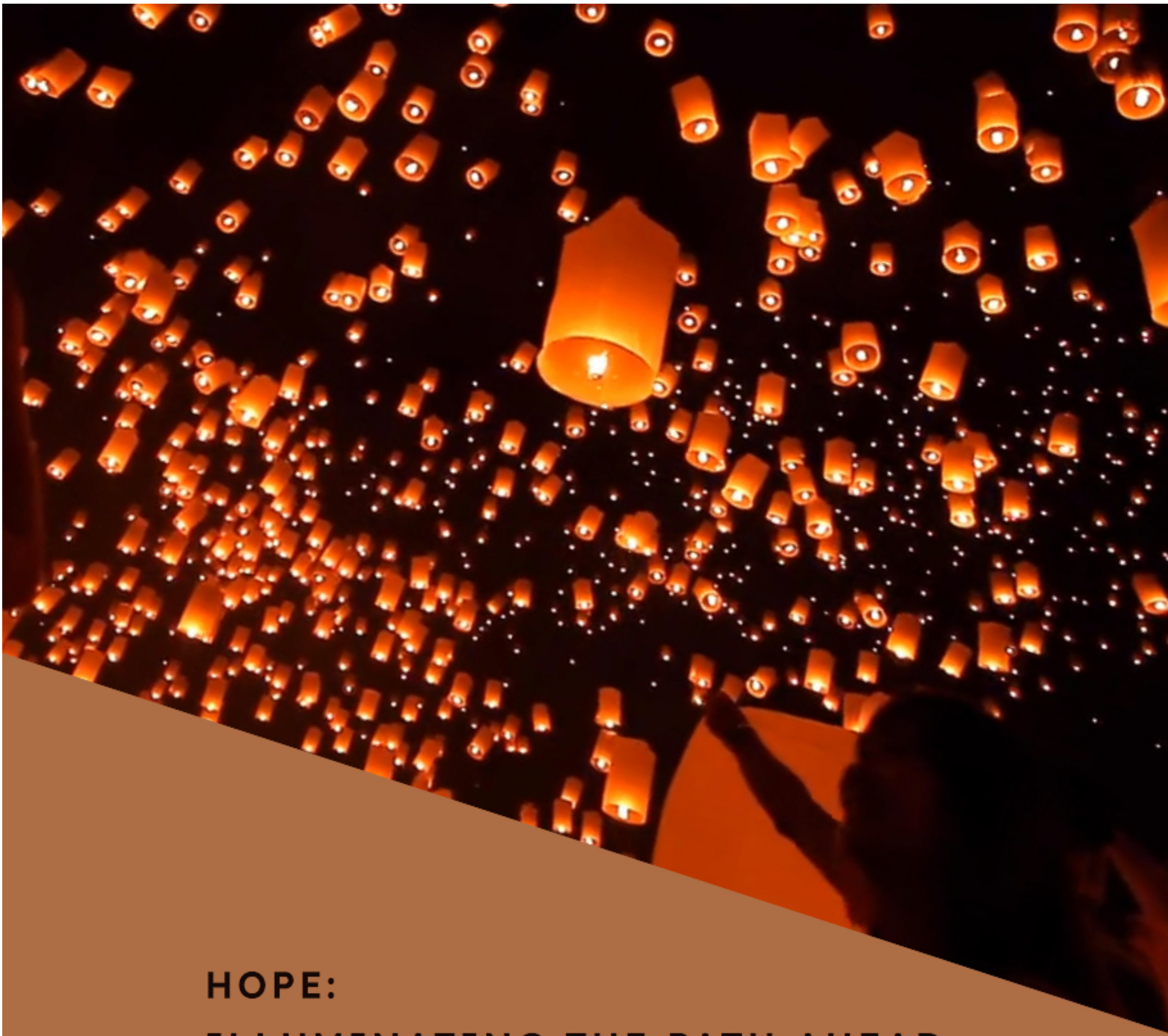

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Journal of Language Teaching

Vol. 3, Issue 5, 2023
https://jlt.ac/
ISSN: 2770-4602

JLT Journal of Language Teaching

ISSN (online): 2770-4602
Vol. 3, Issue 5, 2023

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Journal of Language Teaching, *3*(5), 1-11, 2023
https://doi.org/10.54475/jlt.2023.010

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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Spanish teachers' perceptions about their positive impact on their students to maintain their interest

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Received: April 11, 2023 / Accepted: April 28, 2023 / Published Online: May 1, 2023
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Abstract

The shortage of foreign language speakers in the United States has reached alarming levels. While Spanish is the most widely spoken and studied foreign language, it has also been experiencing low enrollments and discontinuation after a short term of study, leading to lack of acquisition of communicative competence, which is essential for fluency in the language. To that end, this mixed-method study, which forms part of a large-scale study on foreign language teachers' perceptions, investigated Spanish teachers' perceptions about how they determine if they successfully impact their students to maintain their interest in the language and study it long enough to acquire communicative competence. Findings revealed that the teachers believe that the factors that indicate to them that they have a positive impact on their students to maintain their interest in the language are the students' interest in their classes and the language, their motivation toward the language, the feedback they provide, teacher–student relationships, and the students' engagement in classroom activities and academic success. Recommended follow-up studies include an investigation of students' perceptions to ascertain where the teachers' and the students' perceptions coincide and where they differ in order to ensure the successful maintenance of students' interest in the language.

Keywords communicative competence, foreign language learning motivations, foreign language proficiency, maintenance of students' interest in the target language, Spanish teachers' perceptions

1. Introduction

Typically, Americans do not study foreign languages long enough to achieve communicative competence (Alonso, 2007; Garfinkel, 1987; Klein-Smith, 2019; Pratt et al., 2020, 2021; Simon, 1980; Speiller, 1988; Wesely, 2010). As stated in the abstract, this issue has existed over a span of many decades. While half of the world is bilingual (Matthews, 2019) and 73% of Europeans speak two or more languages well, only 25% of Americans speak a language other than English (Egnatz, 2017). Eighty-seven percent of the 25% learned the other languages in their childhood home, while only 7% learned them at school. A major cause of the problem is that while 90% of children in Europe, where elementary second language education is required in 20 countries, begin foreign language study at age 6, only 15% of U.S. public elementary schools offer language programs, and even fewer are proficiency-based. Additionally, 42% of Europeans begin learning a third language after age 12, but in the United States, although 91% of high schools offer world languages, only 44% of the students enroll, and only 50.7% of higher education institutions require foreign language study (Egnatz, 2017). It is also worth noting the critical shortage of qualified teachers (Klein-Smith, 2019). Consequently, only about 20% of the adults in the United States know a language other than English, whereas, in the European Union, about two-thirds of the region's total adult population speaks two or more languages (Hopwood, 2018).

In spite of the plethora of literature on this decades-old issue and the abundance of justifications for the need for Americans to learn more foreign languages, second language acquisition in the United States continues on its downward trend (Egnatz, 2017; Mouradian, 2021). Among the many reasons why Americans need to acquire foreign languages are the growing demand for job candidates to speak one or more languages other than their maternal language, an increase in job postings from U.S. employers looking for bilingual employees, competition against global counterparts, and American companies' loss of over $2 billion annually on cultural or language misunderstandings (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010, 2019). As the need for more companies to expand globally increases, the demand for a multilingual workforce has become a critical factor (Interpreting, 2020). According to Hopwood (2018), "the declining number of students learning a foreign language increases the breach in proficiency between many countries and the United States" (para. 7). In fact, less than 20% of K–12 students presently study a foreign language while the median in the European Union is 92%, and only 7% of U.S. college students are enrolled in foreign language courses (American Councils for International Education, 2017; Friedman, 2015; Mouradian, 2021; Ryan, 2018), and attrition further exacerbates the problem. In fact, knowing another language expands one's potential network as well, a situation which has caused many American companies to compensate employees with an additional $67,000 to $128,000 over their lifetime for their language (Mouradian, 2021). Commenting on the decline in enrollments, Friedman (2015) stated: "Less than 1 percent of American adults today are proficient in a foreign language that they studied in a U.S. classroom. That's noteworthy considering that in 2008 almost all high schools in the country—93 percent—offered foreign languages …" Wesely (2010) summed up the causes as follows: "The four main factors associated with this phenomenon in the literature on both traditional and immersion FL [foreign language] programs have been instruction, academic success, anxiety, and motivation" (p. 10). Regardless of the specific reasons for specific situations, there is no doubt that there is a critical need for foreign language proficiency in the United States that necessitates a solution to the problem.

Although Spanish is the most predominant language in the United States after English and has the highest enrollments of foreign language students at all levels, constituting 69.21% of K–12 foreign language enrollment with 7,363,125 students and 50.2% of college foreign language enrollment with 712,240 students (Flaherty, 2018), it has undergone huge reductions in enrollment and attrition over the period of study. The reasons for that include dramatic differences between the number of students who begin Spanish classes and the number who remain every year after that, the number of students enrolled in high school Spanish classes and the number of those who go on to study Spanish in college (Pratt, 2010; Speiller, 1988), substantial differences between the enrollments in lower- versus upper-level college Spanish courses (Goldberg et al., 2015; Rhodes & Pufahl, 2010), and general discontinuation among students at all levels (Pratt, 2010, 2012, 2016, 2017; Speiller, 1988). It is therefore imperative that drastic measures are taken to maintain students' interest in the language in order to keep them in the programs long enough to achieve communicative competence and cognitive academic language proficiency, which are crucial for language acquisition and proficiency.

Focusing on the use of language in a social context, the anthropological linguist Dell Hymes, who proposed the term *communicative competence*, defined it as "a speaker's knowledge of the total set of rules and conventions governing the skilled use of language in a society" (Matthews, 2007, p. 65). Savignon (1972) defined it as "the ability to function in a truly communicative setting, that is, in a dynamic exchange in which linguistic competence must adapt itself to the total informational input, both linguistic and paralinguistic, of one or more interlocutors" (p. 8). Canale and Swaine (1980) also defined it as a synthesis of an underlying system of knowledge and skills needed for communication. They put more emphasis on ability and proposed four subcategories (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swaine, 1980), namely, grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences. Grammatical competence encompasses the ability to create grammatically correct utterances; sociolinguistic competence is the ability to produce sociolinguistically appropriate utterances; discourse competence is the ability to produce coherent and cohesive utterances; and strategic competence is the ability to solve communication problems as they arise. These competences require a concerted study process that ensures acquisition, which requires a process lasting much longer than the 2 years that U.S. students typically spend studying languages.

Cummins (1980) also distinguished between two types of language proficiency, namely, basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS), which is for socialization and takes two to three years to acquire, and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) for the acquisition of academic language, which takes 5 to 7 years to achieve. Due to the fact that only a small percentage of Americans currently enroll in foreign language courses and study the language for just a short period, typically up to 2 years, Americans are mostly unable to achieve these competencies and skills (which require long-term commitment) and are not even able to reach the level of socialization, let alone academic skills. It is worth noting that the 2-year period is the foreign language requirement for college entrance as well as the undergraduate foreign language requirement where a requirement still exists (Pratt et al., 2021). According to Pratt et al. (2021), 75% of Americans have no second language, which is alarming considering that half of the world is bilingual (Mitchell, 2017) while America is becoming more and more monolingual (Agudo, 2018; American Councils for International Education, 2017; Flaherty, 2018; Matthews, 2019; Mitchell, 2017).

Of great importance, therefore, is an exploration of how teachers can ascertain when students are still interested in studying the language and when they are losing interest in the language, and what role teachers can play in ensuring a meeting of the minds in order to prevent discontinuation, as recommended by Pratt (2010, 2016), Pratt et al. (2009), and Wesely (2010). In a recent study on foreign language teachers' perceptions, which included teachers of Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, and American Sign Language, Pratt et al. (2020) investigated what the teachers believed indicated that they had a positive impact on students to maintain their interest in the languages. According to the findings, the teachers believed that the indicators were the students' interest in the classes and the language, their engagement in class activities and academic success, the motivation they demonstrated, the feedback they provided to the teachers, and their relationships with their teachers.

In order to study the issue in different contexts to obtain language-specific results, which will lead to more targeted solutions, this follow-up study investigated the indicators among Spanish teachers. The central questions were (1) What are Spanish teachers' perspectives regarding whether or not they have a positive impact on their students to maintain their interest in the language? and (2) What factors do Spanish teachers believe are indicative of their positive impact on their students to maintain their interest in the language? Given the results of Pratt et al. (2020, 2021) and Pratt and Rodríguez García (2022), the hypothesis was that the teachers would be confident about their positive impact on their students, but the ranking of the factors that indicated their positive impact would be different due to differences in the status of the different languages.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

This study forms part of a large-scale investigation of foreign language teachers' self-efficacy beliefs (Pratt et al., 2021). Participants were recruited through purposive sampling. An online survey, which was developed by the researcher and her colleagues, was administered via e-mail to approximately 250 middle and high school and lower-level college foreign language teachers. The sample was diverse in terms of gender, age, ethnic affiliation, length of teaching experience, and foreign language taught. One hundred and thirty-one teachers volunteered to participate, and 120 of them completed the surveys fully, so 120 surveys were used for the study. Out of the 120 completed surveys, 64 were submitted by Spanish teachers, so those 64 surveys were then extracted and used for this study.

Forty-six of the 64 teachers (71.9%) identified as female and 18 (28.1%) identified as male. They ranged in age from 22 to 62, with a mean age of 40. Forty (62.5%) identified as Hispanic and 22 (34.4%) as Caucasian; none identified as Black or African American, Native American, or Asian or other Pacific Islander. There were 26 high school teachers, 12 middle school teachers, 11 college instructors, and the remainder did not indicate the level they taught. The length of time they had been teaching Spanish ranged from one semester to 37 years, with 25% of them in the 11- to 15-year range. Forty-two were native speakers and 22 were non-native, but all the participants reported verbal fluency in Spanish. Verbal fluency was used in the general sense of the ability to speak the language effectively for communication. The teachers were simply asked to list the languages they spoke fluently, so they only reported on their verbal fluency. They were not required to provide information about other language skills or specific levels based on any proficiency guidelines. It is possible that verbal fluency could mean different things to them, so that is a limitation of this study. With respect to their training, five indicated that their training programs were very ineffective, six considered their training programs ineffective, 15 reported that they were neither effective nor ineffective, 24 indicated that they were effective, and 11 believed they were very effective. Additionally, 46 (71.9%) had attended workshops or training sessions, and the number of sessions ranged from one to countless.

2.2. Instruments

Two instruments were used for the study. The first instrument, the Teacher Academic and Demographic Questionnaire (TAD), was developed by the investigating team and consisted of 20 multiple-choice and open-ended questions. It was used to solicit information including age, gender, teacher preparation, in-service training, length of teaching experience, instructional strategies and skills, and beliefs about their impact on students. The second instrument, the Foreign Language Teachers' Sources of Efficacy Scale, was also developed by the investigating team. It corresponded to Question 21, and included 31 sub-questions rated on a scale from 0% to 100%, which was used to indicate the teachers' levels of certainty with regard to their efficacy. See the Appendix. It was adapted from the Sources of Multicultural Efficacy Scale (SMES) previously developed by Zaier (2011), which was based on Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998) Teacher Efficacy Scale, in which they described four sources of efficacy stemming from Bandura's (1977) proposal. The SMES was evaluated and validated by ten experts. For this study, the multicultural content was substituted with foreign language content to measure the teachers' levels of efficacy and beliefs in terms of Bandura's four sources of efficacy, namely, performance accomplishment (8 items), vicarious experience (7 items), verbal persuasion (8 items), and emotional arousal (8 items).

2.3. Analysis

A mixed-method approach was used to conduct the study. SPSS software was used for the statistical analysis. The reliability coefficient for the 31-item Sources of Efficacy Scale was conducted and the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was α = .923, which demonstrated a high standard of reliability (Henson, 2001). The participants' responses to Question 17 regarding whether or not they believed they had a positive impact on their students to maintain their interest in the language were used to answer

Research Question 1. Descriptive statistics were also performed on the data in the TAD and the Sources of Efficacy Scale to obtain more information to explain further the responses to Research Question 1. To facilitate the analysis, the 100-point scale of the SES was adjusted to a 5-point Likert scale. To answer Research Question 2, the responses to Question 18 ("How do you know that you have a positive impact on your students to maintain their interest in the foreign language[s] or not?") for the 64 Spanish teachers were extracted and coded to determine the emerging themes. The final themes were then generated and the number of excerpts and their percentages were calculated.

3. Findings

3.1. What are Spanish teachers' perspectives regarding whether or not they have a positive impact on their students to maintain their interest in the language?

Out of the 64 participants, 56 (87.5%) responded in the affirmative, six (9.4%) responded in the negative, and two did not respond. Therefore, the results revealed that the Spanish teachers overwhelmingly indicated that they believed they had a positive impact on their students to maintain their interest in the language. Further review of the participants who responded in the affirmative revealed the following: 40 out of the 56 (71.4%) identified as female, 37 (66.1%) were native speakers of Spanish, 54 (96.4%) spoke Spanish fluently, and the length of time they had taught Spanish ranged from one semester to 32 years, with a mode of 11 to 15 years. With regard to their teacher training, 6.25% indicated that it was very ineffective, 6.25% considered it ineffective, 21.9% indicated that it was neither effective nor ineffective, 35.9% believed it was effective, and 17.2% reported that it was very effective. The rest did not respond. Additionally, 73% had attended workshops or training sessions, and the number of sessions ranged from one to "countless."

With regard to the participants who responded in the negative, two-thirds of them identified as female, two-thirds were native speakers, and all of them were fluent speakers of Spanish. With respect to their teacher training programs, the percentages were 50% effective, 33.3% ineffective, and 16.7% very ineffective. Eighty-three percent of them had attended workshops or training sessions, and the number of sessions ranged from two semesters to "too many." Their length of teaching ranged from one semester to 30 years.

Overall, the results of the Spanish teachers' sources of efficacy scale demonstrated that they felt confident teaching Spanish. The individual scores ranged from 78.6 to 150.93 out of 155 with an overall mean of 125.48, which indicates a moderately high sense of self-efficacy. The demographics did not reveal any significant difference between the group that answered yes and the group that answered no to the question regarding whether or not they believed they had a positive impact on their students to maintain their interest in the language. The analysis demonstrated that the associations between a positive or negative response and the other variables, namely, gender, age, grade level taught, ethnicity, native speaker status, verbal fluency, effectiveness of their teacher education program, years of experience, workshop or training experience, and self-efficacy score were non-significant. There was also no significant difference between those who answered yes and those who answered no to the question regarding whether or not they believed they had a positive impact on their students to maintain their interest in the language. In terms of inter-variable associations, workshop or training experience correlated positively with verbal fluency ($r = .40$, $p <.01$), which means the more workshop or training experience they had, the more likely the teachers were to speak Spanish fluently. Additionally, verbal fluency was significantly associated with self-efficacy ($r = .43$, $p < .001$), which means the more verbally fluent they were in Spanish, the higher their self-efficacy beliefs (see Table 1). There were no other significant associations.

Table 1. Relationships between workshop or training experience, self-efficacy, and verbal fluency

		workshop or training experience	self-efficacy	verbal fluency
workshop or training experience	correlation	1	.256	.396**
	significance		.097	.009
	N	43	43	43
self-efficacy	correlation	.256	1	.428**
	significance	.097		.000
	N	43	64	64
verbal fluency	correlation	.396**	.428**	1
	significance	.009	.000	
	N	43	64	64

3.2. What factors do Spanish teachers believe are indicative of their positive impact on their students to maintain their interest in the language?

Given that survey Question 18 solicited a direct answer to the research question and the requested information was not hidden, descriptive coding was used (Saldaña, 2018). Interpretive coding was used occasionally when the information was not obvious. Microsoft Excel Review was used for the coding and sorting. Some of the themes were then combined and a total of six themes emerged. They were engagement and academic success, positive feedback, motivation, student interest, teacher–student relationships, and no impact. In order to confirm that the sorting had been done correctly, all the codes were reassigned to the six themes and the numbers were double-checked. After that, the frequencies were assigned (see Table 2).

Engagement and academic success referred to how engaged students were in class and the improvements they made in terms of acquisition of the language. *Positive feedback* included the feedback that was received from students. *Motivation* encompassed all the behaviors exhibited by the students that were indicative of their instrumental, integrative, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivations, including the efforts they made to learn and their awareness of the importance of the language. *Student interest* referred to the various ways in which the students demonstrated their interest (and continued interest) and what they did beyond meeting language requirements, such as participating in study abroad and majoring in Spanish. *Teacher–student relationship* involved all the actions that demonstrated the development of positive, lasting, and encouraging relationships between teachers and students, as well as teachers' experiences and recognitions that proved their abilities to establish the relationships and help the students. *No impact* included all the demonstrations of uncertainty and self-doubt by the teachers and the student behaviors that demonstrated lack of interest. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Themes

Themes	No. of Excerpts	Percentage of Excerpts Indicating Impact
Student Interest	43	36.1
Motivation	19	16
Positive Feedback	17	14.3
Teacher–Student Relationship	17	14.3
Engagement and Academic Achievement	12	10.1
No Impact	11	9.2

All the excerpts that carried meaning were counted, so a single response could generate a number of excerpts. There were 119 excerpts. The factor that mostly demonstrated to the teachers that they had a positive impact on the students to keep them interested in the language was student interest, with 43 excerpts (36.1%). Motivation emerged second with 19 excerpts or 16%. Positive feedback and teacher–student relationship tied in third place with 17 excerpts or 14.3%, and engagement and academic achievement was fourth with 12 excerpts or 10.1%. Finally, 11 excerpts (9.2%) corresponded to no impact.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The goals of this study were twofold. First, it sought to ascertain what Spanish teachers' perceptions are regarding whether or not they have a positive impact on their students to maintain their interest in the language. The results indicated that the teachers overwhelmingly believe that they have a positive impact on their students to maintain their interest, with 87.5% of them responding in the affirmative. The results of their sources of efficacy survey also demonstrated that they have a moderately high sense of efficacy and feel confident teaching Spanish. Demographically, there was no significant difference between the group that responded yes and the group that responded no. The statistical analyses did not reveal any significant difference between the groups to explain their choice, and associations between a positive or negative response and the other variables were non-significant. In terms of associations between the variables, workshop or training experience positively correlated with verbal fluency, meaning that the more workshop or training experiences the teachers had, the more likely they were to speak Spanish fluently. Also, verbal fluency was significantly associated with self-efficacy, meaning that the more verbally fluent they were in Spanish, the higher their self-efficacy beliefs. No other significant associations were discovered.

These results were similar to the findings of Pratt et al. (2020), which investigated the perceptions of foreign language teachers and found that they overwhelmingly (91.67%) believed that they had a positive impact on their students to maintain their interest in the languages. Additionally, the variability of the teachers' perceived impact on their students could not be explained by any of the variables either. The only difference is that while this study discovered positive correlations between workshop or training experiences and verbal fluency, and between verbal fluency and self-efficacy, Pratt et al. (2020) discovered a positive correlation between age and teaching experience, meaning that the older a teacher was, the longer their teaching experience. Therefore, whether or not the teachers actually have a positive impact on their students to maintain their interest in the language cannot be explained from the data, but they are confident that they have a positive impact.

The study also investigated the perceptions of teachers regarding what they believe is indicative of their positive impact on their students to maintain their interest in the language. The findings revealed that those factors are student interest, motivation, positive feedback, teacher–student relationships, and engagement and student success, in that order. The first factor, student interest, referred to the various ways in which the students demonstrated their interest (and continued interest) and what they did beyond meeting language requirements, such as participating in study abroad and majoring in Spanish. This ranking coincided with Pratt et al. (2020), which had a comparable percentage (37.2%), confirming that not only Spanish teachers but foreign language teachers in general consider student interest the most prominent factor that is indicative of their positive impact on their students to maintain their interest in the language, with a high level of conviction.

Some of the specific examples provided by the teachers were the following: "interest shown in continuing to study the language"; "interest level in continuing to Spanish III and IV"; "they want to learn more"; "they show their interest in the language and the culture"; "many students have expressed that they didn't use to like Spanish, but now they find it enjoyable"; "their excitement in my class"; "they are excited about continuing beyond our grade level"; "students are willing to use the language being taught and have conversations in the native language"; "they feel happy in class"; "at one time I taught Spanish on campus to kids after school who were interested in learning to speak, read, and write the language; it was very popular with the students and their parents who were very happy to allow their children to stay after school and attend the sessions twice a week"; "because they manifest their interest in continuing with a minor in Spanish at school"; "my students are well behaved in class, we have fun, and they learn"; "my Spanish IV classes have increased in numbers"; "they are interested in learning more"; "by students' reaction"; "their attitudes towards the class"; "students' interest in trying what they have learned outside the classroom"; "their excitement or lack thereof"; "they are enthusiastic"; "others have expressed a desire to minor in it or study abroad"; "many of my students have told me that they will minor in the language after taking my course"; "when they ask me how to get a minor in Spanish"; "when they ask me if I would be teaching upper levels in Spanish"; "I have many students taking dual credit and credit by accreditation test"; "I have had at least 15 students major or minor in Spanish in college"; "they move on to the upper levels even though they don't have to or are not necessarily the best at it"; "they want to continue it in college either as a minor or major"; "going abroad to a country where the language is spoken"; "they continue to request the language on their choice sheets"; "they ask me about which could be the best place for study abroad"; and "they enroll in upper-level classes and tests."

The second factor that the teachers reported as indicative of their positive impact on their students to maintain their interest in the language was motivation. Based on the criteria used for the coding, this factor included the behaviors exhibited by the students that were indicative of their instrumental, integrative, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivations, as well as the efforts they made to learn and their awareness of the importance of the language. The specific examples provided by the teachers included the following: "the efforts they make in class"; "their desire to try when it seems difficult"; "when they speak with me in Spanish after class"; "when they speak Spanish outside of the classroom"; "they inform me about how they see the target language in their lives"; "I have a student who is now a Spanish instructor"; "they are proud to speak two languages"; "they realize the importance of being able to communicate in more than one language"; "when they use and apply the language"; "they are not shy to use their Spanish around non Spanish-speaking students"; "they use it in all areas"; "the students are proud when speaking their language"; "they see how important it is to be bilingual"; "they feel motivated"; "students enjoy hearing me use their native language"; "they are eager to interact with me in Spanish"; "the effort they make"; "many tell me stories of how they try to use the language when the opportunity presents itself"; "they even learn something outside the textbook"; "some are interested enough to travel to a country where the language is spoken."

Pratt et al. (2020) also discovered that foreign language teachers believed that motivation was an indicator of their positive impact on their students to maintain their interest. However, in their study, motivation was ranked third after student interest and engagement and academic success, and constituted 16.4% of the total number of excerpts. The difference in ranking could be explained by the fact that teachers probably perceive motivation among students of Spanish more than among foreign language students in general. This could be explained by the current status of Spanish in the United States. Presently, Spanish is the most dominant foreign language. With over 41 million Spanish speakers, the United States is second to only Mexico in its number of Spanish speakers. There are more Spanish speakers in the United States than even Spain (due to Spain's smaller size). Additionally, Spanish is one of the fastest growing languages in the United States, increasing by 233% between 1980 and 2013. Hispanic culture is also very predominant in the country. The Census Bureau reported in 2017 that there were 58.9 million Hispanics living in the United States, and that by 2030, that number would reach more than 72 million (Propio Language Services, 2021). According to the Census Bureau, the number of Spanish speakers has quadrupled over the past few decades and is predicted to reach 138 million speakers by 2050, which would make the United States the largest Spanish-speaking nation in the world (Propio Language Services, 2021). For these reasons, it would not be surprising if Spanish students exhibited more motivation than other foreign language students.

A closer look at the teachers' responses revealed that the students' motivations can be categorized into integrative, instrumental, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivations. Grounded in a social psychological framework, the socio-educational theory of motivation formulated by Gardner and Lambert (1959) consists of two types of motivation: integrative, where the aim in language study is to learn more about the language group; and instrumental, where the reasons reflect the more utilitarian value of linguistic achievement. According to the self-determination theory of Deci and Ryan (1985), intrinsic and extrinsic motivations lie along a continuum of self-determination. While intrinsic motivation is based on the learner's internal interest in the activity itself and stems from the innate needs of the learner for competence and self-determination, extrinsic motivation is based on rewards that are extrinsic to the activity, such as monetary gain (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci et al., 1991). The plethora of literature on these learning motivations confirms that they result in the achievement of more competence and thus contribute to foreign language learning, and also differ depending on the language; from which milieu a person comes; the context; and individual differences such as gender, ability level, and year of study (Bateman & de Almeida Oliveira, 2014; Gardner, 2001; Pratt, 2010). Additionally, as asserted by Pratt et al.

(2020), the literature also demonstrates that continuing students are characterized more by integrative and intrinsic motivations, which lead to more long-term language study (Goldberg & Noels, 2006; Noels, 2001; Wesely, 2010). What the literature does not assert or confirm is whether or not this results from the influence of the teachers or it emanates entirely from the students. It is therefore imperative that students' perceptions are investigated in order to understand the actual impact or lack thereof of the teachers.

The third most prominent factor for the teachers was positive feedback, which included the feedback the teachers received from students. Some of the specific responses were "they come back years later and tell me they enjoyed the class and remember some Spanish"; "at the end of the school year, I have the students use survey monkey to answer questions about my teaching methodologies"; "they can make comments on what needs to be improved upon or what they would like me to do"; "because they have said it to me"; "students tell me that Spanish is their favorite class"; "they tell me positive stories about their experiences using the language"; "they talk with me"; "I had students who would come to me and tell me how much they had learned in my Spanish classes"; "some of them came to see me when they were in college"; "from time to time I get positive feedback"; "I sometimes run into parents of previous students that make comments"; "previous students come back to visit and they say they are going to become foreign language teachers"; "from their feedback"; "through conversations with the students, especially with students who are applying to study abroad and may need a letter of recommendation"; "two students told me that they are seeking a teaching certificate in Spanish and are in college"; "positive comments from students and teachers on a daily basis"; "my students tell me that I have a positive impact." An examination of the responses revealed that the feedback was almost entirely informal. The lack of formal targeted student feedback deprives the teachers of controlled, constructive, specific, and appropriately structured information specifically about their impact that could clearly provide an answer to this research question, so a follow-up structured investigation of students' perceptions is required.

Teacher–student relationships was the fourth indicator according to the teachers. This included all the actions that demonstrated the development of positive, lasting, and encouraging relationships between teachers and students, as well as teachers' experiences and recognitions that confirmed their ability to establish the relationships and help the students. Specific responses included the following: "my relationship with the students"; "I am able to relate with students and I always make sure they know the benefits of learning a second language, especially how important it is for them to learn Spanish"; "I love to teach and I love the language, so I can make a good impact on my students"; "I try my hardest to make it as interesting as possible"; "I talk about my personal experiences with my students"; "I tell them how it has helped me and my education"; "I at least make the classes lively and therefore hope to maintain a positive attitude towards language study"; "I tell them every day that they are as valuable as two people since they know two languages"; "I constantly encourage them to use the language in the classroom"; "they seem to relate to me very well"; "they know that I also use Spanish to speak with their parents and siblings and other family members whenever possible"; "they feel very comfortable speaking it in the classroom with me"; "Outstanding Teacher Award"; "College of Arts and Sciences Award"; "Freshman Seminar Award for outstanding teacher"; "nominated Outstanding Teacher"; "they can identify with the teacher."

According to the literature, the teacher–student relationship constitutes a crucial factor that ranks very high among useful resources for student success, and its positive implementation is highly recommended due to the fact that it is crucial for the development of student confidence and sense of security and provides guidance and support for the student (Pratt, 2010; Pratt et al., 2020; Sparks, 2019). Nonetheless, the literature also affirms that it is underutilized, and recommends that preservice programs must pay attention to it in order to prepare teachers sufficiently to ensure that they develop good relationships with their students. Given that student success leads to continuance as affirmed by the literature (Pratt, 2010; Pratt et al., 2020; Wesely, 2010), there is a possibility that the teachers' perceptions are valid. However, students' perceptions must also be investigated for confirmation.

The fifth factor for the teachers was engagement and academic achievement, which constituted the engagement of students in classroom activities as well as evidence of academic success with regard to the language. Some of the specific responses the teachers gave were the following: "they get engaged in activities"; "their engagement in class"; "their grade improvement"; "generally, many students get excited in class, at least with some of the activities we do"; "I can tell by how much they participate in class"; "they continue to do well"; "I can see their academic language development as well as their academic progress in all content areas"; "their level of participation"; "they are engaged in the course"; "asking questions and trying to improve"; "when they are able to use the language."

While student engagement can result from intrinsic motivation, in which case it is exclusively personal, it can also result extrinsically from classroom activities and management, which could emanate from the teacher's performance (Bonney et al., 2008; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Dörnyei, 1998; Marszalek et al., 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Both of these are accounted for among the specific responses provided by the teachers. However, they may not all account for the teacher's positive impact due to the personal nature of the result of intrinsic motivation. With regard to academic success, the literature reports a positive correlation with continuance, so students are more likely to continue studying the language if they are successful (Deci et al., 1991; Pratt et al., 2020; Speiller, 1988; Wesely, 2010). While this points to the curriculum as well, which may not fall within the purview of the teachers, teachers do play an important role as their instructional practices contribute to academic achievement. Therefore, the teachers could be playing an important role in this regard. However, actually ensuring that there is an impact on the students to maintain their interest will require consistent validation of effort (Andress et al., 2002; Pratt, 2010).

The study revealed that overall, the Spanish teachers believed that they had a positive impact on their students to maintain their interest. While the themes that emerged were the same as those of Pratt et al. (2020), who researched the same perceptions among 120 foreign language teachers teaching Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Russian, Portuguese, Spanish, Turkish, and American Sign Language, and both studies ranked student interest first, the rest of the rankings were different. While the present study ranked motivation, engagement and academic success, positive feedback, and teacher–student relationships in that order, the order for Pratt et al. (2020) was engagement and academic success, motivation, feedback, and teacher–student relationships. It appears, therefore, that the teachers' perceptions depend to some extent on the language they teach, and the languages should be researched separately to find out how the findings differ.

5. Limitations of the Study

While the study provided important information regarding the perceptions of Spanish teachers that can help resolve some of the problems related to the discontinuance of the study of Spanish, the teachers were recruited from middle and high schools and the first 2 years of college, and the recommendations cannot be generalized to all levels of Spanish. Another limitation is the fact that the teachers' verbal fluency was based on what they reported in terms of the general meaning of whether or not they had the ability to speak Spanish effectively, and they were not required to specify any levels based on a specific proficiency scale, which means there is a possibility that they interpreted verbal fluency in different ways. Additionally, the teachers' perceptions cannot be assessed as they are self-reported, so this renders necessary further investigation based on students' perceptions to confirm if what the teachers perceive is what the students intend, in order to ensure that the appropriate action is taken to help the students achieve long-term study of the language.

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Appendix

Foreign language Teachers' Sources of Efficacy Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank Order
Performance Accomplishment			
1. I have had successful experiences teaching foreign languages.	4.35	0.80	**6**
2. I have not done poorly in teaching foreign languages.	3.94	1.37	**21**
3. I have not made mistakes when teaching foreign languages.	2.69	1.64	**31**
4. I have successfully helped students learn foreign languages.	4.41	0.85	**4**
5. My teacher education program prepared me effectively to teach foreign languages.	3.55	1.23	**27**
6. I have been trained to deal with many of the learning difficulties students encounter when learning foreign languages.	3.41	1.34	**29**
7. My foreign language teaching skills have been honed by working with students.	4.23	0.85	**8**
8. I have learned how to effectively interact with foreign language students.	4.41	0.61	**4**
Vicarious Experience			
9. I have had opportunities to observe other teachers teaching foreign languages.	3.56	1.49	**26**
10. I have observed effective strategies other teachers use to teach foreign languages.	3.59	1.44	**24**
11. I see myself applying the same strategies used by other foreign language teachers to effectively teach foreign languages.	3.9	1.19	**22**
12. I see myself avoiding mistakes other teachers made while teaching foreign languages.	4.01	1.19	**20**
13. I have learned how to teach foreign languages by watching other skillful teachers.	3.56	1.51	**26**
14. My classroom observations of teachers of foreign languages are valuable to me.	4.12	1.34	**15**
15. I am able to improve my instruction of foreign languages by applying successful strategies I have observed experienced teachers use.	4.03	1.25	**18**
Verbal Persuasion			
16. My teachers often told me that I was good at teaching foreign languages.	4.14	1.10	**13**
17. I have often been praised for my ability to teach foreign languages.	4.14	0.97	**13**
18. My family members have told me that I have a talent for teaching foreign languages.	4.2	0.99	**10**
19. My colleagues have told me that I am good at teaching foreign languages.	4.18	1.04	**11**
20. My colleagues have often praised my ability to effectively teach foreign languages.	4.10	1.07	**17**
21. My colleagues believe I am a successful foreign language teacher.	4.20	0.89	**10**
22. My college classmates told me I will be an effective foreign language teacher.	4.10	1.12	**17**
23. My colleagues tell me they learn a lot when they observe me teaching foreign languages.	3.81	1.18	**23**
24. I am passionate about teaching foreign languages.	4.65	0.69	**2**
Emotional Arousal			
25. Teaching foreign languages is not often frustrating.	2.98	1.49	**30**
26. I do not feel discouraged when I think about teaching foreign languages.	4.12	1.28	**15**
27. The idea of teaching foreign languages does not make me feel nervous.	4.27	1.24	**7**
28. I feel comfortable helping students learn foreign languages.	4.63	0.61	**3**
29. I feel happy when I teach well.	4.90	0.24	**1**
30. I am never worried about understanding the learning needs of foreign language learners.	3.47	1.62	**28**
31. I do not feel stressed when I think about teaching foreign languages.	4.01	1.31	**20**

Journal of Language Teaching, *3*(5), 12-22, 2023
https://doi.org/10.54475/jlt.2023.011

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Improving persuasive speaking skills using a student-developed template in an online learning environment

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Received: December 29, 2022 / Accepted: April 28, 2023 / Published Online: May 1, 2023
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Abstract

Effective persuasive speaking is requisite for successful academic, professional, and social life (Nippold, 2007, in Heilmann et al. 2020). However, there is dearth in literature that recommends an effective rhetorical structure that addresses the most pressing and recurring needs of non-native English public speakers – communication apprehension (Bastida & Yapo, 2019) and problems in organizing and outlining ideas in the speech (Lee & Liang, 2012). This explanatory sequential mixed-methods study investigated the effect of a student-developed persuasive speaking template taught in an online class to the persuasive speaking skills of non-native English speakers in a secondary school. Results showed a significant improvement in the participants' persuasive speaking skills before and after they were trained to use the student-developed template as manifested by their careful word choice, formulation of engaging introduction, effective vocal expression and paralanguage, connection with the audience, and lessened communication apprehension. In addition, it was found out that no significant correlation between the online learning environment and the improved skills. The research results revealed that the student-developed template, direct skills instruction, time for research and practice, and teacher's guidance helped improve skills and could form part of an alternative rhetorical pedagogy.

Keywords online persuasive speaking, student-developed rhetorical template

1. Introduction and Literature Review

Speaking is a benchmark of a person's understanding and mastery of a language (Santoso et al., 2018). Nunan (1999) in Farabi et al. (2017) claims that success in language learning is measured in terms of one's ability to converse with another using the target language. One of the many applications of the use of language in speech is public speaking, a skill that is used in a lot of contexts (Li et al., 2016), making it identified as a requirement for a successful academic, professional, and social life (Leopold, 2016; Nippold, 2007 in Heilmann et al., 2020). Since education should prepare students for real-world tasks, there should be primacy in the development of competence in skills necessary for them to be successful in their future endeavors (Byrne et al., 2012; Zekeri, 2004 in Lee & Liang, 2012).

1.1. Public speaking and its challenges

Public speaking can be considered as a 21st century life skill. Defined as the "process of designing and delivering a message to the audience" (Wrench, 2012 in Paradewari, 2017, p. 101), public speaking is used in various contexts making it one of the skills demanded in the workplace (Leopold, 2016) and is necessary to further career development (Zekeri, 2004 as cited in Lee & Liang, 2012). One type of public speaking is persuasive speaking, which highlights the dynamic ability of language to influence a person's mind and decision-making. Nippold (2007, in Heilmann et al., 2020) advocated the development of competence at persuasion to adolescence as it is a requisite for a successful academic, professional, and social life. These are the very reasons why persuasive public speaking skills development is a necessary component of the basic and the tertiary level curricula.

Persuasive public speaking, however, remains to be a challenging task for non-native English public speakers (NNEPS) due to communication apprehension (Bastida & Yapo, 2019) and problems in organizing and outlining their ideas (Lee & Liang, 2012). Furthermore, there is a dearth of local literature that addresses this concern (Del Villar, 2010), especially in public secondary schools.

1.2. Guided oral presentation as a rhetorical pedagogy

Farabi et al. (2017) proposed the use of guided oral presentation (GOP) as a technique in developing public speaking skills. GOP is a scaffolding technique where teachers choose the topic and guide the students in writing and delivering a speech by providing a step-by-step discussion of each section of the speech (Nadia, 2013). It culminates with a short (two to three minutes) performance output of the topic taught (Farabi et al., 2017). Despite the growing number of studies proving the effectiveness of GOP in developing public speaking skills (Al-Issa, 2007; Brooks & Wilson, 2014; Farabi et al., 2017; Nadia, 2013), very few EFL or ESL classes maximize the benefits of its use (Tsou & Huang, 2012).

1.3. Using templates in teaching public speaking

In terms of addressing the second challenge that inhibits the development of public speaking skills, using a template is one effective way to teach organization and outlining that complements GOP. Nikitina (2011) has proven that an outline or a template is an effective tool that allows the clear organization of ideas and proper highlighting of the major points, "bringing together the elements of the speech in a logical sequence" (p. 37).

Two of the most widely used templates for persuasive speaking are the traditional Introduction-Body-Conclusion format and Monroe's Motivated Speech Sequence (MMSS). Despite these templates' proven effectiveness (Briggs & Proszek, 2015; Micciche et al., 2000), they present restrictions when used in the context of secondary schools – the traditional template is less meaning-focused (Schnell, 2015) while MMSS is too complex and is commonly used in the tertiary education context (Haugen & Lucas, 2018; Parviz, 2019; Procopio, 2011; Quagliata, 2014).

1.4. The student-developed persuasive speaking template

This lack of an appropriate template for NNEPS in the secondary schools was the primary motivation for this study's proposal for a student-developed template that is based on the classical patterns of rhetoric, is anchored on the principles of guided oral presentation, and is both specific and meaning-focused. The template followed the principles of guided oral presentation and is student-developed because the students were facilitated to investigate the natural structure of effective persuasive speeches, guided in coming up with a collectively agreed template, and instructed to use that template in drafting and delivering their speeches. The student-developed template is named Rouse, Relate, and Respond (3Rs) to highlight one of the five canons of rhetoric – *memoria*. Doing so facilitates memorization and practice for powerful delivery (Pudewa, 2016). Artistic proofs are also strategically placed on specific sections of the template for NNEPS to ascertain at which part of the speech the artistic proofs should be used.

Rouse is the introductory section of the speech that contains the following elements: hook (e.g., a striking statement, a question, a quotation, etc., geared to catch the audience's attention), background information, and thesis statement. The speaker's aim in this section is to capture the audience's attention. The speakers may use pathos or ethos as the artistic proofs in this section by focusing on capturing the audience's emotions to make them identify with the topic or by establishing the speaker's credibility to speak about the topic.

Relate is the speech body. In this section, the speaker elaborates his or her claims from the thesis statement and provides clear and credible pieces of evidence for them. In this section, logos is highlighted because the speaker presents facts and figures to bolster the truthfulness of the claims presented.

Respond is the speech conclusion. Here, the speaker reiterates his or her main points and gives the audience a call to action. Pathos is the artistic proof that is used in this speech portion by using strategies that appeal to the audiences' emotions aiming for them to sympathize (or empathize) with the topic – an indication of persuasion.

1.5. Teaching persuasive speaking online

Another challenge is the recent modification in the landscape of public speaking pedagogy. Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, classes were taught through online and modular distance learning (DepEd Order 012, s. 2020). Until the pandemic, use of online distance learning in Philippine high schools had only been a supplementary tool for learning (Enriquez, 2014). Thus, a full-online learning context was new to public high schools in the Philippines – an additional challenge in public speaking instruction. Despite its novelty, online learning is a potential avenue to address issues on limited instruction time and large classes in terms of public speaking (Mahoney et al., 2017; Rodrigues & Vethamani, 2015). It effectively reduces speech anxiety and improves public speaking skills aside from its appeal and convenience to this generation's digital natives (Mahoney et al., 2017; Westwick et al., 2015; Wolverton & Tanner, 2019). There is therefore a need to explore the viability of an online learning environment in improving persuasive speaking skills of NNEPS.

Given these challenges, this study sought to explore the answers to the following questions:

1. Is there a significant difference in the persuasive speaking skills of students in an online learning environment before and after they undergo training using the Rouse-Relate-Respond (3Rs) guided oral presentation template in terms of structure and organization, content development, delivery, and confidence? In what ways?
2. Is there a correlation between the use of an online learning environment and students' persuasive speaking skills in terms of structure and

organization, content development, delivery, and confidence?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Participants

This study involved eighteen (18) Grade 10 students who were selected considering the following criteria: 1) pre-intermediate to intermediate English proficiency level, 2) high level of communication apprehension, 3) identified to be challenged by the cognitive demands of persuasive speaking based on teacher reports and previous grades, and 4) was previously instructed about and performed a persuasive speech. All these criteria were requisites to answer this study's research questions and were anchored to the characteristics of the participants in similar studies that used guided oral presentation (Al Issa, 2007; Al Issa & Al-qubtan, 2017; Farabi, 2017; Ibrahim & Yusoff, 2012; Mady, 2015).

2.2. Implementation

After retrieving signed parental and school head consent and determining the final participants for the study, the participants were oriented about the training and the pre-test persuasive speech where they would have to deliver a persuasive speech answering the question "Should education continue despite the pandemic?". The participants were given two days to write and practice their persuasive speeches before they attended a live persuasive speech performance. Their delivery was recorded and forwarded to three raters for evaluation. Then, the participants attended seventeen meetings that covered 6 synchronous and 11 asynchronous sessions. Synchronous online teaching sessions, which lasted for an hour, focused on the participants' answers to the asynchronous online learning sessions emphasizing the speech's content and speaker's delivery. On the other hand, asynchronous online learning sessions were self-paced, where the students were given two days to complete the tasks prior to attending the synchronous sessions. Before the student-developed template was created, the lessons covered Kassim et al. (2015) suggested six phases in the speech planning process: topic selection, audience analysis, information research and evaluation, outline development, presentation aid selection, practice and use of delivery strategies. Video exemplars were used to reinforce the concepts taught.

Guided oral presentation was manifested in teaching of the template through the structure of the lesson plan. The first major section of the lesson – Guided Presentation – section served as the discussion of the topic where the teacher guided the students in analyzing the content of the speech models. In the analysis, the students were facilitated in the creation of the student-developed template where the words Rouse (introduction), Relate (body), and Respond (conclusion) (3Rs template) constantly surfaced. It was also the portion where the teacher guided the students in analyzing the strategy used by speakers of effective persuasive speeches. For instance, in Rouse, students identified the content of the Rouse strategy by coming up with a formula containing its elements that would form as their template (e.g., hook + background information + speaker's personal research + realization + thesis statement). Different Rouse strategies (attention grabbers such as staggering statistics, questions, anecdotes, etc.) were also explored in this section to provide students with different ways to capture the audience's interest. In this section of the lesson, students also identified the artistic proof used. Guided Production, the second section of the lesson, is where the students applied in writing their manuscripts guided by the formula they learned from Guided Presentation. The students were also instructed to share their manuscripts with a peer for evaluation. The third section of the lesson is Guided Practice where students were given time to practice delivering the speech. Once done, the students would upload their work to the assigned LMS where their classmates evaluate their work by writing down comments or suggestions using the PSCR. The teacher likewise prepared a written evaluation of the uploaded video. The comments were then synthesized and given to the students as their reference on how they could improve their speeches.

For the posttest, the participants answered the same question given in the pre-test. After three days, the participants received a Google Meet link where the final live speech delivery took place. Their posttest persuasive speech performance was recorded and sent to the raters for evaluation.

2.3. Research Instruments and Data Analysis

To gather quantitative data that focused on determining the significant difference in the structure and organization, content development, and delivery of the participants' persuasive speeches, their pre- and posttest performances were evaluated using the Public Speaking Competence Rubric (PSCR) (Schreiber et al., 2012 in Mortaji, 2018). Confidence was tested by comparing the pre- and posttest data of the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) (McCroskey, 2013). Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, a non-parametric test, was used to test the difference between the two repeated measurements (Laerd Statistics, 2018). Qualitative data from the first research question were gathered from the participants' speech manuscripts and their transcribed answers from the stimulated recall interview. These were then analyzed using conceptual content analysis to identify common themes that surfaced in the interview and the manuscripts. The Survey on Students' Perception about Online Learning (SSPOL) (Platt et al., 2014) was used to answer the second research question that sought to ascertain the correlation between the persuasive speaking skills and the online learning environment. Pearson-Product Moment Correlation was used to analyze the data in this question to determine the strength of the relationship of the participants' persuasive speaking scores and the online learning environment.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The student-developed template's effect to the students' persuasive speaking skills

To answer the first research question, the PSCR ratings of both pre- and posttests were grouped according to the persuasive speaking skills dimensions they tested. For structure and organization, the dimensions are the following: *Uses an effective organizational pattern* (dimension 3), Locates, synthesizes, and employs compelling supporting materials (dimension 4), and *Demonstrates a careful choice of words* (dimension 6). The following dimensions are under content development: *Formulates an introduction that orients audience to the topic and speaker* (dimension 2), *Develops a conclusion that reinforces the thesis and provides psychological closure* (dimension 5), and *Constructs an effectual persuasive message with credible evidence and sound reasoning* (dimension 11). Delivery has the following dimensions: *Effectively uses vocal expressions and para language to engage the audience* (dimension 7), *Demonstrates nonverbal behavior that supports the verbal message* (dimension 8), and *Successfully adapts the presentation to the audience* (dimension 9). Dimension 1 (topic selection) was not included in the evaluation since the teacher provided the topic for the participants, while dimension 10 (use of visual materials) was not included because delivering an online speech accompanied with a visual aid required using an application – something that is not covered by the training.

Table 1. Pre-Test vs. Posttest Comparison of the Raters' Scores

	Wilcoxon Signed Rank Statistic			**P-value**
	Rater A	**Rater B**	**Rater C**	
Overall Pre vs. Post	-85.5	-85.5	-85.5	<0.0001*
Structure and Organization				
Dimension 3	-76.5	-76.5	-76.5	<0.0001*
Dimension 4	-85.5	-76.5	-85.5	<0.0001*
Dimension 6	-76.5	-85.5	-76.5	<0.0001*
Content Development				
Dimension 2	-76.5	-85.5	-76.5	<0.0001*
Dimension 5	-76.5	-76.5	-76.5	<0.0001*
Dimension 11	-85.5	-76.5	-85.5	<0.0001*
Delivery				
Dimension 7	-85.5	-68	-85.5	<0.0001*
Dimension 8	-85.5	-60	-85.5	<0.0001*
Dimension 9	-76.5	-76.5	-76.5	<0.0001*

Note: *Significant at the < 0.05 level.

Table 1 shows that in the overall pre-test posttest ratings given by the raters, the p-value of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Statistic was less than .05. Furthermore, the negative results show that there is an increase in the evaluated persuasive speaking skills from the pre-test to the posttest. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and the posttest ratings of the participants. In addition, negative value of the statistics means that the ratings given in the posttest by all the raters were significantly higher than the ratings given in the pre-test.

Specific dimensions with the greatest persuasive speaking skill improvement were also explored through the computation of the mean scores of the raters' evaluation. Table 2 presents the mean scores of the pre-test and posttest ratings made by the raters.

Table 2. Pre-Test and Posttest Mean Scores of the Raters

Dimensions	**Pre-test**				**Posttest**			
	Rater A	**Rater B**	**Rater C**	**Average**	**Rater A**	**Rater B**	**Rater C**	**Average**
2	2.33	2.11	2.00	2.15	3.78	3.89	3.80	3.82
3	2.06	2.22	2.40	2.22	3.61	3.94	3.90	3.82
4	2.11	2.33	2.40	2.28	3.83	3.89	3.80	3.84
5	2.22	2.17	2.10	2.16	3.78	3.83	3.80	3.80
6	2.06	2.06	2.20	2.11	3.89	3.83	3.90	3.87
7	2.17	2.33	2.30	2.27	3.61	3.67	4.00	3.76
8	1.83	1.94	2.20	1.99	3.78	3.61	3.90	3.76
9	2.00	2.11	2.20	2.10	3.67	3.72	3.90	3.76
11	2.28	2.33	2.20	2.27	3.67	3.83	3.90	3.80
Mean of the Total Score	**19.06**	**19.61**	**19.94**		**33.61**	**34.22**	**34.94**	

The mean scores revealed that the participants improved most in demonstrating a careful choice of words (dimension 3 – 3.87) for structure and organization and formulating an introduction that orients audience to the topic and speaker (dimension 2 – 3.82) for content development. All three dimensions had the same mean scores for delivery (dimensions 7-9 – 3.76) which measured effective use of vocal expression and paralanguage, nonverbal behavior that supports the verbal message, and successful adaptation of the presentation to the audience, respectively.

Confidence was measured by comparing the pre- and posttest results of the PRPSA.

Table 3. Results of the Pre-Test and Posttest Scores of the PRPSA

Participant	Pre-test	Interpretation	Posttest	Interpretation
A	140	High	90	Low
B	150	High	100	Moderate
C	143	High	90	Low
D	137	High	118	Moderate
E	137	High	85	Low
F	143	High	104	Moderate
G	135	High	120	Moderate
H	145	High	81	Low
I	145	High	102	Moderate
J	133	High	113	Moderate
K	143	High	109	Moderate
L	155	High	130	Moderate
M	137	High	99	Moderate
N	131	High	86	Low
O	131	High	113	Moderate
P	140	High	96	Low
Q	135	High	112	Moderate
R	135	High	105	Moderate

Table 3 shows that prior to the training, all the participants were categorized to have high communication apprehension. It can be suggested that there was an improvement as the participants had moderate to lower communication apprehension after undergoing training.

Table 4 shows the result of the comparison of the PRPSA's pre- and posttest data.

Table 4. Comparison of the PRPSA's Pre-test and Posttest Scores

	Wilcoxon Signed Rank Statistic	P-value
Pre-test vs. Post-test	85.5	<0.0001*

Note: *Significant at the < 0.05 level.

The pre-test and posttest PRPSA scores of students were tested using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test to check if there is a significant change in their public speaking apprehension scores. Per table 4, the p-value is less than .05, and Wilcoxon Signed Rank Statistic has a positive value. This means that the pre-test and posttest PRPSA scores are significantly different. Since the value of the statistics is positive, this means that the pre-test scores are significantly higher than the post-test PRPSA scores. This result shows a significant decline in the participants' communication apprehension and a significant difference in their confidence before and after undergoing training.

The PRPSA mean scores were also computed to show which aspects of confidence showed the greatest improvement. It was found out that the greatest improvement in the participants' confidence was having a feeling that they have had a pleasant experience right after giving the speech (statement 4) and that they had lesser inhibitions with the thought of giving a speech, although c healthy amount of fear is still there (statement 6). This supports Dwyer and Davidson's (2012) and Bastida and Yapo's (2019) finding that acknowledging public speaking as a pleasant experience is a good sign of overcoming communication apprehension.

To amplify how the training contributed to the improvement of the participants' persuasive speaking skills, stimulated recall interviews were conducted. This was done to consolidate and verify the quantitative results with the lived experiences of the participants. From the analyzed interview data, four identified themes surfaced as to which components of the training affected the participants' persuasive speaking skills: 1) use of the template, 2) direct instruction of skills, 3) time for research and practice, and 4) teacher's guidance. Regarding the use of the templates, most of the participants mentioned how identifying the elements of a section of the speech exemplars, creating a formula using the elements, and following that formula as the most effective means that improved structure and organization. In terms of direct instructions of skills, the participants cited the use of outline and video exemplars to be effective in supplementing direct instruction. Analyzing the video exemplars allowed them to observe what makes a good speech and how it should be delivered. This gave them an idea of the possible ways they can use in writing and delivering an effective speech. The participants' recognition of the use of time for research and practice to be influential in the improvement of their persuasive speaking skills supports research findings that found out how giving students ample time for research and practice results in a positive public speaking outcome (Al Issa & Al-qubtan, 2017; Kelsen, 2019; Lata & Luhach, 2014; Tuan & Mai, 2015). More specifically, the participants' answer on the use of time is similar to Pearson's (2010) findings that overall writing preparation and practice time correlated significantly with higher speech grades. In terms of the teacher's role, the consolidated themes in the interview reveal that the teacher's guidance weighed more to the participants than the online learning environment used. This supports the research finding that the teacher has control of enhancing the quality of instruction, specifically by increasing student knowledge, improving performance/skills, and lowering communication apprehension (Mahoney et al., 2017).

Another method qualitative data was gathered was by analyzing the pre- and posttest manuscripts of the participants. In terms of the use of effective organizational pattern, there was an improvement in the organizational pattern, a discernible thesis statement, and an effective attention-getter being evident. These were either rarely or never noted in the pre-test persuasive speech manuscripts. In terms of the use of compelling supporting materials, the posttest manuscripts manifested the use of appropriate materials for all the key points. Furthermore, the materials used were varied and credible. Lastly, a slight improvement in language use and grammar was noted.

Aside from having a longer and more complex-structured sentences, the posttest paragraph show improvement in the use of an attention getter at the beginning, an inclusion of a credible piece of evidence, an effort to empathize with the audience, and a clear presentation of the speaker's arguments.

The first two sub-dimensions analyzed confirm literature findings on the positive effect of the use of principles of guided oral presentation (Bankowski, 2010; Brooks & Wilson, 2014; Farabi et al., 2017; Herbein et al., 2018; Mahoney et al., 2017; Nadia, 2013) and the teaching of a template (Brundage et al, 2010; Pearson, 2010; Santoso et al., 2018) in developing students' organizational skills and effective use of compelling materials. This result implies that a combination of an intentional and explicit instruction of skills and use of video exemplars, matched with the guided instruction using a meaning-focused and detailed template, is a potent solution to the cognitively demanding task NNEPS face in writing their persuasive speeches (Lee & Liang, 2012). It is worth noting that there is a slight improvement in the area of language use even if it was not part of the skills being developed in training. This result supports the findings that one of the advantages of using guided oral presentation is how it connects language study and language use (Nadia, 2017).

A common error, however, in the area of structure and organization that requires attention is language use. While Farabi, et al (2017) placed less emphasis on the improvement of language while using GOP, there should be heightened emphasis in this area as language is the primary vehicle for the presentation of the message. The following are examples of common language errors in the participants' manuscripts, specifically in subject-verb agreement, sentence fragments, and word choice.

Content development was evaluated in three areas – an introduction that effectively orients the audience to the topic and speaker, a conclusion that restates the thesis and provides psychological closure, and an effective persuasive message with credible evidence and sound reasoning. Generally, the participants' scores significantly improved from deficient to basic during the pre-test to proficient and advanced in the posttest. Analysis of the posttest manuscript revealed that the participants did better in capturing the audience's attention, establishing their credibility to talk about the topic, and providing a strong and effective call to action. Apparent use of artistic proofs was also seen.

Most of the analyzed manuscripts show how the speaker led the audience back to the thesis statement. There is also a presence of credible pieces of evidence that were used to present two varying ideas on the topic which then concluded with the interpretation of the data they presented and eventually supported what the speakers believe in.

These results are supported by literature findings that proved the positive effect of the use of principles of guided oral presentation (Al Issa & Al-qubtan, 2017; Santoso et al., 2018) through a template (Pearson, 2010) in the content development of a persuasive speech. Similar to structure and organization, the positive effect in content development was due to the explicit instruction of skills, especially by using a formula that the students identified and should follow in order to come up with each section of the speech. Guiding the students in looking for credible sources, however, should be emphasized in content development as the participants tend to gravitate on easily found yet questionable sources.

Delivery was evaluated in three areas – use of vocal expression and paralanguage that engage the audience, use of nonverbal behavior that supports the verbal message, and an adaptation of the presentation to the audience. Generally, the participants' scores significantly improved from deficient to basic during the pre-test to basic to advance on the posttest. Analysis of the posttest speech delivery revealed that the participants did better in using a variety of vocal expressions suited to their topic, relying less on their notes and projecting a confident stance, and establishing a common ground in order for the audience to relate to their message.

The result in the analysis support literature findings on the positive effect of the use of principles of guided oral presentation (Farabi et al, 2017; Gibbons, 2007 in Garbatti & Mady, 2015; Kassim, et al., 2015; Lata & Luhach, 2014; Mahoney et al., 2017; Mundy, 2014; Nation & Newton, 2009 in Tuan & Mai, 2015; Santoso et al., 2018; Westwick, et al., 2015) through a template (Pearson, 2010) in the delivery of a persuasive speech. The common denominator among the research findings in a guided oral presentation that affected delivery is practice. Garbatti & Mady (2015) recommended the use of practice through task repetition and rehearsal. This research integrated practice by providing the same instruction at the end of the teaching of each major section of the speech, and that is for the students to practice with a peer and share comments on how their delivery could be improved. In terms of the use of the template, the students were able to identify and apply which delivery strategies were appropriate in each section of the speech (Pearson, 2010) as they learned when they should use a certain tone of voice or a certain gesture if they had to capture the audience's attention, relate the message to the audience, establish credible sources, or delivering a call to action used (Kassim et al., 2015). In the area of evaluation, guiding them with the use of the rubric for grading provided practice on how to evaluate their peers (Tuan & Mai, 2015). This result implies that principles of guided oral presentation, especially practice, and the use of templates could influence how students deliver a message.

3.2. Online instruction using the student-developed template

To answer the second research question, the participants answered the Survey on Students' Perception about Online Learning (SSPOL) (Platt, Raile, & Yu, 2014) which was administered to the participants after their posttest speech delivery. The instrument was divided into five dimensions of the online learning environment – general equivalence, comparative flexibility, comparative level of instruction, comparative knowledge gained, and comparative ease. Prior to answering the instrument, the participants were instructed that the context of their answers should be the persuasive speaking class's online learning environment and not their other online classes.

Table 5 presents the result of the correlation between the aspects of online learning and the persuasive speaking skills tested.

Table 5. Correlation between Persuasive Speaking Skills and Online Learning

	General Equivalence	Comparative Flexibility	Comparative Level of Interaction	Comparative Knowledge Gained	Comparative Ease	Total
Structure and Organization	-.10	-.11	-.52*	-.26	-.37	-.23
Content Development	-.03	-.21	-.65**	-.45	-.28	-.21
Delivery	-.26	-.29	-.59**	-.33	-.41	-.41
Confidence	-.16	-.20	-.13	.19	-.20	-.17

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

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

The result of the correlation analysis showed that in all dimensions of online learning, only the comparative level of interaction significantly showed a negative moderate relationship to structure and organization (r = -.52, n = 18, p < .05), content development (r = -.66, n = 18, p < .01), and delivery (r = -.59, n = 18, p < .01). This means that the participants perceived that despite the limited interaction in the online learning environment, there was still a development in their persuasive speaking skills in terms of structure and organization, content development, and delivery. Scores in the rest of the dimensions showed that there is an insignificant negative moderate to negligible correlation between the online learning dimensions and persuasive speaking skills tested, meaning that the dimensions were not perceived to have affected the participants' improved persuasive speaking skills.

It is worth noting that the tool used in this study measured the participants' perception of their experiences in both online learning and face-to-face instruction, specifically in public speaking instruction. In the context of the study, a correlation study could have been conducted by comparing the post-speech delivery results of two classes: one that underwent training using the 3Rs template in an online learning environment and another that underwent a similar training but in a face-to-face environment. However, this could not be done because the study was limited to online learning, the teaching mode used in the country at the time the study was undertaken.

4. Conclusion

This study explored the use of a student-developed template – Rouse-Relate-Respond (3Rs) guided oral presentation template – in improving students' persuasive speaking skills. The study confirms the findings of several researchers who also used principles of guided oral presentation (Abdullah et al., 2015; Al Issa & Al-qubtan, 2010; Bankowski, 2010; Brooks & Wilson, 2014; Farabi et al., 2017; Gibbons, 2007 in Garbatti & Mady, 2015; Herbein et al., 201; Kiuhara et al., 2012; Mahoney et al., 2017; Mundy, 2014; Nadia, 2013; Nation & Newton, 2009 in Tuan & Mai, 2015; Westwick, 2015) and encouraged the use of a student-developed template (Brundage et al., 2010; Pearson, 2010; Santoso et al., 2018).

In terms of structure and organization, the 3Rs guided oral presentation template can help students come up with persuasive speeches that have better organizational pattern, more discernible thesis statement, more appropriate and credible supporting materials (Bankowski, 2010), and more complete, accurate, and qualitatively better outputs (Kiuhara et al., 2012).

In terms of content development, use of the template can aid in effectively starting and ending the speech, using transitions, looking for credible materials (Santoso et al., 2018), capturing the audience's attention, establishing their credibility to talk about the topic, providing a strong and effective call to action, and appropriately using the artistic proofs.

The template can guide NNEPS in using a variety of expressions suited to their topic, relying less on their notes and projecting a confident stance, and establishing a common ground in order for the audience to relate to their message (Abdullah et al., 2015).

Lastly, the template can be effective in reducing communication apprehension as it helped reduce fear of the thought of giving a speech and the anxiety that comes before and during speech presentation (Hashemi & Abbasi, 2013; Ibrahim & Yusoff, 2012; Kedrowicz & Taylor, 2016; Li et al., 2016; Mahoney et al., 2017).

Therefore, following the procedures adopted in this study could help NNEPS, particularly in government secondary schools, to learn how to have a structured and organized persuasive speech with appropriate content, effective delivery, and a healthy attitude toward the task. All these show that teaching persuasive speaking skills using guided oral presentation and the 3Rs template is effective.

The Rouse-Relate-Respond (3Rs) template is a feasible alternative in teaching and improving persuasive speaking skills. This study as well as previous research findings prove the effectiveness of using a template (Brundage et al., 2010) that is meaning-focused (Schnell, 2015). The participants identified the 3Rs template as the primary factor that affected their structure and organization, and content development. As there is a direct relationship between structure and organization and content development, this confirms Brundage et al.'s (2010), Pearson's (2010), and Santoso et al.'s (2018) findings that the use of a template makes a speech more logical and organized. Lee and Liang (2012) recommended the use of a template in teaching persuasive speaking skills as it helps NNEPS in overcoming the complex cognitive process of writing and delivering a speech, which include structure and organization and content development. Similarly, the use of the 3Rs template positively affected the participants' confidence. As the participants acknowledged how the structure, organization, and content of their speech were developed, their confidence in delivering the speech was also developed knowing that the speech they would deliver was meaningful and well-planned (Hashemi & Abbasi, 2013). Therefore, using the 3Rs template should be an alternative in teaching persuasive speaking.

Effective persuasive speaking pedagogy puts premium on direct instruction of identified challenged skills. According to the participants, direct instruction of skills was the second most important element of the training that was instrumental in the improvement of their persuasive speaking skills. This supports previous research findings on the use of direct instruction which promotes the development of public speaking skills (Herbein et al., 2018) and reduces communication apprehension (Kelsen, 2019) resulting in better speech delivery. Moreover, both studies suggested that teaching a specific skill allows students to acknowledge what they can do, thus developing self-efficacy. Students with higher self-efficacy levels in English Public Speaking (EPS) are better public speakers (Ardasheva et al., 2020). Using explicit instruction that directly addresses the challenges of NNEPS prove to be an effective strategy in improving persuasive speaking skills.

Adequate time for research and practice is an essential component of persuasive speaking pedagogy. According to Tuan and Mai (2015), adequate time for the writing and practice of speech delivery is a key factor to a successful performance. Similarly, Pearson (2010) correlated higher speech grades to the overall writing preparation and practice time because allocating time for rehearsal helps reduce anxiety and enhance presentation performance (Kelsen, 2019). Providing ample time for research and practice during public speaking pedagogy can help improve students' overall performance.

In the context of persuasive speaking pedagogy, the role of the teacher in guiding the students is indispensable. This research confirms the findings of Mahoney et al. (2017) regarding the role of the teacher in guiding the students as the teacher is in control of enhancing the quality of instruction, specifically by increasing student knowledge, improving performance or skills, and lowering communication apprehension. It should also be mentioned that in this study, the teacher followed the principles of GOP in teaching the lessons. Therefore, the findings of this research support previous research findings on the effectiveness of GOP in improving public speaking skills as it guides individuals to effectively structure their presentation (Tom et al., 2013) and choose and develop a topic (Li et al., 2016). Because of the reduced cognitive work for the students (Brooks &Wilson, 2014), they were able to focus more on delivering their speeches, which is manifested in their confident speech delivery.

There are specific principles used in the training that positively affected the persuasive speaking skills of the participants. This study confirms that the following principles contributed to the improvement of the participants' persuasive speaking skills: using video exemplars (Abdullah et al., 2015), breaking down the major sections of the speech (Brooks & Wilson, 2014), identifying the elements of an effective persuasive speech and creating a formula out of it (Herrick, 2017), using explicit instruction of paralinguistic skills (Abdullah et al., 2015), using a meaning-focused template (Nikitina, 2011), using targeted feedback giving (Montazeri & Salimi, 2019), employing self-efficacy training (Herbein et al., 2018), having shorter delivery time (Farabi et al., 2017), and providing time for task repetition and rehearsal (Ibrahim & Yusoff, 2012).

The online learning mode of delivery, by itself, is not sufficient to develop the persuasive speaking skills of the participants. Contrary to research findings that suggested pure online public speaking pedagogy (Butler, 2014; Westwick et al., 2015; Westwick et al., 2018), this study revealed that no particular aspect of the online learning environment contributed to the participants' improved persuasive speaking skills. While there are studies that support the participants' agreement on the flexibility of online classes in terms of the availability of materials (Lai & Hong, 2017), freedom in learning (Balakrishnan & Puteh, 2014), and its effectiveness as a venue for self-directed learning (Mahoney et al., 2017; Wu & Huang, 2010), these aspects were not enough to affect the persuasive speaking skills of the participants. This may have been the reason why most studies that used online learning almost always partnered it with face-to-face instruction. It should be established that the studies that used pure online learning were conducted in the tertiary context with participants who were previously exposed to said environment. Online learning should be supported with other avenues for learning.

The Rouse-Relate-Respond (3Rs) guided oral presentation template can be used regardless of the modality. The result of the perception survey revealed that the participants recognized that it was not the online learning environment, but the strategy used that was the primary contributor to the improvement of their skills. This result challenges previous research findings pertaining to improvement of public speaking skills in a purely online learning environment (Westwick et al., 2015; Westwick et al., 2018; Wolverton & Tanner, 2019). This result provides an avenue to explore how the Rouse-Relate-Respond (3Rs) guided oral presentation template would impact persuasive speaking skills if used in blended learning or pure face-to-face classes. It should also be highlighted that the instrument used solicited opinion-based data. There might be a different result if more evidence-based data were used.

Persuasive public speaking can be taught notwithstanding modality. While the current study disconfirms studies that show the effectiveness of pure online learning for public speaking instruction (Butler, 2014; Westwick et al., 2015; Westwick et al., 2018), it implies that the training should be tested in other viable learning platforms for public speaking pedagogy. It should be emphasized, however, that Butler recognized that there is no significant difference in terms of the learning gain scores, students' attitude, and instructor's perceived presence regardless of the instructor modality. His findings indicated that learning gains and instructor presence could be achieved notwithstanding modality or added activities. Similarly, Westwick et al. (2015) posited that while not similar to face-to-face instruction, online public speaking instruction could be an alternative, specifically if it has the same potency to reduce communication apprehension in public speaking and improve public speaking competence. The researchers suggested incorporating effective materials, skills training, and cognitive restructuring to be part of the online training. In this study, the exemplars are the materials used, the use of guided oral presentation is the primary skills training strategy, and the 3Rs template is the cognitive restructuring tool as it provided a different approach in the teaching of persuasive speaking from the usual Intro-Body-Conclusion template. Exploring other effective modalities in teaching persuasive speaking is necessary.

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Acknowledgments

The researcher would like to acknowledge the assistance given by the Scholarship Committee of the College of Education in the completion of this research endeavor. The researcher would also like to express his sincerest gratitude to Prof. Nerissa O. Zara, Dr. Lourdes R. Baetiong, and Prof. Diana G. Caluag of the U.P. College of Education for their unwavering support.

Conflict of interests

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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Journal of Language Teaching, *3*(5), 23-28, 2023
https://doi.org/10.54475/jlt.2023.012

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Review

Metaphor as a cognitive facilitator in L2 vocabulary acquisition

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Received: March 7, 2023 / Accepted: April 25, 2023 / Published Online: May 1, 2023
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Abstract

Vocabulary acquisition is a cognitive activity that poses a significant challenge to second language learners. Non-literal language, particularly metaphor, has long been recognized as a potent cognitive and linguistic tool for expressing and understanding abstract concepts, emotions, and experiences. However, some contend that learning non-literal language may impede L2 vocabulary acquisition. This research paper aimed to investigate the impact of metaphorical competence and metaphorical awareness on vocabulary acquisition in second language learners based on theoretical and empirical studies. It examined a few studies that demonstrated how metaphorical competence and awareness facilitate vocabulary acquisition, such as scaffolding learners' acquisition of word meanings and improving their vocabulary retention. The implications for L2 vocabulary research were discussed for future design, and pedagogical implications were proffered for educators.

Keywords metaphors, vocabulary acquisition, metaphorical competence, metaphorical awareness

1. Introduction

Vocabulary learning has become the focus in language acquisition (Schmitt, 1997) since it provides a solid foundation in understanding a language, either native or non-native. In the process of acquiring a language, it is sometimes difficult for learners to understand abstract and complex ideas as many of the ideas are constituted by metaphors, or the metaphorical relationship between two concepts. The metaphor "time is money" is an illustrative example, as it facilitates learners' comprehension of the abstract concept of time by establishing a link to the more concrete and universally understood concept of money. This enhanced understanding, in turn, can aid learners in effectively retaining and utilizing the words and concepts in their own communication. Therefore, the acquisition of metaphors provides a valuable means of comprehending and acquiring knowledge (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). After Lakoff and Jonson published their book *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980, there has been more research on the effects of metaphors on L2 vocabulary acquisition because metaphors are a major cognitive and linguistic strategy for facilitating the comprehension of abstract concepts and vocabulary acquisition (Niemeier, 2017). Despite other non-literal language like idioms also appearing in our daily lives, idioms are based on metaphors (Gibbs, 1994) and the ways to understand and acquire idioms are similar to that of metaphors – involving metaphorical extension. Moreover, more and more idioms like "lose one's head" become conventional (Schnell, 2007) and thus can be understood by their literal meanings. Therefore, when we discuss whether non-literal language facilitates or hinders L2 vocabulary acquisition, examining metaphors provides a broader view and is more representative and significant. Given that vocabulary learning is a cognitive activity (Hua, 2020), it is appropriate to analyze the impacts of metaphors on L2 vocabulary with reference to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). This paper will first define metaphor and introduce CMT, and review how conceptual metaphors benefit L2 vocabulary acquisition based on theoretical and empirical studies, thus drawing implications for both L2 vocabulary research and pedagogy from a cognitive linguistic point of view.

2. The presence of metaphors as a phenomenon and CMT

Metaphor is deemed a device for conceptualizing one domain of experience in terms of another (Lee, 2002); in other words, metaphor involves mapping one concept onto another in a way that deviates from the expected or core meaning of a particular word or phrase, and has conceptual association (Grady, 2007). For example, love is often metaphorized as a journey and a battlefield as we think that there are frequent changes in a relationship and that love is difficult. Lazar (1996) emphasizes that L2 learners can identify and use the metaphorical extension of words if they want to enlarge their vocabulary; such a metaphorical extension involves cognitive processes. By virtue of the cognitive nature of processing metaphors, CMT has been harnessed to provide theoretical foundation for facilitating L2 vocabulary teaching and learning.

CMT (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) is a framework for understanding how metaphors are used in language and how they shape our thinking and understanding of the world. It explains that metaphors are not only linguistic expressions but also a cognitive tool for humans to elucidate the process of learning English words. In CMT, cross-domain mapping is the process of mapping the structure and attributes of a more concrete and experiential source domain onto a more abstract target domain. The source domain provides a conceptual and experiential basis for understanding the target domain. In other words, cross-domain mapping is a form of mental connection between the source domain and the target domain, and this process of mapping is of great help in the memorization of words and understanding their connotations, making vocabulary learning systematic (Hua, 2020).

Cognitively speaking, when acquiring vocabulary, the concept of the learning burden of a word, which is defined as the amount of mental effort required to learn a word, poses a threat to L2 vocabulary acquisition (Nation, 2001). Learners' prior knowledge and familiarity with related similar phonological and grammatical, semantic, and collocational terms in learners' L1 were found to be the most influential factor contributing to the learning burden. It could be significantly decreased by calling the attention of learners to systematic patterns, similarities, and links between their second and first languages (Nation, 2001). Therefore, by merging many elements of information into a single chunk in working memory, long-term memory knowledge structures enable humans to avoid processing overwhelming quantities of information and effectively remove the potential working-memory overload (Sweller, 2003). Table 1 shows some examples of source and target domains:

Table 1. Frames and Constructions in Metaphoric Language proposed by Sullivan (2013)

Source domain	Target domain
love	journey, argument, war
day	life
birth	dawn
sunny students	cheerful students

Metaphors enable learners to export the conceptual structure of the source domain to the more abstract target domain. Conceptualizing "sunny" as "cheerful" allows learners to activate the knowledge of the source domain and then map the various features of the source domain onto the aspects of the target domain. Learners can deduce the meaning of "cheerful students" from their perceptions of, or experiences of having of "a sunny day". In other words, knowledge about source domains can help learners increase their understanding of a foreign language. This mapping process, the awareness of the source domain, and the ability to metaphorically associate the ideas can facilitate vocabulary retention and acquisition (Boers, 2004).

After introducing CMT and the mechanism of processing metaphors, it is important to explore why and how metaphorical awareness and competence are conducive to L2 vocabulary acquisition with theoretical and empirical studies.

Metaphor is seen as a channelling device to comprehend, store, and reproduce figurative language input (Boers, 2004), but processing metaphors requires a lot of working memory, which is the primary conscious cognitive processor responsible for constructing and integrating mental representations and the short-term storage and maintenance of the relevant information. To ease learners' working memory, extending lexical relations with metaphors is effective (MacLennan, 1994), and thus more capacity can be released to deal with unfamiliar vocabulary and lengthen the retention of vocabulary (Pourdana, Sahebalzamani & Rajeski, 2014). However, there is a paucity of measurements to indicate learners' ability to process metaphors and gauge the effectiveness of metaphors in relation to L2 vocabulary acquisition.

3. Metaphorical competence and metaphorical awareness in relation to L2 vocabulary acquisition

To investigate how processing metaphor is beneficial to L2 vocabulary acquisition, different researchers (Boers, 2004; Kalyuga & Kalyuga, 2008; Littlemore, 2001) attempted to establish the linkage among metaphorical competence, metaphorical awareness and L2 vocabulary acquisition.

Littlemore (2001) defined metaphorical competence as a mix of four components: the originality of metaphor production, the ability to find meaning in metaphor, the speed at which one finds meaning in metaphor, and the fluency of metaphor interpretation. MacArthur (2010) explored the metaphorical language used by undergraduate students in their writing. The data indicated that students utilized metaphors to describe their views on complicated and abstract topics, but their metaphorical usage was not always conventional. Hence, she defined metaphorical competence as the ability to use their second language figuratively.

On the other hand, Boers (2004) deemed "metaphor awareness" as the ability to perceive the ubiquity, underlying themes, non-arbitrary nature, cross-cultural variances, and cross-linguistic diversity of metaphorical expressions in language. Generally, the majority of studies indicate that more proficient L2 learners appear to possess higher metaphorical competence and awareness, which help them comprehend and remember vocabulary in an effective manner (Aleshtar & Dowlatabadi, 2014; Boers & Demecheleer, 1998, Littlemore, 2001; MacArthur, 2010).

The impact of English metaphorical awareness on vocabulary retention was examined by Pourdana, Sahebalzamani, and Rajeski (2014) in their study of 60 intermediate EFL learners in Iran, aged 16 to 20. The experimental group was exposed to and engaged in 20 minutes of English metaphorical awareness tasks, including matching, pictorial idioms, and poems, while the control group was given the vocabulary exercise from *New Cutting Edge* (Cunningham, Moor & Eales 2007), an English learning book focusing on task-based learning for pre-intermediate students. A statistically significant difference was found for the better performance of the experimental group in the post test. The results support that introducing new words and expressions in chunks based on shared metaphorically themed activities such as reading poetry and teaching verbal information through imagery can enhance learners' metaphorical awareness, thus facilitating vocabulary acquisition and recalling vocabulary in four language skills.

Another empirical study undertaken by Starr, Cirolia, Tillman and Srinivasan (2021) also obtained similar results showing that processing spatial metaphors can scaffold children's acquisition of word meanings, and higher metaphorical competence and awareness can allow these children to learn a novel adjective in the domain of space or pitch and to extend the adjective to the target domain. Boers (2000) also conducted his empirical study by testing intermediate English learners whose L1 is either Dutch or French in Belgium. The results consistently substantiate the hypothesis that a lexical organization along source domains can facilitate retrieval and retention of vocabulary (Boers, 2004). A statistically significance was found for the participants who had been encouraged to process metaphors in association with their source domains being more likely to reproduce them in active usage. In other words, enhanced metaphorical awareness can be turned into an additional channel for vocabulary acquisition because they can systematically expand on their prior knowledge and use already known words in extended senses. Later, Boers (2004) and Boers et al. (2004) also presented empirical evidence for the adoption of etymological elaboration to corroborate CMT arguing that learners are more likely to recall metaphorical expressions when they know about their origin than when they only know its meaning. This echoes Kalyuga's and Kalyuga's study (2008) that words that appear in language as a result of metaphorical extensions resemble other etymologically related words. This method helps learners establish mental associations and speed up learning because learners' prior knowledge can assist in assimilating new information by reducing the burden on working memory.

Apart from the above-mentioned studies, the qualitative research undertaken by Liu and Hsieh (2020) also suggests that employing metaphors to develop learners' metaphorical competence and awareness is essential to L2 language acquisition. They adopted a multiple case study design to explore CFL learners' developmental processes of metaphorical awareness and competence regarding Chinese animal metaphors. Three Chinese-speaking university students from a public university in the United States took part in the study. Textual data, including presurvey results, writing assignments, and all the in-class work produced by the university learners, as well as audio recordings documenting the instructional sessions, were collected. The data revealed that all the participants showed an expanded metaphorical awareness in recognizing the commonalities and differences in the animal metaphorical expressions of their L1 and L2 cultures.

4. Implications for L2 vocabulary research

Given the importance of metaphorical competence and awareness and the mechanism of CMT, this paper attempts to proffer three directions for L2 vocabulary research and pedagogical implications based on the abovementioned research.

This paper focuses on conceptual metaphors, but there are other kinds of conceptual metaphors such as imagistic, orientational, ontological, and structural metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) that might affect how learners process them in relation to their cognitive style, proficiency, first language, and culture. Most of the research analyzed in this paper does not categorize and examine a particular conceptual metaphor, except Starr, Cirolia, Tillman, and Srinivasan's research on spatial metaphors (2021); in Boers's study (2004), metaphorical language seems to be chosen selectively or randomly. The particular conceptual metaphor could have yielded different results, suggesting that some particular conceptual metaphors might hinder learners' understanding of L2 and demotivate them. Therefore, the four conceptual metaphors should be investigated independently in relation to learners of different proficiency levels and cognitive styles (Hawkins, 1998) because the styles impact learners' ways of metaphor interpretation (Johnson & Rosano, 1993) and speed of interpretation (Littlemore, 2001).

As for learners' proficiency, most of the participants in the research in this paper are intermediate learners (Boers 2000; Pourdana, Sahebalzamani & Rajeski, 2014) although Boers (2004) claims teaching metaphors tends to work best with intermediate students, since beginners lack the vocabulary and advanced students are risk-averse. As the studies analyzed above focused on intermediate learners, and it is unclear whether the findings can be generalized to learners of other proficiency levels. Future research could investigate the effectiveness of teaching metaphors to beginners and advanced learners and compare the results to those of the intermediate learners.

The teaching order and the level of difficulty of conceptual metaphors should also be further explored because the cognitive burden exerted by different kinds of conceptual metaphors on working memory might be different. Therefore, researchers need to think of the questions when making pedagogical suggestions: should the four conceptual metaphors be introduced to L2 learners in different order? Should teachers consider learners' L1, and their cultural and linguistic background when teaching conceptual metaphors and designing the learning materials?

More longitudinal research should be conducted in the future because most of the participants (the experimental groups) in the abovementioned research received awareness-raising activities for a very short period of time. It stands to reason that a one-off learning experience is often not sufficient to turn metaphor awareness into a long-term strategy (Kalyuga & Kalyuga, 2008), and therefore the effectiveness of awareness-raising activities in relation to L2 vocabulary acquisition and time is worth exploring because metaphor awareness can only be fruitful in the long term (Boers, 2000).

5. Pedagogical implications

Teaching metaphors is difficult because teachers must consider various variables such as learners' proficiency, cognitive style, pedagogy, and learning materials, and there is a scarcity of metaphor-based instruction and learning materials. Research on metaphoric awareness emphasizes the metaphorical foundations of language and asserts that awareness-raising activities can facilitate vocabulary acquisition (Boers, 2004). This paper suggests a few methods for teachers' reference.

Kalyuga and Kalyuga (2008) suggest raising metaphor awareness by presenting vocabulary in metaphorical chunks in conjunction with activating learners' prior knowledge to reduce potential cognitive overload. It helps learners establish associations between the metaphorical expression and its more concrete senses, which can lead to a higher retention rate of vocabulary (Boers, 2000; Guo, 2007). For example, Niemeier (2017) designed the metaphor-based lesson about colour expressions and successfully helped the learners extend their use of already known colour-related vocabulary and store the expressions as meaningful units. When teaching metaphors, teachers can prepare more similar metaphors or other non-literal expressions and guide students to guess the meaning based on their L1 knowledge, metaphorical association. Also, teachers can ask students to discuss and compare metaphors in their native and target languages, as this can improve learners' metaphor comprehension and production (Deignan, Gabrýs & Solska, 1997) because L2 speakers often lack a native speaker's worldview, culture, and socialization and may consequently be incapable of comprehending metaphorical language (Niemeier, 2017). For instance, students can compare the metaphorical meaning of the colour "green" in Cantonese and English. Teachers can also consider instructing students to organize language into thematic groupings based on conceptual metaphors to enhance their ability to expand their vocabulary.

6. Conclusion

In summary, this paper argues that learning non-literal language is conducive to L2 vocabulary acquisition by compiling theoretical and empirical research on the benefits of learning conceptual metaphors from the CMT perspective and the implications of metaphorical awareness and competence (Littlemore, 2001; Boers, 2004; Kalyuga & Kalyuga, 2008; Starr, Cirolia, Tillman & Srinivasan, 2021). As learning vocabulary is a multifaceted process and research on metaphor in relation to L2 education and how other factors such as cognitive styles, age, proficiency, and the difficulty of different types of metaphors affect the effectiveness of metaphor-based learning are scant, this paper proffers directions for future research and metaphor-based instruction and materials design with reference to Niemeier's research (2017).

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Journal of Language Teaching, *3*(5), 29-33, 2023
https://doi.org/10.54475/jlt.2023.013

Review

"It makes my whole body hurt": Foreign language anxiety through the ages

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Received: March 16, 2023 / Accepted: April 29, 2023 / Published Online: May 1, 2023
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Abstract

Learning a foreign language in a classroom setting can be a veritably miserable experience. Nowhere is this better described than in *Buddenbrooks*, where Thomas Mann dissects his young protagonist's feeling of negative anticipation before a language class, with its attendant physical and behavioural symptomatology. Skipping forward eight decades, this essay gives a brief overview of how applied linguists started using the construct of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) in the 1980s to explain deficient performance and a series of deviant learner behaviours in foreign language classes. It briefly clarifies how FLA fit into the institutional landscape of US higher education, and explains how the construct has since been refined by a wider body of empirical evidence. It concludes by discussing some implications for language teaching in similar instructional contexts today, while recognising that a classroom is not where the majority of people learn a foreign language.

Keywords foreign language anxiety, E. K. Horwitz, Thomas Mann

1. Introduction

> "I'm scared," Hanno told Kai. […] "It's driving me crazy, Kai, it makes my whole body hurt. […] If only this wretched Ovid class were over and done with. If only my grade was already in his book, and I'd failed the class, and it would all be behind me. I'm not afraid of *failing*, I'm afraid of the whole brouhaha that goes with it."
> Thomas Mann, *Buddenbrooks*, 1901

Young Hanno's negative emotions, unpleasant physical symptoms and maladaptive behaviour in relation to a foreign language class will ring familiar to many teachers and learners, today as in 1901. Is there something about learning languages in a classroom setting that makes the experience different, *worse*, than studying any other demanding subject? After all, despite a dramatic change in teaching approaches – the Latin lesson described by Thomas Mann would have been based on the outdated "grammar-translation method" (Chang, 2011) – avoidance, procrastination, compensatory behaviour, temporary loss of memory, as well as physical reactions that make one's "whole body hurt", as Mann eloquently puts it (1994, p. 582), are still a frequent corollary to foreign language classes. Significantly, the consequences of failure (feeling of inadequacy, punishment, being exposed to ridicule) do not seem to matter as much to the student as "the whole brouhaha that goes with [failing]" (p. 582). In clinical psychology, this subjective experience of negative anticipation, with its attendant physical and behavioural symptomatology, has a name: anxiety (APA, 2023).

This essay gives a brief overview of how, since the 1980s, applied linguists have used the construct of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) to explain deficient performance and a series of deviant learner behaviours in foreign language classes, especially at university level. The starting point is Horwitz et al.'s exhortation at the end of their seminal 1986 paper:

> *[t]o improve foreign language teaching, we must recognize, cope with, and eventually overcome, debilitating foreign language anxiety as a factor shaping students' experiences in foreign language learning. (p. 132)*

Although the construct validity of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) – the 33-item instrument designed by Horwitz (1986) to measure FLA – has been established empirically (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989), the above historical claim cannot be evaluated without considering its context of origin. This essay briefly clarifies how the authors' pedagogical imperative fit into the institutional landscape of US higher education in the 1980s, and explains how the construct of FLA has been refined by a wider body of empirical evidence in the decades since. It concludes by discussing some implications for language teaching in similar instructional contexts today (UK universities), while recognising that this is not how the majority of people learn a foreign language.

2. The Birth of FLA

Given the widespread anecdotal knowledge that anxiety makes language learning difficult, as well as unpleasant, it may seem surprising that applied linguists did not pay much attention to this affective factor until the 1980s. At this time, institutional landscapes were becoming ripe for this type of exploration as new student-centred philosophies were taking over in some parts of the world. In particular, American universities, where the concept of FLA took shape, was slowly becoming dominated by a culture of helping students "learn for themselves", as psychologist Carl Rogers put it (1983, p. 188). The demands of fee-paying students in a competitive market where drop-out rates affect rankings and where increasing numbers of students with special needs access higher education (Sparks & Ganschow, 2007) undoubtedly gave a push to research on how to support low-performing learners. In this context, the construct of anxiety became helpful to limit the damage of maladaptive behaviours in language classes: not listening, forgetting, avoiding participation (Gregersen, 2003) and even dropping out altogether (Dewaele & Thirtle, 2009). Seen through the lens of the neoliberal shift in US higher education (Saunders, 2010), the trend to medicalise language-learning failure through the construct of FLA starts to make more sense. Suddenly, struggling learners no longer lacked motivation, aptitude or the "right" personality for language learning: their potential was simply being blocked by anxiety. The implication was also a shift in the function of the teacher, whose role now overlapped with that of counsellors and student services specialists in that he or she was responsible for creating a positive student experience.

3. Horwitz et al.'s Theory

Horwitz et al.'s 1986 paper on FLA was based on their clinical experience with two groups of 15 students at the University of Texas. The authors describe FLA as "the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system" (p. 125). Notably, in this paper they present FLA as a variable that is conceptually distinct from general anxiety. It is not, in other words, a personality trait, but an affective reaction that appears in a specific situation. This is a distinction that has been echoed by later research. MacIntyre & Gardner (1991), for example, found no correlation between trait anxiety and FLA in a study with 95 psychology students. Nor is FLA to be confused with communication apprehension (CA), fear of negative evaluation (FNE), or test anxiety (TA). According to Horwitz et al. (1986), all three are related to FLA but are not its components. CA, for example, can even be alleviated in the foreign language: learners who are usually inhibited in their L1 may find it liberating to express themselves in a L2, "as if someone else is speaking" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 127). Although conceptually separate, FNE can be heightened in language classes that require continuous evaluation. How FLA differs from TA is less clear. Sarason (1978) found a significant correlation between FLA and TA ($r = .53$, $p = .001$), although, as Horwitz (2001) notes, "the two measures only share 28% of variance and are, therefore, reasonably independent" (p. 115). In this case, assessment criteria could play a part, since in a foreign language class students are "evaluated according to uncertain or even unknown linguistic and socio-cultural standards" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128).

Wary of the fact that anxious reactions can be induced by other academic subjects – there is a large body of research on mathematics anxiety, for example (Dowker et al., 2016) – Horwitz et al. were especially keen to demonstrate that FLA results from the "uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 128). Learning a language, in other words, is particularly anxiety-provoking because, the authors hypothesise, not being able to fully express oneself challenges one's self-concept as a competent adult, causing a "disparity between the 'true' self […] and the more limited self as can be presented at any given moment in the foreign language" (p. 128). Support for this explanation comes also from qualitative research, such as Cohen & Norst's (1989) diary study with adult learners, who described how they could not be themselves in language classes. If learning a language poses such a profound challenge to one's identity, the solution proposed by Horwitz et al. might appear rather inadequate: indeed, one may doubt that systematic desensitisation – an intervention typically used to treat phobias (Friedman & Silverstone, 1967) – would do much in a situation that is so powerfully ego-threatening. Despite this, researchers have continued to recommend cognitive and behavioural techniques such as systematic desensitisation, relaxation and cognitive restructuring (Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999) and there is some empirical evidence that they work to reduce FLA (Alrabai, 2015; Zhang, 2017).

4. Developments and Criticism

Since the publication of the 1986 paper, the construct of FLA has been fine-tuned by a large body of empirical research. First and foremost, the construct had to be tested in a variety of languages and contexts. Aida (1994) applied FLA to non-Western languages that pose particular difficulties for English speakers, finding that it was related to learners' low performance in L2 Japanese. Meanwhile, Saito & Samimy (1996) discovered that advanced students displayed higher levels of anxiety – a finding they attributed to the advanced curriculum, which placed more emphasis on reading and writing. Since then, other studies have tried to answer the question of which skills are more anxiety-provoking. While speaking and listening remain the most researched skills associated with FLA (Kim, 2002; Serraj & Noordin, 2013; Zhang, 2013), Saito et al. (1999) isolated a specific foreign language reading anxiety and developed an instrument to measure it. In another study, Cheng et al. (1999) showed through factor analysis that anxiety about writing is clearly distinguishable from FLA. A final issue is whether FLA is stable and, if not, *when* exactly it arises. Gregersen et al. (2014), for instance, recorded heart rates and interviewed participants to investigate moment-by-moment anxiety fluctuations during an oral presentation in the L2. The picture that emerged was far from constant: anxiety tends to spike when the speaker loses the thread or forgets words. This body of research suggests that FLA is more multifaceted than initially suggested and that specific interventions may be needed to alleviate anxiety associated with different languages, levels, activities and specific skills.

Another question worth exploring is whether some teaching approaches are more anxiety-provoking than others. In their paper, Horwitz et al. (1986) recognise that "the current emphasis on the development of communicative competence poses particularly great difficulties for the anxious student" (p. 132) – an assertion supported by later qualitative studies (Chen, 2003). A related problem is that, whether or not a communicative approach is employed, FLA arises in a specific social setting: a classroom. Horwitz et al. (1986) were ready to point out that "anxious students also fear being less competent than other students" (p. 130). In spite of this, much of the subsequent literature has investigated FLA as an individual difference, without much attention to the interpersonal dynamics that may produce or aggravate it (rivalry, competition, etc.). Luckily, recent studies are adopting a more complex view of the phenomenon, closing in on the "interaction of the individual and environmental factors" that impact FLA (Kasbi & Elahi Shirvan, 2017, p. 1).

Arguably, the biggest challenge to Horwitz et al.'s theory came from experts on dyslexia and learning disabilities. Sparks & Ganschow (1991), in particular, contested the interpretation that FLA negatively affects performance in foreign languages. FLA, they argued, is not straightforwardly one-directional: poor achievement could lead to anxiety as much as the other way round, and "students who experience difficulties learning a FL may have native language problems" (p. 3). This hypothesis was supported by the testing of 22 university students who had failed a foreign language course and who were found to also have undiagnosed L1 deficits (Sparks et al., 1989). Such difficulties, it is suggested, relate especially to problems with phonological encoding. More recently, Sparks & Ganschow (2007) also questioned in a longitudinal study whether the FLCAS was measuring anxiety or L1 skills. They followed 54 students over 10 years and found that poor L1 skills in first grade were negatively correlated with FLA scores several years later, when students started studying a foreign language in high school. According to the authors, this is further evidence that researchers who treat anxiety as the cause of poor achievement should consider the possibility that language learning skills are a confounding variable. The pedagogical implication is that "classroom teachers will need to address these language issues as a primary focus of instruction" (p. 279), rather than just focusing on alleviating the symptoms (i.e. anxiety).

Unsurprisingly, the view that FLA is a by-product of poor performance has been rejected by scholars who maintain that it is, in fact, a causal agent (MacIntyre, 1995). Horwitz (2000), for example, cites the fact that successful students also experience FLA. Another paper that disproves Sparks & Ganschow's hypothesis is Chen & Chang's (2004) study of 1187 EFL university students in Taiwan, which found that L1 Chinese learning history was correlated to FLA, but not able to predict anxiety. Lately, more conciliatory views have emerged, acknowledging that FLA is "both a cause and effect, part of a non-linear, ongoing learning and performance process" (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012, p. 106). Meanwhile, leaving aside the question of whether FLA has a negative impact on performance, Horwitz (2001) has also argued that research on methods to alleviate FLA is worthwhile in itself, given the "frustration and discomfort too many people endure when learning a second language" (p. 122).

5. Further Implications

As I explained, the construct of FLA emerged in a specific institutional context. Much of the subsequent research has also used participants from university classrooms. As such, Horwitz et al.'s paper and the following literature are more readily relevant to teaching environments with similar priorities, such as UK higher education. Today, addressing FLA is especially important for the thousands of international students who enrol in UK universities. As it emerged from an ethnographic study of international postgraduates (Brown, 2008), anxiety pushed non-native students to disengage and retreat into monoethnic communication. Alleviating FLA, then, is "not only the moral duty of universities seeking to attract full-paying students, but it will also result in improved student retention, positive word of mouth and therefore more successful recruitment" (Brown, 2008, p. 76). High levels of anxiety, Brown speculated, were likely related to "a clash in differences between status at home and abroad" (p. 81). This conclusion goes far beyond Horwitz et al.'s hypothesis about the ego-threatening quality of language learning. It seems apparent that the threat to one's identity experienced by an international student in a UK university is qualitatively different from, say, that of the millions of school pupils worldwide for whom EFL is a requirement or, again, that of a migrant worker who has to navigate the bureaucracy of the UK system. The construct of FLA, developed for classroom settings, falls short of describing the struggles of all these learners. Creating adequate support systems, then, involves more than "recogniz[ing], cop[ing] with, and eventually overcome[ing]" FLA (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 132): it involves identifying the specific sociocultural dynamics that create anxiety about foreign language learning in each one of these different contexts.

This essay began with a quote about an anxious learner in a very distant setting. My intention was not to suggest that anxiety about foreign languages is a universal, but to draw attention to how the same symptomatology (apprehension, physical reactions, maladaptive behaviour) has been understood by learners and teachers in different times and places. In the 1980s, Horwitz et al. thought that it was teachers' duty to limit the negative effects of anxiety on language learning. The construct they contributed to define, FLA, reflects a push to medicalise learners' experience, which was a good fit for the institutional context in which they operated. Assessing the veracity of their historical claim, then, means to recognise that they did not discover and measure something about language learning in general. However, we can confidently say that the construct of FLA reflects an understanding of what a "good" university language class should be that is still largely relevant today in US and UK higher education. The subsequent literature has refined the concept and presented abundant evidence of the usefulness of the FLA construct in analogous learning situations.

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Journal of Language Teaching, *3*(5), 34-38, 2023
https://doi.org/10.54475/jlt.2023.014

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Review

Review on the validity of China's Standards of English Language Ability

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Received: April 17, 2023 / Accepted: April 28, 2023 / Published Online: May 1, 2023
© Pioneer Publications LTD 2023

Abstract

The English and Chinese versions of China's Standards of English Language Ability (CSE) were released in 2018. The appearance of CSE helps to solve the problems of different standards of English exams in China, the separation of teaching and assessment objectives, and the incoherence of teaching objectives at various stages. Before, during, and after the development of the CSE, many scholars have discussed the construction of the scale from theory to practice and contributed to the realization of same standardization for English testing in China. This paper aims to review the relevant studies in order to provide insights and suggestions for the future research and application of the CSE from three aspects: 1) introducing the two major theoretical frameworks for validating language scales in China; 2) reviewing the studies on the validity of the CSE in general; and 3) reviewing the empirical studies on the validity of the sub-scales in the CSE, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, interpreting, translation, pragmatic competence. However, there is a lack of studies on the aspect of organizational competence.

Keywords China's Standards of English Language Ability, validity, language scales

1. Introduction

The main development of the CSE was completed at the end of 2016, and on February 12, 2018, it was officially released by the Ministry of Education and the State Language and Literature Working Committee and was officially implemented on June 1, 2018 (State Language Commission, Ministry of Education & State Language Affairs Commission, 2018). CSE is oriented to language use and divides learners' English proficiency into three stages, namely, basic, advanced, and proficient level. The release of the CSE helps solve the problems of different standards of English exams, separation of teaching and assessment objectives, and incoherence of teaching objectives at each stage, and achieve a one-stop English teaching process and mutual recognition of multiple learning outcomes.

CSE includes a language proficiency matrix, as well as a proficiency matrix for listening comprehension, reading comprehension, oral expression, written expression, organizational competence, pragmatic ability, interpretation, and translation ability, etc. (Ministry of Education & State Language Affairs Commission, 2018). Since its release, it has been gradually applied in language learning, teaching, and testing. Many researchers showed great concern on the validity of CSE and there have been many studies from different perspectives. Currently, the research on the validity of CSE mainly focuses on the overall validity of CSE, as well as on the validity of each scale, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, interpreting and translation scales, etc.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Two major theoretical frameworks for validating language scales

Language scales can measure the language ability of participants. Therefore, the validity of a scale can be defined as the extent to which a test measure what it is supposed to measure (Chapelle, 1999). Before the establishment of CSE, there have been some pivotal studies in the field of the validity of language scales (Li, 2020). Two major theoretical frameworks for validating language scales were proposed in the following two studies.

Zhu (2016) defined the basic content of the research on the validity of language scales and provided a theoretical framework for validating

National English Proficiency Scale of China (NEPS) in his study, which can be generally referred to as the "social and educational cognitive model" (Zhu, 2016, p.9). In this framework, the validity of a language scale is "the extent to which the scale measures the target language ability constructs" (Zhu, 2016, p.3). On the one hand, the author discussed the connotation and interconnection of construct validity research and fairness validity research from the perspectives of science and ethics. On the other hand, the author discussed the importance and essentiality of teaching backwash validity and social impact validity from the perspectives of English education and social life. To summarize, the NEPS should be scientific, fair, valid for relevant decisions, and should have a positive impact on English language teaching and social life. Moreover, this framework specifies various methods of evidence collection, including questionnaires, field surveys, interviews, psychological experiments, statistical methods and big data analysis, etc.

In the next year, Fang & Yang (2017) proposed a validation framework for validating the scale, including four types of validity, namely, construct validity, content validity, criterion validity, and use validity. The framework considers that construct validity and content validity belong to the internal validity of the scale, while the validity of criterion validity and use validity belong to external validity of the scale. Internal validity is the first priority, which determines the external validity to a large extent. There is no specific discussion over the research methods of validity in this framework. However, two basic requirements of validating scales were proposed, one is that scientific and operational validity be given equal importance, and the other is that valid experiments and surveys be conducted. Moreover, the authors proposed that the construct validity of CSE is mainly manifested in the following three aspects, 1) the adaptability of the scale to the specific language teaching and testing social environment; 2) the rationality of the scale's intended goals and its' usage; and 3) the scientific validity and feasibility of the theoretical rationale, ideas and methods used to develop the scale. Constructs are mental processes or characteristics that explain differences in the behavior of individuals or groups, and construct validity refers to the extent to which a measure measures the construct to be measured (Strauss & Smith, 2009). In the construction of the scale, construct validity is the extent to which the scale reflects the competencies to be included in the scale (Luiz et al., 2001), and it is related to the state of language education and language proficiency theory in a given social context.

The two frameworks have different conceptual names, crossover between validity categories, and slightly different categories. Zhu's framework emphasizes the primacy of decision validity, while the Fang and Yang's framework puts emphasis on the primacy of internal validity (construct and content validity). The strength of the Zhu's framework is that it highlights the importance of fairness and consequences (teaching backwash validity and social impact validity), and the strength of the Fang and Yang's framework lies in the clearer definition of construct and content validity, and it is more operational.

2.2. Research on the overall validity of CSE

After the release of CSE in 2018, some studies began to focus on the validity of CSE. The following two are the most influential articles which analyze the validity of the CSE in general.

Liu (2021) tested the construct validity, fairness validity, and procedural validity of CSE based on the Assessment User Argument (AUA) validation model, and this study revealed strong evidence in support of the overall validity of CSE. Fairness validity refers to the degree of fairness of the examination, that is, all parties related to the examination should be fair and impartial at any stage of the examination, from the design of the examination to the use of the results, and there should be no improper factors such as non-examination-related conceptions and misuse of examination results. For the scale like CSE, there should not be any bias on the gender, race, religion or culture in the description when conducting the Differential Item Functioning (DIF) analysis to test the fairness validity (Zhu, 2016). Procedural validity refers to the appropriateness of procedures and the quality of their implementation (Kane, 1994), which includes clarity, operability, and reasonableness of the procedures (Pant et al., 2009). The procedural validity of CSE is to test whether the procedures adopted in the development of the scale are realistic and whether the design of the steps is appropriate and scientific, and whether each step is well executed (Papageorgiou & Tannenbaum, 2016). In Liu's (2021) study, there were altogether 130 thousand participants and 30 thousand English teachers involved in the validation. Due to the specialty of the CSE, a validation model was constructed in this study based on Toulmin's (2003) validity argument theory and Bachman & Palmer's (2010) AUA theoretical model. Results showed good construct validity, fairness validity and procedural validity of the CSE with quantitative and qualitive data.

In order to validate the self-assessment grids of CSE, Zhou (2021) adopted the validity framework of Chapelle et al. (2011) to construct an IUA framework, which consists of four types of reasoning: scoring, generalization, interpretation, and extrapolation. This study used statistical methods to test the five assumptions proposed in the framework. The study indicated that the scale consists of descriptors of different levels of difficulty, which can reliably distinguish students of different English levels. The difficulty level of the descriptors at each level in this study increased as the level increased, and the difficulty level of the descriptors basically matched the language proficiency levels specified in the scale, supporting the generalized inference of the self-assessment scale. The correlation between the self-assessment results and the standardized test results, although weak, was significant and largely consistent with the results of existing studies, thus largely supporting extrapolative inference. In general, multiple evidence suggest that the self-assessment scales have good validity.

2.3. Research on the validity of the sub-scales in CSE

Liu & Han (2018) constructed a theoretical framework for the application-oriented language proficiency scale, which classified the various competencies in the scale into listening, speaking, reading, writing, interpreting, translation, pragmatics, and organization based on the actual situation of language learners and users' proficiency levels and the degree of social needs. The following passage will also provide an overview of the empirical research on the sub-scales in these areas.

He & Chen (2017) validated listening ability subscale of the CSE in terms of ability conceptualization, rating, and usage of the scale. They defined construct validity as "the extent to which the descriptive and parametric frameworks of the scale reflect ability constructs". From their descriptions, it is clear that the scale developers set up the listening ability model based on the actual needs of English teaching and testing in China and the latest research results of listening comprehension at home and abroad. The authors also proposed the parameter framework for the descriptors accordingly, which was repeatedly validated by relevant experts. In addition, the interview data of teachers and students are also evidence of the construct validity of the descriptors. To ensure the validity of the scale rating, the scale developers used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. This study emphasized the importance of post validity evidence for CSE use, arguing that applied research in different domains is an important source of validity evidence.

In order to validate the oral ability subscale of CSE, Wang (2020) adopted the text-mining approach to compare the similarities and differences between CSE and Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) in terms of the following three aspects, namely, themes, co-occurrence network and distinguishing features in each level. In this study, a text mining software was used to analyze the content of all descriptors of CSE and CEFR oral communication activities. Comparing the typical characteristics of the descriptors at different levels of the two scales, a high degree of similarity was found between the two verbal expression descriptors. For example, both CSE Levels 1 and 2 and CEFR Level A1 describe verbal expression using simple language; both CSE Level 5 and CEFR Level B1 emphasize personal opinions on relevant issues in verbal expression; CSE Levels 8 and 9 and CEFR Levels C1 and C2 both describe the use of complex language for effective communication and exchange in the professional domain. However, there are also differences between the two, for example, the CSE oral ability subscales have close semantic relationships and are clustered together, especially at CSE levels 1 and 2, 8 and 9, whereas the six CEFR levels are relatively dispersed and the semantic distance between levels is relatively far. Nevertheless, the general results of the study showed that the two scales had greater similarities than differences, which indicates to some extent that the CSE oral ability subscale has a high validity. The findings also suggest that the descriptors in part of the adjacent levels are not clear-cut.

Zhou (2021) verified the validity of the reading strategy descriptors of the CSE at the higher education level from the perspective of the Rasch measurement model. The Rasch measurement model was applied to verify the validity of the descriptors as follows. First of all, the author compared the actual ranking of the topics from easy to difficult with the expected ranking. The expected ranking of topic difficulty can be based on expert judgment, existing research, or a combination of both. Then, she compared the spacing of topics with the expected spacing, and examined the Differential Item Functioning (DIF) of the topics. If a topic exhibits a DIF, it means that the traits measured by the topic are defined differently for different groups. The participants in this study included 30,772 questionnaire takers and 12 interviewees. This study showed that the reading strategy descriptors fit well, and the overall difficulty ranking of the descriptors was consistent with the expert's judgment. The overall difficulty ranking of the descriptors is consistent with the experts' judgment, and the level classification is basically reasonable. However, there are still a few descriptors whose difficulty ranking is different from the experts' predicted difficulty, and the number of levels differed slightly from the experts' predictions. The authors identified the problematic descriptors based on the validity verification, and ensured the clarity and de-jargonization of the descriptors through deletion, so that the level representation of the descriptors was optimized.

CSE writing scales consist of two subscales, namely, written expression ability and written expression strategies. The validation of the CSE writing scales included expert judgment, two graded validations, and in-depth interviews. The content validity of the descriptors and the rationality of the descriptor classification were examined by expert judgment. In-depth interviews revealed the factors that influence the inconsistency of some descriptor classifications with expectations. Deng, Deng & Zhang (2021) validated the writing scales of CSE, focusing on the content, categorization and grading of descriptors. The results in this study showed that the writing scale descriptors were comprehensive and typical, the categories were reasonable, the descriptors had great goodness-of-fit, the overall difficulty level was basically consistent with expert judgment, and the level division was basically reasonable. Based on the validation results, the writing project team processed the descriptors to ensure that the descriptors were comprehensive, typical, and relevant in content, correct and non-crossing categories, and monotonically increasing difficulty levels with good differentiation. The validation of the descriptors in the development stage of the scale can ensure the practicality of the scale and guarantee its full implementation. This study can provide a reference for the validation of the CSE writing application scale, and can help accelerate the construction of English writing assessment standards in China.

Xu, Yang & Mu (2019) pointed out that the validation of the interpreting ability descriptors consisted of two graded validation processes. The first one was conducted by a quantitative method using a large-scale data survey to determine the level of descriptors by means of a descriptor questionnaire for the relevant population groups, i.e., learners, users and teachers of the corresponding levels. In the second validation process, a qualitative approach was used to conduct focus group interviews with users of the interpreting scale to explore the appropriateness and usefulness of the descriptors for interpreting ability. The results of large-scale quantitative cross-validation showed that the descriptors of the interpretation scale had a moderate goodness-of-fit. However, there are still some unfitting descriptors, low differentiation descriptors and a large number of difficulty parameters that do not match the original level. Therefore, the first validation provided data for further adjustment and modification of the descriptors. The second graded validation showed that some of the proficiency descriptors in the interpretation scale were repeated or similar descriptors. In response to the inconsistency, incomprehensibility, ambiguity and repetition of the descriptors, the descriptors were revised one by one after the second graded validation.

Lv & Ren (2022) adopted Rasch's rating scale model to examine the validity of the translation ability scale of CSE. A self-assessment survey was conducted to collect data from students and practitioners on the 33 descriptors of the scale. The study found that the RSM model can effectively estimate the difficulty and differentiation of the descriptors, which can help to screen out the poor-quality descriptors; the overall reliability of the descriptors is high, and they have good conceptual validity; the scale can distinguish between different levels of participants. These findings provide necessary data support for the future application of the scale in the teaching and evaluation of translation. However, the study is limited in the sample size and the lack of qualitative data analysis.

The pragmatic competence scale of the CSE is based on two dimensions, namely, language comprehension ability and language expression ability, and the scale classifies learners' language proficiency into nine levels from low to high, and describes the performance characteristics of each proficiency level to provide a guide for learners to self-assess their language proficiency. Sun & Fu (2021) verified the validity of the pragmatic competence scale of the CSE from the perspective of self-assessment by Multi-faceted Rasch Model based on AUA. In this study, the validity of the pragmatic competence scale was interpreted in terms of the degrees of agreement and discrimination. The former was mainly examined in terms of the consistency in the severity of ratings among learners, which was reflected in the goodness-of-fit of descriptors and rating scales; the latter was judged mainly with reference to two indicators, namely, the separation coefficient and the reliability of the separation coefficient.

3. Conclusion

Since the release of the CSE, an increasing number of researchers and scholars began to pay attention to the validity of the scale, whether the general validity of the scale or the validity of sub-scales in the CSE. However, to the best of our knowledge, there is a lack of research in the field of the organizational competence in the CSE. Besides, the number of the published paper is still not vey enough in the other sub-scales as well as the validity of the CSE in general. Therefore, much more attention could be paid to the study of the validation of CSE in the future.

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