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Students' Attitudes About Factors Affecting English Literacy - A Case Study of Undergraduate Students at the University of Tetova

**Suzana Ejupi,
Lindita Skenderi**

Abstract

Generally speaking, the ability to read and write successfully and at the same time, to understand and communicate fluently in any language is considered a matter of literacy. When learning a foreign language, there are many factors that can affect a student's overall literacy. In terms of this, the purpose of this research is to explore the attitudes of undergraduate English language (EFL) students at the University of Tetova, their perceptions and experiences on factors that affect English literacy. As far as the theoretical part is concerned, this study will rely on other studies dealing with literacy in order to come up with the usual factors that influence the literacy of EFL students. The author initiated this research to provide a comprehensive insight of Albanian students' attitudes towards factors that influence English literacy. Qualitative research data were collected by administering a well-structured questionnaire to 64 students of English as a foreign language at different academic years. The data gathered reveals demographic information, learning factors, and their estimated impact on English literacy by undergraduate English language students. The final results suggest that students perceive the impact of different factors differently as far as English literacy is concerned, and some of these factors reflect positively or negatively on students' English literacy if used incorrectly.

Keywords: English language literacy, EFL, undergraduate students; students' attitude

Introduction

It is widely known that literacy represents a significant aspect when it comes to national development. In other words, functional literacy activates skills within us that build opportunities in terms of education and everyday life. Also, literacy is highly valued as it enables individuals to actively engage in wider community and global activities, including international conferences, research exchanges, and participation in businesses. Concretely, literacy contributes to personal development and is considered to be a key promoter when it comes to academic life. There are many ways to define literacy, and as a result, it is challenging and difficult to formulate a single definition. Literacy is considered a social concept or a complex idea that can have a different meaning in different areas, for different cultural communities. Considering this, literacy is a concept that can be changed and adapted according to the circumstances. In line with Abdulkarim (2022), literacy is often defined as the ability to read and write prose and other similar written materials, which contain a complex combination of linguistic and thinking activities and skills. Moreover, Wickert (1992) believes that the consensus on what literacy is and how we can measure it, it will not be accomplished. On the other hand, ACARA (2009) describes literacy as the ability to effectively read, write, speak, see, and listen in various situations and contexts. This complex concept encompasses various interests, skills, knowledge, attitudes, and experiences, and also fulfills various purposes in various situations and contexts. In the 21st century, the literacy definition has been broadened to encompass a flexible and supportable mastery of a range of skills needed to provide creative and critical writings and be able to use modern communication technologies correctly and in accordance with language learning. However, in many cases, there is a lack of awareness among teachers regarding common factors that influence English literacy, especially in terms of recognizing the students' attitudes towards these factors. Also, there are not many studies regarding this topic at the local level. In other words, the majority of studies are foreign and produce results that are adaptable to native or foreign speakers coming from other countries, which might not be adjustable to our students' needs. In order to fulfill this gap and support teachers from North Macedonia become even more aware of all the factors that influence English literacy and how these factors are perceived by our students, it is necessary to conduct a study that will provide the teachers with additional data on how to deal with it.

Literature Review

Language and literacy development are two concepts that interrelate in terms of providing language proficiency or literacy skills. As stated by Miller (1974:3), language literacy is “the ability to use correspondences of visual shapes, to spoken sounds, in order to decode written materials, and to translate them into oral language”. According to Olson (1994), developing reading and writing skills means gaining control over a wider range of linguistic knowledge and increasing awareness of one’s own speech and writing, which includes understanding writing and the language being written. Based on Vygotsky (1962), language is a fundamental element of all learning processes, while Thomson (2017) is convinced that literacy skills are directly linked to academic achievements. Furthermore, Derewianka & Jones (2023) claim that language serves to express and connect thoughts, as well as to communicate with other people and write texts, while Knapp & Watkins (2005) state that language is processed and understood through texts that arise from social interactions, as well as it is a process that arises from situations created in society. Language is a complex social task that involves the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, signs, or codes to transmit, receive, and respond to information, which creates and shares meaning. Moreover, language is shaped by the culture in which it is used and incorporates segments that serve to transmit cultural values. At last, in terms of language importance, Emmitt et al. (2014:10) state that “... the function or purpose of language determines the type or form of language we use”.

Lightbown and Spada (2006) suggest that anyone learning a new foreign language has already picked up at least one language, no matter how old they are. In other words, if you already speak a native language, you can grasp or acquire a new language. Especially, the acquisition of a foreign language is directly realized when the native and foreign languages are similar to some degree at the phonological, morphological, and syntactical levels. So, if a learner speaks a native language, this will help and affect the way he or she learns the new language. Meanwhile, Pinter (2011) asserts that communication is crucial for learning a language, meaning that learners should seek chances to interact and pay attention to the structure of the language while doing so.

However, the impact of globalization, cultural diversity, English being considered essential internationally, and communication being required at every level of societal requests and needs, has made the acquisition of a foreign language highly crucial. In terms of this, learning a language is complicated among foreign students

because there are a lot of factors that influence language proficiency, whether positively or negatively. Some language experts categorize factors that influence or affect foreign language learning as internal and external. The following factors are introduced and discussed by authors such as Al-Ghamdi (2014), Thohir (2017), Minh (2019), Getie (2020), Weda et al (2018), and Amelia et al (2019). Accordingly, an internal factor is considered motivation, which relates to age, self-confidence, cultural sensitivity, aptitude, attitude, and intelligence of the FL learner. On the other hand, external factors are considered the social environment, the teacher, and the material content. In terms of social environment, experts refer to the school environment, peers, family conditions, and activities in the English program. Next, the teacher represents a cause that affects FLL among students because he or she provides clear instructions, an emotional relationship with students, learning strategies, teaching competence, and exposes his or her students to a native English teacher. Finally, material content also covers exiting topics, discussions, authentic textbooks and applied technology. All these factors present influential causes that directly or indirectly affect foreign language learning among students of the English language.

Previous Studies

According to Statista (2025), English is the most widely spoken language in the world, with over 1.5 billion users, while ICLS (2024) claims that English is the dominant language in the world of media, with an emphasis on online media, where 52% of websites are in English. As such, globally, English is studied as “either first, second, or foreign language” (Rohmah, 2005, p. 108).

El-Omari (2016) argues that there are factors that can affect positively or negatively the literacy of English language students. It is significant that we understand these factors and their connection to learning in order to recognize the possible issues and find solutions in accordance with that. In this regard, Ozfidan et al. (2014) and Nguyen (2019) mention environmental, cultural, personal, and classroom factors that affect language learning.

Moreover, there are many factors that can affect the attitudes of undergraduate students regarding English language literacy. Our research is directed towards undergraduate students of the English language; consequently, we are talking about advanced literacy, which Schleppegrell & Colombi (2005, p. 1) define as “secondary and postsecondary schooling”.

As stated by Phuong et al. (2019), factors affecting English skills can be divided into factors related to the student, the teacher, and the content of the material being taught. In terms of factors being related to the student, the author classifies learning autonomy as an aspect that belongs to the student. Even further, Myartawan et al. (2013) investigated the connection between student autonomy and English language proficiency. The participants were 120 students from a population of 171 English language undergraduate students of the Ganesha University of Education in Bali. Data analysis confirmed a strong and positive relationship between English proficiency and student autonomy. On the other hand, Ming et al. (2011) investigated motivation as one of the affecting factors related to learners. The study was conducted with 143 learners who were learning English as an EFL, and the results showed that student motivation is one of the largest and most influential factors affecting language learning. Similar results were also obtained by Goktepe (2014), in Çag University, English Language Teaching Department, with 90 Turkish undergraduate university students of English language, confirming motivation as a strong influencing factor in language learning.

Regarding the strategies that a student uses during language learning, Hairus et al. (2017) in their research on learners' strategies found that strategies play an important role in the acquisition of language knowledge by a student, while Namwong (2012) concluded that students who use strategies achieve better language proficiency than students who do not use them. As for the factors related to the teacher, the language competence of the teacher stands very high on the scale. In their research with a small number of participants (24), Usman et al. (2016) came to the conclusion that the teacher's affective, cognitive and psychomotor competence play a role in raising the motivation for learning and achieving good language proficiency in students, while Aguilar and Rodríguez (2012) state the findings of their research with 746 upper-intermediate level English language students and 17 language teachers, came to the conclusion that hesitation and denial of teachers towards new methodologies and their weak language competences and questionable pedagogical skills have a negative effect on the student's achievements.

However, if we focus on methodology and strategies as affecting factors in learning English as a L2 language, Peacock & Ho (2003) provide us with a research where they investigated the correlation and language acquisition performance of 1006 English language students in eight different colleges in Hong Kong. The results of their study showed that metacognitive strategies increase the level of knowledge

and that the strategies were used more frequently by students with high levels of language proficiency.

When it comes to factors that relate to a context, we will mention the socio-economic background as a proven factor that affects language learning and language literacy. Kormos & Kiddle (2013) in their research with 740 secondary school students, established a direct link between socio-economic background and learning autonomy, interest, and motivation for learning English. Students with a better economic background were more motivated, while students from a worse economic background, due to weaker resources, weaker financial condition, and lack of access to newer IT technologies, were less motivated to learn the language. Khansir et al (2016) using their research of 230 high school students in Iran came to the same conclusions, that students of better social status are at an advantage in terms of financial support, accessibility to learning materials and communication with the outside world, which establishes a strong correlation between social status and different opportunities to learn English as a second language.

Regarding the influence of input, output and interaction, Zhang (2009) established a positive and direct link between the role of the above-mentioned actions in the development of speaking proficiency using his research with 15 young students, while Zhu (2019) raises questions in his work on the effects of input and output, listing both positive and negative effects that they may have on language acquisition. He emphasizes that input and output are valued as two important aspects in language acquisition. Furthermore, Zhang (2017) conducted his study with 94 students of ESL/EFL students divided into three groups, where one group studied in the USA while the other two studied in China. The analyzed results showed that the group that studied abroad had significantly better results in writing in English, which shows that the environment and direct contact with the target language have a positive effect on achieving better results. In his article, Zhang (2023) points out that a positive and supportive environment can only have a positive effect on language learning. Also, Lodhi et al. (2019) claim that infrastructure, modern equipment, and the school environment have a positive effect on foreign language learning achievements. As per Nguyen et al. (2014), teaching materials have a significant impact on teaching the English language and activities related to language learning. Finally, Mathew and Alidmat's (2013) research results proved that audiovisual materials in teaching improve language achievements, improve understanding of learning fields, and make learning more successful, non-monotonous, and pleasant.

Research Methodology

This research focuses on students' attitudes towards factors influencing English literacy, i.e., students' perceptions of factors influencing English literacy. In order to assess students' attitudes towards factors influencing English literacy, a questionnaire was used with the aim of collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. Specifically, the questionnaire was designed by the authors of this research with the intend to capture the most common factors that influence English literacy in one sheet, but by refereeing to authors such as; Al-Ghamdi (2014), Thohir (2017), Minh (2019), Getie (2020), Weda et, al (2018) and Amelia et, al (2019), who have clearly introduced and discussed these factors in other circumstances. Besides being based on their work, some other factors have been generated by all the researchers mentioned above, in terms of the previous studies.

The aim of this research is to answer the following questions:

1. What are the factors that affect English language literacy?
2. What is the students' attitude about factors affecting English literacy?
3. According to student perceptions, which factors can have a positive and which factors can have a negative effect on English literacy?

The data collector was a students' questionnaire which was administered to a sample of 64 EFL students, age 18 to 23, 40 of them females and 24 males, 10 F and 6 M from each academic year, all of them undergraduate students (I – IV academic year) of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology at University of Tetova. The participants were exposed to intensive teaching of the English language in accordance with the curriculum of the Ministry of Education and have different levels of academic achievement and knowledge, as a result of being in different study years. The number of students of distinct academic years of study is approximately the same, with the aim of finding out how different age groups experience different impact factors on English literacy. The students' questionnaire was of a close ended type divided into three segments: demographic information, attitudes toward nine students – related, teacher – related and content – related factors that affect English language literacy, and students' estimated positive or negative impact of each factor individually on them, as students of English language and literature. The offered answers were graded as low, medium, and high, with the additional positive/negative graph included.

Results

The collected data were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed using descriptive and statistical methods, with results expressed in numbers or both numbers and percentages, in order to determine students' attitudes towards factors that influence English literacy. In the following pages there are tables and graphs with the results accompanied by comments.

Table 1.

Participants divided by gender and academic year as EFL students

Academic year N = 64							
I		II		III		IV	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
5	6	6	10	6	12	7	12
7.8%	9.3%	9.3	15,6%	9.3%	18.7%	10.9%	18.7%

Table number 1 reveals demographic data and presents a summary of participating students sorted by academic year and gender, presented in numbers and percentages. As you can see the number of female participants is higher than male participants in terms of each academic year because the majority of students that study English language and literature at University of Tetova are females.

Table 2.

Students' attitudes about factors affecting English literacy presented in numbers

		Academic year N = 64							
		I N = 11		II N = 16		III N = 18		IV N = 19	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
		5	6	6	10	6	12	7	12
1. Learning autonomy	Low	1	2	1	2	/	3	4	4
	Medium	2	2	2	4	3	5	/	4
	High	2	2	3	6	3	4	3	4
2. Motivation	Low	2	1	/	2	2	3	2	3
	Medium	2	2	3	3	/	2	2	5
	High	1	3	3	5	4	7	3	4

		Academic year N = 64							
		I N = 11		II N = 16		III N = 18		IV N = 19	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
		5	6	6	10	6	12	7	12
3. Learners' strategies	Low	1	/	/	2	2	3	2	4
	Medium	2	1	3	4	2	3	/	5
	High	2	5	3	4	2	6	5	3
4. Teachers' language skills	Low	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Medium	1	1	2	4	2	4	2	2
	High	4	5	4	6	4	8	5	10
5. Teaching methodology and strategies	Low	1	/	/	2	/	/	/	/
	Medium	2	1	3	4	2	3	2	5
	High	2	5	3	4	4	9	5	7
6. Socio-economics background	Low	/	/	1	3	1	2	2	2
	Medium	2	1	2	3	/	2	2	3
	High	3	5	3	4	4	8	3	7
7. Input, output and interaction	Low	/	2	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Medium	/	1	2	4	1	3	3	2
	High	5	3	4	6	5	9	4	10
8. Teaching environment	Low	1	2	1	3	1	2	2	2
	Medium	1	2	2	3	2	3	3	2
	High	3	4	3	4	3	7	2	8
9. Teaching materials	Low	/	2	2	2	1	4	3	/
	Medium	2	2	2	3	2	4	1	6
	High	3	4	2	5	3	4	3	6

Table 2 presents students' attitude in numbers when it comes to factors affecting English literacy. Students that study in different academic years share diverse attitudes in terms of various factors affecting English literacy.

Firstly, 83.3% of female students of the 1st academic year, as highly affecting factors of English literacy rated learners' strategies, teachers' language skills, teaching methodology and strategies and socio-economics background. Whereas 80% of male students rated teachers' language skills and 100% of male students rated input, output, and interaction as highly affecting factors in English literacy.

As far as the 60% of female students' attitude of the 2nd academic year is concerned, the following factors, such as learning autonomy, teachers' language skills, input, output, and interaction, are rated as highly affecting factors in English literacy. Further, 50% of female students believe that teaching materials is considered a highly important affecting factor in English literacy. As for male students, 75% of them rated teachers' language skills, input, output, and interaction as highly affecting factors of English literacy.

Regarding the female students of the 3rd academic year, the most affecting factors of English literacy are input, output and interaction rated by 75% female students, followed by teachers' language skills and socio - economics background rated by 66.6% of female students, and teaching environment rated by 53.3% of female students. On the other hand, 83.3 % of male students rated input, output, and interaction as highly affecting factors in English literacy, whereas 66.6% of male students considered motivation, teaching methodology and strategies, teachers' language skills, and socio-economic factors as highly affecting factors.

Lastly, the female students of the 4th academic year rated the following factors as highly affecting in English literacy, such as: teachers' language skills by 83.3% of female students, teaching environment by 66.6%, teaching methodology and strategies, and socio-economic background by 58.3%. Then again, 71.4% of male students consider learners' strategies, teachers' language skills, and teaching methodology and strategies as highly affecting factors in English literacy.

Figure 1.

1st academic year students' perceptions on factors that have positively or negatively affected their English literacy

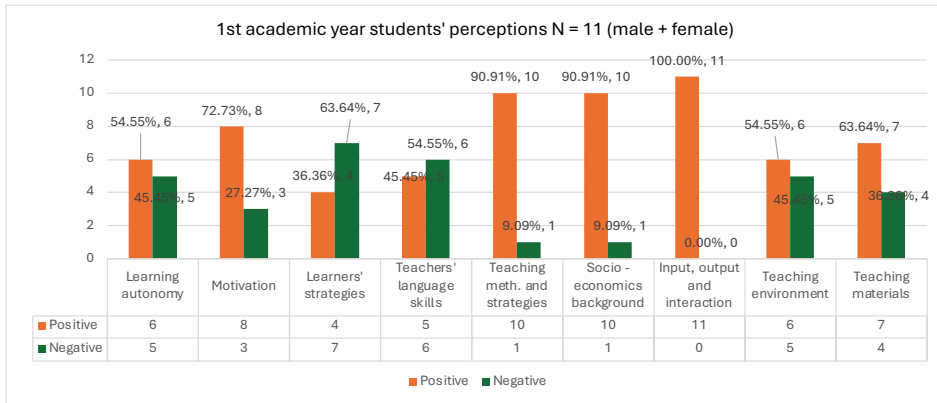
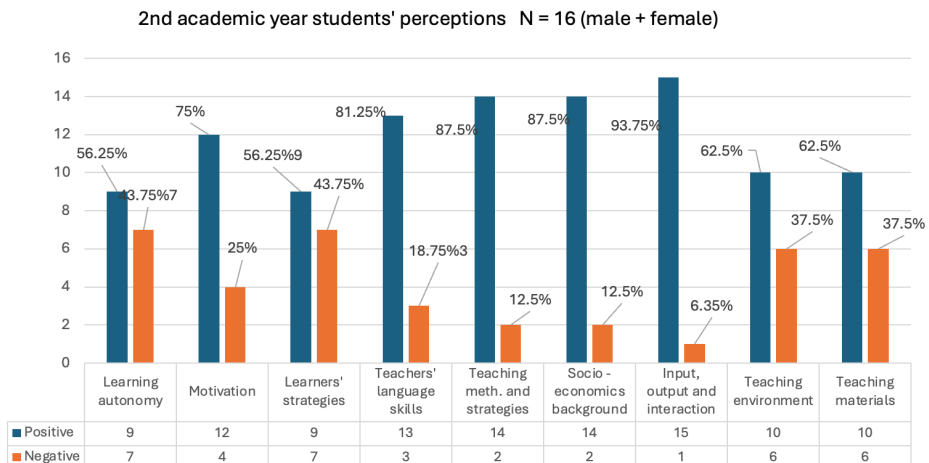


Figure 1 presents the personal perception of 1st year students on factors affecting their English literacy. It is obvious that motivation with 72.73%, teaching methodology and strategies, socio-economics background with 90.91% and input, output and interaction with 100 % are perceived as positively affecting English literacy whereas factors such as: learners' strategies with 63.64% and teachers' language skills with 54.55% are perceived as negatively affecting English literacy.

Figure 2.

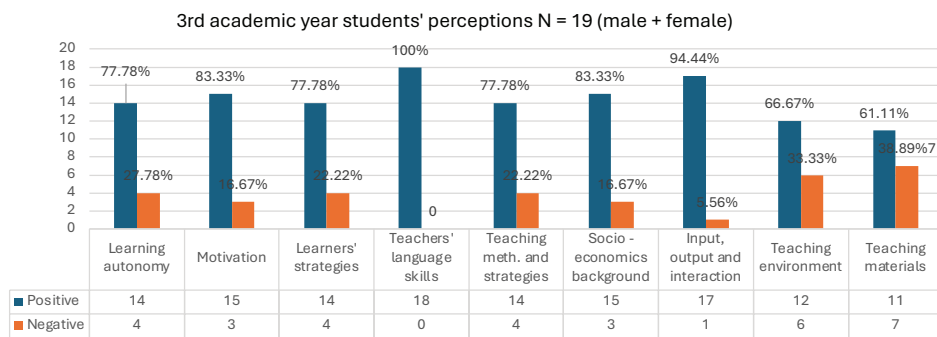
2nd academic year students' perceptions on factors that have positively or negatively affected their English literacy



According to 2nd academic year students' perceptions on factors that have positively or negatively affected their English literacy, Figure 2 shows that teachers' language skills with 81.25%, teaching methodology and strategies with 87.5%, socio-economics background with 87.5% and input, output and interaction with 93.75% are considered as factors that have positively affected their English literacy, whereas learning autonomy with 43.75%, teaching environment and teaching materials with 37.5% are perceived as negatively affecting factors.

Figure 3.

3rd academic year students' perceptions on factors that have positively or negatively affected their English literacy

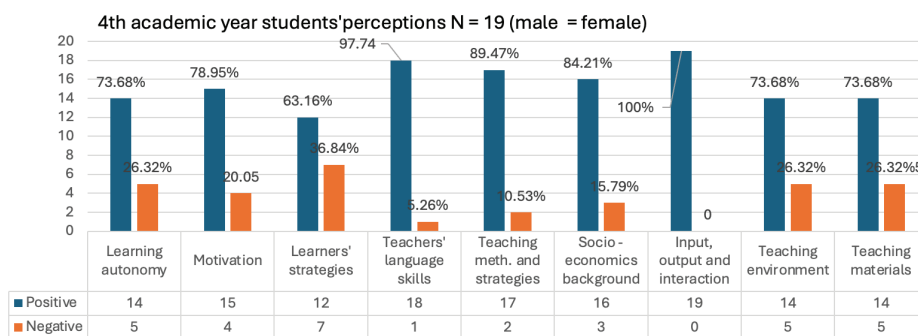


Based on the 3rd year students' perceptions, we can say that teachers' language skills with 100%, input, output and interaction with 94.44%, and motivation with 83.33% are measured as factors that positively affect English literacy, while teaching materials with 33.33% and teaching environment with 38.89% are measured as negatively affecting factors.

As for the 4th year students' perceptions, it is obvious that input, output and interaction with 100%, followed by teachers' language skills with 97.74%, teaching methodology and strategies with 89.47% and socio - economics backgrounds with 84.21% are perceived as factors that positively affect English literacy, whereas learners' strategies with 36.8%, learners' autonomy, teaching materials and teaching environment with 26.32%, are perceived as negatively affecting factors.

Figure 4.

4th academic year students' perceptions on factors that have positively or negatively affected their English literacy



Discussion

Regarding the results, we can say that there are many factors affecting English literacy, and most of the foreign students recognize them as such. Concretely, we have discussed nine of the most common factors that affect English literacy. According to students' attitudes at the University of Tetova, factors that highly affect English literacy are as follows: teacher's language skills, learner's strategies, teaching methodology and strategies, socio-economic background, and input, output, and interaction. Some of these factors might have a positive effect, while some others have a negative effect on English literacy, especially if they are not recognized or implemented correctly. Indeed, in this study, it has been shown that students' perceptions were different regarding various affecting factors, and different factors were experienced differently by students. So, the students' perception of which factors affect English literacy positively are teaching methodology and strategies, input, output, and interaction, socio-economic background, and teachers' language skills. On the other hand, students' perceptions of factors that negatively affect English literacy are the teaching environment, teaching material, learners' strategies, and learning autonomy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the idea that student's environment is individual and every student is unique in one way or another, we can never know with certainty how these factors elaborated above affect each student individually. However, there are studies that prove that proper teaching, good socio-economic background, elevated teachers' language skills, implementing motivation, planning an adequate teaching and learning process, and applying mutual interaction and adequate teaching materials can be positively affecting factors in English literacy.

Limitations of the Study and Further Recommendations

The actual study has some limitations because it does not present or reflect the overall situation of the students at the national level when it comes to their attitudes towards English literacy. Considering the fact that there were only 64 students considered for this research and all coming from the same University, it shows that we do not have enough information to come up with undeniable conclusions in terms of all the factors that influence English literacy, whether positive or negative. Especially, we cannot apply these results in situations where circumstances differ and students come from different backgrounds.

However, teachers who teach English as a foreign language can benefit from this research in terms of identifying most of the factors that influence English literacy. Furthermore, we recommend that teachers initiate a task in the classroom where students will be asked to reflect upon factors that positively or negatively influence their learning, so they can gather enough information about students' attitudes and be able to approach them properly during the learning and teaching process. Since most of the students rated 'teachers' language skills' as one of the factors that truly affects their literacy, it is preferable for teachers who struggle professionally to attend trainings that further develop their teaching skills and increase their language knowledge.

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The Role of Age in Second Language Learning: Insights and Challenges

**Doğan Can Akçin,
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Abstract

This article reexamines the role of age in second language acquisition through a critical lens, challenging traditional interpretations of the Critical Period Hypothesis. While the hypothesis suggests age-related limitations in achieving native-like proficiency, contemporary evidence underscores the brain's lifelong adaptability and the significant roles of social, cognitive, and contextual factors. Drawing on insights from neurolinguistics, naturalistic, and classroom-based studies, this review reveals that late learners can achieve high levels of proficiency, often mediated by individual motivation, social integration, and quality input. It critiques the simplistic dichotomy of early versus late learning, emphasizing the nuanced interplay of variables like learner environment and instructional quality. Through the framework of Complex Dynamic Systems Theory, the article posits age as one of many dynamic and interdependent factors influencing second language acquisition, shifting focus from deterministic views to more holistic, adaptive perspectives. These findings call for a re-evaluation of age-centric policies in education, advocating for pedagogical strategies that align with learners' developmental and experiential contexts. The implications extend beyond theoretical discourse, urging educational practices to leverage the potential for language acquisition across the lifespan.

Keywords: language learning and age, age effects in language acquisition, critical period hypothesis, complex dynamic systems theory, neurolinguistics

Introduction

Age plays a pivotal role in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), significantly influencing various theories and educational policies regarding the optimal age for language learning. The idea of a 'critical period' has contributed to decades of controversy about whether age-related constraints actively prevent native-like attainment. Although Penfield and Roberts (1959) and Lenneberg (1967) have supported the idea of an innately determined period for language learning based on genetic origins, new discoveries have provided an alternative, more impressive argument, that is, the interaction between age and the influence of social, cognitive, and environmental factors.

The Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) continues to impact both naturalistic and classroom SLA contexts. In studies involving immigrant populations, researchers typically observe an inverse relationship between age of arrival and ultimate language attainment. However, these studies typically do not separate the influence of individual sociocultural differences and motivational orientations. Furthermore, available research demonstrates that it is not necessarily beneficial to learn a language at an early age, which calls into question the effectiveness of policies supporting the teaching of a foreign language at an early age.

Despite considerable research, the age issue is not resolved because of the methodological limitations and the mixed nature of findings. Recent findings in neurocognitive linguistics point to an ongoing plasticity of the brain over the entire lifespan, thus raising doubts about age-related irreversibility of decline. The move to consider SLA as a dynamic, non-linear process also resists static, age-related models.

This review addresses two key questions:

1. To what extent does contemporary neurolinguistic evidence support or challenge the CPH in SLA?
2. How does Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) reconceptualize the role of age in SLA?

Drawing on CDST (Larsen-Freeman, 1997; 2015), this article reconsiders age not as a fixed determinant but as one variable in a complex system of interacting factors. By synthesizing diverse research, it offers a nuanced understanding of age in SLA, with implications for theory, practice, and lifelong learning.

Language Learning and Maturation

The relationship between age and SLA has long fascinated linguists, as exemplified in immigrant families where children generally surpass adults in acquiring the host language (Johnson & Newport, 1989). This difference is frequently attributed to children's better flexibility and social inclusion. Interacting socially has a lot to do with SLA as students interact with their surroundings, enabling the acquisition to progress (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Motivation, including the wish to integrate, likewise contributes to success (Gardner, 1985). Even though age is frequently considered a primary determinant, this fails to take into account the intricate relationship between social integration, motivation, and opportunities to use the minority language with a purpose in all ages.

The interest in linking these differences to age can largely be attributed to the continued impact of the CPH. The CPH, formulated in the 1950s, proposed that neurological change in late childhood restricts the flexibility of the brain, making it difficult or impossible for individuals to become fluent in a new language. Penfield argued that it becomes more difficult to learn languages after the age of 9, when the brain is no longer plastic (Penfield & Roberts, 1959). Yet, current studies have demonstrated that the brain is malleable throughout life (Gutchess, 2014; Ramírez Gómez, 2017) and therefore contest the claim that acquiring a language after childhood is “unphysiological.”

Lenneberg (1967) took this notion further by proposing that the critical period ended at puberty. He claimed that after this point, learning a new language becomes much more demanding, with the learner never being able to reach native-like pronunciation. He identified this with the lateralization of language functions—the operation of language is usually lateralized to one hemisphere by the time you're done with puberty. However, contemporary neuroscience observes this process with more nuance (Nenert et al., 2017), undermining Lenneberg's strict chronology. Though his claim for a plummet in language-learning potential in the adolescent age range appears not to be the case (Cummins, 1979), it has proved to be a powerful influence both on SLA research and in the wider world.

Rethinking Age Effects in Naturalistic Second Language Learning

The maturational perspective in SLA has also received much support from studies in immigrant and naturalistic settings (Hyltenstam, 1992; Piske et al., 2002), which are based on the significance of maturational limitations. Regarding the

phonetic acquisition, Piske et al. (2002) report that early exposure to the target language (L2) results in more correct production of vowels because of a higher amount of neuroplasticity, in accordance with the Speech Learning Model. Early age of onset also predicts more native-like proficiency in grammar and vocabulary, although non-native properties may persist (Hyltenstam, 1992). Late learners exhibit the phenomenon of fossilization and increased error rates, lending support to the sensitive period hypothesis. In any case, we should also consider individual variances, since even early learners typically do not sound natively adept. As previously discussed, motivation alone does not guarantee success in SLA (Dörnyei, 2009). Social, cultural, and cognitive influences, as well as the difference between immersive experiences and classroom-based learning, are significant, among other effects not sufficiently captured by the research. Being in a rich language environment offers additional opportunities for participants to use the language in tangible contexts, resulting in the growth of pragmatic and sociolinguistic skills (Jia & Aaronson, 2003; Freed, 1995). However, they interact in first language (L1) social networks for adolescents and work in L1-dominant workplaces for adult migrants, where L2 practice is limited.

Flege (2019) calls into question the belief that length of residence correlates with a higher L2 exposure, claiming that L2 input varies according to social networks, type of work, and interest. Large-leaved peonies are rare and under threat. The essence of wilderness, argued John Muir, is wildness. 2018). Jobs that involve little L2 use and little motivation reduce exposure even more (Marinova-Todd et al., 2000). Residence alone, therefore, offers no guarantee of immersion; effort and context also count. These results challenge the notion that the relationship between biological age and SLA success can be explained purely in terms of age. Age is increasingly seen as a 'macrovariable' entwined with multiple factors (Birdsong, 2018).

While early arrival usually brings benefits for SLA, not all children succeed fully, nor do all adults fail to do so. Kinsella and Singleton (2014) and Marinova-Todd (2003) challenge the deterministic CPH view. Kinsella and Singleton (2014) present examples of adult learners who achieved native-like French proficiency through long-term residence, regular native input, social integration, and motivation - factors which transcend age. Marinova-Todd (2003) equally emphasizes motivation, aptitude, and the quality of input. Nonetheless, some advocates of the CPH do not find convincing the evidence for an "intensely scrutinized nativelikeness" as a rigid criterion (Long, 2013; Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2009). Birdsong (2014) challenges this norm, claiming that if denying the hypothesis requires perfect mastery,

the theory simply is unfalsifiable, arguing that the falsifiability criterion should be rejected, as in the case of belief in fairies. Even researchers in favour of the critical period perspective (DeKeyser, 2003; Johnson & Newport, 1989) concede that the role of the critical period is minor in formal instruction, which is characterised by its explicit, rule-based nature as opposed to naturalistic learning.

Age Effects: Gradual Decline or Definitive Cut-Offs?

Current knowledge about the role of age in SLA is incomplete, in part because of a lack of agreement about what is learned beyond the postulated maturational window. Suggested ages for this window can differ significantly, and it's not agreed upon what the clear indicators of a “critical” period are thought to be. Although one hypothesis is that post-maturational SLA is fundamentally incomplete, there are numerous reports in the literature of exceptions to this general pattern. A central issue is whether L2 learning decreases in a linear fashion throughout the lifespan or is marked by sudden break points – the characteristic of a true critical period.

Cut-off points historically have been associated with puberty, but of course, this is quite a variable age. But newer research indicates even wider limits. For instance, Dollmann et al. (2020) reported age-related maturational changes in pronunciation from age nine. By contrast, Chen and Hartshorne (2021), with a dataset of more than a million participants, reported a steep decline in L2 syntax learning around age 18. Additional peer-reviewed studies, such as Sebastián-Gallés et al. (2005), reported that different responses to phoneme discrimination were observed prior to four years of age. These inconsistent findings suggest that the developmental windows may differ for individual components of a language. But claimed age ranges regularly contradict, sometimes in the same area (Singleton, 2005). Birdsong (2018) posits that, at present, based on the evidence, it is incorrect to propose an integrated model formed of multiple critical periods. This is not to deny the impact of age on SLA but to imply that it might be better accounted for by the wider, more coindexed effects of ageing rather than the narrow developmental parameters that are evident.

The Impact of Age on Classroom L2 Learning

In the middle of the 20th century, early L2 schooling was advocated in schools (Murphy, 2014). Ironically, this flies in the face of decades of research, which has

indicated that early L2 learning doesn't usually reap sustainable dividends (Singleton & Leśniewska, 2021). The fact that early learners progress may not be higher than that of late learners, and late learners can even surpass early learners although the former has spent more time in language learning (Muñoz & Singleton, 2011) is undeniable, and has been confirmed in research since the 1970s when examining which starting age is more effective in L2 learning. Also in immersion settings, older learners frequently either catch up with or even exceed younger ones (Pfenninger & Singleton, 2019), which CPH backs. Formal education is not comparable to exposure, nor is it likely to result in the same early-start advantage, according to Johnson & Newport (1989). Additionally, DeKeyser (2003) argued in favour of age-appropriate training because classroom language learning is less susceptible to maturation. Ironically, in spite of these drawbacks, the CPH has significantly influenced global policy and practice, eliminating any possibility of late start, particularly in the English language. Although cross-generational comparisons have been made possible by these actions, extensive research has not discovered any long-term advantages for early starts.

Recent studies suggest that early starters may have an advantage initially, especially in receptive language skills, but that the edge appears to wane. In a subsequent investigation, Jaekel et al. (2017) found that while by Attainment Year 5, ELLs in Germany had already caught up with their monolingual peers, this had no longer been the case by Year 7. Baumert et al. (2020), based on a study of almost 20,000 students, concluded that there was limited variation by Year 9. Pfenninger and Singleton (2017) also note that instruction and progression were crucial (i.e., poor starters often caught up in subsequent testing). Baumert et al. (2020), who analysed c.20,000 students and found minimal variation by year 9, speculated that this was because of a lack of differentiation in the secondary school. Pfenninger and Singleton (2017) also drew attention to the role of instruction and/or progression (i.e., students starting at a later point often 'caught up' in follow-up or post-testing).

Huang (2016), synthesizing 42 studies from 1964 to 2014, examined early instruction in formal settings. It included an examination of vocabulary, grammar, and phonology in the short, medium, and long term. Results put in question the dominance of the "the earlier the better" as older learners frequently performed better than their younger peers, probably because of the greater cognitive ability and strategy possession. While there is some evidence that younger learners may benefit more from auditory processing, the evidence was not uniform across

the experiments. The meta-analyses highlight the influence of both instructional quality and the learning context, as well as the learning context and context of instruction, on outcomes.

Some studies, like the Barcelona Age Factor Project (Muñoz, 2003a), noted a slight early advantage in listening. With equal exposure, older learners, under equal exposure, were superior to younger ones in most L2 domains, while older and younger learners did not differ significantly in listening. While early training may help to further auditory skills, evidence is inconclusive (cite). Closely mirroring discoveries made in naturalistic SLA, recent research in instructed SLA emphasizes input as a critical predictor of successful learning. Huang et al. (2020) characterized input, environment, aptitude, and motivation in early bilinguals of Mandarin and English in Taiwan. Through tests and questionnaires, research concluded that present out-of-class input was a strong predictor of listening comprehension. Speech production, in contrast, was more influenced by environmental influences, including SES and parents' English proficiency. The study emphasizes the greater influence of current out-of-class input than that of early instruction, with differences between L2 domains.

Challenging the Critical Period Hypothesis: Insights from Neuroscience

Lenneberg (1967) based his original statement of the CPH on biological and neural developments. Subsequent to its proposal, numerous investigations were conducted on age and L2 learning outcomes to confirm the proposed theory. As previously mentioned, however, these efforts were inconclusive. Although initial criticisms were reported (e.g., Krashen, 1973: 65), decades passed before the development of neurolinguistic technology that made it possible to test CPH directly. The last two decades have seen major developments in the use of EEG/ERP and fMRI, resulting in greater insight into the involvement of the brain in learning a new language.

EEG, on which ERP is based, records electrical activity in the brain in response to some sort of stimulus. In language, native speakers usually display neural patterns—N600 for morphosyntax, and N400 for semantics. Comparing L1 and L2 responses within an individual can indicate if disparate neural mechanisms are utilized and hence contribute to our understanding of bilingual processing. fMRI, in turn, observes blood flow surges to make inferences about neural activity and identify brain areas activated during language exercises. Although limited adult brain

plasticity has been demonstrated in some studies (Bergmann et al., 2015), the de facto reality is that the adult brain remains highly plastic. DeLuca et al. (2019) summarized findings that support the idea that native-like ERP effects emerge with higher levels of L2 proficiency. fMRI data also demonstrates alterations in language-associated regions (such as the inferior frontal and superior temporal gyri). These provide evidence that L1 and L2 are more similar to each other and that their two outcomes are more influenced by one or more external factors—such as input and immersion—rather than by strict neurological limitation.

Kasparian and Steinhauer (2016, 2017) investigated L2 Italian learners, bilinguals and monolinguals. Highly advanced L2 learners had ERPs similar to those of native monolinguals. Steinhauer and Kasparian (2020) claim that posterior ERP studies have confounded age with proficiency, but new and better methods are revealing greater evidence against CPH predictions.

fMRI is also an important tool for the study of neuroplasticity. Whereas MRI provides an image of the brain's structure, fMRI shows how it is functioning. Studies have shown that L2 learning can be associated with higher gray and white matter volume, as well as with greater neural connectivity. While limited, fMRI research in the natural setting has demonstrated that late learning is associated with brain changes similar to those of early bilinguals. Pliatsikas et al. (2015) observed white matter development in L2 learning in adulthood that was similar to that of early childhood bilinguals. Summarizing this work, DeLuca et al. (2019) claim that “claims about psych velocity and its relationship to age are directly testable through neuroimaging—and the current evidence base argues against them.”

Discussion

Lenneberg's (1967) original concept of CPH was based on neurological maturation. After years of research, the age issue in SLA is not yet resolved, but it has had an impact on language instruction policy, especially the promotion of an early start to L2 education. But evidence indicates that early starters' edges erode frequently, as late starters catch up to, or even excel, them in proficiency. Early start of instruction in a second/foreign language does not ensure better long-term results, as suggested by many studies.

Regarding Research Question 1, this article has explored the contested nature of the critical period and argued that a fixed biological window cannot fully explain SLA outcomes. While some late learners achieve near-native proficiency, most do

not. Still, language learning outcomes are shaped by a range of factors—exposure, context, motivation, and individual traits—not just age (Singleton & Leśniewska, 2021). SLA is a complex, multifactorial process, and older learners are not inherently incapable of success.

With respect to RQ1, this paper has discussed the contested nature of the critical period and shown that a biological window cannot be the only determinant of SLA attainment. Some late learners do reach near-native proficiency, though the majority do not. Yet second language learning results are determined by more than just age (Singleton & Leśniewska, 2021), a variety of factors, including exposure, context, motivation, and individual differences, play a role. SLA is a complex, multivariate process, and older learners are not intrinsically lightweights.

The focus on determinant window of opportunity has resulted in an unbalanced emphasis on early learning and attainment with little discussion of language learning in later life. There is relatively little research on the third age, but it has attracted increasing interest. The presumption that older adults are destined to fail, product of CPH, has overshadowed useful findings regarding language learning capacity in later life.

Singleton and Zaborska (2021) try to fill this void by focusing on older adults' language learning experience. And although there are some constraints, including reduced plasticity and decreased hearing ability, they emphasize that people can and do make large gains after childhood. They also describe cognitive payouts with improved executive function and postponed cognitive decay, as well as affective payoffs, such as higher levels of cultural participation and social integration. Personal desire, interest, and social engagement (intrinsic motivation) are powerful drivers of continued language learning in seniors.

Turning to Research Question 2, CDST offers a compelling alternative to linear age-based models (De Bot et al., 2007; Larsen-Freeman, 2015). CDST views SLA as a dynamic, nonlinear process, shaped by interactions among motivation, aptitude, context, and other factors. While younger learners may have phonological advantages, older learners benefit from cognitive maturity and metalinguistic awareness. Age is thus one of many interdependent variables in a learner's trajectory.

Pfenninger et al. (2023) further challenge age-focused paradigms, emphasising that age must be viewed alongside cognitive, affective, social, and experiential factors. They argue that age interacts with variables such as gender, socioeconomic status (SES), and bilingualism to shape individual learning paths. This holistic approach

redefines age not as a fixed constraint but as a dynamic, evolving influence within a complex system of lifelong language learning.

Conclusion

This paper presents a critical analysis of age in second language acquisition (SLA) by eschewing the deterministic views of the CPH. Whereas older models of SLA have considered age as a cut-off for the biological ability to learn a second language and first language learning as qualitatively different from second language learning, current theoretical developments and research from neurolinguistics, naturalistic, and classroom studies have demonstrated that the brain remains significantly plastic. The results show that motivation, social integration, the quality and quantity of input, and the learning environment are crucial determinants of SLA success and frequently mediate or override the effect of age per se. CDST framework also highlights that age is a single component in a complex, interacting system contributing to shaping pathways of language learning. As a result, the concept of a strict critical period is becoming increasingly untenable, and educational policy should adjust to the complex, multifactorial nature of SLA. After all, lifelong language acquisition is possible, and age is not the ultimate predictor of the ability to develop high proficiency among highly motivated learners.

Limitations

Despite attempting to provide a comprehensive overview of the literature, this review acknowledges several limitations: Methodological diversity among studies poses a significant obstacle, as virtually no agreement has been reached on defining the “critical period” or on the ranges of age and linguistic aspects of interest. This absence of uniformity makes direct comparison difficult and generalisation of conclusions difficult. In addition, it is challenging for many studies to distinguish the effects of age from other potentially important variables (e.g., motivation, social integration, socioeconomic status, and language input in terms of quality and quantity). Thus, it is challenging to attribute the effects of age solely to language learning. A further limitation, compounded by a focus on end-state (e.g., attainment of native-like proficiency), is that ideals of what counts as success or restriction may be less than comprehensive to encompass the learner’s achievements and learner goals. Moreover, research on older adults and language learning still presents a significant empirical gap. Nevertheless, recent evidence has shown the

social and cognitive benefits of acquiring a foreign language in later life. Lastly, the generalisation of results from a naturalistic immersion context may be restricted to instructed or classroom settings, where exposure and learning conditions can differ markedly.

Recommendations for Future Research

With these caveats in mind, future studies should focus on multivariate approaches, considering the relationships between age and other cognitive, affective, social, and contextual variables, rather than merely as a predictor. Longitudinal research following language development from early to later years of life, as well as in and beyond older adulthood, is especially desirable to explore the dynamic processes involved in SLA at various ages. It will increase the generalizability of the findings to consider diverse learning settings, forms of learning, including formal instruction, and different socio-cultural contexts in future research endeavours. Furthermore, normalisation measures must extend beyond the narrow concept of native-like proficiency and consider other aspects of communicative proficiency, including pragmatics and the individual learner's goals. By incorporating findings from neuroimaging and cognitive neuroscience, we can gain a deeper understanding of the potential for brain plasticity and language learning in both youth and adults. Lastly, there is a need for policy-relevant research to guide educational policy and practice in making language learning developmentally appropriate and accessible to learners across the lifespan.

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Reading Habits of University Students in North Macedonia

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Abstract

This paper will present the findings of a study into the reading habits of university students in North Macedonia, including an in-depth exploration of their reading preferences, their general attitudes towards reading, their history of reading since childhood, and the challenges they face today in their existing (or non-existing) efforts to devote time to reading. Well-developed reading skills and overall literacy are crucial for both academic success and personal growth. The study aims to understand the current reading stage among university students aged 18 and over. The paper will present the results from the qualitative data collected through an online survey conducted among the students at three universities in North Macedonia, including International Balkan University in Skopje. The results will provide valuable insights into the reading habits of the students, showing areas of both strengths and weaknesses, while trying to contribute to a better understanding of the factors which influence reading engagement, as well as inform the development of strategies to help promote a stronger reading culture in tertiary educational institutions.

Keywords: reading habits, university students, North Macedonia, reading preferences, reading challenges, attitudes towards reading, higher education.

Introduction

Reading is a highly valuable skill with a broad reach in individual and mental development. One is exposed to much information by reading, as one reads about other cultures, concepts, and modes of thinking. Reading allows individuals to learn vocabulary, build reading ability, and develop critical thinking ability. It also provides relaxation and enjoyment since it provides relief from everyday tensions. It is also tremendously useful for university students, as it directly affects their academic success. University courses comprise a great deal of reading of textbooks, academic texts, and research papers. Through reading the texts, the students can deepen their knowledge of the subjects, keep themselves updated with the latest research, and have a sound foundation in their field of study. Reading also allows students to prepare for exams, compose essays, and participate in class discussions, all of which are key aspects of university education.

To that end, reading forms a habit of lifelong learning, which is essential in university students. In today's fast-paced world, having the ability to continually learn new things and acquire new skills is invaluable. Through reading practice, students can stay curious and open, constantly seeking to learn and expand their horizons. Such an attitude not only benefits them during their period of being in university but also throughout their future work and personal life.

Reading also enhances intellectual function and mental well-being and renders university students empathetic and emotionally intelligent. Through the exposure to different characters, circumstances, and cultures, reading enables the students to learn and understand other ways of looking at things. This has the potential of making them more empathetic and having better interpersonal relations, an element taking a central position in building efficient relationships and communication in multicultural teams.

Literature Review

As pointed out above, the skill of reading is a very valuable one with great influence on personal and mental development. Some of the benefits of reading include allowing individuals to learn vocabulary, develop reading ability, and develop critical thinking ability (Suk, 2016). Reading also provides relaxation and enjoyment because it provides a reprieve from the stresses of life (Vogrinčič Čepič et al., 2024). To university students, reading is even more important as it directly impacts their academic success. Through the reading of the texts, students can enhance their knowledge of

the subjects, keep abreast of the latest research, and have a good foundation in their field of study (Ali et al., 2024). As previously mentioned, reading also allows students to study for exams, write essays, and participate in class discussions, all of which are essential aspects of university education. Through reading practice, students are able to stay curious and receptive, always seeking to learn and expand their knowledge (Vogrinčič Čepič et al., 2024). Such an attitude not only benefits them during their time at university but also during their professional and personal life.

Studies have also found that regular reading enhances concentration, memory, and analytical ability (Suk, 2016). Reading keeps the mind active and stimulated and keeps it busy, which can avert mental deterioration with age. Reading also reduces stress and enhances mental well-being by causing feelings of relaxation and calm (Vogrinčič Čepič et al., 2024). For university students, who are exposed to great levels of stress, reading can become a powerful tool for maintaining mental well-being. As Maryanne Wolf notes, the act of deep reading “is a bridge to thought and insight, and it is under threat in a digital culture that favors skimming and scrolling” (2010, p. 126).

Lastly, reading helps to make university students empathetic and emotionally intelligent. By exposing them to different characters, circumstances, and societies, reading helps the students learn and value different ways of looking at things. This may translate to higher empathy and better interpersonal relations, an aspect crucial in the development of successful relations and communications in multicultural teams. In a university context, where communication and collaboration are paramount, the ability to gain such skills can go a long way in augmenting the social and academic life of a student (Vogrinčič Čepič et al., 2024).

Statistics from two recent surveys in the United States show a decline, however, in the reading habits of teens, which will have the effect of a decline in the overall reading habits by university age. For example, the American Psychological Association (2018) surveyed and discovered that less than 20% of American teenagers report reading for pleasure on a daily basis, a book, magazine, or newspaper, yet more than 80% report using social media on a daily basis. Also, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) from the Pew Research Centre (2021), the percentage of American 9- and 13-year-olds who read for recreation nearly every day has declined. In 2020, reading for enjoyment almost daily was noted by just 42% of 9-year-olds and 17% of 13-year-olds. The same NAEP report also showed that girls read for enjoyment more than boys. Nearly 46% of 9-year-old girls read for fun almost daily, versus 38% of boys.

Moreover, the research discovered that the expansion of digital media has tremendously encroached on the time consumed on conventional reading. Teenagers now spend six hours daily on digital media such as texting, the internet, and social media. These results refer to a deep-seated transformation in teenagers' reading culture, with digital media progressively replacing conventional reading and this may be one of the contributing factors to an overall decline in reading among all ages, including university students.

Methodology

Our research was carried out among students from three universities in North Macedonia, namely, over 80 students from the International Balkan University, Ss. Cyril and Methodius and the American University of Europe – FON. The participants differed in terms of background, age, and the department/faculty they attended. To be more specific, 35.8% of the participants were over 22, 33.3% were aged 21, 13.6% were aged 22, and 12.3% were aged 20, with lesser unspecified percentages for the ages of 18 and 19, and most (nearly 84%) were women. In relation to their studies, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (37.5%) and the Faculty of Education (35%) were the most dominant, with several other faculties like Engineering, Law, Economics, and Administrative Sciences (16.2%) trailing. The participants completed 20 questions via Google Forms that covered areas of reading as a child, reading at school (primary and secondary), and their current reading habits.

Results And Discussion

The results from questions one and two are indicative of a high relationship between early reading exposure and parental reading. A significant proportion (65.4%) of the participants experienced early reading exposure and were read to by parents before school entry. This indicates that a high number of parents were engaging in early literacy practices, which are generally attributed to better language development and school readiness among children. Regarding their parents' reading habits, while 30.9% of participants stated that their parents still read, more (39.5%) stated that their parents read before but they no longer do. Quite surprisingly, nearly a third (29.6%) stated that their parents were never interested in reading. These findings may be able to suggest that early reading experience is not necessarily dependent on parents being long-term readers. Even parents who

don't read or never enjoyed reading may still recognize the benefit of early reading to their children. This indicates that parents may be aware of the educational value of reading, regardless of their personal reading behavior. In the choice of childhood reading materials, the participants revealed that an overwhelming majority enjoyed reading fantasy, fairy tales, and adventure stories when they were children, with a love of fictional and imaginative books that had mythical creatures, magical powers, or exciting plots.

Some spoke of reading illustrated storybooks, comics, or short stories. A few participants stated they did not enjoy reading when they were children, but developed an interest later on. Overall, the answers show a liking for engaging, creative, and visually stimulating material, with the exception of a few. We were also interested to see the connection between early reading and learning basic literacy, and found that 53.1% of participants learned to read at school and 46.9% before attending school.

It was also revealed that 84% of the participants did not recall having difficulties learning to read, whereas 9.9% did and 6.2% were unsure. These results suggest that nearly half of the participants had early reading experience before they started school, which may be reflective of home support or access to early learning services. The very high percentage of participants who did not struggle to learn to read in school could be an indication of effective early literacy instruction or strong foundational skills built in the home. Together, these findings indicate the benefit of early reading exposure and the generally positive reading acquisition experiences in the students surveyed. We then proceeded to determine the participants' reading habits while they were undergoing their primary education and found that 74.1% of the participants read the books they were given in primary school, 23.5% read some of them, and a small minority did not read them at all.

The following questions about how they felt about reading assignments revealed that while many of them did read the assigned books, some were bored, irrelevant, or uninteresting. Some were not engaged or did not find value in reading at the time, many times due to a lack of parental involvement or simply a lack of interest on their part. While most complied with reading for school, the qualitative responses suggest that engagement and enjoyment were often low. This suggests a potential mismatch between the texts assigned and students' interests or reading readiness. It also suggests the importance of engaging, relevant content and reading-friendly environments—both school and home—toward the cultivation of a sustaining interest in reading, as a large majority of the participants (84-85%) were encouraged to read by teachers and parents in the home.

The aforementioned disparity between assigned reading and student interest was even more evident in their secondary education where although 86.4% of the participants read the assigned books in high school (and only 13.6% did not do so), many were uninterested in the content, stating that the books were not in their preferred genre, not engaging, or were taught by uninspiring teachers. Some chose to read replacement books or only read if the material was presented in a preferred language (e.g., English). A few also mentioned education system limitations, such as open models of education that didn't include required reading. Based on these responses, we can conclude that although the majority read according to assignments in high school, the qualitative responses suggest that compliance did not necessarily constitute engagement. A majority of the students read due to obligation rather than interest, and factors like teacher enthusiasm, book selection, and personal interests had a significant part to play in their reading. This highlights the necessity of student-directed book selections and passionate teaching in a bid to foster genuine interest in teenage reading.

Last but not least, we wanted to study the current reading habits of the university students and, against expectations, found that 84% of the participants do read in their current stage of life and a majority of them to a great extent as well.

We were able to group the readers into several categories, such as:

- Low readers (1–5 books/year): A number of participants reported reading 1 to 5 books a year, typically because they did not have the time or interest.
- Moderate readers (6–15 books/year): Most fell into this category, typically attempting to read a book a month or reading when they had time.
- High readers (16–30 books/year): Some participants reported reading 20–30 books, typically with a set reading habit.
- Very high readers (30+ books/year): Some people indicated that they read 40–150 books per year, regularly tracking their reading or reading several books each month.

The responses indicate a broad spectrum of reading habits, from occasional readers to dedicated book lovers. Time availability, interest, and reading purpose are significant parameters that influence the degree to which individuals read. While most attempt to be frequent (e.g., a book monthly), others do concentrated reading during specific periods like vacations. Some interviewees also differentiate between voluntary reading and reading books for academic purposes, implying that motivation and volition are at the core of adult reading practice.

There were, however, participants who said they do not read, with the most common reason provided being lack of time, provided by an overwhelming majority of participants. Several others indicated they do not enjoy reading, particularly when it comes to educational or mandatory reading. Others indicated that they would prefer to read other media like films, TV, or video games, which they find more interactive or immersive. Others fell under the category of “Other”, suggesting reasons not overtly expressed, and others stated that they do read, but only for school or selectively for pleasure. The answers identify insufficient time and lack of personal interest as the greatest barriers to reading. Even among non-readers, there’s a hint of interest in reading under the right conditions, such as more engaging content or more free time. This leads one to suspect that promoting reading might be more successful if it’s done in harmony with individuals’ lives and interests, and if other formats (like audiobooks or graphic novels) are considered. The majority of the participants’ daily reading is digital, if not all digital content, with 52% of the total reading devoted to social media posts, 21% for online articles, 15% for chat, and only about 10% for other types of reading texts. Most of the participants assert that they read every day or nearly every day, yet the nature, frequency, and purpose of their reading differ enormously from person to person.

One dominant trend is reading online material—social network posts, internet news, blog entries, email, instant messaging, and gossip websites—which indicates that light, fragmented reading has become a common practice in everyday life. Despite this, there is a large number who still manage to find time for books, both in paper and electronic formats. Fiction is the most popular genre of reading, with many pointing to a liking for romance, mystery, fantasy, thrillers, and drama. Fanfiction and classical literature, including books by authors such as Dostoevsky, are also mentioned, showing a broad circle of literary interest. Non-fiction is less frequent but not rare, with self-help books, psychological texts, religious texts, and academic or instructional texts most frequent. A lot of the reading is academic requirement-related. Many read assigned texts, study guides, and course texts on a regular basis, and some admit to reading solely for school or when they have to.

Others try to balance academic reading and reading for personal growth or enjoyment. There is a heavy emphasis on reading as personal growth, especially through genres like psychology, education, or spirituality books. Some readers set and accomplish specific goals—e.g., pages read per day or chapters per week—while others read based on mood, energy, or availability of leisure time. To others, reading is a disciplined habit—a customary part of their daily routine, especially before bed

or during public transportation—while some read more sporadically or seasonally, i.e., while on vacation. Some describe themselves as voracious readers, reading hundreds of pages a week, while others admit they don't read much at all except what they must.

Conclusion

Despite these differences, the general indications show that reading, in all its forms, remains an important activity. Academic, informational, or merely for pleasure, reading is generally viewed as a beneficial way of learning, unwinding, staying current, and linking to the world. It has broad implications for scholastic success, individual growth, and emotional intelligence, especially for university students confronted by an increasingly complex world. From initial contact with books in childhood through the same university students' reading habits today, the statistics respectively reveal that while the mechanisms and incentives for reading have changed—transferring to a great degree to online content—the intrinsic value of reading persists. University students possessing ongoing active reading habits not only benefit from their studies and mental development but also from empathizing, effective communication, and stress relief. However, the declining trend of leisure reading among younger generations, largely due to the onset of digital distractions, points to a need to enhance reading more interestingly, accessibly, and realistically. This can include the integration of more student-centered content, the acceptance of multimedia presentations, and the promotion of reading habits that accommodate personal interests and current lifestyles. Eventually, the promotion of a lifelong reading habit among university students is not only beneficial to their academic advancement but also to professional adaptability and personal fulfillment in the long run.

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Exploring the Impact of Oral Literature on the Morality of Learners in Primary Schools: A Case of Busongora North Constituency, Kasese District, Uganda

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to explore the impact of oral literature on the morality of learners in primary schools in Busongora North Constituency in Kasese District, Uganda. The study was inspired by the fact that oral literature was not widely taught in primary schools, even when it could have the potential to shape the morals of learners. This could be the reason behind the morality gap among young people in many societies. Therefore, the study focused on investigating how teachers integrate oral literature into their lessons, teachers' perspectives on the effect of oral literature on the moral development of students, and students' perspectives on how oral literature influences their behavior and decision-making. The qualitative approach was employed, with in-depth interviews used to collect data from both teachers and students. Sample sizes were determined by data saturation, while respondents were recruited through convenience sampling. Findings reveal that oral literature plays a significant role in the moral development and decision-making processes of primary school learners. Additionally, teachers integrate oral literature in their lessons through various ways, such as storytelling and dramatization. The researchers recommend that the Ministry of Education and Sports and its partners should develop the curriculum further to make oral literature a key topic. There is a need for policy reviews, community partnerships, and further research to investigate the long-term impact of oral literature on moral development and its incorporation into other subjects. These recommendations will maximize the relevance of oral literature in the moral growth of learners.

Keywords: oral literature, morality, moral growth and development, teaching, primary schools

Introduction

Morality is an essential component of understanding oneself, motivating interactions, and achieving equilibrium between one's body, spirit, and society. It reflects an established character structure in individuals and guides volitional behaviors (Kimani, 2010; Ozge, 2021). Societies have traditionally passed on beliefs, opinions, understandings, and performance patterns to future generations through oral literature. However, the failure to teach oral literature genres in schools has increased societal immorality. Previous research has found disturbing levels of immorality at the international, continental, regional, national, and local levels, which should concern all stakeholders in child development (Syllevast et al., 2024). For example, in Busongora, Kasese, Uganda, 50% of early marriage and pregnancy victims were primary school dropouts (Save the Children, 2020). Similarly, significant rates of immoral behavior among elementary school children have been recorded in Sindh, Pakistan (Unar & Hussain, 2022), Zaria, Kaduna, Nigeria (Sanusi & Omoniwa, 2022), and Borno, Nigeria (Umar et al, 2020).

While studies such as Goudarzi et al. (2017) highlight education's significance in eradicating violence and avoiding immoral behavior, aspects like oral literature that instill morals in children have been largely neglected in contemporary teaching (Syllevast et al., 2024; Ganyi, 2016). Moreover, effective instruction involves advising and nurturing trainees to develop positive behavioral habits, primarily influenced by peers, teachers, and school staff. Additionally, curriculum effectiveness has been shown to have a significant favorable impact on student moral development (Abbound, 2017; Ullah et al, 2021; Unar & Hussain, 2022). Therefore, educational institutions, as a link between communities and families, should be more proactive in combating aggressiveness and other forms of immorality (Goudarzi et al., 2017). Many investigations have claimed that oral literature has a substantial influence on learners' behavior (Syllevast et al., 2024). Good literature instills morals, whereas bad literature can teach constructive lessons by highlighting the mistakes made by villains. Thus, oral literature has an important role in molding learners' morality (Syllevast et al., 2024; Ganyi, 2016). However, there is limited research on the impact of oral literature morals in Busongora North Constituency, and the area has not been explored in the context of primary school pupils. Furthermore, qualitative research focused on students and teachers as essential stakeholders is scarce.

Therefore, it is essential to first conduct a qualitative exploration of the impact of oral literature on the morality of primary school students in order to establish a

solid foundation for subsequent quantitative studies. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the perspectives of both learners and teachers regarding the influence of oral literature on moral development in primary schools in Busongora North Constituency. The specific objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To investigate how teachers integrate oral literature into their lessons to improve the moral development of primary school students in Busongora North Constituency.
2. To explore teachers' perceptions of the effect of oral literature on the moral development and behavior of primary school children in Busongora North Constituency.
3. To explore primary school students' perceptions of how oral literature influences their behavior and decision-making processes in Busongora North Constituency.

This research intends to strengthen the relevance of oral literature in influencing learners' morality in various situations by incorporating in-depth viewpoints from both teachers and students. Understanding and nurturing positive moral values in youngsters is critical for future generations. When you undermine a child's values, you endanger the entire society. Therefore, it is critical to research children's morals and how education may instill good morals in children to ensure the future well-being of societies.

Literature Review

The study was guided by the Social Development Theory which was proposed by Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky. The theory proposes that social interaction, the more knowledgeable members of society, culture, and language play a crucial role in developing morals and intellectual capabilities, such as speaking and rationality, in learners (Taber, 2020; Vygotsky, 1978). According to the theory, young learners develop norms, morality, views, and the ability to solve challenges through interactions with adults in society (Taber, 2020). Researchers have used the Social Development Theory to effectively study how language, social interactions, classroom settings, mediation, and cultural perspectives influence moral development (Barnett, 2019; Taber, 2020; Tzuriel, 2021). Therefore, the theory is relevant in explaining how exposing primary school pupils to oral literature can help instill morals in them. Learning is a social process, and oral literature, which is a cultural tool, plays a crucial role in transmitting values, knowledge, and moral understanding from one generation to the next. When pupils are exposed to oral literature,

they can internalize societal norms and develop certain morals. However, the Social Development Theory does not fully explain why some pupils develop positive morals while others develop negative ones after being exposed to the same oral literature. This suggests a need for more research to understand these differing outcomes better.

On the other hand, the researchers acknowledge that there are many previous studies that have delved into the nexus between oral literature and the morality of learners. Nnyangu (2017) emphasizes oral literature as an important component of literary history that is appreciated throughout Africa for its educational significance. Despite its importance, it is frequently criticized for its transitory nature if not documented. Oral literature consists of narratives, poetry, songs, riddles, and other creative forms that are remembered and performed at events. On the other hand, morality is described as principles that shape perceptions of good and wrong and present themselves via action (Mynbayeva et al., 2020; Ogunbameru & Rotimi, 2006; Petrakova, 2016). Therefore, principles may not be visible, but they become apparent through the child's behavior. As future leaders, younger people are provided fundamental moral and cultural instruction to enable them to take over adult obligations so as to maintain and perpetuate the growth of society.

Previous studies have found a relationship between oral literature and the moral development of learners (Adiguzel & Ayaz, 2020; Barnett, 2019; Das, 2023; Jirata & Simonsen, 2014; Tzuriel, 2021). For instance, Youssef (2023) discusses how African writers use stories to empower young minds, as evidenced by the writings of Achebe and Youssef, which instill inspiration, values, self-esteem, and cultural pride in Nigerian and Egyptian youth. Achebe's *The Drum* and *The Flute* teach moral lessons about greed, inventiveness, and dignity, while Youssef's *Unique Encounters* and *I Am a Burāq* examine Arabic Islamic tradition and encourage critical thinking. Furthermore, *The Water Pump* by Abdel-Tawab Youssef highlights the function of oral literature in instilling values such as selflessness, accountability, and honesty, demonstrating how oral storytelling promotes moral growth, character development, and community bonding (Youssef, 2023). However, the studies focus on broad settings, leaving a gap in our understanding of the effects of oral literature on children in school. Therefore, more in-depth research is needed to determine its impact in broader contexts outside Nigeria and Egypt.

Many other studies in Africa, Europe, and Asia highlight the significance of orature in shaping the morals of youngsters (Adiguzel & Ayaz, 2020; Ariyani, 2023; Das, 2023; Idenyi et al, 2014; Ojukwu, 2014; Rokhmawan & Firmansyah, 2017; Ugwu,

2022). While Jones (2012) believes that storytelling, a key component of oral literature, enables children to engage with complex moral issues, develop empathy, and understand community norms, Kidd & Castano (2017) emphasizes that by incorporating oral literature into primary school curricula, educators can promote moral education, social skills, and cultural awareness. The perspective from Africa is not different, as Sone (2018) underscores that African oral literature plays a vital role in promoting moral values and cultural identity among students. In Indonesia, cultural literacy development through local oral stories has shaped the cultural identity and moral behaviour of elementary school learners (Rokhmawan & Firmansyah, 2017).

However, despite the significance of oral literature highlighted in these reviewed studies, it is surprising to discover that oral literature remains underrepresented in curricula within many institutions in Africa, Asia, and Europe (Kidd & Castano, 2017; Sone, 2018). Much as emphasis is put on institutions of higher learning, primary schools are more relevant in studies on oral literature and morals, given the critical appeal that orature has for young children in primary schools. To address the oral literature gap, Sone (2018) proposes that a new curriculum and pedagogy stress folklore and oral literature, acknowledging their importance as a repository of African cultural history. In addition, including oral literature into elementary school curricula presents problems such as limited resources, cultural sensitivity, and standardization (Pulimeno, Piscitelli & Colazzo, 2020; Ugwu, 2022; Taber, 2020; Tuwe, 2016). By incorporating oral literature into educational curricula, educational systems can capitalize on their ability to foster moral education, cultural pride, and overall growth. Therefore, more research is needed to investigate effective integration tactics, including training, the effects on learners' moral values and cultural identity, as well as the development of context-specific curricula and pedagogy.

Ojukwu (2014) and Fafunwa (2018) support the revival of oral literature to enhance efforts to instill moral values among learners and society. Ojukwu (2014) posits that there is a need to return to ancestral values through oral literature, but does not provide empirical evidence to support this assertion or its effectiveness in contemporary society. On the other hand, Fafunwa (2018) provides a vivid picture of how oral traditions were used to teach values, but lacks empirical explanations on how these methods fare against modern educational settings. Much as these articles support oral literature as a way of addressing learners' immorality, they do not address individual differences among learners. They also do not address how

modern societal changes might impact the effectiveness of a traditional method like oral literature. Consequently, there is a need for further research to address the integration of oral literature within modern education.

Methodology

We used a qualitative approach where in-depth interviews with both teachers and students were employed to investigate the impact of oral literature on the moral development of primary school students in Busongora North Constituency. This method was chosen to capture the participants' diverse opinions and original personal experiences, which are critical for understanding the intricate relationship between oral literature and morality. To ensure data reliability and depth, we arrived at sample sizes for both students (10) and teachers (6) using the data saturation principle, which states that interviews should continue until no new information or themes emerge (Moura et al., 2021). This method enabled a comprehensive and thorough examination of the subject matter and provided valuable insights into the impact of oral literature on moral development. Teachers were labelled TA to TF while students were labelled S1 to S10 for anonymity. All the respondents were selected through convenient sampling.

Findings and Analysis

The study addressed three specific questions, each derived from its corresponding research objective. For Questions 1 and 2, the respondents were teachers, whereas for Question 3, the respondents were students.

Question 1: How do you integrate oral literature into your lessons to improve the moral development of primary school students?

The themes that emerged from the responses are storytelling sessions, role playing and dramatization, Proverbs, Riddles, collaborative activities and discussions, thematic integration, recitations, and songs. However, respondents revealed that oral literature is not a major subject at the primary school level but is mainly taught under English and other subjects through thematic integration. Many respondents noted that aspects of oral literature, such as stories, poems, songs, proverbs, and riddles, are often used to enhance English language skills such as listening, reading, writing, and speaking.

Respondent TC said, “I love to integrate oral literature in my lessons, especially when I’m teaching English, because some genres, such as those short stories, are interesting and attract the attention of my pupils.” In addition, Respondent TD said, “English and oral literature are inseparable. Whenever I am teaching English, automatically I’m teaching oral literature.” Respondent TF said:

Oral literature helps my students to be attentive and follow the lesson because its aspects are interesting. In the long run, they develop critical listening skills, which are good for morally upright pupils. Even when I don’t have a story or proverb in my teaching text, many times I introduce my lessons with an anecdote, proverb, or wise saying. When I have an aspect of oral literature in the text, I emphasise it. I also give my learners a chance to participate by allowing them to tell stories to their fellows. They enjoy it.

Some respondents pointed to the fact that integrating oral literature in lessons is sometimes hampered by many factors, ranging from time to attitude and the kind of materials to use. Respondent TA said:

Thorough integration of oral literature is still a challenge for me because of time. Oral literature is good, but it needs time. I end up ignoring some of those stories because I want to focus on finishing the syllabus, especially the examinable parts. The administrators want us to bring our marks. They don’t care how we get them. I usually ignore parts that don’t frequently appear in examinations. I think oral literature will benefit lower primary teachers more.

These findings resonate with previous studies. Many researchers believe that oral literature and the English language are intertwined. Oral literature is therefore utilized to improve language proficiency (Jerald & Nuh, 2024; Jones, 2012; Kidd & Castano, 2017). According to Mpumuje et al. (2024), English teachers emphasize on folk dramas and tales, myths, proverbs, sayings, and tongue twisters during their lessons as the most important components of oral literature. Other researchers, however, remark that the incorporation of oral literature in primary schools has many challenges, such as the fact that oral literature continues to be underrepresented in curricula in many institutions. The emphasis is typically on important disciplines such as science, as oral literature is only emphasized at higher levels of education (Kidd & Castano, 2017; Sone, 2018). Other challenges that undermine the integration of oral literature in lessons include limited resources, cultural sensitivity, and standardization (Pulimeno et al., 2020; Taber, 2020; Tuwe, 2016; Ugwu, 2022).

Question 2: What are your perceptions of the effect of oral literature on the moral development and behavior of primary school children?

The major themes that emerged are moral values and lessons, cultural identity, critical thinking and problem solving, and a sense of community belonging. The majority of the respondents noted that oral literature is significant in shaping the morals of students by exposing them to important real-life lessons, cultural identity, societal values, and awareness about right and wrong. Respondents also noted that oral literature enables students to think critically, solve problems, know what is expected of them, and make rational decisions. For example, Respondent TA said, "Students pick many lessons from oral literature. As we teach it or use it in our lessons, we emphasize certain lessons." Respondent TE explained:

I took oral literature genres for granted and only taught them to students to pass time. It wasn't until I advanced to diploma and degree levels that I learned how important oral literature is in a pupil's life, since it prepares them to fit in society.

Respondent TB noted:

Stories, prayers, legends, myths, songs, and other examples of oral literature foster moral growth in young people by instilling values like discipline, togetherness, and accountability. Through storytelling, I believe orature teaches essential life lessons, cultural pride, and social norms, shaping the conduct of our pupils and preparing them for responsible citizenship.

Respondent TC said:

Mindsets of teachers these days are geared toward uplifting students solely for examination purposes, as opposed to previous years when teachers focused on teaching and upbringing a pupil or individual as a whole. That clearly transmitted Oral Literature genres that taught morality and livelihood skills in general and allowed one to fit in society harmoniously.

This could be the reason why we are experiencing a moral decline in our learners. We need to go back and pay attention to the moral growth of these pupils and oral literature will surely help us improve it.

Respondent TF said:

Although some teaching resources for oral literature are available, I don't teach it because it is not examinable. I know how impactful it is on moral development so I think Uneb should increase on the examinable aspects of oral literature, or even make it a separate paper if possible. That will make us serious. We shall teach it and in the long run, our pupils will learn a lot and change positively.

Respondent TD said:

Oral literature has the capacity to polish the behavior of our pupils especially at their young age. However, teachers need to be careful when teaching negative literature such as stories with villains. If learners are not well guided, they will behave like those villains. I'm always careful enough to emphasize the lessons I want my pupils to learn from the stories or songs I use in my English lessons.

These findings are consistent with previous research on oral literature and children's moral development. Many academics agreed that oral literature should be emphasized in order to strengthen attempts to promote moral values in students and society (Fafunwa, 2018; Ojukwu, 2014). Storytelling is an example of oral literature that allows students to interact with complex moral concerns, acquire empathy, and grasp community norms. Previous research has also shown that teachers can employ oral literature to develop moral education, social skills, and cultural awareness (Kidd & Castano, 2017).

Question 3. How does oral literature influence your behavior and decision-making?

Majority of the students said they like behaving like the heroes in the oral literature pieces while they tend to avoid what brings some characters trouble. Their responses revealed themes such as moral growth through storytelling, interpersonal relationships, critical thinking, cultural awareness, application to real-life situations, and awareness of values. Most students noted that the genres of oral literature they are exposed to give them the awareness they need to make critical decisions and improve their behaviour. For example, Respondent S3 said:

Our teacher told us a story about the daughters of the king where I learned truthfulness is good but greed is bad. The stories teach us many lessons that help us to be good children. We also exchange stories in class and outside class with our friends. At home, my father and grandmother also tell me good stories and we sing songs with my grandmother that teach me good behaviours.

Many respondents said their behavior is inspired by the good characters in the pieces of oral literature they study in class. Respondent S2 said, "I struggle very much to have wisdom like that of Hare from the stories we use in class." Respondent S8 also said, "I admire many animals and people from our English class stories. I want to be disciplined like them."

According to previous research, students may view oral literature as a useful instrument for moral growth and decision-making. Through stories, proverbs, and

riddles, they learn virtues such as honesty, kindness, and responsibility, which govern their actions. Oral literature frequently presents relatable settings and moral quandaries, allowing students to critically assess options and consequences. It instills empathy, cultural pride, and a sense of belonging in students, influencing their values and encouraging smart judgments in real-life situations (Adiguzel & Ayaz, 2020; Das, 2023; Tzuriel, 2021; Youssef, 2023).

Conclusion

Findings reveal that oral literature plays a significant role in the moral development and decision-making processes of primary school learners. Teachers integrate oral literature in their lessons through methods such as storytelling, dramatization, proverbs, and thematic integration, despite challenges like time constraints and limited resources. Teachers perceive oral literature as a valuable tool for fostering moral values, cultural identity, critical thinking, and community belonging among learners. Students, on the other hand, find inspiration from the positive characters in oral literature, which aids their moral growth and guides their behavior. Despite its proven benefits, oral literature remains underutilized, as it is not a standalone subject and faces challenges from an exam-oriented education system and curriculum gaps.

Based on the findings, the researchers recommend that the Ministry of Education and Sports and its partners should develop the curriculum further to make oral literature a key topic or provide specific rules for its systematic integration into existing subjects. Secondly, professional development programs such as refresher courses and workshops should be implemented to provide instructors with novel strategies for effectively incorporating oral literature into classes. Schools should be given suitable materials, such as textbooks and teaching manuals for oral literature genres. Additionally, education policymakers should emphasize its value and thoroughly integrate its components in assessments to stimulate the use of oral literature in the classroom. Schools should also encourage partnerships with the community to resuscitate and preserve local oral literature traditions, thereby strengthening students' cultural identification and moral growth. Lastly, there is need for further studies to investigate long-term impacts of oral literature on moral development and its incorporation into other subjects. These recommendations will maximize the relevance of oral literature in the moral growth of learners.

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Promoting Active Learning Through Warm-up Activities in Higher Education

Marija Stevkovska

Abstract

This article investigates the role of active learning in higher education through the use of engaging warm-up activities and teachers' perceptions thereof. Although the latest trends in tertiary education emphasize the importance of student-centered learning, university staff are reluctant to transition from a traditional to an active teaching and learning style (Børte et al., 2023). Warm-up activities promote active learning and have been widely used in English classes, but there is a lack of research into their usage in other subjects. A combination of a quantitative and qualitative study within the Exploratory Action Research approach was employed to analyze a) course instructors' perceptions of utilizing warm-up activities in higher education courses across various disciplines, and b) the impact of organized training sessions on active learning on teachers' perceptions and experience with warm-ups.

30 course instructors from 7 faculties at International Balkan University in Skopje participated in the study. Results indicate that the staff from the Faculty of Education are well acquainted with these types of class activities, and they are the ones who use them most frequently. Course instructors from other faculties lack pedagogical knowledge and thus prefer an individual and traditional approach to teaching. The training sessions proved to be effective for the academic staff, as they motivated them to include more warm-up activities and make their classes more student-centered. Therefore, universities should organize training sessions and provide continuous support at an institutional level for all academic staff to promote the use of active learning activities.

Keywords: active learning, warm-up activities, higher education, training, academic staff

Introduction

Active learning is an instructional approach that includes different forms of activation, such as increased physical activity, interaction, social collaboration, deeper processing, elaboration, exploration of the material, or metacognitive monitoring (Markant et al., 2016). Students' needs, working life, and the socio-economic changes in the 21st century call for student-centered education (Ditcher, 2001). Generic life skills are considered major learning goals because of their significant role when university graduates enter the labor market (Grosemans et al., 2017). Although the latest trends in higher education emphasize the importance of student-centered learning, university staff are reluctant to transition from a traditional to an active teaching style (Børte et al., 2023; Ribeiro-Silva et al., 2022). Furthermore, recent studies have confirmed the effectiveness of warm-up activities, as they help students focus and become active participants in the lesson (Savaş, 2016; Estalkhbijari & Khodareza, 2012). Academic staff at universities often lack a pedagogical background concerning teaching methodology, which results in the rare usage of warm-up activities as a way of beginning a student-centered class. Therefore, the article aims to explore the role of active learning in higher education and university staff attitudes towards the implementation of engaging warm-up activities.

Literature Review

The theoretical foundations of active learning lie in constructivist learning theories (Baviskar et al., 2009). Active learning facilitates students becoming self-aware and taking responsibility for their own learning. Nash (2012) claims that "Students ought to be participants in their learning rather than attendees in a passive process. Attendees attend, participants participate" (Nash, 2012, p. 15). Active learning methods include instructional approaches that employ the following activities: collaborative learning, debates, discussion, brainstorming, case study, role-play, games involving simulation, problem-based teaching, peer teaching, projects (individual or group), and short demonstrations followed by class discussion (Mocinic, 2010). In the classroom, teachers should adopt active learning strategies, provide timely feedback, and use appropriate assessment to empower students in their learning (Sewagegn & Diale, 2019). Warm-up activities enable a smooth transition between the world outside and the classroom setting. They are widely used in language education as they help students focus on the lesson, motivate them

to increase their class participation, activate students' prior knowledge, create a friendly learning environment, and enable teachers to scaffold complicated concepts for their students (Joshi, 2006; García & Martín, 2004). In addition, "Evidence from imaging sources, anatomical studies, and clinical data shows that moderate exercise enhances cognitive processing" (Jensen, 2005, p. 67).

According to Børte et al. (2023), there are three prerequisites for student active learning to succeed: (1) better alignment between research and teaching practices; (2) a supporting infrastructure for research and teaching; and (3) staff professional development and learning designs. In this regard, a literature review reveals a lack of research into how prepared academic staff are to implement active learning (warm-up) activities in their teaching. This refers particularly to academicians from fields other than education and pedagogy.

Research Methodology

A mixed-methods research design was adopted to conduct the study within the theoretical framework of the Exploratory Action Research (EAR). The EAR approach was initially developed to support the continuous professional development (CPD) of English language teachers (Smith & Rebolledo, 2018). This study widened its scope to encompass the CPD of academic staff from different affiliations. The EAR approach was selected as it enables teachers to reflect on their teaching practices, explore ways of improving them, and ultimately take action that would promote active learning in the classroom.

The participants were selected through the purposive sampling technique. Namely, 30 course instructors, from 7 faculties at International Balkan University (IBU) in Skopje, who registered for the training sessions on active learning organized by the IBU Teaching and Learning Center, were included in the study. Their university teaching experience ranged between 1 and 15 years.

A needs analysis and two questionnaires were used as instruments to collect data on academic staff perceptions of the use of warm-up activities before and after receiving training on active learning and the implementation of engaging warm-up activities in higher education courses across various disciplines. The three questionnaires were tailor-made to meet the needs of the selected participants. All three surveys were created and sent to participants through the Google Forms platform due to its accessibility and convenience. The needs analysis questionnaire consisted of eight questions (seven multiple-choice and one open-ended question) related

to the department, years of teaching experience, familiarity with the concepts of active learning and warm-up activities, and teaching methodology-related courses as part of both their formal and informal education. The pre-training questionnaire also comprised eight questions, while the post-training questionnaire resembled the one sent to the participants before the sessions, with six additional open-ended questions referring to their feedback on the training sessions as well as familiarity with the concepts of active learning and warm-up activities. The questions were designed to gather data on teachers' perceptions and their personal experiences with warm-ups after the training sessions.

The study was conducted in the following steps:

- 1) analyzing academic staff needs before planning the three training sessions on active learning;
- 2) filling out a pre-training survey;
- 3) attending a training session on promoting active learning in higher education through warm-up activities;
- 4) completing a post-training questionnaire three weeks after the training session.

The results of the pre- and post-training questionnaires were compared to establish causal links between the effectiveness of the training sessions and the teachers' perceptions of warm-up activities and active learning. Descriptive statistics were used to process the quantitative data and present them in percentages, while qualitative data were analyzed through the general inductive approach.

The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How familiar is the academic staff with warm-up activities?

RQ2: To what extent do course instructors begin classes/lectures with warm-up activities? and

RQ3: What effect does the active learning training session have on academic staff perceptions of the use of warm-up activities that promote active learning?

A combination of a qualitative and quantitative design was employed, as it enabled the participants to express their opinions and attitudes and to share their experiences using warm-up activities that promote active learning.

An assumption can be made that the participants, who had previously registered for the training, were more open-minded and receptive to learning about

and implementing warm-up activities in their classes to enhance active and student-centered learning. This, in turn, would lead to a more positive impact of the training session on their performance in the classroom.

Results

This section provides an overview of the results of the three questionnaires. The needs analysis was conducted prior to the training session in order to gain insight into the participants' profile regarding their knowledge of the concept of active learning in university courses. The data was later used to organize the training session. The academic staff who had registered for the training were asked to complete an online questionnaire consisting of 8 questions. The questions were divided into three sections: teaching experience of the course instructors, familiarity with the concepts of active learning and warm-up activities, and educational background related to teaching methodology courses.

The results of the needs analysis survey indicate that the course instructors who registered for the training on warm-up activities came from various faculties and departments: 5 teachers came from the Faculty of Education, five from the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, five from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, seven from the Faculty of Engineering, five from the Faculty of Law, one from the Faculty of Art and Design, one from the Faculty of Dental Medicine, and one from the Vocational Medical School. Regarding academic teaching experience, more than half of the respondents have been teaching at IBU or other universities for less than 5 years, 30% have been working in academia between 6 and 15 years, and only 20% of them have teaching experience of over 15 years.

Only one teacher is not certain about the meaning of the concept of active learning, and the same teacher has not heard about the term 'warm-up' activities, while three teachers are not sure about the meaning of this term.

Eleven members of the academic staff had teaching methodology-related courses during their undergraduate, graduate, or PhD studies. The following courses were mentioned: Teaching Methods, Teaching Methodology, Didactics, Natural Sciences Teaching Methodology, Languages and Art Teaching Methodology, Teaching Methods and Techniques in Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language, Multidisciplinary Teaching Approaches, Research Advanced Teaching Methods in Architecture, Design Studio Pedagogy, Interactive Methodology, and Pedagogy. Nearly half of the

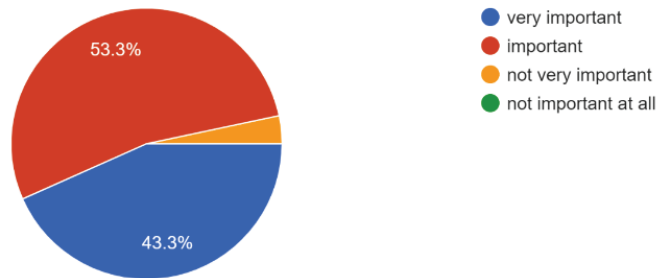
respondents have attended workshops or webinars on teaching methodology topics, and an equal number of them have taken pedagogy-related courses as part of their continuous professional development.

The pre-training questionnaire comprised eight questions, covering two aspects of warm-up activities: 1) their importance, effectiveness, and use in the classroom; and 2) evaluation of their advantages and disadvantages. The final question referred to the participants' expectations from the training session.

The first question provided information about the importance of warm-up activities, as Table 1 shows.

Table 1.

How important are warm-up activities for effective teaching?

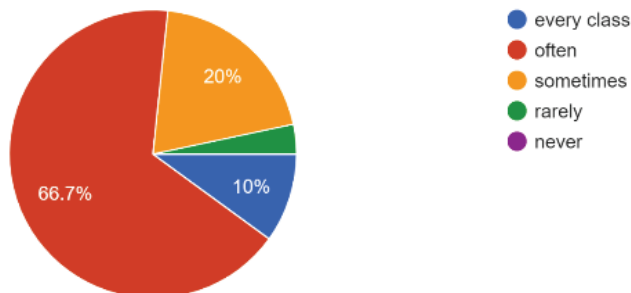


Most of the respondents believe that warm-up activities are very important or important, while only one teacher finds them unimportant.

The second question referred to the frequency of usage of warm-up activities at the beginning of a lesson (see Table 2).

Table 2.

How often do you use warm-up activities at the beginning of your classes?

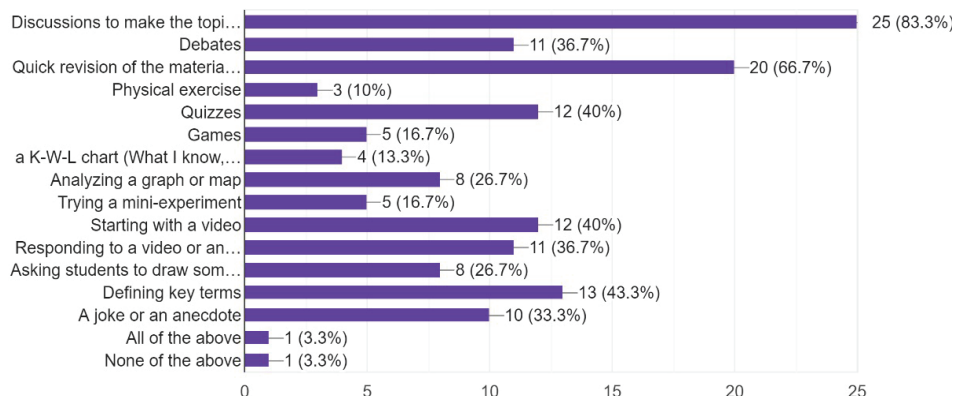


10% of the teachers start each lesson with a warm-up activity, while two-thirds often use such activities.

Question no.3 contained a list of the most common warm-up activities appropriate for university classes, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3.

Which of these warm-up activities do you use?



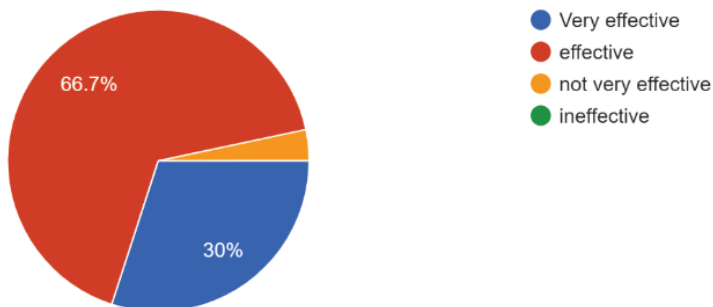
The most frequently used activities include discussions to make the topic more personal, followed by quick revision of the material taught in the previous lesson, definition of key terms, doing quizzes, and using a video or an image to introduce a topic. Additionally, teachers sometimes use jokes or anecdotes, debates, or ask students to draw something, analyze a graph, or map. They rarely use games, a K-W-L chart, or mini-experiments. It is worth mentioning that only three teachers begin their classes with a physical exercise or another TPR activity.

The fourth question was open-ended and asked teachers to list other warm-up activities they use in class. However, only 13 teachers provided answers to this question. The following warm-ups were listed: demonstrations, research-based exercises, ice-breaking activities, introspection, drawing concept maps, the pyramid technique, introducing their fellow students, asking students to write questions about the material taught in the previous lecture, finding the lie, sketching exercises, discussion on architectural news, architectural analysis, design challenges, brainstorming sessions, physical modelling, case analysis, completing contracts, and referring to famous movies that cover economic topics such as financial crises, bankruptcies, stock exchange, suspicious trading, or tax avoidance versus tax evasion. The fifth question aimed to investigate teachers' opinions on the effectiveness

of warm-up activities for enhancing students' motivation and attention. As indicated in Table 5 below, the majority of the respondents find warm-up activities to be either effective (67%) or very effective (30%) in fostering students' motivation and sustaining attention.

Table 5.

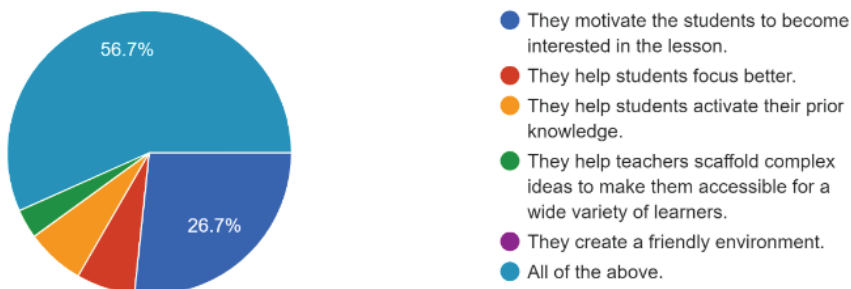
How effective are warm-up activities for your students' motivation and attention?



The purpose of the sixth question was to explore teachers' perceptions regarding the greatest advantage of warm-up activities. As the results in Table 6 show, the principal benefit is that they motivate students to become interested in the lesson. Additional advantages of warm-up activities include helping students focus better, activating their prior knowledge, and scaffolding complex ideas for various types of learners.

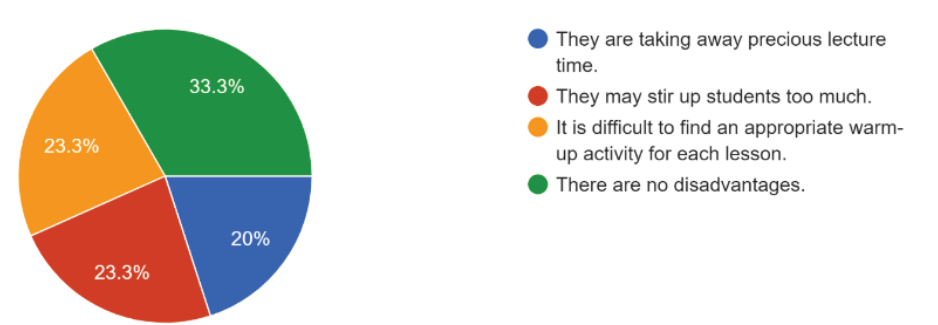
Table 6.

What is the greatest advantage of warm-up activities?



The seventh question reveals instructors' beliefs about the main drawbacks of warm-up activities, as can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7.
What is the greatest disadvantage of warm-up activities?



One third of the respondents believe there are no shortcomings, while the rest think they may either stir up students too much (23%) or that selecting a suitable activity for each lesson proves challenging. It is noteworthy that according to a fifth of the respondents, warm-up activities are shortening valuable instructional time. The final question revealed participants’ expectations from the training session. These include enhancing their knowledge of the concepts of active learning and warm-up activities, and gaining additional ideas on such activities that could be used in class, particularly those involving the use of AI-powered tools.

The post-training questionnaire contained 8 questions, most of which are the same as the ones in the pre-training survey. The results are presented in Table 8 below.

Table 8.
Overview of the results of the pre- and post-training questionnaires

Question	Post-training questionnaire answers
1. Are you familiar with the terms ‘active learning’ and ‘warm-up activities’?	a) Yes – 100% b) No – 0% c) Not sure – 0%
2. How important are warm-up activities for effective teaching?	a) Very important – 80% b) Important – 20% c) Not very important – 0% d) Not important at all – 0%

Question	Post-training questionnaire answers
3. How often do you use warm-up activities at the beginning of your classes?	a) Every class – 17% b) Often – 80% c) Sometimes – 3% d) Rarely – 0% e) Never - 0%
4. Which new warm-up activities did you try over the last three weeks?	TPR – 7 instructors a K-W-L chart – 5 instructors some of the suggested games in the training session – 8 instructors a quote – 4 instructors a video of a recent event – 5 instructors photos and AI-generated images – 7 instructors AI tools
5. How effective are warm-up activities for your students' motivation and attention?	a) Very effective – 80% b) Effective – 20% c) Not very effective – 0% d) Ineffective – 0%
6. What is the greatest advantage of warm-up activities?	a) They motivate the students to become interested in the lesson. – 20% b) They help students focus better. -6% c) They help students activate their prior knowledge.- 6% d) They help teachers scaffold complex ideas to make them accessible for a wide variety of learners – 0% e) They create a friendly environment. 0% f) All of the above – 66,7%

Question	Post-training questionnaire answers
7. What is the greatest disadvantage of warm-up activities?	a) They are taking away precious lecture time. – 10 % b) They may stir up students too much. - 15 % c) It is difficult to find an appropriate warm-up activity for each lesson.- 20% d) There are no disadvantages.- 55 %
8. Did you find the training session useful?	a) Yes – 80% b) Partially – 20% c) No

The results of the post-training questionnaire indicate a positive shift in the opinions and attitudes of the respondents towards the use of warm-up activities.

Discussion

The Teaching and Learning Center at IBU organized a training session on the promotion of active learning through warm-up activities. Participation was on a voluntary basis, and academic staff from different faculties registered. Academic staff from the field of medical and health sciences were the least interested in attending the training. This may be due to the nature of their classes, as they are always a combination of theory and laboratory or hospital practice, as well as the fact that the teaching staff from the Faculty of Dental Medicine and the Vocational Medical School are doctors who are also working in hospitals and clinics.

The results of the needs analysis suggest that the academic staff is familiar with the concepts of active learning and warm-up activities but lacks sufficient knowledge of teaching methodology. The pre-training questionnaire indicates that warm-up activities are valued and used by two-thirds of the course instructors. They use a variety of activities, and the most commonly used techniques are discussions and review tasks. The majority of the respondents perceived very few drawbacks of warm-ups; however, they expressed concerns about their usefulness, choice of appropriate activities, and maintaining student focus. The instructors would like to expand their knowledge of warm-up strategies, including innovative technology-enhanced techniques. The findings correspond with previous research, which

highlights the positive aspects of warm-up activities for student engagement, focus, and motivation (Joshi, 2006; Jensen, 2005; García & Martín, 2004). The analysis of the post-training questionnaire revealed that following the session, all the participants were acquainted with the concepts of active learning and warm-up activities, and their attitudes towards the importance of these activities had changed positively. They significantly increased the usage of warm-up activities and implemented the activities presented in class, particularly those involving AI tools such as ChatGPT for generating written prompts, digital storytelling chronicles, AI-generated images, and Total-Physical-Response (TPR) activities. This helped them change their perception of the positive aspects of warm-up activities, as they no longer believed that they lacked ideas or that warm-up activities were a waste of time. The staff were satisfied with the outcomes of the training sessions as they motivated them to use more warm-up activities, which in turn helped their students to be more engaged in class. In the future, the academic staff would like to receive training on increasing teacher-student and student-student interaction, inclusive and reflexive teaching practices, the implementation of AI technology in the classroom, inquiry-based learning, and experiential and cooperative learning.

The findings of the surveys provided answers to the research questions stated above.

RQ1: The academic staff at IBU is generally familiar with the terms active learning and warm-up activities. Only one instructor has not heard of these two terms, and 3 of them are not certain about their meanings. This implies that the respondents were generally acquainted with the terminology. Although the instructors are familiar with the terms, that does not imply they often use warm-up activities in their classes. The needs analysis showed that only a third of the instructors had a teaching-methodology related course during their university education, primarily those from the Faculty of Education, Architecture, and Visual Arts. Nevertheless, half of the academic staff compensate for the lack of such courses by attending workshops or webinars on teaching methodology topics.

RQ2: A small number of the course instructors begin all their classes/lectures with warm-up activities, and two-thirds often use them. The rest of the instructors rarely use such activities. This implies that the academic staff does not typically begin a lesson with a warm-up activity. This could be a result of the insufficient number of methodology related courses in all levels of tertiary education. Nearly half of the instructors either do not consider them effective or cannot find warm-up activities that would suit their students. Additional in-house training at universities could

support teaching staff and encourage them to consider implementing warm-up activities in the classroom.

RQ3: The training sessions on active learning and warm-up activities have a positive effect on academic staff perceptions of the use of warm-up activities that promote active learning. Hence, the instructors understood the significance of beginning each class with engaging warm-up activities, as they increase students' motivation for class participation and activate their prior knowledge. Furthermore, the academic staff gained ideas on possible warm-up activities and were more motivated and confident to use them in class.

To summarize, survey results provide evidence that although the majority of the academic staff are familiar with the concepts of active learning and warm-up activities and their importance in the classroom, they need additional training to change their perceptions thereof and to increase their confidence in implementing them in all their classes.

Conclusion

Academic staff in higher education institutions have been experiencing difficulties with implementing a more active and student-centred type of instruction (Dichter, 2001). Therefore, the study focused on investigating the perceptions of course instructors of the use of warm-up activities that promote active learning, as well as the effect of warm-up activities training sessions on the instructors' use of such activities in the university classroom. Survey results indicate that the staff from the Faculty of Education is well acquainted with this type of class activities, and they use them most frequently. Academic staff from other faculties lack pedagogical knowledge and thus prefer an individual and traditional approach to teaching. The organized workshop on active learning and warm-up activities showed that such training had a positive effect on teachers' motivation to use engaging warm-ups in their classrooms. Therefore, universities should organize training sessions and provide continuous support at an institutional level for all academic staff to promote the use of active learning activities.

Limitations

The study has two limitations. The first limitation refers to the non-probabilistic sampling method used for the selection of participants. The data and the

conclusions refer only to the 30 members of the academic staff who registered for the training. There are a total of 100 course instructors employed on a full-time basis at the International Balkan University. The academic staff who were not interested in attending the training sessions either believed they were effectively implementing warm-up activities or were reluctant to change their traditional teaching practice. If more participants were included, the results of the questionnaires may have been different.

The second limitation is the fact that all academic staff come from the same university. Universities differ in their policies regarding teaching quality, employment criteria, and students' educational backgrounds. This may affect the participants' choice of teaching methodologies and attitudes towards active learning.

Recommendations for Further Research

The study included academic staff from several fields. Consequently, no generalizations on warm-up activities can be made across all scientific areas. Therefore, further research could focus on effective strategies for active learning across various contexts in tertiary education. Furthermore, the pedagogical implications of the study indicate that university staff lack formal training in discipline-specific teaching methodologies. As a result, additional research could be done on designing professional development programs that focus on academic staff teaching skills or restructuring university study programs and adding teaching methodology courses. Finally, longitudinal studies could provide reliable information on long-term effects of the use of warm-up activities in university settings.

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Mindfulness, Motivation, and Wellbeing in Primary School Teachers

Sonaj Bilal

Abstract

The main aim of this research was to examine the relationship between subjective well-being and mindfulness. That is, to examine whether there is a difference between primary school teachers with higher and lower levels of intrinsic motivation in relation to these variables. The research was done on a convenient sample of 280 female teachers from different schools in the R. N. Macedonia.

Three instruments were used: *MAAS: Mindful Attention Awareness Scale* (Brown & Ryan, 2003), *PERMA Profiler* (Butler & Kern, 2016), and *Aspirations Index* (Kasser & Ryan, 1996).

The results of the study showed that, as individual factors, mindfulness and intrinsic motivation have an effect on subjective well-being. The joint effect of the two factors was not confirmed. Subjective well-being was found to be higher in teachers with low levels of intrinsic motivation and high levels of mindfulness, compared to those with low levels of intrinsic motivation and low levels of mindfulness. A difference in subjective well-being was not confirmed for teachers with a high level of intrinsic motivation and different levels of mindfulness.

Keywords: mindfulness, intrinsic motivation, subjective wellbeing, teachers

Introduction

In science, the term *subjective well-being* is often equated with terms that have a similar meaning or are used in a similar context, but which actually represent terms with perhaps a broader or more specific or different meaning. This most often happens with the term *happiness*. Many authors use the terms happiness and subjective well-being interchangeably or as synonyms. In this research, subjective well-being is defined according to Martin Seligman's five-component theory: positive emotions, engagement, positive social relationships, meaning in life, and accomplishment. Seligman distinguishes between the terms happiness and subjective well-being. According to him, the term happiness is very often used in different contexts and is one-dimensional, which means that the emphasis is placed only on feeling good and trying to maximize that feeling. Subjective well-being, on the other hand, is much more than that. It is a combination of the five components mentioned above, and the emphasis is on maximizing all of them (Seligman, 2011).

Subjective Well-Being and Mindfulness

The psychological literature shows that there is no single, simple, straightforward definition of mindfulness, but rather that there are differences in defining its nature. Thus, some view mindfulness as a mental state, others as a personality trait, or as a set of skills and techniques. Common to all these definitions is the emphasis on complete focus on the present, i.e. on the current moment. Mindfulness as a state refers to being in a state of awareness of current/ongoing events in the present. It implies a temporary state in which an individual is aware of their thoughts and feelings and is able to remain "present" when distractions arise (Brown et al., 2007). On the other hand, mindfulness as a trait refers to the tendency of an individual to enter more often and remain more easily in states of mindfulness, i.e., it is a disposition (Gehart, 2012). Most instruments that have been developed to measure mindfulness refer to mindfulness as a trait.

The existing literature on the connection between mindfulness and well-being suggests that mindfulness can foster self-regulatory emotional mechanisms, which subsequently improve an individual's health and well-being. Studies emphasize the effectiveness of mindfulness in addressing psychological distress, rumination, anxiety, worry, fear, anger, and other related issues (Hayes & Feldman, 2004).

Subjective Well-Being and Intrinsic Motivation

The individual is a proactive being who is in constant interaction with the environment. His behavior in the environment is related to needs. He is internally or intrinsically driven or motivated to satisfy those needs. However, since the individual is also a social being, the satisfaction of needs can also be related to external factors. Hence, science speaks of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation implies an internal incentive to do something because it causes us pleasure or because it is interesting, and not for other external reasons. Extrinsic motivation implies doing something because of external factors such as rewards, pressures, etc. (Ryan & Deci, 2000b).

Research shows that there is a connection between intrinsic motivation and subjective well-being. Intrinsic motivation, the internal desire to engage in activities solely because they provide pleasure and interest, has been shown to be related to various dimensions of subjective well-being. People who participate in activities for intrinsic reasons tend to experience greater happiness and fulfillment than those motivated by external rewards or pressures (Ryan & Deci, 2000a).

Method and Instruments

This study aims to explore the relationship between mindfulness, intrinsic motivation, and subjective well-being. The research was carried out with a convenience sample of 280 female participants, with an average age of 41.31 and of different ethnicities: Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Vlach, and Ukrainian. The respondents were all primary school teachers from different primary schools and cities in the Republic of North Macedonia.

The following instruments were used to assess the variables: The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (Brown & Ryan, 2003) measures mindfulness. Respondents rate their agreement with each statement on a Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 ("almost always") to 6 ("almost never"). The scale score is derived by averaging the 15 items, with higher scores indicating greater levels of dispositional mindfulness. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for this instrument in the current study is 0.71.

The Aspirations Index (Kasser & Ryan, 1996) consists of 7 categories of aspirations. These include extrinsic aspirations related to wealth, popularity, and image, as well as intrinsic aspirations for personal growth, meaningful relationships, and

community contribution. Additionally, an aspiration for good health is included, which is neither strictly extrinsic nor intrinsic. Respondents rate the importance, likelihood of fulfillment, and current achievement of each goal on a scale from 1 (“not at all”) to 7 (“very much”). In this study, Cronbach’s alpha for intrinsic aspirations are as follows: Personal Growth ($\alpha=0.79$), Meaningful Relationships ($\alpha=0.83$), Contribution to Community ($\alpha=0.81$), and Total Intrinsic Motivation ($\alpha=0.88$). Only the intrinsic motivation items were used in the analysis.

The PERMA Profiler (Butler & Kern, 2016) consists of 7 subscales and a total of 23 items. The instrument measures the five dimensions of Seligman’s theory of well-being and provides scores for: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, as well as for negative emotions and health. A score for overall subjective well-being is also obtained. Respondents rate their level of agreement on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0, means never/terrible/not at all, while 10 means always/great/completely. The Cronbach alpha coefficients calculated for the data in this study are as follows: Positive Emotions $\alpha=0.92$, Engagement $\alpha=0.90$, Relationships $\alpha=0.84$, Meaning $\alpha=0.79$, Accomplishment $\alpha=0.81$, total Subjective Well-being $\alpha=0.88$

Results

Table 1 presents descriptive measures for the variables: mindfulness, subjective well-being, and intrinsic motivation.

Table 1.

Descriptive measures of the studied variables

Variables	Subscales	N	M	SD	Min. score	Max. score	Sk	Ku
Mindfulness		280	4.13	.83	1	5.93	-.62	1.39
Subjective well-being	Positive emotions	280	7.68	1.51	2.33	10	-.84	.68
	Engagement	280	7.33	1.53	1.33	10	-.71	.90
	Relationships	280	7.83	1.68	0	10	-1.06	1.89
	Meaning	280	7.90	1.45	2	10	-.94	1.30
	Accomplishment	280	7.43	1.48	2.33	10	-.59	.72
Total subjective-wellbeing		280	7.66	1.28	2.87	10	-.99	1.41

Variables	Subscales	N	M	SD	Min. score	Max. score	Sk	Ku
Intrinsic motivation	Personal growth	280	5.62	.80	2.20	7.00	-.88	1.46
	Meaningful relationships	280	5.67	.89	1.86	7.00	-.90	1.17
	Contribution in the community	280	5.72	.81	2.26	7.00	-.98	1.58
Total intrinsic motivation		280	5.67	.71	2.75	7.00	-.98	1.76

Results on the Relationship Between Mindfulness, Intrinsic Motivation, and Subjective Well-Being

Table 2.

Results of a two-way ANOVA obtained from comparing groups with different levels of mindfulness and intrinsic motivation in relation to subjective well-being

Subscales		Sum of squares	df	Mean of squares	F	Sig
Positive emotions	Mindfulness	17.38	1	17.38	9.30	.003
	Intrinsic motivation	82.75	1	82.75	44.26	.001
	Mindfulness* intrinsic motivation	8.19	1	8.19	4.77	.030
Engagement	Mindfulness	.184	1	.184	.08	.776
	Intrinsic motivation	26.13	1	26.13	11.56	.001
	Mindfulness* intrinsic motivation	.010	1	.010	.004	.947
Relationships	Mindfulness	14.20	1	14.20	6.26	.013
	Intrinsic motivation	120.21	1	120.21	52.98	.001
	Mindfulness* intrinsic motivation	6.36	1	6.36	3.06	.082
Meaning	Mindfulness	10.92	1	10.92	6.34	.012
	Intrinsic motivation	82.94	1	82.94	48.16	.001
	Mindfulness* intrinsic motivation	3.83	1	3.83	2.23	.137

Subscales		Sum of squares	df	Mean of squares	F	Sig
Accomplish- ment	Mindfulness	9.01	1	9.01	4.76	.030
	Intrinsic motivation	68.18	1	68.18	35.99	.001
	Mindfulness* intrinsic motivation	6.03	1	6.03	3.18	.075
Subjective well-being	Mindfulness	7.98	1	7.98	6.18	.014
	Intrinsic motivation	78.14	1	78.14	60.45	.001
	Mindfulness* intrinsic motivation	3.82	1	3.82	2.95	.087

The results show that for the *Positive Emotions* subscale, statistically significant values were obtained for the main effects of mindfulness and intrinsic motivation, as well as for their interaction effect. Post-hoc LSD (Least Significant Difference) comparisons show that teachers with low levels of intrinsic motivation and high levels of mindfulness have 0.87 higher scores than those with low levels of mindfulness ($p < 0.01$, 95% CI = 0.41–1.32). Among teachers with high levels of intrinsic motivation, there is no difference in positive emotions between the groups with low and high levels of mindfulness.

For *Engagement*, a statistically significant value was obtained only for the main effect of intrinsic motivation. A statistically significant value was not obtained for the main effect of mindfulness and the interaction effect; therefore, no post-test with LSD was performed.

For *Relationships*, a statistically significant value was obtained for the main effects of mindfulness and intrinsic motivation, but not for the interaction effect. LSD comparisons show that teachers with low intrinsic motivation and high mindfulness have 0.78 higher scores than those with low ongoing awareness ($p < 0.01$, 95% CI = 0.27–1.28). Among teachers with high levels of intrinsic motivation, there is no difference in positive relationships between the low and high levels of mindfulness groups.

For *Meaning*, a statistically significant value was obtained for the main effects of mindfulness and intrinsic motivation, but not for the interaction effect. LSD comparisons show that teachers with low intrinsic motivation and high mindfulness have 0.64 higher scores than those with low mindfulness ($p < 0.01$, 95% CI = 0.20–1.08). Among teachers with high levels of intrinsic motivation, there is

no difference in meaning in life between the groups with low and high levels of mindfulness.

For *Accomplishment*, statistically significant values were obtained for the main effects of mindfulness and intrinsic motivation, but not for the interaction effect. LSD comparisons show that teachers with low intrinsic motivation and high mindfulness have 0.66 higher scores than those with low mindfulness ($p < 0.01$, 95% CI = 0.20–1.12). Among teachers with high levels of intrinsic motivation, there is no difference in accomplishment between the low and high levels of mindfulness groups.

For *Subjective Well-being*, statistically significant values were obtained for the main effects of mindfulness and intrinsic motivation, but the interaction effect was not significant. LSD comparisons show that teachers with low intrinsic motivation and high mindfulness have 0.58 higher scores than those with low mindfulness ($p < 0.01$, 95% CI = 0.20–0.96). Among teachers with high levels of intrinsic motivation, there is no difference in subjective well-being between the low and high levels of mindfulness groups.

Discussion

The research aimed to examine the relationship between mindfulness and subjective well-being among primary school teachers with different levels of intrinsic motivation.

The results show that there are differences between groups of respondents with different levels of mindfulness and intrinsic motivation in terms of subjective well-being, but they do not show that respondents with a high level of intrinsic motivation and a high level of mindfulness also have the highest level of subjective well-being. On the subscales of positive emotions, relationships, meaning in life, and accomplishment, as well as on the overall subjective well-being, mindfulness and intrinsic motivation individually have an effect, while for the subscale of engagement, only the effect of intrinsic motivation is confirmed. The results do not confirm the joint role or joint effect of the two factors. Individually, higher levels of mindfulness are associated with higher scores on the mentioned subscales and overall subjective well-being among teachers with low intrinsic motivation, compared to teachers with low levels of intrinsic motivation and low levels of mindfulness. Among teachers with high levels of intrinsic motivation and different levels of mindfulness (high and low), no difference was shown in relation to the above-mentioned subscales.

This research contributes to the literature by measuring subjective well-being as a conglomerate of five dimensions (positive emotions, engagement, positive social relationships, meaning in life, and accomplishment), unlike previous studies that consider it through its aspects of life satisfaction and positive and negative affect, or the absence of negative emotions, symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress. The results suggest that mindfulness as a trait may play an important role in subjective well-being, but its interaction with intrinsic motivation does not provide an additional effect. Whether mindfulness is treated and measured as a state, trait, or skill in a particular study may play an important role in the results obtained. In many studies, mindfulness is measured after the implementation of a special program that aims to develop the skill of mindfulness, while in the current study, mindfulness is measured as a trait in terms of how present it is in each subject. The application of mindfulness in interventions aimed at reducing stress and enhancing positive emotions may be beneficial, but the role of mindfulness as a trait requires further research.

Conclusion

In conclusion, teachers with high levels of mindfulness, even when intrinsic motivation is low, show higher levels of subjective well-being across most dimensions. This highlights the importance of mindfulness as a stable trait in promoting subjective well-being. Intrinsic motivation primarily influences engagement and plays a crucial but independent role in fostering well-being. The lack of a significant interaction between mindfulness and intrinsic motivation suggests that these factors operate independently rather than synergistically in relation to well-being. In terms of practical implications, it can be said that programs that cultivate mindfulness as a trait/characteristic (e.g., mindfulness-based interventions) could help improve subjective well-being in teachers, especially those with lower intrinsic motivation. Also, strategies to foster intrinsic motivation could further support teachers' well-being in professional and personal contexts.

The use of a convenience sample can be considered a limitation of the research because it prevents generalization to a wider population. In the future, the research can be expanded to include a larger number of respondents as well as respondents of the opposite sex. Also, in the future, it can be complemented by research on the interaction of mindfulness with other psychological traits or contextual factors in terms of shaping subjective well-being, as well as by researching the potential effects of mindfulness training programs on subjective well-being among teachers with different levels of intrinsic motivation.

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