonna be good enough. You need to sort out your daily schedule and you’re gonna have to make a sacrifice of

something else that you do to fill up your 24 hours.” [Participant D]

## **Stress and Frustration**

During the test, the participants also consistently reported that the test-taking experience was stressful and occasionally frustrating. A variety of factors were mentioned, from test stress to frustrating procedures, and teachers also uniformly commented that this helped them empathize more with the experiences of their students:

I think in that way the JLPT is a good reminder for teachers teaching English or any subject, that like “oh yeah, that’s what it’s like taking a test, that’s right, it sucks!” [Participant A]

## **Participant Conclusions**

The final interview questions encouraged the participants to give broader conclusions on their experience of taking a standardized language test and how it influenced their teaching. While some participants repeated previous ideas, some new ideas were also exposed.

The most common benefit, reported by all participants, was increased feelings of empathy for students and the challenges they face. It’s clear that the experience of taking a standardized test had a strong influence on how teachers view the struggles that their students face, and therefore can play a beneficial role in teacher development:

Yeah, so long as our students are taking standardized tests, it only benefits us to at least experience, ideally, a similar type of test. [Participant B]

Participant D, in particular, mentioned that it is only fair that language teachers should have to go through the same processes as their students:

If our students have to take standard tests, of course, we should take some too, so we know what it’s like. Of course! It’s only fair! [Participant D]

Additionally, Participant C mentioned that the experience had made

them more interested in the processes behind test design, something that forms a key part of language education:

It's made me think more about test production and actually creating test questions that accurately and fairly and reliably show, demonstrate, students skills. [Participant C]

Finally, all participants strongly agreed that they found the experience beneficial and that they believed taking a standardized test in an additional language was a beneficial experience for language teachers.

### **Additional Findings**

In addition to these findings, there were a small number of interesting features that were mentioned by several participants. While they may not have much influence on answering the research questions, they could be used as the basis for additional investigation into how teachers approach language learning themselves.

### **Do What I Say, Not What I Do**

This concept was raised by Participants B, C, and D, with all stating that while they understood how they should approach various aspects of the test, they did not employ those methods themselves. This poses some interesting questions about the practicality and suitability of the methods in question: if teachers are unable to follow the advice they are giving to students, is this advice beneficial? In hindsight, exploring this idea further with the participants could have potentially led to some further interesting conclusions.

### **Reliance on Self-Motivation**

Participants B and C both discussed methods that they admitted were only achievable due to their own motivation and self-awareness, indicating that these methods might not be suitable for all learners. This self-determination is, of course, a positive thing but means that the methods employed in these cases may not translate well to teaching a class.

## Sharing Experiences with Students

Participants B and D both mentioned that they include their own learning experiences in their teaching, with Participant D even showing students their personal study techniques and materials. Sharing language learning experiences echoes the ideas of Snow (2007), who framed the teacher as an expedition leader who can guide students based on their own experiences. While Snow most likely created this metaphor with practical learning experiences in mind, it would seem that it can also extend to test-taking experiences, especially given how negatively the test-taking experience can be perceived by some students (Suryaningsih, 2014).

## CONCLUSIONS

### Participants

While the number of participants in this study was small, the range of realizations recorded through the interview process was quite broad. This suggests that the personal takeaways for teachers when taking a standardized language test are likely to be highly individualized and influenced by a wide range of factors including the participants' learning styles, teaching philosophies, interests, and personal circumstances. This small-scale study does, however, suggest that the test-taking experience has a positive impact on teachers' classroom methodologies, giving an affirmative response to RQ1.

Additionally, the participants all reported that the experience helped them to understand the challenges involved in standardized test preparation, increasing their empathy towards their students. Therefore, in response to RQ2, it is possible to conclude that the experience of taking a standardized language test has also had a positive influence on teachers' empathy and understanding of their students.

Finally, all participants stated that they thought the process was a beneficial experience for them as language teachers and that they believed language teachers should go through the experience of taking tests in foreign languages. The implications of this are interesting and far reaching, although potentially quite impractical and, given limited research in the area, unlikely to change in the near future. However, with

expanded and wider-reaching studies, the development of institutional support systems that encourage teachers to take standardized tests and the inclusion of test-focused language classes in ESL training could be merited on the back of these findings.

## Limitations

The main limitation with this project is the low number of participants. Recruiting participants for this project was more challenging than expected due to the low number of university teachers voluntarily taking on a standardized language test in addition to their existing workload.

Related to this, the participants had all dedicated significant time, energy, and money in preparing for and taking the test. It is therefore possible that there may be some positive bias in the results, as the participants are likely to view their time and effort as worthwhile. Short of forcing somebody to take a standardized language test against their own will, it is likely to be hard to avoid this potential bias.

Additionally, the scope of this study is quite narrow: All the participants grew up with English as their main language of communication both at home and in education, teach English in Japan, and are studying Japanese. As a subject with limited existing literature, the small scope may not necessarily be a negative point, as this study merely serves as proof of concept and can potentially open up wider avenues of research into the role that test-taking can play in teacher development. For any subsequent studies, however, it would be valuable to expand this range to include, for example, teachers who are not L1 speakers of the language they teach, or teachers learning a language in addition to their L1 and the language they teach.

One final limitation is the nature of data collection. Participants were interviewed only once, shortly after receiving their test results. A more detailed understanding of the process could be gained through more continuous data collection, either through regular interviews or as a diary study. This would, however, present its own set of challenges: The current study revealed a wide range of results and revelations among participants, something which is only likely to expand through continuous data collection. Accordingly, while limited, the single interview methodology employed in this study is therefore appropriate for an initial inquiry.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Interview Questions**

- What do you think about standardized testing?

### **Study Strategies: Vocab/Grammar/Listening/Reading**

- What strategies did you use to study vocabulary / grammar / listening / reading? Were they successful?
- Do you teach students to use similar strategies?
- Did taking a standardized test influence your approach to teaching these skills?

### **Test Strategies**

- Did you employ any particular strategies during the test?
- Do you teach students about test strategy?
- Did taking a standardized test influence your approach to test strategies?

### **Practicalities**

- How did you manage your study time? Was it successful?
- Has this increased your understanding of the student experience?
- How was your experience of taking the test on the day?
- Has taking a standardized test given you any other insight into the test-taking experiences of students?

### **Overall**

- Do you think you performed in a way that represents your abilities?
- Has taking a standardized test changed your understanding of how students feel about standardized testing?
- Has taking a standardized test changed how you approach teaching in any way?
- Do you think taking a standardized test is beneficial for language teachers?

## From “Investment” to “Arboriculture”: An Explication of Metaphiers

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Two decades after Norton introduced the concept of investment (Darvin & Norton, 2023), it has proved to be an enduring, sharp lens to view the complexities of learners’ identities during second language acquisition (SLA). Fundamentally, investment is a metaphor, and metaphors shape our perception of reality (Marian, 2023). As an avid language learner and instructor, I conducted an analysis of the metaphor using processes borrowed from the field of philosophy. Performing an explication revealed shortcomings in the metaphor of “investment,” including the transactional connotation that constricts the near-infinite combinations of factors that characterize the interplay between learners’ identities and their SLA. Instead, a second metaphor, i.e., *arboriculture*, meaning “tree production,” is provided here. Through a more nuanced, verisimilar metaphor, new insights into identity and language learning may emerge. If the new metaphor is grafted onto *investment*, learners would no longer “invest” in their language learning but rather *arboricultivate* it.

**Keywords:** concept-engineering, investment, identity, metaphor, SLA

## INTRODUCTION

Two decades have passed since Bonny Norton introduced the concept of investment into the study of second language acquisition (SLA; Darvin & Norton, 2023). Investment changed the field by contextualizing “motivation” within the dialectics of learners’ identity and ideologies. Norton (2000) explained:

If learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and

material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital. Learners expect or hope to have a good return on that investment – a return that will give them access to hitherto unattainable resources. (p. 10)

Differentiating investment and motivation, Darwin and Norton (2023) posited, “Investment is a tool that enables us to probe these inequalities and to challenge the dominant ideologies that perpetuate these inequalities (p. 37). The study of investment was soon extended into classroom instruction (Pittaway, 2004). In the intervening years, studies utilized investment as a conceptual framework or an analytic lens, prompting Darwin and Norton to further flesh out the concept. Their 2015 model (TDNMI) identified the primary components of investment as identity, ideology, and capital), thereby unifying somewhat discrete concepts and literatures.

At its core, *investment* is a metaphor, a simplification of multifaceted processes. Yet as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) astutely identified, metaphors sometimes contain incoherence or contradictions. To their credit, Darwin and Norton (2023) acknowledged that the metaphor of *investment* may be misleading for those reading too much into the metaphor. The scholars explained,

We have seen how (the concept of investment) can sometimes be misinterpreted in ways that reduce these ideas to the transactional; for example, “cost–benefit assessment” or “return on investment.” By portraying learners as “entrepreneurs” who only invest in learning to “gain profit,” this reductive usage, however, indexes a neoliberal logic that runs contrary to the theoretical underpinnings of investment in language learning. (p. 38)

Historicizing *investment’s* development, we must recognize that Norton first developed the concept from extant theorizations, specifically from Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital (De Costa, 2010). As such, the foundations for an economic metaphor were already laid.

What is unfortunate is that the metaphor itself risks overshadowing many of the nuances the scholars themselves provided. To inspire ideation across SLA-interested fields, this paper explicates some of the hidden corollaries embedded in the metaphor. Such an analysis avails a comparison between it and an alternative metaphor here being proposed

for the same conceptual model: the Darwin and Norton model of investment (TDNMI). This type of analysis and comparison is practiced within the sub-field of philosophy known as “concept engineering,” in which the language used to describe the world is critically examined and updated. Borrowing from this sub-field, this analysis employs a method called “explication,” which scrutinizes both metaphors: *investment* and the proposed alternative. This work begins with a brief overview of the subtle role of metaphors within society, followed by a synopsis of how metaphors function generally. Finally, implications and suggestions for transitioning between metaphors will be discussed.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### The Power of Metaphors

Metaphor’s power is rooted in the connection between language and ideation. A *metaphor* is a “figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them (as in *drowning in money*)” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-f). Metaphors saturate our communication (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metaphors allow people to participate in an ontology, or the “shared understanding of ‘what there is’” with which they coordinate their speech and actions within various contexts (Gergen, 2009, p. 32). Consequently, metaphor’s importance exceeds the linguistic realm because “we act according to the way we conceive of things” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Recent scholarship across linguistic fields seems to be supportive of such views. Marian’s (2023) work insisted that language impacts how we engage with the material world. Cognitive scientists are suggesting we “normalize” the once controversial Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Reiger & Xu, 2017). As an ideational construct, expressed through language, metaphors may be guiding human activity in subtle ways.

As a general overview, metaphors contain two components. Philosopher Julien Jaynes termed one the *metaphrand*, or the thing being described, and the other, the *metaphier*, or the relation/thing used to describe the metaphrand (Jaynes, 1976, pp. 48–49). These terms were coined to echo the mathematical terms of *multiplier* and *multipliland*, in

which the former operates upon the latter. According to Jaynes (1976), a language's lexicon "is a finite set of terms that by metaphor is able to stretch out over an infinite set of circumstances, even to creating new circumstances thereby" (p. 52). Jaynes further prophesied that metaphors will remain indispensable to human communication until the moment when new language is devised that is capable of expressing everything.

Spencer (1987) similarly perceived metaphors as inescapable but pointed out the latent, perhaps nefarious, potential within them. Spencer wrote, "Because metaphors are central aspects of our understanding, we will always continue to use them; by the same token, we should not be used by them" (p. 7). This warning hints at their power: Metaphors are influential because they orient human thinking towards the metaphrand in particular ways. For example, the sight of people arguing is often metaphorized to warfare (e.g., *battling it out*), a metaphor that predisposes those involved or observing the argument to perceive the participants as combatants and expect their behavior to follow that pattern (Gergen, 2009). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) invited us to imagine a culture in which the prevailing metaphor for argument was rather a dance in which the goals were balance and aesthetics. People of that culture would not only talk of arguments differently (than our bellicose metaphor), but they would experience them differently as well.

Another aspect of metaphors that motivated Spencer's warning was their near-invisibility within a society or culture. Amongst their users, metaphors are often "so natural and so pervasive in our thought that they are usually taken as self-evident, direct descriptions of mental phenomena" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 28). Awareness of such subtle orientating may escape even the most learned among the metaphor's users. This may be the case among applied linguists vis-à-vis the metaphier of "investment." For this reason, periodic review of the metaphors we utilize seems incumbent upon linguists and scholars who seek a tighter correspondence between reality and the words used to describe it.

## **Foucauldian Discourse Formations**

The concern that metaphors control the human rather than vice versa constitute long-standing anxieties raised by scholars interested in inherited discourses and practices. Many such scholars advocate for efforts to (re)claim human agency from these metaphors, each having

named and framed this concern idiosyncratically: Gramsci called it “hegemony”; Bourdieu, “habitus”; Fairclough, the “common-sense”-ness of ideology (Blommaert, 2005, p. 127); and Williams, “inherited practical consciousness” (Williams, 1978, p. 105). Their concern seems singular: Macro-sociological forces determine what can be expressed and understood in each milieu, which bear upon individuals’ discourse events (communicative behaviors) and discursive products (texts; Williams, 1978, p. 103). About this tension, Foucault (2002) explained, “It is not possible for us to describe our own archive, since it is from within these rules that we speak” (p. 146). These rules he referred to as “discursive formations,” which enable and constrain what we can think and speak. Through this process, the individual may be controlled unknowingly by the discursive formation, just as the controller may be exerting power through the discursive formation unknowingly (Erickson, 2004). How then can we free ourselves from such a confining set of inherited thinking, practices, and norms? Offering one part of the answer, Blommaert (2005) posited, “Let us start by looking for adequate metaphors” (p. 127).

This paper is not claiming that *investment* as an SLA metaphor has become a Foucauldian discourse formation, but it does not deny that it can become one. Evaluating the metaphors we live by, and pondering new metaphors, can only make us more conscious of the ways we experience the world and describe that experience.

## Conceptual Engineering

Within the field of philosophy, Cappelen (2018) pioneered what is called *conceptual engineering* (p. ix). Suggesting that conceptual engineering represents a core activity of philosophy, Cappelen was inspired both by claims that certain concepts are incoherent or inconsistent and by exploring how revisionist intellectual projects relate to one another. In his honor, fellow philosophers have identified a concept being called “Cappelen’s Dilemma.” The dilemma identifies that in some contexts, revising concepts is nearly impossible because doing so requires changing the world itself. Yet in other contexts, conceptual revision is easy because it only entails changing how we talk about the world. In such circumstances, conceptual (linguistic) revision may not manifest in any meaningful way beyond language. The former can be called contexts dominated by “internalist discursive norms,” and the

latter, by externalist ones (Cogburn, 2019, para. 2).

To applied linguists, words matter. We know that even small linguistic changes can ripple far and deep into society. Moreover, the field is constantly revisiting and revising its own language and practices, recognizing that ethical considerations permeate our work (De Costa, 2016). As such, we should elevate metaphiers for processes within SLA, not simply because we can, nor because we predict they will spark some great paradigm shift, but merely because they are a more verisimilar construct than the preceding one.

## METHOD OF ANALYSIS

### Explication

As a transdisciplinary field (Douglas Fir Group, 2016), applied linguistics does not hesitate in borrowing conceptual or methodological tools when their use seems promising. This analysis borrows “explication” from the field of philosophy, where it is utilized in concept formation (Cordes & Siegwart, 2023). According to Carnap (1950), “Explication consists in transforming a given more or less inexact concept into an exact one” (p. 3). Explication provides useful language and processes to analyze the two metaphiers for SLA investment but requires some modification for use outside philosophy. Explication involves the *explicandum*, or “the given concept (or the term ascribed to it),” and the *explicatum*, or “the proposed concept/term to replace it” (Carnap, 1950). Using these terms, explication involves three general steps: preparation, explicative introduction, and post-processing (Cordes & Siegwart, 2023).

In the first step, preparations are made. Analysts identify the explicandum (Step 1.1 below), the explicatum (1.2), and the language of each, or the domain that “encompasses those prior employments of the explicandum that the explicators deem to be the relevant reference points for their explicative project” (Cordes & Siegwart, 2023, Section 2b, para. 6). This step also involves (1.3) identifying the criteria for assessing the adequacy of the explicatum (Cordes & Siegwart, 2023).

The second step is the explicative introduction. Amongst philosophers, this step prohibits the use of symbolic language, generally

using instead “predicates by generalized biconditionals” (e.g., any  $x$  is true if and only if  $x$  is a belief and  $x$  is justified; Cordes & Siegwart, 2023, Section 2c, para. 3). The goal of the step seems to be to scrutinize the explicatum. Being an applied linguist, I adapted this step to analyze metaphors (symbolic language) rather than logical truths. Working with the substance of symbolism, examining a metaphier means unpacking its implications and language ideologies, its “representations, whether implicit or explicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world” (Woolard, 1998, p. 3). For this purpose, Bloomaert’s (2005) procedure for studying ideology within language proves useful. It focuses the analysts’ attention “on the who-what-where-why-when-and-how of ideology” (p. 171).

The final step, post-processing (Step 3 below), requires evaluating the explicatum (the proposed alternative) according to the criteria selected for adequacy (Cordes & Siegwart, 2023). As will be discussed, this step will also require customization.

This analysis is limited to English terms and their usages. Davies and Elder (2006) reminded us that “language as communicative practice is tied to a person’s position in time, space, social and historical relations, and his/her social and emotional identity” (p. 249). As such, I acknowledge that analyses conducted by different analysts may yield different conclusions.

## The Author’s Positionalities

My appreciation for investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015) developed from my experiences as a second language learner, user, instructor, and researcher. Rather than recounting my journey, it suffices to report that my positionalities were forged in W.E.I.R.D. milieux, meaning “Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic” (Siliezar, 2020). As a native English speaker of a so-called inner circle variety (Kachru, 2008), I enjoyed privileges in international contexts that I have not earned, and my multilingualism was elective, not requisite. Admiring the international teaching assistants (ITAs) with whom I was teaching, I decided to make understanding their experience of an ITA training class the subject of my dissertation. To do so, I utilized TDNMI in a multi-case study. Having committed my career to multilingualism and its advancement, *investment* remains a central metaphor guiding how I view language learning. Post-graduation, I taught at one institution in which disengaged students

were assigned to my language course by an overwhelmed registrar. At another, I taught student-soldiers whose very lives might later depend upon their L2 proficiency. This broad range of investments has left me intellectually, occupationally, and personally preoccupied with questions of “investment.”

## THE EXPLICATION OF “ARBORICULTURE” FOR “INVESTMENT”

### Step 1: Preparation

#### Step 1.1. Identify Explicandum

*Investment* is the explicandum. “Investment” (with quotation marks) is the metaphier for the metaphrand of all that is contained within Darwin and Norton’s (2015) model of investment (TDNMI). In other words, TDNMI is not being examined, but only its metaphier and possible substitution.

Merriam-Webster’s definition of *investment* is “the outlay of money usually for income or profit: capital outlay, *also*: the sum invested or the property purchased.” The explicandum language indexes financial or economic discourses, including its noun form *investment*, its action “investing,” and its doer “investor.” The most common collocations also belong to this discourse (Online Oxford Collocation Dictionary, n.d.). While other usages exist (i.e., “invest in your future,” “it’s an investment”), they seem to draw from a single metaphor. Going forward, the explicandum’s vocabulary is “investors invest or make investments.”

#### Step 1.2. Identify Explicatum

*Arboriculture* is the explicatum. Merriam-Webster (n.d.-b) defines *arboriculture* as “the cultivation of trees and shrubs especially for ornamental purposes.” Another source defines it as the “practice and study of the care of trees and other woody plants in the landscape” (Arboriculture International, 2023). The explicatum language indexes agriculture and ecology. No common collocations were found. Moreover, the term lacks a unique verb or doer. To give equal scrutiny to both metaphiers, new terms were coined, even if for use only here. *Cultivate* (from the first definition) means “to foster the growth of (something).” Related, a *cultivator* is “one that cultivates” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-d).

Using *cultivate* as a base, I adjoined to it the prefix *arbori-*, which the dictionary defines only as “tree” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-a). This returns *arboricultivate*, and derivatively, *arboricultivator*. These neologisms are preferable to extant terms of *arborist*, who is “a specialist in the care and maintenance of trees” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-c), or *horticulturalist*, meaning “a person whose work involves growing fruits, vegetables, flowers, or ornamental plants” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-e). Such metaphiers for language learners would exclude those without specialized knowledge, which would be inconsistent. In short, the explicatum’s vocabulary is “arboricultivators arboricultivate or do arboriculture.”

### **Step 1.3. Selecting Adequacy Criteria for Assessing the Explicatum**

To be considered an improved metaphier, “arboriculture” must be (a) reflective of TDNMI and (b) be more reflective of it than “investment.” Failure to do either would render it inadequate.

## **Step 2: Explicative Introduction**

### **Step 2.1. Explicatum: “Arboriculture” as a Metaphier**

Who? When humans initiate arboriculture, they become arboricultivators. Anyone engaged in arboriculture is an arboricultivator, irrespective of their expertise.

What? Arboriculture can involve the planting, tending to, and harvesting of trees and/or trees’ (by)products for various human application. The type of tree is selected according to the arboricultivators’ specific needs, desires, and envisioned usages, within a given set of constraints.

Many (by)products of arboriculture are essential to a society’s success, even if their arboreal origins are often overlooked (e.g., toilet paper, telephone poles, plywood). Another defining characteristic of arboriculture is that trees exist as both individual organisms and as groups. An oak in one’s yard is at once a singular organism and also representative of a species of tree that exists in the millions within a given geographic range. Tragically, some tree species disappear altogether, their existence being known only through fossils.

Where? Arboriculture can occur in a location designated by the arboricultivator. Undoubtedly, choosing a location (and species of tree)

may be constrained by the characteristics of the physical space, the available resources, the purpose of the arboriculture, etc.

Why? The motivations for arboriculture are innumerable. People undertake arboriculture not only for economic reasons but also for aesthetic and symbolic ones. What matters is that arboriculture involves choices made by humans.

When? Arboriculture occurs whenever the arboricultivator initiates it. Once initiated, the arboricultivator determines the frequency and intensity of their involvement in the project. Some arboricultivators are fastidious, while others are lackadaisical. Again, the question of when and with what frequency arboricultivators engage in arboriculture is, in part, a choice.

How? Arboriculture is probably infinitely diverse. It happens on large and small scales. It could involve only children planting seeds or saplings. It could involve a busy homeowner buying a healthy plant from a garden center and planting it in the backyard. It could involve serious hobbyists grafting shoots of one species onto the rootstocks of another. Conversely, industrial-scale arboriculture is practiced in agricultural areas like the rich Central Valley of California or the macadamia nut farms of mountainous Guatemala. Both large- and small-scale arboriculture may involve the maintenance of existing trees. This may involve reforestation plans that compensate large landowners who pledge to not significantly alter their tree-populated properties for a fixed number of years. In this way, arboriculture may at times include the landowners' non-action.

Once initiated, the arboricultivators' relationship and responsibilities to their trees may transform as the trees transfigure according to the seasons. At times, expert intervention may be needed when the trees' needs surpass the arboricultivators' capabilities. Instances of overgrowth, of the prolonged presence of pests, of annual pruning, or of attack by invasive species may require the expertise or capacities of more expert arboricultivators. In summary, arboriculture is performed by anyone, requires varying degrees of commitment and expertise, and uses methods and schedules that vary according to the arboricultivator. In short, how arboriculture is effectuated is as diverse as humanity itself.

### Step 3: Post-Processing

The two criteria to evaluate the adequacy of *arboriculture* were (a) its reflectiveness to TDNMI and (b) this reflectiveness compared to that

of *investment*. Therefore, the second criterion entails an evaluation of “investment” as a metaphor for TDNMI before a comparison becomes possible.

“Arboriculture” is similar to TDNMI because both

1. envision end-products to the process whose possible forms are limitless. No end-product, financial or otherwise, are presumed or defined. Reasons for arboricultural span from the material to the spiritual, just as learners commit to learning because it will provide them “symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital... (bringing) a good return on that investment” (Norton, 2000, p. 10).
2. recognize the human agency of individuals (and constraints upon it). Learner arboricultivators do not enjoy absolute freedom in their endeavors. Yet neither is their context wholly determinative of the manner in which they perform their SLA activities. Both SLA and arboriculture can happen in almost any space, again acknowledging that each space’s specifications will impact which activities and how these activities are done. Arboriculture’s recognition of both agency and constraints on it reflect “the tension between agency and structure, the freedom of learners to choose, and the limitations of the choices made available to them” (Darvin & Norton, 2023, p. 31).

Conversely, “investment”

1. excludes. Only individuals (investors) who possess surplus wealth can invest. Moreover, the financial transaction that investing initiates must be done by a legitimated intermediary. Even if investors today can make investments via their smartphones, transactions must be effectuated in specific spaces. These dimensions negate the individuated nature of identity (within TDNMI), which it takes as “how *a person* [emphasis added] understands his or her relationship to the world” (Norton, 2013, p. 45).
2. envisions an end-product that is financial in nature. While some learners’ language learning is propelled by financial interests,

others are not. “Return on investment” (ROI) is therefore an inadequate metaphor. As identified by Darwin and Norton (2023), “investment” invokes “transactional” activities, nuancing the concept in misleading ways (p. 38). If *capital* is one of the definitive factors of TDNMI (p. 35), it is important that the metaphor of capital be more malleable to the individuation of as many learners as possible.

3. decenters the individual’s agency. The transformation of the investors’ wealth into profit depends (almost entirely) upon the activities of hundreds or thousands of people whose identities are unknown and uninteresting to the investor. Farmers, laborers, miners, and servicepeople must improve their labor and output so investors earn a profit. Next, customers must purchase more goods/services from these laborers. Only then can investors receive ROI. This metaphor denigrates the tremendous effort needed to learn a language.

SLA, however, recognizes “systematic patterns of control” (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 42), or the unseen machinations of power that may hinder the learners’ access to learning overall. Yet in “investment,” learner-investors now exert their invisible power upon unknowing laborers. In this way, the metaphor oddly aligns with the metaphorand.

Returning to Criteria 1, “arboriculture” appears reflective of TDNMI and adaptable to a wide range of possibilities. As for Criteria 2, “investment” narrows the possibilities before language learners. This analysis then suggests that “arboriculture” is a sharper metaphor for TDNMI than “investment.” Given the vast diversity of “arboriculture,” there will admittedly be ways in which “arboriculture” as a metaphor for SLA proves incoherent. For example, I can plant a tree and leave the rest to nature. I cannot do the same with a second language. Such work merits future explication.

## CONCLUSIONS

Metaphors contribute to our construction of reality. *Investment*, a pivotal concept in applied linguistics (Darvin & Norton, 2015), draws upon a metaphor. Cognizant of the term’s capacity to mislead (Darvin &

Norton, 2023), this work analyzed “investment” and “arboriculture” as metaphiers. “Investment” was found to narrow the learners’ agency, while “arboriculture” seemed to widen possibilities by eschewing economic undertones. Some learners endeavor to learn a second language to deepen their spiritual roots, while others simply seek a bump in the pay scale. The variety of reasons and identities involved in learning are seemly endless. Moreover, “arboriculture” as a metaphor appears more reflective of the processes involved in TDNMI. Coincidentally, embracing “arboriculture” would align the concept with the title of a seminal paper on SLA (Douglas Fir Group, 2016), which outlined how the various frameworks interact with each other in what we call SLA. Carrying this new metaphor forward, we would no longer view learners as “investing” in their language learning but rather as “arboricultivating” it.

Because “investment” has become a pillar of identity-oriented SLA work, it cannot be torn down overnight. Any transition from one metaphier to another can only be done with the support of the scholarly and practitioner community. No upheaval or major paradigm shift is needed. Such an update will help us make “investment” become a Foucauldian discursive formation, reinforced by its prevalence across the field. What would result is a smaller, duller analytical toolkit. Given the power of words, it is possible that sharper imagery will produce ripples into other areas of applied linguistics. Undoubtedly, astute colleagues of the future will spot shortcomings in “arboriculture” as a metaphier for TDNMI. The sharpening of our analytical tools and the constant re-engineering of our concepts should remain an ongoing project.

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## Investigating MRVAT Sensitivity in Detecting Changes in the First 2000 Most Frequent Words in the New JACET8000

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This study builds on Elmetaher (in press) to investigate the sensitivity of the Multifaceted Receptive Vocabulary Assessment Test (MRVAT) in detecting changes in the first 2000 most frequent words in the new JACET8000 (Ishikawa, 2016) among participants with lower-level English language proficiency. The MRVAT consists of 15 multifaceted questions. Each question contains three main categories, each addressing a specific aspect of a word. The study involved 29 native-Japanese pre-intermediate participants who were second-language English speakers. Participants took two different but equivalent versions of the MRVAT over an academic quarter, at the beginning and after seven weeks. The participants' mean percentage scores for the two MRVATs were statistically analyzed using the *t*-test. In general terms, the MRVAT detected a significant positive change in participants' test scores from Time 1 to Time 2: word-meaning in written contexts (5.403), ( $t(28) = -2.386, p < .05$ ); word-form in written contexts (4.712), ( $t(28) = -3.368, p < .01$ ); and total test scores (4.1), ( $t(28) = -2.705, p < .05$ ). There was a non-significant positive change in word-meaning in spoken context (2.184), ( $t(28) = -0.883, p = .385$ ). The results support the MRVAT's sensitivity in assessing the 2000 most frequent words in the new JACET8000. Discussion of the test results, implications for language classrooms, and a full version of the test are included.

## INTRODUCTION

This research addresses the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology's (MEXT) initiative to enhance education quality by promoting multifaceted and objective assessment of student learning achievements (MEXT, n.d.). The research builds on an

earlier study conducted by Elmetaher (in press) in which he created and validated a new Multifaceted Receptive Vocabulary Assessment Test (MRVAT). The MRVAT targets receptive vocabulary knowledge (i.e., vocabulary needed for listening and reading skills) for several reasons: (a) It is easier to assess and grade compared to productive vocabulary knowledge (Webb, 2005); (b) its changes are more consistent compared to productive vocabulary knowledge (Elmetaher, 2021, 2022); (c) it forms a crucial aspect of English entrance and placement exams in most Japanese universities and high schools, which mainly focus on receptive language skills (i.e., listening and reading).

The MRVAT consists of 15 items. In each item, participants hear a statement or a question, followed by a matrix of words, all selected from the first two thousand most frequent words according to the new JACET8000 (Ishikawa, 2016). Each question is divided into three main categories, each dealing with a specific word aspect. The three categories are marked with three different colors: blue, green, and orange. The blue category assesses the ability to recognize word-meaning in written contexts. The green category assesses the ability to recognize word-meaning in spoken contexts. The orange category assesses the ability to recognize word-form in written contexts. Each category has a maximum possible score of 30 points with a total possible score of 90 points for the entire test. The test must be completed within a 30-minute time frame, and it can be administered and processed by classroom teachers. A sample of potential test questions is included in Figure 1.

### FIGURE 1: Sample Test Item

Participants may hear the following question:

*Woman: Do you think our classmates will attend Aya's graduation ceremony?*

The answer may appear in their test paper as follows:

*Man: I \_\_ (1) \_\_ our \_\_ (2) \_\_ friends are \_\_ (3) \_\_ to \_\_ (4) \_\_ to \_\_ (5) \_\_ the \_\_ (6) \_\_.*

The matrix of possible answers might be as follows:

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A. suppose	A. work	A. inable	A. aforde	A. locate in	A. forest
B. ignore	B. childhood	B. unable	B. aford	B. participate in	B. game
C. battle	C. school	C. unaple	C. afforde	C. expand to	C. practice
D. promise	D. family	D. anable	D. afford	D. proud of	D. event

Note. (1) & (5) = blue, (2) & (6) = green, (3) & (4) = orange. (This note has been added due to black-and-white printing considerations. — Editor)

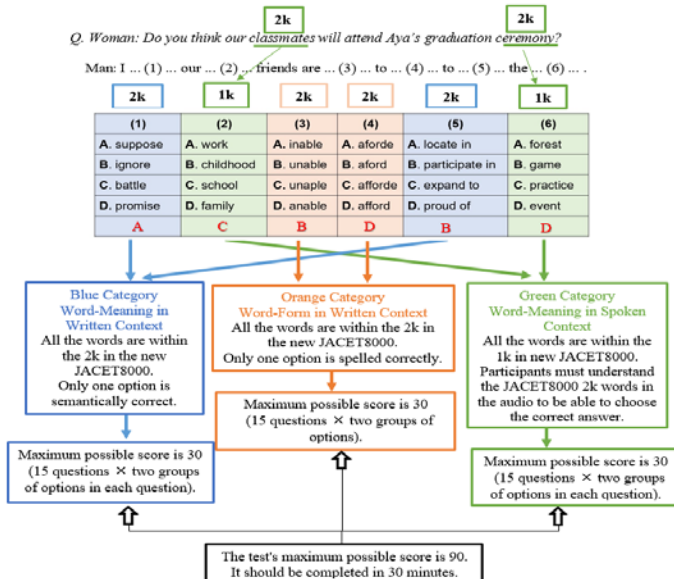
The best answer for this question is

*Man: I suppose our school friends are unable to afford to participate in the event.*

Therefore, your answer should be recorded as **AC BD BD**.

Figure 2, provides a visual illustration of the test item structure.

**FIGURE 2: Visual Illustration of the Structure of MRVAT Items (Elmetaher, in press)**



Note. (1) & (5) = blue, (2) & (6) = green, (3) & (4) = orange. (This note has been added due to black-and-white printing considerations. — Editor)

The MRVAT, as demonstrated in Figures 1 and 2, marks a significant innovation in the field of language assessment. It effectively addresses three main issues found in current well-known receptive vocabulary tests, such as the Vocabulary Level Test (VLT; Nation, 1983; Schmitt et al., 2001), the X\_Lex (Meara & Miralpeix, 2016), and the Vocabulary Size Test (VST; Nation & Beglar, 2007).

First, the test items in the three traditional tests (VLT, X\_Lex, and VST) are presented exclusively in a written format, lacking the receptive vocabulary necessary for listening skills. The VLT (Nation, 1983; Schmitt et al., 2001) presents test items in two columns: one with written words and the other with written definitions. Test-takers are required to match the words with the corresponding definitions. The X\_Lex (Meara & Miralpeix, 2016) displays single written words on a screen, prompting test-takers to indicate recognition by selecting either a smiley face for familiar words or a sad face for unfamiliar ones. The VST (Nation & Beglar, 2007) features written sentences with blanks, each followed by four written multiple-choice options. Test-takers must select the correct word that fits each sentence.

In contrast, the MRVAT introduces an innovative approach by including test items in both written and spoken contexts. Test-takers listen to a question or statement and then choose six different words to complete a subsequent sentence. The correct choices are mainly based on understanding the spoken sentence as well as the words' meanings and forms. By integrating both listening and reading skills in its assessment, the MRVAT provides a more comprehensive evaluation of a learner's receptive vocabulary than the traditional tests, which are limited to written formats.

Second, while the three traditional tests (VLT, X\_Lex, and VST) claim to provide a complete picture of different word frequency levels, this claim is somewhat undermined by the limited number of test items and word aspects they measure. For example, the VLT provides 30 matching test items for each word frequency level (e.g., 2k) and claims to measure word-meaning as an indicator of receptive vocabulary knowledge. The X\_Lex provides 20 yes/no questions for each word frequency level (e.g., 2k) and claims to measure word-form as an indicator of receptive vocabulary knowledge. The VST provides 10 multiple-choice test items for each word frequency level (e.g., 2k) and claims to measure word-meaning and word-form as indicators of receptive vocabulary knowledge.

In contrast, the MRVAT provides a total of 90 multiple-choice test items mainly for the first 2000 most frequent words to measure three different words aspects: meaning in written context, meaning in spoken context, and form in written context. The test specifically aims for the 2k frequency band, as words of this frequency group represent approximately 80 percent of the vocabulary in a “typical” written English text (Nation, 2001; Schmitt & Schmitt, 2014). This alignment is especially important when considering that the majority of the native Japanese-speaking university students are at beginner to pre-intermediate English proficiency levels (Barrow et al., 1999; McLean et al., 2014; Shillaw, 1995).

Third, the test items in the three traditional tests (VLT, X\_Lex, and VST) are derived from various word corpora, none of which relate to the participants’ native language (L1) or their targeted second language (L2). For instance, in the new versions of the VLT (Schmitt et al., 2001), words were sampled from the Academic Word List (AWL; Coxhead, 1998, 2000). The X\_Lex words were sampled from both the Japan Association for University English Education word list (JACET8000) and Kilgarrieff’s listing of the British National Corpus (Kilgarrieff, 1998). The VST words were sampled from the British National Corpus (BNC) word family lists, which has recently become known as BNC/COCA (Nation, 2017).

To further support the aforementioned point, I conducted an analysis of the 2k section on each of the three tests (VLT, X\_Lex, and VST) with the new JACET8000. The new JACET8000 list is the most updated vocabulary list by the Japan Association for University English Teachers (JACET). The frequency ranking is tailored to Japanese English teaching materials and examination questions, ensuring alignment with the specific requirements of English education in Japan. The analysis revealed that in the VLT, only 50 percent of its 2,000 sampled words fall within the 2,000 most frequent words in the new JACET8000 list. This proportion decreases in the X\_Lex, where only 36 percent of the words are with the new JACET8000 2k list. The VST shows an even lower percentage, with just 30 percent of its words appearing in the new JACET8000 2k list.

The MRVAT, on the other hand, is mainly based on the new JACE8000 2k list, making it more relevant to the participants L1 (Japanese) and target language (English). This close alignment underscores the MRVAT’s suitability and effectiveness in assessing the

English language proficiency of Japanese participants.

Illustrating some of the main differences between the MRVAT and the three well-cited receptive vocabulary knowledge tests (i.e., VLT, X\_Lex, and VST) supports the MRAVT's potential in providing unique perspectives on different aspects of receptive vocabulary knowledge. However, before proceeding further with the use of the MRVAT, it is important to determine its validity, reliability, and sensitivity in detecting change. The MRVAT validity and reliability were investigated in Elmetaher (in press) while the current study focuses on its sensitivity.

The reliability and validity of the MRVAT, as investigated by Elmetaher (in press) in a study with 23 Japanese participants of English at a pre-intermediate proficiency level, demonstrated promising results. The Pearson correlation coefficient between two versions of the test indicated a moderately significant correlation ( $r = 0.539$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating the consistency and stability of MRVAT's results. Additionally, the test displays a good validity, as it significantly correlates with an average VST 2000-word frequency band score ( $r = 0.666$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

## METHOD

The current study aims to extend Elmetaher's (in press) research by developing additional versions of the MRVT. The primary goal is to investigate the test's sensitivity in detecting changes in receptive vocabulary knowledge. This investigation focuses on the 2000 most frequent words from the new JACET8000 list among L1 Japanese participants with lower-level proficiency in English.

Exploring the MRVAT's sensitivity is crucial in assessing its efficacy, particularly in its ability to accurately detect even minor changes in vocabulary knowledge over a short period of time. Such ability in detecting minor changes might be essential in different educational settings where accurate and sensitive assessment is required. In addition, a sensitive test might provide real-time feedback on different teaching materials and strategies, which can be invaluable for language classrooms.

Accordingly, this study is responding to the following research question:

RQ: To what extent do the findings of a short-term, longitudinal

study indicate the MRVAT's ability to detect changes in receptive vocabulary knowledge among lower-level L1 Japanese L2 English participants?

## Participants

The study involved 29 participants who were L1 Japanese and had pre-intermediate proficiency in L2 English. The participants were undergraduate students of English from a university in Japan. The participants were enrolled in English Communication Skills (ECS) courses for pre-intermediate proficiency levels, which met for two 100-minute sessions each week. Participation in the study was voluntary with the right to opt out at any time. Personal data were protected, as the average mean scores were the primary findings reported in the study results, with no personal information collected from any of the participants.

## Data Analysis

Two similar versions of the Multifaceted Receptive Vocabulary Assessment Test (MRVAT) were created and administered seven weeks apart to the 29 pre-intermediate participants. To allow for comparison across the three different parts of the test (each worth 30 points) and the overall test score (90 points), participants' mean raw scores were converted to percentages. The mean percentage score for each section was calculated using the formula: (scoring items/possible scoring items  $\times$  100).

In this formula, *scoring items* refers to the number of correct answers for each part. *Possible scoring items* refers to the maximum number of questions for each part. For example, if a participant scored 45 points on the MRVAT as the total score, this participant's score would be calculated as  $(45/90) \times 100 = 50\%$ . Similarly, if a participant scored 15 points out of 30 in one of the MRVAT's three sections, the participant's score would be calculated as  $(15/30) \times 100 = 50\%$ . The study involved descriptive statistics and *t*-tests to compare the scores from the two test administrations.

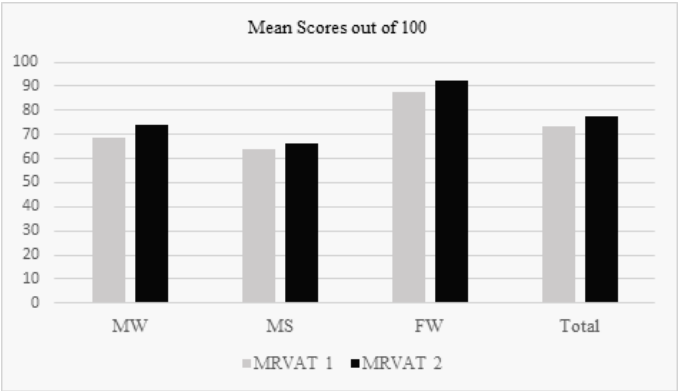
RESULTS

The descriptive statistics for the MRVAT (mean, standard deviation, and range) for each of the three parts and the total scores for both versions are provided in Table 1. For further visual illustration, Figure 3 has also been provided. Employing graphics to describe the test data is important to provide a clear description of how the students performed on the test (Brown, 2005).

TABLE 1. Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Range for the Two Versions of the MRVAT

Task	Word-Aspect	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
MRVAT 1	Meaning in Written Context	68.391	11.739	50
	Meaning in Spoken Context	63.793	10.301	40
	Form in Written Context	87.357	7.683	30
	Total	73.179	7.392	34.440
MRVAT 2	Meaning in Written Context	73.794	10.901	40
	Meaning in Spoken Context	65.977	11.899	56.670
	Form in Written Context	92.069	5.802	20
	Total	77.279	7.279	34.450

FIGURE 3. Comparison of Mean Scores for MRVAT 1 and MRVAT 2



Note. MW = meaning in written context, MS = meaning in spoken context, and FW = form in written context.

To investigate the MRVAT's sensitivity in detecting changes, a *t*-test was conducted among the scores of the two test versions. The results are presented in Table 2.

**TABLE 2. Sensitivity of MRVAT in Detecting Change Across the Two Testing Times Using the *t*-Test**

Test	Time 1	Time 2	Change (T2-T1)
Meaning in Written Context	68.391 (11.739)	73.794 (10.901)	5.403*
Meaning in Spoken Context	63.793 (10.301)	65.977 (11.899)	2.184
Form in Written Context	87.357 (7.683)	92.069 (5.802)	4.712**
Total	73.179 (7.392)	77.279 (7.279)	4.1 *

*Note.* \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ . Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

## DISCUSSION

The results displayed in Tables 1 and 2 reveal two main findings. First, the MRVAT appears to be a multifaceted sensitive measure of receptive vocabulary knowledge within the most frequent 2000 words of the new JACET8000 list, encompassing both reading and listening skills. The average test scores between the two test times (meaning in written context = 5.403, meaning in spoken context = 2.184, form in written context = 4.712, and total score = 4.1) show positive changes. All these scores are significant, except for the meaning in spoken context aspect.

The non-significant positive change in meaning in speaking context suggests that vocabulary needed for listening skills may not develop as consistently as vocabulary needed for reading skills, possibly due to the higher cognitive load involved in listening. Listening is a complex process that requires receivers to “comprehend the text as they listen to it, retain information in memory, integrate it with what follows, and continually adjust their understanding of what they hear in the light of prior knowledge and incoming information” (Osada, 2004, p. 60). Further studies might be needed to investigate this aspect of word knowledge (i.e., meaning in speaking context) in more depth, within a longer period of time, across different language proficiency levels, and with a larger sample of participants.

Second, although participants' average scores at both testing times

were highest in form in written contexts, followed by meaning in written contexts, and followed lastly by meaning in spoken contexts, the changes within the three-word aspects ranked differently. Meaning in written context showed the greatest change (5.403), followed by form in written context (4.712), and followed lastly by meaning in spoken context (2.184). This finding might be explained by two main points. First, the ECS classes that these participants were enrolled in focused on integrated skills activities, primarily reading, listening, and speaking. Students were engaged in various communicative topics, which might have significantly enhanced their ability to recognize word meanings. Second, the average score for form in written context was quite high at the first testing time (87.357), which may have limited the potential for substantial change in this word aspect. Conversely, the average score for meaning in spoken context was relatively low (63.793), indicating more room for improvement. However, as noted earlier, development in this aspect might be inconsistent. Overall, this finding issues a second call for a longitudinal study to further explore how each aspect of word knowledge changes over an extended period of time.

## CONCLUSIONS

The earlier discussion suggests that the MRVAT offers a sensitive and multifaceted assessment of receptive vocabulary knowledge, benefiting language learners, educators, and researchers. The MRVAT assists in ensuring that students can recognize the first 2000 most frequent words of the JACET8000 in both reading and speaking contexts. This should help students, especially those at lower levels of proficiency, to recognize the meaning of at least 80 percent of non-technical spoken and written language materials as argued by Nation (2001) and Schmitt and Schmitt (2014). By achieving such a level of language comprehension, students might overcome the “three language lows” that many language learners face as argued by Muller, et al. (2014): low confidence, low motivation, and low abilities.

Finally, the MRVAT has the potential for replication or adaptation for learner groups with comparable vocabulary knowledge, such as Korean learners of English. Like their Japanese counterparts, many Korean learners may face significant challenges in acquiring essential vocabulary, particularly in mastering core vocabulary for effective

everyday English communication. The MRVAT's focus on the 2,000 most frequent words of the JACET8000 aligns with language requirements for both everyday and academic contexts, ensuring that learners are well-equipped to interact with a variety of language materials effectively.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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## APPENDIX A

### Full Version of the MRVAT

#### Instructions

First, listen to the English question or statement. If necessary, you can listen to the audio multiple times. Alongside, you'll see a written statement related to the audio. This statement is missing some words. To fill in these blanks, pick 6 words from a list of options. For each missing word, you'll have four choices (A, B, C, D). Select the word that fits best and note down its corresponding letter under the word's column. Below, you can find a sample question for guidance.

#### Sample Question

In the audio, you may hear the following question:

*Woman: Do you think our classmates will attend Aya's graduation ceremony?*

The answer may appear in your test book as follows:

Man: I (1) our (2) friends are (3) to (4) to (5) the (6).

The matrix of possible answers might be:

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A. suppose	A. work	A. inable	A. aforde	A. locate in	A. forest
B. ignore	B. childhood	B. unable	B. aford	B. participate in	B. game
C. battle	C. school	C. unaple	C. afforde	C. expand to	C. practice
D. promise	D. family	D. anable	D. afford	D. proud of	D. event
----	.....	- - - -	- - - -	----	.....

(Note. The lines in the boxes at the bottom of the columns indicate column colors in the black-and-white print version of this paper. A solid line [ ——— ] indicates blue, a dotted line [ . . . . . ] indicates green, and a dashed [ - - - - ] line indicates orange. — Editor)

The best answer for this question is:

*I suppose our school friends are unable to afford to participate in the event.*

Therefore, your answer should be recorded as **AC BD BD**.

Test Audio

Link: <https://shorturl.at/fpNvK>

QR Code:



Q1. Woman: It is a \_\_ (1) \_\_ \_\_ (2) \_\_, but you should take that  
\_\_ (3) \_\_. \_\_ (4) \_\_ close to \_\_ (5) \_\_ is \_\_ (6) \_\_ it.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A. daily	A. decision	A. chance	A. Used	A. country	A. worthe
B. northern	B. desision	B. product	B. Being	B. bed	B. wothe
C. public	C. decesion	C. key	C. Push	C. nature	C. worth
D. tough	D. decicion	D. novel	D. Hunting	D. company	D. warth
_____	- - - - -	. . . . .	_____	. . . . .	- - - - -

Q2. Woman: She has been \_\_ (1) \_\_ to \_\_ (2) \_\_ to class on time for  
the last \_\_ (3) \_\_ days. I think she \_\_ (4) \_\_ this \_\_ (5) \_\_  
\_\_ (6) \_\_.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A. unheard	A. excuse	A. eleven	A. can't forget	A. demandinge	A. spirit
B. charged	B. come	B. elleven	B. can't pass	B. demanding	B. medical
C. claimed	C. enjoy	C. eleeven	C. can't give	C. demending	C. session
D. unable	D. find	D. elven	D. can't get	D. damanding	D. population
_____	. . . . .	- - - - -	. . . . .	- - - - -	_____

**Q3.** Man: Please   (1)   my   (2)   with everyone,   (3)   our   (4)   team. There's enough food for at   (5)     (6)   players.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A. hold	A. welcome	A. completely	A. soker	A. least	A. fifteen
B. share	B. look	B. greatly	B. socer	B. charge	B. fifteen
C. join	C. love	C. mainly	C. soccere	C. combine	C. fiteene
D. leave	D. money	D. reality	D. soccer	D. concentrate	D. fiften
.....	.....	——	- - - - -	——	- - - - -

**Q4.** Man:   (1)   her   (2)   to   (3)   her goal,   (4)   was very   (5)  . Her   (6)   were not enough.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A. Desbite	A. atempts	A. reach	A. crash	A. limited	A. sweets
B. Despite	B. attembts	B. move	B. release	B. distance	B. spaces
C. Despit	C. attempts	C. raise	C. conclusion	C. emotional	C. shops
D. Despide	D. attemptes	D. receive	D. success	D. comic	D. winnings
- - - - -	- - - - -	.....	——	——	.....

**Q5.** Man: I guess so. I prefer to use my   (1)     (2)   to   (3)   only   (4)     (5)     (6)  .

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A. garbage	A. computer	A. encourage	A. succeed	A. edukational	A. materials
B. factor	B. teacher	B. read	B. anniversary	B. educationl	B. matrials
C. modern	C. watch	C. express	C. particular	C. educasional	C. materiales
D. preserve	D. character	D. gather	D. survive	D. educational	D. materiels
——	.....	.....	——	- - - - -	- - - - -

**Q6.** Man: Our \_\_ (1) \_\_ \_\_ (2) \_\_ her \_\_ (3) \_\_ to \_\_ (4) \_\_ these \_\_ (5) \_\_ \_\_ (6) \_\_.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A. dyrectors	A. appreciate	A. anniversary	A. maentain	A. little	A. goals
B. directors	B. whisper	B. hobby	B. maintaine	B. past	B. universities
C. direkors	C. heritage	C. ability	C. maintain	C. busy	C. presidents
D. directores	D. plain	D. advantage	D. maintaen	D. great	D. relationships
- - - - -	_____	_____	- - - - -	.....	.....

**Q7.** Man: I hope you \_\_ (1) \_\_ to \_\_ (2) \_\_ before our \_\_ (3) \_\_ \_\_ (4) \_\_ Best \_\_ (5) \_\_ \_\_ (6) \_\_ party.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A. save	A. throw	A. scheduld	A. approtching	A. Chain	A. death
B. ride	B. touch	B. skaduled	B. approashing	B. Billion	B. climate
C. remember	C. answer	C. scheduled	C. aproaching	C. Balance	C. childhood
D. study	D. wear	D. schedjuled	D. approaching	D. Talent	D. Award
.....	.....	- - - - -	- - - - -	_____	_____

**Q8.** Woman: I noticed that your \_\_ (1) \_\_ \_\_ (2) \_\_ and \_\_ (3) \_\_ chair were \_\_ (4) \_\_ when I was \_\_ (5) \_\_ your \_\_ (6) \_\_ last week.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A. grai	A. table	A. comfortaple	A. adopted	A. managing	A. car
B. grae	B. phone	B. komfortable	B. damaged	B. replacing	B. job
C. gray	C. picture	C. comfortabl	C. embarrassed	C. smoothing	C. pet
D. graiy	D. umbrella	D. comfortable	D. estimated	D. surrounding	D. house
- - - - -	.....	- - - - -	_____	_____	.....

**Q9.** Man: I \_\_(1)\_\_ about it. The \_\_(2)\_\_ helped us to recruit \_\_(3)\_\_  
 \_\_(4)\_\_ \_\_(5)\_\_ from our \_\_(6)\_\_.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A. know	A. symbol	A. aid	A. potential	A. custmers	A. comunity
B. decide	B. environment	B. bit	B. equal	B. customers	B. community
C. design	C. company	C. extra	C. link	C. customer	C. community
D. develop	D. video	D. deal	D. pocket	D. kustomer	D. community
.....	.....	——	——	- - - - -	- - - - -

**Q10.** Woman: I \_\_(1)\_\_ \_\_(2)\_\_. The movie \_\_(3)\_\_ deep \_\_(4)\_\_  
 to understand the story. I like more \_\_(5)\_\_ and  
 \_\_(6)\_\_ ones.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A. felt	A. concerned	A. desires	A. learning	A. musecal	A. adfenture
B. excused	B. sleepy	B. confuses	B. killing	B. musical	B. adventre
C. guessed	C. silent	C. requires	C. thinking	C. musicale	C. advanture
D. finished	D. destroyed	D. details	D. listening	D. musikal	D. adventure
.....	——	——	.....	- - - - -	- - - - -

**Q11.** Woman: He was a great \_\_(1)\_\_ \_\_(2)\_\_ in the \_\_(3)\_\_  
 century. He \_\_(4)\_\_ \_\_(5)\_\_ and \_\_(6)\_\_ it with others.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A. poletical	A. leader	A. twelfth	A. discovred	A. grant	A. selected
B. political	B. junior	B. strange	B. discovered	B. giant	B. obtained
C. politikal	C. student	C. sweet	C. diskovered	C. furniture	C. traded
D. poltical	D. neighbor	D. next	D. discovered	D. metal	D. requested
- - - - -	.....	.....	- - - - -	——	——

**Q12.** Woman: I would \_\_ (1) \_\_ \_\_ (2) \_\_ against \_\_ (3) \_\_ my \_\_ (4) \_\_  
\_\_ (5) \_\_, even if it is a few \_\_ (6) \_\_ away.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A. definitely	A. argue	A. visiting	A. ujual	A. desk	A. conferences
B. definitely	B. severe	B. changing	B. usuale	B. bed	B. oceans
C. defintely	C. suggest	C. using	C. usuel	C. fan	C. blocks
D. definitely	D. trade	D. wanting	D. usual	D. shoes	D. channels
- - - - -	_____	. . . . .	- - - - -	. . . . .	_____

**Q13.** Man: Your internet \_\_ (1) \_\_ is not \_\_ (2) \_\_. You can \_\_ (3) \_\_ \_\_ (4) \_\_  
scores later when your \_\_ (5) \_\_ has a better \_\_ (6) \_\_.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A. conection	A. impressive	A. produce	A. his	A. defice	A. signal
B. konnection	B. dirty	B. check	B. her	B. dervice	B. opponent
C. connection	C. stable	C. protect	C. their	C. devicee	C. pain
D. connektion	D. likely	D. solve	D. your	D. device	D. painter
- - - - -	_____	. . . . .	. . . . .	- - - - -	_____

**Q14.** Man: I \_\_ (1) \_\_ your \_\_ (2) \_\_ \_\_ (3) \_\_. Your \_\_ (4) \_\_ system is  
now back to \_\_ (5) \_\_ and you can \_\_ (6) \_\_ on it.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A. read	A. sencitive	A. awards	A. alarm	A. complain	A. refer
B. checked	B. sensitife	B. garden	B. alarme	B. normal	B. narrow
C. passed	C. sensiteve	C. cameras	C. alrem	C. attractive	C. examine
D. lost	D. sensitive	D. children	D. alaram	D. upper	D. rely
. . . . .	- - - - -	. . . . .	- - - - -	_____	_____

**Q15.** Man: I   (1)   them, and they   (2)   that the   (3)     (4)    
  (5)     (6)   you ordered will arrive later today.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
A. finished	A. succussed	A. exsellent	A. feared	A. fashion	A. dinner
B. knew	B. mentioned	B. excelent	B. daily	B. fashione	B. bag
C. called	C. suspected	C. excellent	C. impossible	C. fashion	C. coffee
D. followed	D. combined	D. excelent	D. smart	D. fashion	D. magazine
.....	———	-----	———	-----	.....

Name (in English): \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

#### Test Scores

Blue Column Recognize word-meaning in written context (30 points)	Green Column Recognize word-meaning in spoken context (30 points)	Orange Column Recognize word-form in written context (30 points)
-----	-----	-----
<b>Total (90 points)</b>	-----	

### Answer Key & Script\*

(\* Due to black-and-white printing considerations, the words in blue, green, and orange font are underlined here with a solid line for blue font, a dotted line for green font, and a dashed line for orange font.  
 — Editor)

#### Q1. DA AB CC

##### Script

Man: I have an opportunity to move to the countryside, which is much healthier than living in a city.

Woman: It is a tough decision, but you should take that chance.  
Being close to nature is worth it.

Q2. DB AB BC

*Script*

Man: Maya is not attending her classes, so she may fail the course.

Woman: She has been unable to come to class on time for the last eleven days. I think she can't pass this demanding session.

Q3. BA CD AB

*Script*

Woman: Can I extend your lunch invitation to our friends?

Man: Please share my welcome with everyone, mainly our soccer team. There's enough food for at least fifteen players.

Q4. BC AD AD

*Script*

Woman: She has been trying to achieve a good profit of her project.

Man: Despite her attempts to reach her goal, her success was very limited. Her winnings were not enough.

Q5. CA BC DA

*Script*

Woman: Are you going to buy the course textbook? I heard there is a free e-copy online.

Man: I guess so. I prefer to use my modern computer to read only particular educational materials.

Q6. BA CC DD

*Script*

Woman: Mina has an impressive network of professionals all over the country.

Man: Our directors appreciate her ability to maintain these great relationships.

Q7. CC CD DD

*Script*

Woman: I asked my team to remind me to respond to your questions.

Man: I hope you remember to answer before our scheduled approaching Best Talent Award party.

Q8. CA DB AD

*Script*

Man: The carpenter should visit my apartment at five o'clock today.

Woman: I noticed that your gray table and comfortable chair were damaged when I was managing your house last week.

Q9. AD CA BD

*Script*

Woman: Are you aware of our new commercial?

Man: I know about it. The video helped us to recruit extra potential customers from our community.

Q10. AB CC BD

*Script*

Man: What is your impression of this mystery movie?

Woman: I felt sleepy. The movie requires deep thinking to understand the story. I like more musical and adventure ones.

Q11. BA AD DC

*Script*

Man: This is a picture of our historical hero.

Woman: He was a great lovely leader in the twelfth century. He discovered metal and traded it with others.

Q12. DA BD AC

*Script*

Man: Would you be upset if you transfer to a different office?

Woman: I would definitely argue against changing my usual desk, even if it is a few blocks away.

Q13. CC BD DA

*Script*

Woman: I can't access my personal test score.

Man: Your internet connection is not stable. You can check your scores later when your device has a better signal.

Q14. BD CA BD

*Script*

Woman: Did you examine our security system?

Man: I checked your sensitive cameras. Your alarm system is now back to normal and you can rely on it.

Q15. CB CB DD

*Script*

Woman: Did you contact the bookstore?

Man: I called them, and they mentioned that the excellent daily fashion magazine you ordered will arrive later today.

## Ethical and Unethical Teacher Behaviors

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This study explores university students' perceptions of ethical and unethical behaviors in teaching, a topic that has received attention in studies such as Smith (2018) and Johnson et al. (2020). Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study surveyed 200 students and conducted in-depth interviews with 20 participants, similar to the methodology used in Lee (2019). The findings revealed insights into the students' views on ethical teaching, which aligned with the framework proposed by Davis (2017). In contrast, perceptions of unethical behaviors echoed concerns raised by Kim (2021). This study contributes to the discourse on teaching ethics, as discussed by Miller and Thompson (2020), and highlights practical implications for educators and policymakers.

**Keywords:** ethical teaching, unethical behaviors, university students, perceptions, educational policy

## INTRODUCTION

The teaching profession is distinctive in comparison to other occupations. Teaching serves as the foundation for all other careers. The teaching profession is held in high regard in society, emphasizing the need to adhere to ethical standards in all aspects of practice (Pelit & Güçer, 2006). Educational ethics are rules that provide principles, norms, and boundaries for behaviors in educational contexts and are acknowledged by the stakeholders. Having these norms promotes public trust in the profession of teaching and serves as a guide for instructors to ensure adequate performance (Maxwell, 2017).

According to Çelikkaya (2012), education is the process of informing or convincing others. Education aims to alter individual behaviors.

Hence, ethics must be addressed through its objectives, beliefs, and procedures (Aydın, 2012). According to Goodlad (1992), one of the functions of education is to pass along societal value judgments to the next generation. As a result, some ethical standards determine how the value system is conveyed and how educators behave while doing so. However, educators must embrace the principles of ethics. Ethical ideals that are not integrated into the school culture cannot survive or improve the school's organizational existence.

A teacher's educational background and experiences shape their ethical identity. According to Maher (2005), the teachers' ethical identity motivates them to maintain their profession and strive for excellence. Recent arguments suggest that teacher preparation programs should include a professional ethics component (Bowen et al., 2006). Teachers' professional ethics are influenced by the structure of the teaching profession, their interactions with other teachers and students, the educational environment of the school, and the development and demands of modern society. Many theories and teacher educators acknowledge that classrooms are not neutral places and that teacher-student interaction is influenced by moral and educational values.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Kuusisto et al. (2012) studied the ethical sensitivity of Finnish teachers, students studying teaching, and instructors from different disciplines. The study revealed variations in ethical awareness between students and professors. Both groups of participants had strong ethical sensitivity and internalized standards. The study found that Finnish participants prioritize fundamental values and Finnish principles in education.

Yoo and Rho (2020) conducted a comprehensive analysis to identify predictors of job satisfaction among Korean teachers. Their research revealed that collaborative school climates, teacher self-efficacy, feedback mechanisms, participatory school climates, and perceived barriers to professional development are significant factors affecting teacher satisfaction. This work underscored the necessity of fostering a supportive and collaborative environment in schools to enhance teacher satisfaction and, consequently, educational outcomes.

Research by You et al. (2019) delved into the dynamics of teacher

self-efficacy and beliefs towards inclusive education in early childhood settings in Korea. Their findings suggest that while direct experiences of teaching and training do not have a straightforward impact on self-efficacy, these experiences indirectly influence self-efficacy through the mediation of beliefs towards inclusive education. This underscores the critical role of nurturing positive attitudes and beliefs about inclusive education among teachers to foster effective teaching strategies and enhance student learning outcomes in inclusive settings.

On the ethical dimension, Yum (1988) discussed the impact of Confucianism on interpersonal relationships and communication patterns in East Asia, underscoring the philosophical underpinnings that influence educational ethics in Korea. This perspective is critical in understanding the role of teachers in guiding students toward moral and ethical development.

Barrett et al. (2012) employed a 41-item questionnaire to survey 593 educators and teachers about their judgments on ethical and unethical behaviors. They also developed a code of conduct for teachers. As a consequence, four criteria were determined. These include physical harm, grade violation, reckless behavior, and breaches of public and private boundaries. Pre-service teachers are more open to implementing standards in practice than in-service teachers. Pre-service teachers take inattention in the classroom much more seriously than in-service teachers. In-service teachers often disregard school rules and fail to prepare for their lessons. It was determined that they had neglected more.

A study conducted by Chang et al. (2015) examined unethical and unprofessional behavior in Korean medical residency training. It highlighted various misbehaviors, such as substandard practice, dishonesty with patients, and disrespect towards colleagues and patients, among others. The study found a wide range of unethical behaviors, with “not fulfilling basic duties for patient care” being the most frequently mentioned misconduct. This research underscores the need for enhanced professional education during postgraduate medical training to help trainees manage ethical conflicts.

While existing literature has significantly contributed to our understanding of ethical sensitivity, teacher satisfaction, and the dynamics of inclusive education within diverse educational settings, there remains a crucial gap in comprehensively understanding university students’ perceptions of ethical and unethical teacher behaviors, particularly

within the context of teaching. This research aimed to bridge this gap by providing a nuanced analysis of these perceptions, thereby offering insights that have both theoretical and practical implications for enhancing ELT practices in Korea and beyond.

By surveying 200 students and conducting in-depth interviews with 20 participants, this research not only echoed the frameworks proposed, but also critically examined the perceptions of unethical behavior. Such an approach allowed for a more granular understanding of the ethical dimensions of teaching as perceived by university students. Furthermore, the study's findings on the importance of empathy, communication, and the role of teachers as ethical models not only aligned with the theoretical frameworks, but extended them by highlighting specific ethical and unethical behaviors identified by the students.

This research contributes to future studies by offering a foundational framework for exploring ethical teaching contexts globally. Its emphasis on student perceptions provides a unique lens through which the complexity of ethical teaching can be understood, offering valuable insights for teacher training, policy formulation, and curriculum design in Korea and similar educational contexts. Moreover, the study's findings on the critical role of ethical behavior in teaching effectiveness have profound implications for Korean ELT. By identifying specific behaviors that are considered ethical and unethical by students, this research provides actionable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers to enhance the ethical standards of teaching. This is particularly relevant in Korea, where the cultural context and educational values emphasize respect, hierarchy, and the teacher-student relationship.

## PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this research was to identify university students' perceptions of their experiences as students with both ethical and unethical teacher behavior. The research focused on providing answers to the following questions:

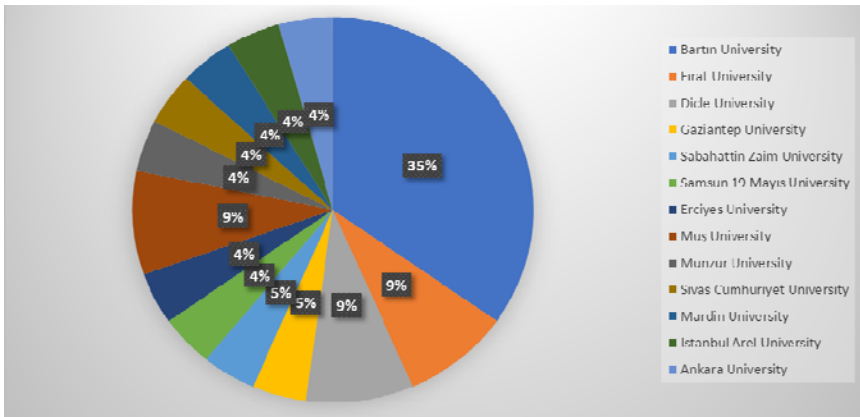
- Q1. Based on your student life or your observations in general, can you give three examples of teacher behavior that are ethical in your opinion, along with their reasons?
- Q2. Based on your student life or your observations in general, can

you give three examples of teacher behavior that are unethical in your opinion, along with their reasons?

## METHOD

This study focused on university-level students' perceptions of ethical and unethical teacher behaviors. The questionnaire was chosen as an efficient instrument to collect information from a large number of students. Data were collected using an online questionnaire created with Google Forms. Altogether, 29 university students from Turkey answered the questionnaire. Of these, seven students did not provide answers that were suitable for conducting a content analysis and, therefore, were excluded from the study. Hence, the actual number of participants was 22. The participants were between the ages of 18 and 23, and from various universities. With seven participants, Bartın University had the highest representation, followed by Fırat University with four. There were three participants each from Dicle University and 19 Mayıs University. There were two participants each from Sivas Cumhuriyet University and Mardin University, and one each from İstanbul Arel University, Ankara University, Munzur University, Muş Alparslan University, Erciyes University, and Sabahattin Zaim University (see Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1. Distribution of Students by Universities**



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Ethical Teacher Behaviors

The questionnaire on the ethical behaviors of teachers asked students what they thought were ethical teacher behaviors, based on their student life. I discussed these behaviors with the participants and identified similarities among their views and, thereby, categorized their responses into five subcategories: empathy and communication, justice and equality, development process and evaluation, role model and care, and professional commitment.

#### Empathy and Communication

The study initially focused on the themes of empathy and communication in the educational context. The diverse backgrounds of the participants, hailing from various universities and faculties, ensured a comprehensive examination of these critical issues from multiple perspectives.

A male student from the Department of Oral and Dental Health at Istanbul Arel University expressed a fundamental expectation from educators: The need for empathy and attentive listening to student issues. His viewpoint underscores the importance of understanding and responding to the emotional and personal challenges students face, which can significantly impact their academic experience and overall well-being.

Similarly, a female student from the Department of English Language Teaching at Bartın University emphasized the necessity of effective communication between teachers and students. She believed that teachers should engage in open and understanding communication, fostering a supportive and interactive learning environment. This perspective highlights the role of communication in building trust and rapport between students and educators, which is essential for a conducive learning atmosphere.

Echoing these sentiments, a male student from the English Language Teaching Department at 19 Mayıs University provided a more detailed view of what constitutes ethical teacher behavior. He stated that ethical educators should regard their students as colleagues, respect them as individuals, contribute to their personal and professional development,

and offer sound guidance on their choices. This comprehensive approach to teacher–student interaction reflects a deep respect for student autonomy and a commitment to nurturing their growth.

These responses align well with the principles of understanding and tolerance, an ethical guideline that emphasizes the importance of empathy and open-mindedness in educational settings. The principle advocates that it is not only ethical but essential for teachers to empathize with their students and approach their problems with a deep sense of understanding and tolerance.

In summary, the insights from students across different universities highlight a crucial aspect of teaching ethics: The need for empathy and effective communication. These qualities are vital in creating a nurturing educational environment where students feel valued, understood, and supported. The study, therefore, underscores the importance of these ethical principles in teaching, suggesting that educators should be trained and encouraged to develop these skills to enhance their interactions with students. Such an approach not only benefits students academic performance but also their personal development, fostering a more humane and empathetic educational culture.

### **Justice and Equality**

Participant insights provided a nuanced understanding of how fairness and equitable treatment are perceived and valued by students in their academic environments. A female student from the Medical Laboratory Department of Dicle University highlighted a critical aspect of fairness in grading. She suggested that exams should be evaluated question by question, without knowledge of the student’s identity, to eliminate any biases. This perspective points to a common concern among students: The tendency of some teachers to let personal preferences influence grading, thus compromising the fairness of the evaluation process.

In a similar vein, a male student from Firat University’s Department of Sports Sciences emphasized the importance of fairness among students. He pointed out the necessity for educators to uphold and implement what is right, even when faced with pressure from superiors or external influences. This underscores the ethical challenges teachers may face in maintaining justice and the need for strong moral principles in education.

Furthermore, a female student from the Department of English

Language and Literature at Ankara University provided insight into the broader impact of fairness in teaching. She expressed that a teacher's fairness not only affects academic assessments but also helps students develop a sense of justice, enabling them to distinguish between right and wrong. This highlights the influential role teachers play in shaping students' moral and ethical frameworks.

Lastly, a male student studying at the Police Department at 19 Mayıs University succinctly stated the essence of ethical behavior: "Treating everyone equally" and "It is ethical to not discriminate." His response aligns with the principle of fair and equal treatment, underscoring the fundamental expectation of impartiality in educational settings.

The convergence of these diverse perspectives from students across different fields and universities reinforces the importance of fairness and equality in education. It underscores the responsibility of teachers to act ethically, not only in grading but also in all aspects of their interactions with students. This necessitates a commitment to unbiased and equitable treatment, ensuring that every student receives the attention, respect, and opportunities they deserve. This approach to teaching not only fosters a just and equitable educational environment but also instills in students the values of fairness and integrity, which are essential for their future roles in society.

## **Development Process and Evaluation**

It is important for the teacher to evaluate and ensure the development of their students in terms of academic life. Some students expressed their opinions on this subject. According to a female student at Bartın University, Department of Land Registry and Cadastre, "The teacher should evaluate the development process of the student. Each individual develops in different periods of time. It is ethical behavior for the teacher to adjust this period according to each student."

A male student from the Department of English Language Teaching at Mus University gave this response: "Assisting the teacher in in-class and extracurricular activities, having high teaching motivation, and working hard while they are teaching are examples of ethical behavior." A female student at Dicle University, Sports Sciences Department, responded, "It is ethical to answer exam questions transparently in the classroom and to give students the right to examine exam papers." Lastly, according to a female student from Sivas Cumhuriyet University, Department of Sports Sciences, the teacher should be able to give

positive and negative feedback. If there are mistakes in assignments and exams, these should be evaluated. If students make many mistakes, they should look for the problem themselves. These responses align with the principle of minding student progress. Understanding and respecting students' various developmental phases is ethical behavior for the instructor.

### **Role Model and Care**

Research emphasizes that the teacher should be a role model for the student and give the student the necessary attention. According to a female student from the Department of English Language and Literature at Ankara University, "The teacher is an example. The student needs to grow up as a good person by taking the teacher as a role model." Another female student from the Department of English Language and Literature at Munzur University responded, "Being smiling, always positive, giving due importance to the subjects he explains, and being attentive to the students creates sympathy and interest in the course." A male student from the Department of Software Engineering at Firat University responded,

I think it is very important for students to focus on the subject they do not understand and to be understanding and affectionate towards students because if a student loves his teacher, he also loves his lesson. Ensuring that students participate in the lesson allows the students to listen and understand the lesson better.

A female student from Gaziantep University, Faculty of Medicine stated, "She should guide the student in accessing information, be able to establish a good dialogue with the student and be friendly and sympathetic." A female student from the Department of Theology at Erciyes University gave this response: "One should speak in a friendly manner in negative situations, and give material and moral support to the student in difficult situations." According to a male student from Firat University, Department of Sports Sciences, "They must be understanding and tolerant, take good care of the students, maintain personal boundaries with the student, and respect them regardless of their age." These responses follow the principle of setting a good example. Ethical behavior includes maintaining a cheerful attitude, expressing interest in students, and paying attention to issues. It is an ethical obligation for the

teacher to provide a positive example for students in their behavior.

### **Professional Commitment**

In the final phase of analysis, we focused on occupational dependency, examining how students perceive the professional conduct and dedication of their educators. The responses, primarily from female students across various departments, provided insightful perspectives on what constitutes ethical and professional behavior in the teaching profession.

A gastronomy student at Mardin University emphasized the importance of discipline, proper lesson delivery, and punctuality in a teacher's role. This perspective reflects the expectation for educators to exhibit a high level of professionalism in their conduct, ensuring that classes are structured, well-prepared, and conducted promptly. Another student from the same department highlighted the need for well-prepared and regularly updated lecture slides. This aspect of teaching is crucial in ensuring that students have access to clear, organized, and up-to-date educational materials, which facilitates better understanding and engagement with the course content.

One student from Sabahattin Zaim University's Department of History expressed the belief that a teacher's passion for imparting academic knowledge is essential. This desire to teach and share knowledge not only enhances the learning experience but also inspires and motivates students to engage more deeply with the subject matter.

In contrast, a student from the Department of Sociology at Mus Alparslan University brought up a unique point about the importance of minimizing distractions during class, such as silencing phones. This view underscores the need for a focused and respectful learning environment, where both teacher and students are fully engaged in the educational process.

These varied responses align with the ethical principles of the education profession. They collectively suggest that an educator should be meticulous in maintaining working and class hours, use class time effectively, possess the necessary knowledge and qualifications, and demonstrate a genuine passion and commitment to teaching. Avoiding behaviors that might convey a lack of interest or dedication to their job is also crucial.

These insights emphasize that being an educator is not merely about academic qualifications but also about professional demeanor, effective

communication, and a sincere commitment to students' learning and development. Upholding these ethical standards is vital for creating a positive and conducive learning environment and for modeling professional conduct to students, who are future professionals themselves. This comprehensive understanding of professional competence in teaching highlights the multifaceted role of educators in shaping not only the academic but also the personal and ethical dimensions of their students' lives.

## Unethical Teacher Behaviors

In this study, students were also asked what they thought were unethical teacher behaviors, based on their student life. The answers were discussed and categorized into six subheadings.

### Inequality

The problem of inequality was first addressed. The participants' diversity in terms of universities and faculties guaranteed that this problem was examined from a wide angle.

According to a male student in the Bartın University Department of English Language Teaching, "Discrimination by professors towards their pupils can lead to a loss of faith in justice and oneself in the future." A female student at the same university made the argument that it is unfair for teachers to concentrate on one area of the classroom while ignoring others. It is unfair, according to a female student from the Sivas Cumhuriyet University, Department of Sports Sciences, for lecturers to disregard a majority of the students and concentrate solely on those seated in the front rows. A male student from the Department of Oral and Dental Health at Istanbul Arel University stated that he did not find it ethical to separate students according to prioritizing by teachers. A female student from Sabahattin Zaim University's Department of History highlighted the importance of all students being treated equally by their professors. Such behavior is immoral, and teachers should treat all students equally and fairly, according to the ethical concepts underlined in *Professional Ethical Principles for Education and Teaching Service Providers* (Ministry of National Education, 2017).

These thoughts demonstrate that in interactions with students, coworkers, and parents, we, as teachers, must take a stance grounded in

the values of justice and equality. This directs teachers to establish an atmosphere that fosters students' social and personal growth in addition to their academic achievement.

## Justice

The research included the pupils' perspectives on justice, particularly focusing on their experiences and perceptions of unfair grading practices by teachers. This aspect of the study garnered significant attention due to its impact on the students' academic and emotional well-being.

A striking example comes from a male student in the English Language and Literature Department at Firat University, who expressed concerns about the subjective nature of grading. He stated, "It is unfair for lecturers to assign grades based only on their personal preferences." This sentiment underscores a widespread issue in educational settings where grades might reflect a teacher's personal bias rather than a student's academic performance.

In line with this, a female student from the Department of English Translating at Bartın University echoed similar sentiments. She highlighted the ethical dilemmas inherent in individualized grading practices, emphasizing that such methods often result in students not receiving the grades they truly deserve. Her perspective sheds light on the discrepancies in grading standards and the need for a more standardized and equitable approach.

These student testimonials align with *Professional Ethical Principles for Education and Teaching Service Providers* (Ministry of National Education, 2017), which categorically states that biased grading is unethical. This code of ethics emphasizes the crucial role of educators in maintaining impartiality. It advocates for the abandonment of personal preconceptions and biases, urging teachers to adopt a fair and balanced approach to grading. This principle is fundamental in ensuring that all students are treated equitably and that their academic evaluations reflect their true abilities and efforts.

The issue of fairness in grading is not just a matter of academic integrity, but also of educational justice. It affects students' trust in the educational system and can have long-lasting impacts on their motivation, self-esteem, and future academic choices. The voices of these students from Firat University and Bartın University, therefore, represent a significant concern in the realm of educational ethics. Their experiences call for a reevaluation of grading practices and policies,

urging educational institutions and policymakers to consider more rigorous standards and oversight to ensure fairness and equity in academic evaluations. This study thus contributes to the broader discourse on teaching ethics and has practical implications for educators and policymakers, who are responsible for upholding ethical standards in educational environments.

### **Contempt**

This study's discussion of the issue of contempt and student experiences highlights a significant impact of teacher behavior. As an illustration, a student talked about an encounter he had at Ankara University. He felt ashamed in front of his peers when his teacher mockingly minimized his incorrect response during class. In subsequent sessions, this initial behavior had a negative impact on the student's confidence and participation.

A Mardin University student described how his teacher made negative comments about him during a presentation, concentrating more on the student's appearance than the caliber of the work. Because of this circumstance, the student's personality was emphasized more than their intellectual prowess.

Last but not least, a female student in Dicle University's Medical Laboratory Department, in her criticism of the teacher's focus on how important it is to treat every student fairly.

These incidents demonstrate that the student's views about instructors have an impact beyond just academic achievement. They stressed that educators should value every student and encourage their interactions with one another and with themselves in the classroom. These encounters also highlight the social and emotional components of students' learning processes. It could be suggested that it is necessary to consider embracing these values in order to show them respect and foster an atmosphere that will advance both their intellectual and personal growth. Students' success and self-confidence will rise when a safe and valued learning environment is established.

### **Mistreatment**

Students' perspectives on abuse highlight the moral and psychological aspects of teachers' actions. For instance, a female student from Bartın University's Department of Psychology condemned actions that upset

other students during class. A different student from the Department of Land Registry and Cadastre highlighted lecturers' impolite demeanor and lack of empathy. A male student from the same university discussed the detrimental repercussions of the teachers' use of violence on their students.

Additionally, a male student from the Police Department of 19 Mayıs University stated that he found that humiliating the students during the lesson to be unethical behavior and that he had no motivation left when going to the class because they saw it as being shamed in front of their friends. Lastly, a female student from the Department of Theology at Erciyes University concurred with the viewpoint that insulting a student in the classroom constituted condescending and unethical behavior. Such conduct runs counter to the beliefs of well-known educational theorists like John Dewey. Dewey (1938) placed a strong emphasis on the role that teachers should play in guiding students' holistic development through education. Dewey's emphasis on fostering a helpful and cheerful environment in the classroom is at odds with rude or violent behavior on the part of educators.

This feedback gives teachers vital information about their duties to students and how to meet their academic and emotional requirements. Educators should do more for their students' personal growth than just impart knowledge. This emphasizes how crucial it is to create an atmosphere in the classroom that caters to the student's emotional needs and boosts their self-esteem.

## **Sincerity**

The issue of sincerity and the moral boundaries of teacher–student interactions is a complex and vital aspect of educational ethics. Student opinions from various universities highlighted the nuances and potential pitfalls in these interactions. These perspectives raise important questions about the appropriateness of certain behaviors and the need to maintain professional boundaries in educational settings.

A female student from the Bartın University Department of English Language and Teaching expressed her concern about unnecessary interactions and humor between lecturers and students. She viewed making jokes with students as inappropriate, suggesting a need for a more formal and respectful relationship. This perspective underscores the importance of maintaining a professional demeanor in the educational environment to ensure that the teacher–student relationship is based on

respect and appropriate boundaries.

Similarly, a male student from the Sports Sciences Department at Firat University criticized lecturers who attended to personal matters during class. This behavior can be seen as a breach of professional ethics, indicating a lack of respect for the educational process and the student's time and learning needs.

Additionally, a male student from the Department of Software Engineering at the same university voiced concerns over educators treating students personally and the perception that a teacher's behavior outside of school is irrelevant. This point raises the issue of the broader impact of a teacher's conduct, both inside and outside the classroom, on their professional image and their relationship with students.

These student opinions collectively emphasize the importance of educators maintaining professional boundaries and cultivating healthy, respectful relationships with their students. In the context of teacher-student interactions, a balance must be struck between being approachable and maintaining a professional distance. This balance is crucial for fostering an environment conducive to students' academic and personal growth.

Educators are tasked with upholding professional ethics, which includes respecting students' boundaries, maintaining a focus on educational objectives, and ensuring that their personal conduct does not negatively impact their professional role or students' perceptions of them. This necessitates a constant awareness of the influence educators have over their students and the responsibility that comes with this role.

These insights align with existing research and discussions in the field of educational ethics. For instance, studies like those by Shapira-Lishchinsky (2010) and Tirri (2010) emphasized the importance of professional boundaries and ethical conduct in teaching. They suggested that teachers must navigate complex interpersonal dynamics while adhering to ethical standards that prioritize the well-being and development of their students.

### **Carelessness and Ego States**

Another phase of the study concentrated on the careless and reckless actions of educators. One male student from Bartın University's Department of English Translating, for instance, claimed that irresponsible teachers can harm the students' growth when they model reckless behavior for them. Dicle University and Gaziantep University students

chastised instructors for arriving late to class and not beginning on time. A female from the Department of Theology at Firat University categorized the teacher's coming to class late, answering/using the phone, lecturing by heart, and skipping classes as irresponsible. A female student from the Department of English Language and Literature at Munzur University referred to the unethical personality attitudes of teachers who deliberately make projects difficult at private universities.

Such conduct suggests that educators should use greater caution in carrying out their duties as professionals. Students' educational experiences are greatly impacted by the teacher's ability to manage their time, engage with students, and thoroughly understand the material they teach. These situations emphasize that teachers must constantly improve themselves and be sensitive to students' needs. They also need to be more conscious and responsible in their relationships with students, colleagues, and parents. This highlights the importance of an environment that supports the students' emotional needs and personal self-confidence throughout the educational process.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

The research findings have several crucial implications for Korean English language teaching (ELT), as they offer a roadmap for enhancing both the ethical standards and effectiveness of English education in Korea. These implications are drawn from the detailed analysis of ethical teacher behaviors – empathy and communication, justice and equality, development process and evaluation, role model and care, professional commitment – and addressing unethical behaviors.

This implies the necessity for teacher training programs to emphasize the development of empathy and advanced communication skills. Teachers should be equipped to understand and address the varied emotional and educational needs of students, thereby fostering a supportive and inclusive classroom atmosphere.

Ensuring that all students have equal access to learning opportunities and resources is paramount. The programs should implement transparent and fair assessment methods to minimize biases and ensure that every student's performance is evaluated on an equal footing.

Tailoring education to fit individual student needs and recognizing diverse learning trajectories is essential. Korean ELT should focus on

personalized learning plans and flexible evaluation strategies that acknowledge each student's unique pace of learning and development.

Teachers in the Korean ELT context are encouraged to act as positive role models, including demonstrating ethical behavior, professional integrity, and genuine care for their students. This involves not just imparting knowledge, but also nurturing the students' moral and emotional growth.

Continuous professional development for teachers is critical in keeping up with the latest pedagogical strategies and ethical teaching practices. Institutions should support educators in their ongoing learning and adaptation to new teaching methods and technologies.

Establishing clear guidelines and protocols for identifying and dealing with unethical behavior in educational settings is essential. Teachers should promote a culture of integrity and respect, ensuring a safe and positive learning environment for all students.

Implementing these implications requires concerted efforts from educators, administrators, and policymakers. By focusing on these areas, Korean ELT can not only improve the quality of English education but also foster an environment that respects and promotes ethical teaching and learning practices.

## CONCLUSION

This study looked closely at how Turkish university students perceived both moral and immoral teaching practices. According to the responses from 22 university students, teachers should place a high value on ethical behaviors, including empathy, communication, justice, equality, professional commitment, and setting an example for their pupils. It was stressed that students needed to be aware of their own growth stages, treat others with respect, and provide a good example for others.

Students valued in teachers empathy, open communication, fair evaluation, equality, serving as role models, and assisting students in developing ethical teacher practices. Unfairness, humiliation, student neglect, discrimination, and carelessness were all examples of unethical behavior. These findings informed us about the university students' perceptions of ethical and unethical instructor behavior.

Students stressed the relevance of equality and justice in ethical

actions. Unethical behavior, such as unfair exam judgments, discrimination against students, and caustic and condescending attitudes were widespread complaints. Furthermore, the students' expectations of their instructors included encouraging student growth, ensuring fairness, and serving as a positive role model.

This research provided the following information regarding students' expected role of teachers: Empathy, honest communication, and fair evaluation should be prioritized in teachers' ethical interactions with students. Teachers should seek justice, treat all students fairly, and promote student development. They must also be committed to serving as a positive role model and providing cautious and empathetic guidance to students. It is also critical for teachers to collaborate with their coworkers, communicate honestly, and encourage one another. Collaboration with parents would allow the teachers to make a more effective contribution to students' education. Given this understanding, one could aspire to be a student-centered, ethical, and collaborative educator.

## THE AUTHOR

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## **Appendix**

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## Korea TESOL Journal

### General Information for Contributors

As an academic journal in the field of English language teaching (ELT), the *Korea TESOL Journal* welcomes the submission of manuscripts that meet the general criteria of significance and scientific excellence. Submissions should be of practical import, dealing with aspects of the Korean ELT context or directly applicable to it. As a journal that is dedicated to the nurturing of research among ELT practitioners, the *Journal* also welcomes quality submissions from the early-career researcher.

The *Korea TESOL Journal* invites submissions in three categories:

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Manuscripts are accepted for peer review with the understanding that the same work has not been submitted elsewhere (i.e., not pending review or currently under review) and has not been previously published, online or in print. A statement confirming this should accompany submissions.

Manuscripts should follow APA style guidelines (*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 7th ed.), especially for in-text citations, reference items, tables, and figures. Submissions should be made with tables, figures, and other graphics included in the manuscript text (and upon request, as separate files). Graphic text must also follow APA style. All figures should be created in black and white, and graphs (pie charts, bar graphs, etc.) must display distinctive shades or patterning for readability. Manuscripts should be submitted as MS Word (DOC or DOCx) files.

The *Korea TESOL Journal* accepts submissions for two issues annually.

Inquiries/manuscripts to: [journal@koreatesol.org](mailto:journal@koreatesol.org)

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