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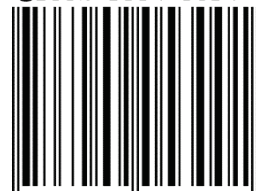
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Exploring the Effect of Knowledge Sharing on Student Satisfaction Using Social Media in Malaysia

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Abstract

Social media utilization at the student level has become more prevalent in contemporary higher education. This conceptual study analyzes the mediating role of information sharing in determining student satisfaction in Malaysian colleges and universities through the lens of social media usage. Understanding the deep linkages between sharing information on social media and student satisfaction is critical for enhancing educational techniques in an era distinguished by the widespread influence of online platforms. This research provides a conceptual framework based on previous research that views knowledge sharing as a mediating component in the correlation between social media activity and satisfaction among students. The framework incorporates crucial factors such as social media usage, and it delineates the routes via which knowledge sharing on social media platforms promotes and potentially improves overall satisfaction with learning. This conceptual structure not only advances theoretical understanding of the relationship between social media, knowledge sharing, and student satisfaction, but it also serves as a road map for educators, researchers, and lawmakers trying to improve the educational experience. The study was completed by collecting data from students through online survey, using quantitative research methodologies. A total of 193 students took part by filling out the web-based questionnaire. The impact of social media on student happiness and academic performance is found significant along with mediating effect of knowledge sharing. This study provides the groundwork for empirical investigations that will empirically evaluate and refine the suggested mediating model, eventually influencing evidence-based methods for harnessing social media to improve student satisfaction among Malaysian students.

Keywords: Social media usage, knowledge sharing, student satisfaction, education, online communication, social media platforms

Introduction

According to the Global Digital Report 2019, Worldwide social media users in January 2022, there were 4.62 billion people who use social media everywhere. This equates to 58.4 percent of the total global population, albeit it should be noted that social media "users" may not represent distinct persons. Worldwide social media users have increased by over ten percent in the last year, with 424 million new users joining the platform in 2021. However, in January 2022, 30.25 million Malaysians were using social media. In Malaysia, by the beginning of 2022, social media usage accounted for 91.7 % of the total population.

Today, the usage of social media is not restricted to any specific group of society; social media is used by the people from all over the world regardless of their age, background, and social status. Moreover, social media has become a part of everyone's daily life. The adoption of

social media in education is fast developing, particularly for student cooperation, because it has the potential to increase users' knowledge via an enhanced knowledge-sharing ecosystem (Masood et al., 2020; Turel et al., 2018; Weng et al., 2021). Social media's interest in students is due to many factors, including but not limited to its capacity to reach a large audience and facilitate online interactions between users to gain sustainable education. Today's students use social media for a variety of functions, including informational searches, teamwork, and interpersonal communication. Students use a variety of social media platforms to help with their research training and educational initiatives. Examples of these platforms include Facebook, LinkedIn, Researchgate, Academia.edu, and Slideshare.net. Thus, it is anticipated that students who utilize social media will share more knowledge with one another (Kumar et al., 2022; Saleem et al., 2021; Tekin & Turhan, 2021).

In the Malaysian context, the influence of the global internet landscape is palpable. The nation is undergoing a digital transformation, driven by the government's initiatives to embrace the digital age. With a high rate of internet penetration, Malaysians have integrated the internet into various aspects of their lives, from daily communication on social media platforms to accessing educational resources online. According to Rasheed et al. (2020), knowledge sharing is the process by which people share knowledge (such as facts, skills, or abilities). Argote and Fahrenkopf (2016) define knowledge sharing as the exchange of information and knowledge between sources. According to academics, technology utilization fosters a self-sustaining and friendly atmosphere that encourages information sharing across individuals (Moughal et al., 2023a; Tong et al., 2015). According to a recent review, social media plays a significant role in instructional activities and in improving student engagement and performance (Narayan et al., 2019) to enhance their satisfaction.

The widespread acceptance of social media among students can be attributed to several factors, including but not limited to its capacity to reach a large audience as well as promote online communication among users. Social media is being used by students these days for a variety of things, including information searching, teamwork, and interpersonal communication. In particular, a variety of social media platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, ResearchGate, Academia.edu, and Slideshare.net) are being used by students to help with their research training and teaching initiatives. It follows that more knowledge sharing among students who utilize social media is anticipated (Ahmed et al., 2019; Moughal et al., 2023b). One dynamic and important component of modern education is the impact of social media use as a knowledge-sharing platform on student happiness. In order to foster a collaborative learning environment, social media platforms are useful tools for enabling students to share knowledge, resources, and insights with one another (Jabeen et al., 2023). Students can share insightful academic material, join in online communities that transcend typical classroom boundaries, and have real-time conversations using these digital platforms. Student satisfaction has been positively affected by the relationship, which creates a sense of community and encourages a group approach to learning. Students may access material in a variety of formats, such as written word, images, and multimedia content because of social media's adaptability, which also supports different learning styles. Social media, being a language medium, breaks down barriers between students of different linguistic origins, facilitating effective communication and knowledge sharing (Xie et al., 2021). Social media combined with the usage of language, knowledge sharing, and other factors becomes a potent catalyst for improving education as a whole and raising student satisfaction levels as a result.

Academic social media use can facilitate the sharing of knowledge, behavioral management, and student satisfaction. This is particularly pertinent for collaborative learning, where students can engage in synchronous (like FaceTime or live messaging) as well as asynchronous (like delayed responses to group posts) interactions (Eliyana et al., 2020; Ozanne

et al., 2017). Through interactions on various social media platforms, users are also led to develop a common purpose towards its satisfaction. In light of this, students are using the medium of social media which they believe is most appropriate for knowledge sharing.

Students can use social media as a knowledge-sharing tool for educational purposes, knowledge development, and student satisfaction. The use and adoption of social media by students may have a rapid effect on their educational success (Al-Qaysi et al., 2021; Rasheed et al., 2020) and satisfaction. Nonetheless, much research shows that social media use among university students is favorably correlated with both academic performance and achievement (Abbasi et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2022; Jabeen et al., 2023); however, the usage of social for educational knowledge sharing among students towards their satisfaction has been neglected. The difficulty and complexity of determining how students' social media adoption affects their performance and satisfaction as a knowledge-sharing aspect. The goal of the article is to gain a deeper understanding of the basic concepts that forecast these results of social media usage affecting student satisfaction using knowledge sharing.

This research is extremely important for the humanities as well as the sciences since it provides particular perspectives into how knowledge sharing may boost student satisfaction in these different academic domains. Collaborative knowledge-sharing in the humanities can improve critical thinking, enhance interpretations, and improve discussions in disciplines like historical analysis, philosophy and literature. Students may be more satisfied as a result of this enhanced involvement because they gain a variety of perspectives and group understanding that come from knowledge being shared. In the sciences, on the other hand, cooperative information exchange and the real-world application of theoretical principles can be rather helpful. In fields such as science, for example, group problem-solving and experimental can result in a deeper understanding of intricate ideas, which in turn affects students' engagement and satisfaction with the significance and practicality of their learning. The study not only highlights the general significance of knowledge sharing in raising student satisfaction by clarifying these domain-specific structures, but it also offers practical advice for educators and institutions to customize strategies under the particular requirements of students in both the sciences and the humanities.

This study contributes to literature in multiple ways by offering recommendations for and evaluating a model on the usage of social media by students to their satisfaction. For example, we explore, using a specific sample of Malaysian university students, two crucial outcomes of social media usage: student engagement and knowledge sharing for satisfaction. Secondly, we reveal knowledge sharing as the fundamental cause of these ties in addition to connecting students' use of social media with their creativity and participation towards satisfaction.

We suggest that students' involvement with social media and innovation in research instructional activities are improved when they share information and ideas with others on social media and exchange knowledge, ideas, and views. Thirdly, this approach examines the mediating effect of knowledge sharing on the associations between social media usage and student satisfaction. The theoretical model of our investigation is shown in Fig. 1.

The research objective is to examine the effect of knowledge-sharing mediating effect between social media usage and student satisfaction.

Literature Review

Social Media Usage and Student Satisfaction

The term "social media" is commonly used to characterize technological platforms associated with community and cooperation with education (Joosten, 2012). Social networking sites (SNS) are web-based platforms that enable users to generate rich content, and individual profiles, and communicate with other users by connecting with social media platforms (Bailey et al., 2021; Majid et al., 2020).

Social media usage is now a great source of information to assist in student's learning. Educational interactions and the perceived advantage of social media usage were found to be strongly correlated with student satisfaction in knowledge gaining (Kamal et al., 2020; Rasheed et al., 2020). College student content with the use of social networking platforms for learning purposes is strongly correlated (Hwang & Cho, 2018). Social networks therefore have an impact on students in both positive and bad ways, with behavior ultimately determining the outcome (Majid et al., 2020; Moqbel & Kock, 2018) and satisfaction. Social media offers a variety of communication types and directions that can improve students' educational experience, results, and satisfaction (Ngien & Jiang, 2022; Shi et al., 2020). According to the present research, there is a connection between social media usage and educational satisfaction among students.

Hypothesis 1. Social media usage will have a positive effect on student satisfaction.

Knowledge Sharing Using Social Media Usage and Student Satisfaction

Social media knowledge sharing has impacted almost every area of people's lives in the past decade (Mnif et al., 2021; Moughal et al., 2023a; Rasheed et al., 2020). Social media has gained equal popularity in all facets of education as a result of recent studies demonstrating its significant beneficial effects on knowledge sharing (Ahmed et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021) and student satisfaction. For example, the study found that students' usage of social media to share knowledge and performance was positively correlated (Chen et al., 2022; Zivnuska et al., 2019). Social media platforms are now an excellent educational tool that aids in student satisfaction. Another study that examined the influence of social media on educational patterns discovered a significant relationship between academic communication and the accepted value of social media among students (Darma & Supriyanto, 2017; Kumar et al., 2013; Tong et al., 2015).

According to Chen et al. (2022); Muntinga et al. (2011), social media motivates users to engage in online arguments, which contributes to the creation of a pleasant learning environment for youth and satisfaction. Because most people today perceive social media to be incredibly vital to their way of life, it has become an integral component of daily living (Pearson et al., 2016) and their satisfaction. Social media platforms are used for educational purposes, recreational activities, and knowledge sharing to boost their satisfaction. Social media usage is increasing in higher education because it facilitates student engagement and information interchange throughout the research process (Al-Qaysi et al., 2021; Deng et al., 2022).

As a result, academics are using social media platforms such as Whatsapp groups, Facebook research communities, and Academia. and Research Gate for academic cooperation. In other words, we believe that university students' usage of social media is favorably connected with their means of sharing knowledge toward student satisfaction. As a result, we postulated that.

Hypothesis 2: Students' knowledge sharing through social media has a positive relationship with student satisfaction.

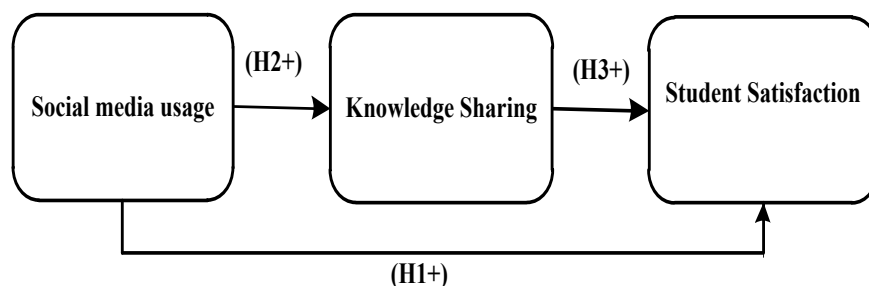
Mediating Role of Knowledge Sharing Behavior among Social Media Usage and Student Satisfaction

The Internet is the most convenient, fastest, and least expensive way to obtain and share information (Almetere et al., 2020) among students. The internet provides a platform via which students can have access to knowledge from all around the world. Social media has emerged as a form of interaction and sharing of information among individuals as the internet has evolved. Social media allows students to learn emerging abilities and share knowledge more effectively (Mnif et al., 2021; Rasheed et al., 2020). Students use social media to form relationships with more knowledgeable and skilled people from across the world, which helps them share and learn things online (Narayan et al., 2019). When students collaborate and communicate through social media, they build learning communities in which they learn from one another. Students who participate in such learning groups are more connected, enthusiastic, and innovative in their research training (Luqman et al., 2017) and are more satisfied.

Scholars believe that the rise of social media usage has improved collaboration and information sharing among students (Abbasi Shaari & Moughal, 2021; Xie et al., 2021). In recent years, the popularity and increased use of social networking sites have increased the sharing of knowledge among academicians as well (Moqbel & Kock, 2018). Cao et al. (2019); Moqbel and Kock (2018) indicate that students who examine more knowledge on social media and share it are more creative in their research training and education. Scholars believe that social media platforms and related tools increase awareness and knowledge, which improves people's creativity (Moughal et al., 2023a). Abbasi Shaari Moughal et al. (2021); Latha et al. (2020), the social network plays a crucial role in this context when it comes to information sharing and innovation. According to Abbasi Jahl et al. (2021); Majid et al. (2020), other researchers have also found that specific variables affect the use of social media networks and other platforms for knowledge sharing. With so many social media tools available to users for information gathering, digital media has been generally accepted by students (Rasheed et al., 2020). According to Sultana (2020), technological advancement has brought about a plethora of new learning platforms that are dependable, astute, valuable, and unique from earlier learning methods and satisfy students.

With social media usage learning, individuals interact, exchange information, and collaborate as a group while maintaining a distance from one another. Latha et al. (2020) that students who employ social media platforms for studying are more unique in their education and are more satisfied. This conversation leads us to believe that information sharing plays a mediating function between students' use of social media and their satisfaction with the usage of social media for educational purposes. Thus, this study hypothesized.

Hypothesis 3: Students' knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between their social media use and student satisfaction.

Figure 1 Conceptual Model

Methodology

The purpose of the research is to identify the phenomena associated with social media usage about knowledge sharing among students' satisfaction. The study involved 193 students from various educational institutions in Malaysia, including universities and secondary schools. The conceptual framework of the study is derived and based on online platform sources which brought together the disparate ideas put forth by several researchers into a single investigation. Previous research presented a variety of concerns and factors pertaining to social media usage and knowledge sharing by students. Likert scale 5 items were used for data collection and analyzed using SmartPLS 3.2.2.

This study enhanced the usage of social media as a tool of language among university students to account for social media usage, and knowledge sharing and to predict the student satisfaction of university students utilizing social networking sites to improve university performance in Malaysia. The questionnaire was adapted based on the perspective of the study. For the identified constructs items, the three items of social media usage were adapted from (Hu et al., 2015). The scales of knowledge sharing five items were adapted from (Lu et al., 2012), the five items of student satisfaction derived from (Butt & Rehman, 2010). The survey questionnaire method was adopted to collect empirical data for this study. The data analyzed using SmartPLS.

Demographic Characteristics

The demographic descriptions of the respondents of this study are 193 in total, where 56.4% (109) were males and 43.5% (84) were females. All the acknowledged respondents were diverse in ethnicity, the majority are Malay 112 (58.03%), Chinese 50 participants (25.9%), and Indian 31 participants (16.60%). Based on the education level, 35 respondents are Ph.D. candidates (18.13%), 51 have master's degrees (26.24%), and 107 are bachelor's degrees (55.44%). Therefore, the demographic profile of respondents reveals that they are educated, experienced, and have a deeper understanding of social media usage.

To analyze and test the hypothetical relationships among variables, SmartPLS 3.2.2 was used.

Assessment of Measurement Model

We used confirmatory factor analysis to evaluate the validity and reliability of the research variables. According to Sarstedt et al. (2014), Cronbach Alpha values identified in Tab. 1 showed that every item loaded have values more than 0.70 which are significant to proceed.

Table 1 Construct Reliability and Validity

| | Cronbach's Alpha | rho_A | Composite Reliability | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|------------|-------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|---|
| KS | 0.926 | 0.935 | 0.945 | 0.773 |
| SMU | 0.913 | 0.930 | 0.945 | 0.851 |
| SS | 0.906 | 0.912 | 0.930 | 0.726 |

As can be shown in Table 1, all variables' composite reliability and rho_A findings were more than 0.70 indicating the validity of each variable measure. By looking at the convergent and discriminant validities, the variables' validity was evaluated. AVE values, or average variance retrieved, were used to assess convergent validity. Table 1 demonstrates that for every variable, the AVE exceeds the 0.50 threshold value (Sarstedt et al., 2014).

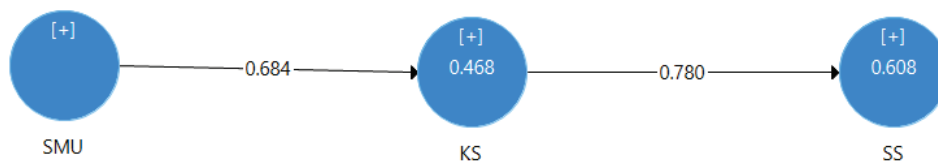


Figure 2 Measurement Model

Further, discriminant validity was evaluated by comparing the square root of AVE values for each variable, with the correlation values located between the variable and other variables (Chin, 1998). As shown in Table 3, all square roots of AVE are larger than variables correlations, implying that the variance outlined by the particular variable is greater than the measurement error variance. Thus, all variables proved an acceptable level of convergent and discriminant validities.

The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) methodology which is recognized as the most cutting-edge method for a discriminant validity analysis was used to evaluate discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). The ideal HTMT ratio was found by Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt to be less than the predefined threshold of 0.85, emphasizing the need for discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). Kline (2011); Gold et al. (2001), state that the discriminant validity issue in the criterion technique is discovered if the mean percentage of HTMT appeared to be more than 0.85 or a value of 0.90.

Table 2 Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

| | KS | SMU | SS |
|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| KS | | | |
| SMU | 0.730 | | |
| SS | 0.834 | 0.861 | |

Assessment of Structural Model

The current study examined the hypothesis using the structural model assessment depicted in Figure 3, which was spurred by the measurement model's exceptional performance. 5000 samples were bootstrapped in order to investigate the statistical significance, T-value, and effect size of the path coefficients (Jeon et al., 2019).

Multiple regression analysis was used to assess the effects of the independent variables—social media usage, knowledge sharing, on student satisfaction. The results show that independent factor has a considerable impact on an employee's student satisfaction.

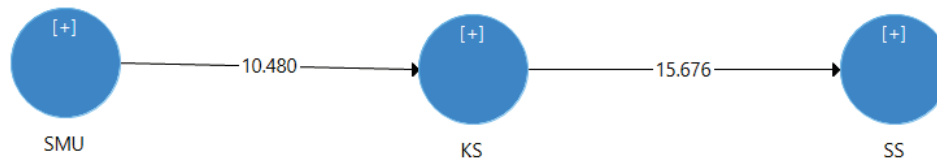


Figure 3 Structural Model

Figure 3 shows the test results for the three hypotheses executed by PLS. The overall assessment of the model is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Assessment of Structural Model

| Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| | Original Sample (O) | Sample Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (STDEV) | T Statistics (O/STDEV) | P Values |
| KS -> SS | 0.780 | 0.782 | 0.050 | 15.676 | 0.000 |
| SMU -> KS | 0.684 | 0.685 | 0.065 | 10.480 | 0.000 |
| SMU -> SS | 0.534 | 0.538 | 0.076 | 7.053 | 0.000 |

Findings

The findings show that the use of social media usage and knowledge sharing on student satisfaction is validated by this research. Student satisfaction was positively impacted by knowledge sharing which also had a substantial impact on how students shared their knowledge and boosted satisfaction (Moughal et al., 2023a; Moughal et al., 2023b; Shi et al., 2020; Tetrick et al., 2000; Wolinetz & Axsen, 2017). Since student satisfaction is impacted by their social media usage, these components were also presented in an appealing manner by this research. It has been noted that social media usage can be influenced by knowledge sharing.

To fully understand the complex interactions between social media usage (SMU), knowledge sharing (KS), and student satisfaction (SS), the data findings from this study are revealed next. First, H1 demonstrates the importance of the correlation between information sharing and social media use. An in-depth analysis of this link, bolstered by statistical proof and effect sizes will clarify the degree to which student participation in social media promotes knowledge sharing. H2 concentrates on the effect of information sharing on student satisfaction in its second section. A comprehensive investigation into this relationship, encompassing particular discoveries and pertinent trends, will illuminate the function of cooperative knowledge generation in influencing students' general contentment scores. Finally, H3 explores the relevance of social media use having a direct impact on satisfaction among students. Statistical

robustness and detailed explanations of this result will shed light on how students' general satisfaction levels are affected by or not by digital platforms. The study attempts to contribute a thorough understanding of the intricate factors at play in the environment of higher education by rigorously organizing and laying out these data.

The results revealed in Table 3 demonstrate the relationships between social media usage with knowledge sharing ($\beta = 0.684$, $p = 0.000$) and social media usage with student satisfaction ($\beta = 0.534$, $p = 0.000$) are significant. Thus, H1 and H3 are supported. The H1, usage of social media towards knowledge sharing is found and supported by the earlier studies (Ngien & Jiang, 2022; Shi et al., 2020). Social networking is becoming an invaluable repository of information to help students acquire knowledge. Educational contacts and the perceived benefit of social media use were found to be substantially connected to student satisfaction along with knowledge acquisition (Kamal et al., 2020; Rasheed et al., 2020). Another study also supported social media provides a variety of interpersonal ways and channels that may enhance students' educational experiences, outcomes, and engagement (Majid et al., 2020; Moqbel & Kock, 2018). Social media offers a variety of communication types and directions that can improve students' educational experience, results, and satisfaction (Ngien & Jiang, 2022; Shi et al., 2020). H3, social media usage to influence student satisfaction also found supported. Earlier studies Chen et al. (2022); Muntinga et al. (2011), also found social media encourages participants to get involved in online discussions which helps to create an enjoyable educational environment for youngsters and for their satisfaction. To increase their happiness, social media platforms are employed for educational objectives, fun pursuits, and knowledge sharing. Social media adoption in educational institutions is expanding because it enhances student engagement and knowledge exchange across the research process and boosts their satisfaction (Al-Qaysi et al., 2021; Deng et al., 2022). This study assumed that university students' use of social media is positively related to their ways of sharing information and hence contributes to student satisfaction. The effect of knowledge sharing on student satisfaction ($\beta = 0.780$, $p = 0.000$) is also significant and positive, thus H2 is supported. Through social media, students can connect with more experienced and informed individuals worldwide, which facilitates online sharing, learning and satisfaction (Narayan et al., 2019). Using social media communication and teamwork, students create learning communities where they share knowledge and experience with one another. According to Luqman et al. (2017), students who take part in these learning groups are satisfied and exhibit higher levels of connection, enthusiasm, and innovation in their studies.

The results show that student satisfaction reported R^2 0.608, which means 60% of the variance associated with knowledge sharing was accounted for students' satisfaction. Finally, knowledge sharing reported R^2 of (0.468), which means about 46.8% of students' usage of social media.

Discussion

This study perceived the significance of social media usage in enhancing students' satisfaction by sharing knowledge, whereas prior studies lack the significance of exploring student satisfaction through the social media knowledge-sharing aspect. Earlier studies examined different models of social media usage along with student effective performance, and student satisfaction using social media, however, neglected the usage of knowledge sharing (Alkhayyal et al., 2019; Aminrad et al., 2013; Gadenne et al., 2009; Hamid et al., 2017), and social media usage has been utilized distinctly to boost awareness of students' knowledge (Alkhayyal et al., 2019; Idumange & Environmental Awards, 2012; Scholtz et al., 2016). Students' knowledge sharing through social media has not been considered in one study. This study has given the

idea of merging knowledge sharing towards student educational satisfaction. This study develops the concept of enhancing student's knowledge sharing through social media to promote student satisfaction among students. Practically, this research idea contributes to developing strategies related to social media for knowledge sharing by policymakers. This study proposes for policymakers to enhance student satisfaction by using social media by devising effective strategies. Overall, this research contributes to attaining sustainable education using social media. The theoretical contribution may be implemented in educational institutions as a component of the framework for student satisfaction. Social media is used by the framework to improve knowledge literacy and sustainability consciousness as well. This encourages student-satisfied behavior and may even help to promote knowledge sharing and environmental aspects effectively.

The research makes theoretical advances by providing a new perspective of the complex connections among knowledge sharing, social media use and student satisfaction in the framework of Malaysian higher education. The study contributes theoretical depth to the body of literature by putting forth an extensive conceptual framework and emphasizing the critical role that information sharing plays in determining student satisfaction. The framework incorporates essential factors including social connectivity, collaborative learning factors, as well as information mobility, offering a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which these aspects interact. The study also adds to the larger theoretical conversation by taking into account the social and cultural subtleties of Malaysia, recognizing the diversity of the student body and the distinct educational environment.

The study's practical implications provide teachers, administrators, and policymakers in Malaysia with insightful information on how to improve education by strategically integrating social media toward student satisfaction. The conceptual framework offers a path for creating focused interventions on social media platforms that promote efficient information exchange and cooperative learning settings. These findings can be used by educators to create instructional strategies that handle possible drawbacks and optimize social media's advantages. The research results can also be used by policymakers to develop best practices and recommendations for integrating social media into teaching methods, which will increase student happiness. Finally, by providing practical suggestions for maximizing the usage of social media in Malaysian higher education to favorably impact student satisfaction, the study closes the gap between theory and its application.

Conclusion

The importance of having an in-depth comprehension of the core ideas that predict the outcomes of social media usage on the satisfaction of students through knowledge exchange cannot be overemphasised. The findings of this study add significantly to the academic discussion on the nexus of social media, knowledge sharing and student satisfaction. Exploring the underlying factors that drive these results can provide useful insights for those working in education, management, and policymakers. It facilitates the development of adapted strategies for capitalizing on the positive effects of social media networks on knowledge sharing, hence improving students' overall happiness as well as educational experience. Organizations can customize their educational approaches and create an atmosphere that most effectively uses social media as an avenue for collaborative learning as well as information exchange by understanding the nuanced nature of these relationships. This will ultimately improve academic results and student success on a larger scale.

In the worldwide context of the educational aspect, social media plays a critical role in influencing knowledge sharing among students to gain sustainable education. Social media can be effectively used to increase knowledge sharing and satisfaction among students. The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of social media usage on knowledge sharing towards satisfaction. This research contributes to the body of existing literature by examining the proposed framework and creating practical strategies to increase knowledge. It also recommends looking at the actual data analysis considering that the research is conceptual in nature. It will be possible to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals related to sustainable education by using social media among students. The purpose of this study is to add to the expanding body of knowledge regarding social media's usage role in education, particularly as it relates to knowledge-sharing to boost student satisfaction in Malaysia. For educators, policymakers, and academics looking to maximize social media's potential as a teaching and learning tool, the results will offer insightful information.

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Can ChatGPT Analyse Textual Data? The Sub-Themes Reflected by Typical Conceptual Metaphors in Short Stories of Language Assessment

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Abstract

Conceptual metaphors constitute a basic facet of human cognition, enabling individuals to comprehend abstract concepts by means of more concrete experiences. Previous research has found that metaphors are frequently employed in discourse and have a substantial impact on how we think. However, less consideration has been given to how conceptual metaphors reflect the views of writers and the themes of stories. The primary objective of this study is to examine the underlying sub-themes that are conveyed and reflected through typical conceptual metaphors found in the 22 short stories from the book *Tests and Us – A Collection of Real Stories (Volume 2)*. Additionally, this study intends to delve into the perspectives of the writers on the principles and associated concepts of language assessment. Following the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors were identified by the AI program ChatGPT (GPT-4) and validated by linguistic experts. The findings revealed a cumulative count of 250 conceptual metaphors, comprising 131 structural metaphors, 64 ontological metaphors, and 55 orientational metaphors. Meanwhile, the typical metaphors have served as representations of the underlying sub-themes pertaining to the five principles of language assessment, as well as concepts including fairness and equity, formative assessment, learning environment, ethics, and integrity, among others. Through metaphors, thematic analysis not only becomes a tool for dissecting narratives but also an avenue for exploring the profound connections between language, thought, and emotion. This offers some insights for future research into various literary genres and the application of ChatGPT for the analysis of textual data.

Keywords: Conceptual metaphors, thematic analysis, short stories, language assessment, ChatGPT

Introduction

The investigation of metaphorical language has become a focal point in the field of linguistic and literary studies. This centrality is driven not only by the intrinsic value of metaphors as literary devices but also by their profound influence on cognitive processes and human understanding. Conceptual metaphors, categorized as structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors, play a crucial role in the analysis of themes and sub-themes in short stories due to their ability to encapsulate complex ideas in a succinct and relatable manner. These metaphors serve as cognitive tools that bridge the gap between abstract concepts and concrete experiences, thereby enhancing the depth and richness of thematic analysis. As a qualitative research method, thematic analysis moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focuses on identifying

and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data (Alhojailan, 2012). In the context of short stories, this method provides a lens through which readers can distill the core ideas and messages conveyed by the writer. It functions as a tool to elucidate the underlying motifs and ideas that weave through a narrative, adding depth and dimension to the reader's understanding. Though previous studies have conducted thematic analysis of short stories (e.g., Bunge, 1970; Mbuthia, 2005) and explored the role of conceptual metaphors in other literary genres, including fairy tales (Ruiz, 2006), novels (Minervino et al., 2009), poetry (Hayrutdinova et al., 2021), and dramas (Hussain et al., 2022), there is a dearth of research connecting conceptual metaphors with thematic analysis, and makes an in-depth investigation into the specific sub-themes reflected by conceptual metaphors in short stories of language assessment. Thus, the current study aims to investigate the sub-themes reflected by typical conceptual metaphors in 22 short stories of language assessment. Following the CMT by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors were identified and analyzed by ChatGPT (GPT-4) and validated by linguistic experts, and the sub-themes reflected by these metaphors in the short stories were also investigated through this cutting-edge AI-assisted program GPT-4. The findings demonstrated a dynamic interaction between conceptual metaphors and the underlying themes included in the short stories, shedding light on the symbiotic relationship between form and content in narrative constructs. The interplay of conceptual metaphors and sub-themes showcases how writers skillfully embed layers of meaning, allowing readers to embark on a cognitive journey of discovery. Furthermore, this study unveils the writers' viewpoints and interpretations concerning the principles and associated concepts of language assessment, thereby emphasizing the vital role of literary elements in both shaping and conveying the compelling dimensions of language assessment.

Literature Review

Conceptual metaphors encompass the cognitive process of comprehending and perceiving one thing by means of another. They enable us to articulate abstract ideas by relating them to concrete experiences, facilitate comprehension of novel or intricate encounters through analogies to familiar ones, and enhance communication efficacy by drawing upon shared cultural or universal experiences. The CMT framework was initially introduced by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in the 1980s. Metaphors, as they manifest in language, are not regarded as mere embellishments of style, but rather as indications that the cognitive processes involved in contemplating and comprehending the external world and the functioning of our bodies rely on metaphorical mechanisms. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) provided a summary of the study conducted by Johnson (1999), Grady (1997), and Narayanan (1997) as potential supporting evidence for CMT. Different types of conceptual metaphors have been defined as well, including structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors. Understanding one concept in terms of another, usually mapping a less concrete concept onto a more concrete or structured one, is the goal of structural metaphors. For example, the idea of "time is money" implies that we should value and not squander our time in the same way that we would value and not waste money. It organizes our concept of time as a precious resource. Orientational metaphors are those that provide abstract conceptions, grounded in bodily experiences, directionality, or spatial orientation. As an example, happy emotions or events are associated with the direction "up" whereas bad ones are associated with the direction "down", as in "I'm feeling up today" or "His spirits sank". Ontological metaphors refer to or quantify abstract notions or actions by

treating them as entities or objects. The expression “bottle up your emotions” is one example. Emotions are not literally tangible things that can be put into a bottle in this context, but we grasp the concept of repressing or restricting feelings through metaphor. It is clear from these categories how deeply established metaphors are in our mental processes, allowing us to navigate challenging abstract ideas by grounding them in more real experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The CMT has become a well-established research paradigm in cognitive linguistics, with a wide range of applications, such as literature, grammar, specific discourses, and second language teaching (Soriano, 2015). As an embodiment of the human experience and a reflection of cultural norms and values, literature frequently employs metaphors to dive into deep philosophical investigations and depict nuanced emotional landscapes (Podsiadlik III, 2021). Scholars can use CMT to systematically uncover underlying themes and motifs in literary works. A common metaphor in a novel, for example, might compare life to a river, implying themes of fate, destiny, and the unstoppable passage of time. CMT allows readers and analysts to understand how writers utilize metaphors to comment on life, unpack characters’ psychological states, and interact with larger societal or philosophical problems. As a result, it is critical to link conceptual metaphors with thematic analysis in literary works.

Thematic analysis (TA) is a method that has become a widely used tool for analyzing qualitative data (Terry et al., 2017). As outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), it consists of six interrelated phases that are not strictly sequential but recursive in nature. The six phases are: 1) Familiarisation with the data; 2) Coding; 3) Searching for themes; 4) Reviewing themes; 5) Defining and naming themes; and 6) Writing up. As there are different genres in literary works, the way of doing thematic analysis may be different based on the length of texts in certain genres. For short stories which can range in length but typically they are between 1,000 to 7,500 words, Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) developed a form of narrative analysis specifically tailored for these concise written narratives. The primary focus of their study centers on the process of identity-building within the context of short stories. This investigation is structured around a series of five steps: 1) Who are the characters and how are they relationally positioned; 2) The interactive accomplishment of ‘narrating’; 3) How is the speaker positioned within the interactive flow of turns that constitute the situation as ‘research’; 4) How are relationships between all characters managed; and 5) How is the self-portrayed in this brief storytelling? This approach to analyzing short stories serves as a paradigmatic example of adapting a general analytical technique to suit the specific demands posed by working with brief texts. The approach employed in their study is mostly based on the narrative analysis framework established by Labov and Waletzky (1997). Additionally, it incorporates a model of identity positioning that entails examining how individuals portray themselves concerning other characters (Bamberg, 1997). A most recent study focused on thematic analysis of short stories and brief texts was conducted by Robinson (2022), who introduced a structured tabular approach that offers both flexibility and rigor in analyzing these concise narratives. Such an approach is of growing importance given both the increasing availability of such data via social media along the rising popularity of open-ended survey responses or short story elicitation methods. According to Robinson (2022), Structured Tabular Thematic Analysis (ST-TA) follows a hybridized process approach that incorporates elements of Braun and Clarke’s (2006) TA process and Boyatzis’s (1998) TA phases. It includes seven phases: Phase A: A-priori theme development (deductive and hybrid only); Phase B: Deep immersion in the data (deductive, inductive, and hybrid); Phase C: Generating initial codes and themes (inductive and hybrid only); Phase D: Tabulating themes against data segments (deductive, inductive and

hybrid); Phase E: Checking inter-analyst agreement; Phase F: Exploring theme frequencies; Phase G: Developing thematic maps and diagrams; and Phase H: Producing the report.

While there exists a body of research dedicated to the methods of conducting thematic analysis for short stories and brief texts, there seems to be a noticeable gap in the literature when it comes to understanding how conceptual metaphors, as intricate linguistic tools, mirror, and possibly enhance the primary themes or even the more nuanced sub-themes of these brief narratives. Meanwhile, employing the conventional approach of manually categorizing metaphors and undertaking thematic analysis would entail a substantial expenditure of time. The emergence of technological advancements has led to a surge in attention towards ChatGPT, a language model that has played a significant role in enabling the analysis of textual data (Grimmer & Stewart, 2013). Hence, the primary objective of this study is to address the existing research gap through an examination of the underlying sub-themes manifested in conventional conceptual metaphors found within short stories pertaining to language assessment. This investigation will be conducted utilizing the AI-powered tool ChatGPT (GPT-4) for enhanced assistance.

Research Questions

1. What are the typical structural, orientational and ontological metaphors used in short stories of language assessment?
2. How do these conceptual metaphors reflect various sub-themes in short stories of language assessment?
3. What insights do the short stories provide into the writers' perspectives on the principles and associated concepts of language assessment?

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the typical structural, orientational and ontological metaphors used in short stories of language assessment.
2. To explore the various sub-themes reflected by conceptual metaphors in short stories of language assessment.
3. To uncover the writers' perspectives on the principles and associated concepts of language assessment from the short stories.

Methods

Research Design

The current study used a mixed approach that included qualitative as well as quantitative methods. The quantitative method was utilized to measure the frequency and proportion of typical structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors, as well as the presence of various sub-themes in a collection of short stories. The qualitative method sought to investigate the sub-themes connected to language assessment principles and concepts as indicated by typical conceptual metaphors in these short stories.

Data Source

The sample for this study consisted of 22 short stories from a 2023 book titled *Tests and Us - A Collection of Real Stories (Volume 2)*. The narratives were authored within various Language

Evaluation and Accountability courses that have been periodically offered since the year 2019. The writers of the stories, hailing from diverse countries, bring forth a range of cultural perspectives, thereby infusing their works with distinct flavors. Upon reading, the discerning readers shall observe that each story possesses a distinct essence, thereby encapsulating the features, issues, and principles of assessment within diverse cultural contexts (Nimehchisalem & Geng, 2023).

Data Collection and Analysis

The textual data were gathered by self-creating a corpus of 22 short stories of language assessment. The total word count was around 23,000 words, with an average of 1045 words per story. The briefest narrative, titled “An Encouraging English Teacher”, consists of 519 words, whereas the lengthiest story, entitled “Speak! Or Forever Hold Your Peace”, encompasses 1364 words.

For the analysis of typical conceptual metaphors, an AI-assisted program ChatGPT (GPT-4) was used for the identification of structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors based on the CMT proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The researchers inserted the quest and engaged in dialogue with GPT-4 by asking questions and conversationally providing prompts. For example, the researchers gave cues like:

- *Could you please comprehensively analyze all the conceptual metaphors (structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors) in this short story and categorize them into a table with columns of conceptual metaphors, categories, examples, and explanations?*

After the GPT-4 gave results, the validation of data was manually done by human linguistic experts in the area of metaphor analysis. The frequency and distribution of these three types of metaphors were determined through the software SPSS. The mapping of conceptual metaphors was also made.

For the analysis of the various sub-themes represented by these conceptual metaphors, ChatGPT (GPT-4) was also used for inductive coding. For example, the researchers gave cues like:

- *Could you please analyze the main theme of this short story, and the typical conceptual metaphors (structural, orientational and ontological metaphors) that reflect the sub-themes related to the principles (including but not limited to validity, reliability, practicality, authenticity, and washback) of language assessment in this short story and make a table by main theme, typical conceptual metaphors (put the types in the bracket), examples, sub-themes, principles of language assessment?*

In the analysis performed by ChatGPT (GPT-4), the first stage entails a comprehensive understanding of the stories, involving a deep dive into the sub-themes of language assessment, narrative plots, and the dynamics of its characters. The comprehensive exploration is essential for subsequent awareness of conceptual metaphors. Next, the story is examined to identify phrases and sentences that exhibit resonance with any of the three different types of conceptual metaphors: structural, orientational, or ontological. Upon identification, every metaphor undergoes a systematic coding procedure to assign it to the right category. For instance, metaphors that lend structure to abstract ideas are tagged as structural metaphors.

After the process of classification, the focus then shifts to establishing connections between the discovered metaphors and any underlying sub-themes that may be present within the story. The aforementioned sub-themes may intricately interconnect with some of the fundamental principles of language assessment. The outcome of the analysis is the generation of a comprehensive table, which demonstrates the multifaceted relationship between conceptual metaphors, sub-themes, and principles of language assessment.

Then the validation of data in thematic analysis was manually done by researchers by following Robinson's (2022) ST-TA for short stories. The process began with a deep immersion in the results, followed by a checking on the initial codes and sub-themes of language assessments, and then the tabulated sub-themes were refined through the reflection of conceptual metaphors. Through a series of meetings and discussions, a consensus was reached among the researchers. The frequency of sub-themes was counted again, and the researchers finally reported the results.

Results and Discussion

Structural, Orientational, and Ontological Metaphors in Short Stories of Language Assessment

According to the ChatGPT (GPT-4) results, a total of 250 conceptual metaphors were detected in the 22 short stories of language assessment. The percentage and frequency of the three types of conceptual metaphors are depicted in Figure 1.

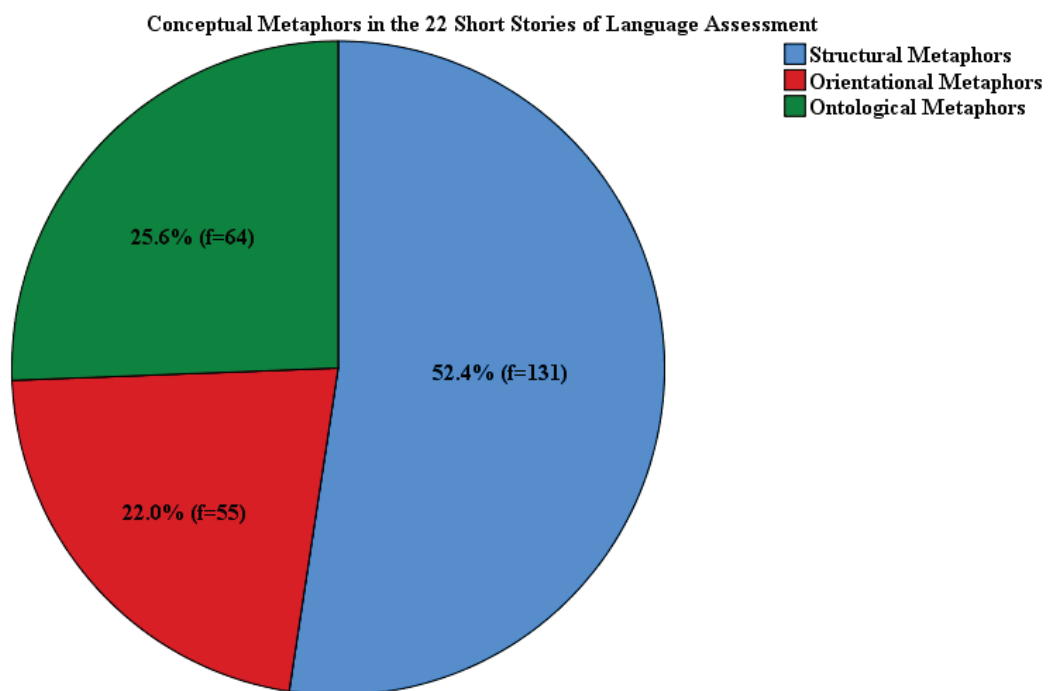


Figure 1: Distribution of Structural, Orientational, and Ontological Metaphors

From Figure 1, it is evident that structural metaphors were the most prevalent metaphors in short stories, accounting for over half (52.4%) of all conceptual metaphors. The proportion of ontological metaphors and orientational metaphors was 25.6% and 22.0%, respectively.

The prevalence of structural metaphors over ontological and orientational metaphors, as analyzed in the short stories, could be attributed to various factors. One possible explanation for the popularity of structural metaphors could be their inherent compatibility with the human cognitive process. Such metaphors often draw parallels between abstract concepts and tangible relationships, facilitating comprehension and conveying complex ideas concisely and tangibly. Take the metaphor “misjudgment is a dagger” as an example, the mapping is from the source domain “dagger” onto the target domain “misjudgment”, which hinges on the similarity between the two concepts. In the short story *Misjudgement*, the sentence including this type of metaphor is “Like a dagger, Tim glances intently at the black iron gate.” The use of the structural metaphor in this context serves to enhance the reader’s understanding and visualization of the scene. By likening Tim’s gaze to a dagger, the sentence conveys the notion that his glance is not just casual, but rather cutting and deeply penetrating. The word “dagger” carries connotations of sharpness, precision, and potential harm, implying that Tim’s gaze is keenly targeted and potentially impactful.

Among the three types of metaphors used in short stories, ontological metaphors are employed less frequently than structural metaphors. This finding is congruent with Zhao et al.’s (2019) study, which examined conceptual metaphors in a Nobel Prize-winning novel. In the case of “The Classroom is a Desert or Oasis” from the short story *A Seed in a Desert or Oasis* (Geng, 2023), the abstract experience or quality of a classroom is being understood in terms of a tangible, concrete thing like a desert or oasis. The writer vividly contrasts two starkly different educational environments. In the same way that a desert is barren, inhospitable, and oppressive, representing a classroom that lacks supplies, feels sterile, and restricts creativity, an oasis is its antithesis. An oasis, being nurturing, refreshing, and fertile, resembles a classroom that fosters intellectual development, provides some relief from the stresses of learning, and encourages an abundance of ideas and thoughts. This comparison illustrates the profound effect that classroom environment and teaching methods can have on a student’s thirst for knowledge. The advantages of employing ontological metaphors within such literary contexts are manifold. Firstly, these metaphors enable an intricate layering of meaning, allowing writers to convey abstract or complex ideas in a more relatable and comprehensible manner. The reader’s cognitive engagement is heightened as they decode the metaphorical connections, fostering a deeper connection with the text. Moreover, ontological metaphors imbue the narrative with vividness and sensory richness, facilitating a more immersive reading experience.

Followed by ontological metaphors, orientational metaphors also occur in the short stories of language assessment. They are linguistic constructs that facilitate the understanding of abstract concepts through spatial relationships, such as up-down, inside-out, front-back, shallow-deep, and center-periphery. They take advantage of the human propensity to project physical experiences onto more abstract domains and facilitate the communication of complex ideas by grounding them in familiar sensory experiences. Based on the findings, it can be observed that the orientational metaphor words “down” and “up” exhibited a higher frequency within the corpus of 22 short stories. The characters in the text have been associated with negative emotions through terms such as “low”, “coldness”, and “burden”. Conversely, feelings of optimism have been conveyed through expressions like “high”, “warmth” and “strength”. For example, in the short story *Unforgiven*, the sentence with a parallel structure “My head down, my ears hot, my eyes sewn to the floor” uses this type of metaphor and effectively conveys a profound feeling of humiliation and embarrassment in response to an unjust punishment. There

is another example in a story related to cheating. The sentence “Hi, can I sit next to you during the exam, so it will be easier for me to copy your answers” used the symbol “next to”, and created a metaphorical expression as “cheating is copying answers” by highlighting the dishonesty and unethical behavior involved.

Sub-Themes Reflected by Conceptual Metaphors in Short Stories of Language Assessment

The examination of the three types of conceptual metaphors has revealed the presence of underlying sub-themes pertaining to language assessment. For example, in the short story titled *Unforgiven*, the prevailing sub-themes revolve around the trauma and injustice stemming from the harsh discipline (Nimehchisalem, 2023). Several typical conceptual metaphors are employed to deepen the narrative’s resonance, including viewing “education as a torturous journey”, perceiving the “school as a vacuum”, characterizing the “teacher as a tyrant”, equating “misbehavior to a crime”, envisioning “fear as a predator”, treating “time as a motionless entity”, and depicting “memory as a cinema screen”.

Table 1 presents an overview of the story titles, sub-themes, typical conceptual metaphors, and reflections on principles of language assessment within the context of the 22 short stories.

Table 1: Sub-Themes Reflected by Typical Conceptual Metaphors in Short Stories of Language Assessment

| No. | Story Titles | Sub-Themes | Typical Conceptual Metaphors | Principles |
|-----|---|--|--|---|
| 1 | Unforgiven | Trauma and Injustice of Harsh Discipline | Education as a torturous journey School as a vacuum Teacher as a tyrant Misbehavior as a crime Fear as a Predator Time as a motionless entity Memory as a cinema screen | Practicality Reliability Authenticity Washback |
| 2 | A Seed in a Desert or Oasis | The Transformative Power of Teaching | Classroom as a desert/oasis Teaching as a mechanized process Teacher's anger as fire Fear as physical confinement Knowledge as nourishment Learning as growth | Practicality Reliability Validity Washback |
| 3 | Speak! Or Forever Hold Your Peace | Power of Communication and Challenges | Career choice as a path Language as a door Speaking as a physical obstacle Failure as falling Emotions as weather | Practicality Validity Authenticity Washback |
| 4 | The Perfect Atmosphere for a Life-Changing Exam | Struggle for Education in Warfare | Life as a battle Education as a ticket Exams as wars Words as weapons Choices as paths Hope as light | Practicality Reliability Validity Washback |
| 5 | Misjudgment | Misperception and Prejudice | Language testing as a battle Glances as a dagger Nervousness as a physical illness Assessment as a discovery journey Teacher's suspicion as a storm Misjudgment as a physical barrier | Practicality Reliability |
| 6 | I'd Rather Be a Student | Ethical Dilemmas and Fairness | Teaching as a burden Grading as a conflict | Reliability Washback |
| 7 | The Thief of the Secret Paper | Ethical Dilemmas and Consequences | Exam as a journey Exam as a mirror Exam hall as a battlefield Cheating as theft Silence as compliance Success as gain Failure as loss | Washback |

| | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|--|---|---|
| 8 | Two Sides | The Paradox of Motivation and Fear in Education | Time as a path Challenges as physical obstacles Exam as a natural disaster Exam as a living creature Panic as a growing plant Emotions as weather Two attitudes as sides of a coin | Washback |
| 9 | English Tutor | The Disparity Between Institutionalized Education and Natural Language Learning | Mother as tutor Educational system as a machine Language as a living entity Tests as barriers Emotions as weather | Validity Authenticity Washback |
| 10 | The Leather Bag | Personal Growth and Resilience | Learning as a journey Challenges as obstacles Education and work as crossroads IELTS test as a battle Stress as a storm Scores as objects Failure and success as directions Love and care as power | Practicality Reliability Washback |
| 11 | Bola's Story | The Contrast Between Traditional, Structured and Individualized, Adaptive Teaching Methods | Teaching as a journey Teaching as nurturing Teacher's preparation as craftsmanship Teaching style as direction Learning as building Classroom as a living organism | Validity Washback |
| 12 | Fail Now or Fail Forever | Fear of Failure and Resilience | Learning as building Fear of failure as an obstacle Father's advice as a motivator Education as a financial transaction Life as a test | Reliability Washback |
| 13 | A Boy with a Dream | Challenges of Cultural and Individual Identity in Unfamiliar Settings | Learning as building Ambition as hunger Test as a battlefield Test as a mirror Test as a trap Cultural differences as barriers Coldness as a barrier Doubt as physical weakness | Validity Reliability Authenticity Washback |

| | | | | |
|----|--|---|---|----------|
| 14 | The Eleventh Hour is Worth Every Minute and Second | Last-Minute Preparation | Time as a race Life as a journey Studying as consumption Knowledge as a physical burden Last-minute preparation as a physical ailment Emotions as physical sensations Wisdom as taste Parental concern as sharpness Failure as falling Failure as a physical injury Success as physical elevation Success as a surprise | Washback |
| 15 | My Experience of Learning English Language | Challenges and Personal Growth | Learning as a journey Learning as building Struggles as weight Sacrifice as payment Desire for success as an internal force Success as a lottery Success as a destination Cultural transition as a rebirth Guidance as light | Washback |
| 16 | Fingers Crossed | Challenges in Grading and Assessment | Language as a barrier Teaching as a journey Teaching as building Teaching as nurturing Grading as a battle Difficulty as a physical burden Disappointment as a physical impact Expectations as physical holding Progress as movement | Washback |
| 17 | An Encouraging English Teacher | Encouragement and Motivation from Teacher | Mind as a blank container Emotions as physical sensations Teaching as support Test-taking as a competition Personal growth as a journey Success as a destination Sleeplessness as an obstacle Class as a controlled space Eyes as communication tools Fear as an unsettling presence Happiness as a tangible object Teacher's appearance as an artwork | Washback |

| | | | | |
|----|---|--|---|--------------------------------|
| 18 | Reporting a Cheat or Not? | Ethical Dilemma in Reporting Cheating | Classroom as a quiet battlefield Cheating as a game Cheating as a stealthy act Examiner as a detective Policies as external boundaries Reporting cheating as a moral dilemma | Validity Washback |
| 19 | Teaching Experience at Al-imam Ali Secondary School | Engagement and Individualization | Teaching as a journey Teacher as a builder Relationships as bridges Management as steering a ship Classroom as a field Lessons as tracks Educational progress as a journey uphill | Authenticity Washback |
| 20 | It's a Farm Visit for the Class | Innovative Methods of Language Learning and Teaching | Learning as an adventure Teaching as guiding a journey Classroom as a dynamic ecosystem Student as an explorer Animals as instruments Emotions as weather Student excitement as light | Validity Authenticity Washback |
| 21 | Hybrid Lessons Are Like Hibiscus Flowers | Hybrid Teaching and Learning Adaptation | Hybrid lessons as a roller-coaster ride The classroom as a theater stage Teaching as navigating a maze Teaching as a journey Teaching as a heartfelt endeavor Students as a beacon of light Students as mirrors Hybrid lessons as an ecosystem with both beauty and challenges | Washback |
| 22 | Don't Judge a Book by Its Cover | The Perceptions and Misconceptions in the Virtual Learning Environment | Online teaching as uncharted waters Tech-savviness as a torchlight in darkness Online blunders as theater bloopers Students' misbehavior as a web of deceit Age as a Technological Handicap | Washback |

By examining conceptual metaphors, a thorough understanding of the underlying sub-themes within the 22 short stories can be attained. These short stories delve into the multifaceted challenges and triumphs of the education realm. They tackle the haunting specter of trauma stemming from unjust disciplinary practices and the profound metamorphosis brought about by effective teaching. While some narratives shed light on the power of communication and

the hardships encountered in war-torn environments, others grapple with the prejudicial lens and the ethical tightropes of fairness and consequence. The juxtaposition of institutional versus natural language learning draws attention to the gaps in our educational systems, and the ever-present fear of failure is paralleled by inspiring tales of resilience. The duality of traditional teaching methods versus more adaptive approaches, challenges in grading, the essence of true engagement, and the evolution of hybrid teaching methodologies come to the fore. Moreover, in an increasingly digital world, the perceptions and pitfalls of the virtual classroom underscore the ever-changing landscape of education. Additionally, formative assessment has also been frequently discussed.

Examining themes through the lens of conceptual metaphors holds paramount importance as it unveils layers of meaning that might otherwise remain concealed. Previous studies also showed that themes and sub-themes can be reflected through metaphors in various literary genres (Ross & Pollio, 1991). This approach allows for a more profound comprehension of the subject matter, providing a gateway to the intricate tapestry of human experiences. Through this method, thematic analysis not only becomes a tool for dissecting narratives but also an avenue for exploring the profound connections between language, thought, and emotion.

Writers' Perspectives on the Principles and Associated Concepts of Language Assessment from the Short Stories

Regarding the principles of language assessment, “washback” stands out prominently in these short stories. Washback refers to the influence that testing or assessment exerts on teaching, learning, the individual learner, and even broader entities like government and society. While it can manifest in positive ways—by shaping curriculums, refining teaching methods, or guiding societal educational goals—it can also have negative implications. For instance, an undue emphasis on certain testing metrics might skew teaching priorities or put undue pressure on students. In the short story *Two Sides*, the metaphor of an “exam as a natural disaster” strikingly illustrates the negative impacts associated with assessments. The dual nature of washback, both its benefits and pitfalls, is a recurring theme in the narratives, underscoring its pivotal role in the landscape of language assessment.

Moreover, “reliability”, as a fundamental principle, frequently surfaces in various narratives. In the context of these stories, reliability often alludes to the consistency with which various aspects of examinations are managed and experienced. Notably, the stories focus on consistent conditions for students or test-takers, the objectivity and consistency of raters or scorers, uniform test administration procedures, and the inherent consistency of the test content itself. An underlying concern depicted in these narratives is the physical and mental well-being of both the test-takers and the scorers at the time of the exam. Some stories vividly portray the discomfort or distress faced by students during exams, using powerful conceptual metaphors such as “fear as a predator,” “fear as physical confinement,” and “coldness as a barrier.” Such metaphoric expressions emphasize that the students are not in an optimal state while taking the test, potentially undermining the reliability of their performance.

The exploration of sub-themes, as conveyed through metaphorical language in these short stories, highlights the profound influence that principles of language assessment exert on individuals and societies, as discerned and portrayed by the writers. The use of metaphors not only deepens the emotional and cognitive engagement of the reader but also acts as a pivotal lens to unravel the complexities and subtleties of language assessment. Delving into these

metaphorical expressions provides critical insights into the real-world experiences and viewpoints of those affected by language assessment, thereby enriching our comprehension of its core principles and their practical application.

Conclusion

This study marks a novel integration of conceptual metaphors and thematic analysis, employing the AI-powered application ChatGPT (GPT-4) to explore short stories within the context of language assessment. In building upon the foundational work of Nimehchisalem and Mat Hussin (2018) and Nimehchisalem et al. (2019), who identified metaphorical representations of language assessment in terms of guidance, motivation, empowerment, and control, our research extends the scope of investigation into the realm of conceptual metaphors. Through the meticulous application of ChatGPT (GPT-4), the findings were subsequently verified by experts in linguistics, highlighting the prevalence of structural metaphors in these narratives, followed by ontological and orientational metaphors.

The exploration of conceptual metaphors not only contributes to a deeper understanding of the underlying cognitive processes but also underscores their fundamental role in shaping the narrative landscape. The intricacies of these metaphorical representations reinforce the intertwined nature of language, cognition, and emotion, making thematic analysis a powerful technique in literature interpretation. The collection of 22 short stories encompassed various sub-themes, which not only addressed the five fundamental principles of language assessment (validity, reliability, practicality, authenticity, and washback), but also incorporated additional concepts such as fairness and equity, formative assessment, learning environment, ethics, integrity, growth mindset, motivation, and others. This study has provided insights into the application of ChatGPT for the analysis of textual data.

This study had its limitations in the relatively small size of the corpus. In the future, more stories and texts may be added. Meanwhile, developing AI techniques allows for the analysis of conceptual metaphors and their connections to themes and sub-themes in other literary forms such as poetry, prose, and drama. ChatGPT and human specialists can be compared in terms of coding and identification of conceptual metaphors, as well as thematic analysis.

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Internationalisation of Undergraduate English-Medium Instruction Programmes on University Websites in Japan & Malaysia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the current status of, and issues associated with English-Medium Instruction (EMI) programmes at higher education institutions (HEIs) in Japan and Malaysia. More specifically, this study examined how internationalisation is represented in the undergraduate EMI programmes found on university websites in Japan and Malaysia. The study employed the ROAD-MAPPING framework (Dafouz & Smit, 2016; 2020) and conducted a content analysis of 9 undergraduate EMI programmes on the university websites from national and public universities, with Japan (n = 5) and Malaysia (n = 4). The EMI programme components was analysed by their level of English language proficiency requirements for local and international students, Medium of Instruction (MoI), Academic Discipline, Language support and Student admission. Results indicated that the level of English language proficiency requirements for local and international students appear to follow a stringent benchmark in Japan whereas is discipline specific in Malaysia. Language support is provided for Malaysian and Japanese university students with courses in English for Academic Purposes, but are not necessarily linked to EMI programmes. English is the MoI for EMI programmes with the exception of a bilingual approach for courses like Law or a trilingual approach for Islamic studies in Malaysia. Implications of this study show the uniqueness of EMI programmes that are influenced by the social, institutional and socioeconomic reality of its geographical location.

Keywords: English-medium instruction, internationalisation, higher education institutions, Japan, Malaysia

Introduction

The expansion of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) resulting from globalisation has not only led to the adoption of English language learning, but also in the widespread use of English as a language of instruction (Jenkins, 2009, 2015). In an increasingly competitive global marketplace, higher education institutions (HEIs) constantly seek to internationalise. One of the major internationalisation strategies of educational institutions worldwide is to use English as medium of instruction (Dearden, 2014, p. 24; Kirkpatrick, 2011, p. 100). As a result, HEIs have increased the number of English-Medium Instruction (EMI) programmes to attract faculty and students from overseas. A deciding factor that will affect international students' study destination choice is the language spoken and used in instruction (OECD, 2018, p. 223). Countries whose language of instruction is widely spoken and used, such as English, French,

German, and Spanish is more appealing to international students. The popularity of English-speaking countries, such as the United States (US), Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom (UK) as top study destinations in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is not surprising. These four countries combined account for more than 35 per cent of all internationally mobile students in the OECD and partner countries (OECD, 2022). Of the 4.39 million internationally mobile students in OECD countries, 957,000 are studying in the US, making it the top destination country. Following the US is UK with 551,000 international students, Australia with 458,000 and Canada accounting for 323,000 mobile students (OECD, 2022, p. 224). The global education market share dominated by the US stands at 15 per cent, i.e. 15 per cent of all international students in the world are enrolled in the US. Among other English speaking countries, Australia and the UK each have 7 per cent and 9 per cent of the global share respectively, while Canada has 5 per cent. Meanwhile, in non-English speaking countries, Germany (6 per cent), France and China (both 4 per cent) have generous shares of the global market (OECD, 2022, p. 224).

Many countries have increasingly introduced English as a mandatory subject in the school curriculum, even at early education levels, and many students aim to improve their English-language skills by engaging themselves in a native English speaking environment. In addition, the number of HEI's in non-English speaking countries offering tertiary-education programmes taught in English continue to rise, as seen in Table 1 (OECD, 2014, p. 346; OECD, 2015, p. 356). This shows the progressive adoption of English as a global language (OECD, 2015, p. 356), "with one in four people using it worldwide" (Sharifian, 2013, p. 29). In Europe, the spread of English as a medium of instruction is prevalent in the Nordic countries (Wächter & Maiworm, 2014, p. 15). Even so, there has been a recent growth in transnational flows within both mainland Europe (e.g. into Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands) and the Asia Pacific region (e.g. into China, Hong Kong, and Malaysia) (Jenkins, 2014). Noteworthy exceptions are Japan and Korea: even with a less widespread language of instruction, the enrolment number of international students is large, with 95 per cent from Asia (OECD, 2023).

Rationale and Aim

Apart from attracting international students, the spread of EMI is also connected to HEI's aspiration "to attract teaching staff and researchers, to increase mobility, to augment revenue, to climb up education ranking systems, to improve English proficiency, and, last but not least, to enable graduate students to use English effectively in the workplace of the twenty-first century" (Lasagabaster, 2022, p. 1).

In the context of English as a global language and internationalisation of higher education, this study compares how university websites in East and Southeast Asia communicate internationalisation through their EMI programmes. Kirkpatrick (2018) states that English-medium instruction in Asian universities occurs in varying complex and diverse sociolinguistic situations. Many Asian countries (Malaysia included) were once former colonies of European powers and have only started to promote their national languages soon after the end of the Second World War. For example, Khmer in Cambodia, Bahasa Malaysia in Malaysia, Filipino in the Philippines and Vietnamese in Vietnam. (Bolton, Bacon-Shone & Botha, 2022).

In reference to the use of EMI in HE, Bolton & Botha (2020) explained that there are considerable differences between Outer Circle and Expanding Circle contexts in Asia. A major characteristic of Outer Circle society is that they were once former colonies of Anglophone (mainly British but with the exception of the US for the Philippines), powers. During the post-

colonial period, the status of English was maintained for important official purposes in government domains such as in law and education (Bolton & Botha, 2020). The Outer Circle societies mentioned by Bolton & Botha, 2020 include those in South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka); Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Brunei, Myanmar, Singapore, the Philippines) and Hong Kong in East Asia. The use of English varies greatly depending on the “sociolinguistic realities” (p. 2) of these countries, but in the case of Malaysia, the current status and functions of EMI in HE are subject to the advocate and promotion of the use of the national language (Bahasa Malaysia) since independence in 1957. Public universities in recent decades have increased the use of EMI and many private universities use English as a medium of instruction (Bolton & Botha, 2020).

The Expanding Circle contexts are by and large countries where, sociolinguistically speaking, English has had the status as a foreign language rather than a second language (Bolton & Botha, 2020). Examples of countries in the Expanding Circle include Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, China, Cambodia, Laos, Macau, South Korea, to name a few. The current status and functions of EMI in HE show that in Japan, regardless of the government’s initiatives to promote English-medium education, past studies have reported some problems with the implementation of EMI courses. Many EMI programmes aim to cater to attract the international students rather than providing an international educational environment for the Japanese students (Bolton & Botha, 2020).

Despite the widespread rise of studies on EMI, most focus on a specific university, or country in a particular region, however, there is a lack of comparative studies on EMI. As put forward by Macaro et al., 2018 below:

The preponderance of research based on case studies of single institutions further exacerbates the problem of not being able to ascertain the impact of EMI on either English proficiency or on content learning. The almost total absence of any comparative studies amongst institutions and/or amongst countries (except for the issue of EMI growth) means that the rigour offered by comparative education methodology (Bray, Adamson & Mason, 2014) is largely absent (p. 64).

This current study fills in the gap by comparing two countries (Japan and Malaysia) with seemingly different language situations in terms of linguistic and cultural background (as explained above). The study, therefore, aims to provide insights into the diverse context that EMI operates in: Outer Circle country (Malaysia) and Expanding Circle country (Japan) and its influence on the implementation of EMI in Asian higher education. This study defines EMI as “the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English” (Macaro, 2018, p. 19).

Literature Review

In this section, the relationship between internationalisation of higher education and EMI is discussed, as well as its impact on the communication strategies of EMI programmes on university websites.

Internationalisation of Higher Education and EMI

Against the backdrop of English as the de facto international common language of academia and research, the mushrooming of EMI courses and programmes offered by universities in non-English speaking countries (especially in Europe and Asia) is on the rise (Rose & McKinley, 2018). EMI has been reported as “an unstoppable train” (Macaro, 2015, p. 7), while Chapple (2015, p. 1) describes it as “a ‘galloping’ phenomenon now ‘pandemic’ in proportion. Seeing as internationalisation and the discourse on HEI’s are inextricably linked, EMI posits itself as one of the most important tools in university language policy to achieve the internationalisation-related objectives (Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2013; Kirkpatrick, 2011). Internationalisation is defined as the “policies and practices undertaken by academic systems and higher education institutions to tackle the global academic environment” (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 290). In Europe, the Erasmus exchange programme and the Bologna Process were developed to “boost student mobility programmes and multilingualism among university stakeholders” (Lasagabaster, 2022, p. 6). In reality, English has been widely used in Northern Europe with the Netherlands and the Nordic countries being the frontrunners in EMI. Nowadays, its spread has reached countries that had little English as a foreign language learning tradition, like Italy, Greece and Spain (Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2013). A significant study on English-taught programmes (ETP) conducted by Wächter & Maiworm, (2008, 2014) revealed a 239 per cent increase of ETPs between 2007 and 2014. Following the introduction of EMI in HE across Europe, Asian countries also display their commitment to promote EMI as a crucial factor in the internationalisation of HE (Shao & Carson, 2023).

For the last few decades, EMI has flourished in non-Anglophone countries like Japan and Malaysia, where English is a foreign and second language respectively. Countries like Japan and Malaysia have brought faculties and students with different linguacultural backgrounds on campus. As a result, EMI classrooms turn into multilingual, multicultural environments where English is used for communicating, delivering and understanding content knowledge among students and faculty (Kaur, 2020).

In Japan, amidst a steady population decline and stagnant economy, EMI is closely associated with the economic needs of the country (Bradford, 2023). As a result, this led the Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT) to become heavily invested in promoting English-taught programmes as a way to boost internationalisation in HE and raise the profile of its universities globally. The two main initiatives that highlight the “government’s dual focus on EMI” (Bradford, 2023, p. 171) are: a) the Global 30 Project or G30 project (2009-2014); and b) the Top Global University Project or TGUP (2014-2023). MEXT introduced the Global 30 Project in 2009 (MEXT, 2009) to internationalise HE, with “EMI as one of the four main principles” (Shao & Carson, 2023, p. 57). It aimed to attract the world’s best students to come and study and subsequently work in Japan to help achieve “the improvement of the international competitiveness of science, technology and industry” (MEXT, 2008). In 2014, TGUP targeted 37 universities at the national, public and private levels (MEXT, 2014). This project focused on upskilling domestic students to become global leaders through the EMI programmes and study abroad (Bradford, 2023). It also aimed to increase the profile and visibility of Japanese universities by focusing on university innovation (Council for the Implementation of Education Rebuilding, 2013, as cited in Bradford, 2023, p. 171; MEXT, 2014). More specifically, the TGUP aimed to ensure that more of Japan’s universities make it to the list of top 100 universities in the world (Shao & Carson, 2023).

In summary, through the implementation of EMI, the government of Japan and the MEXT hope that EMI will assist Japanese universities to become more ‘global’ in two ways: first, it will help prepare domestic students for English-speaking workplace, and second, it will allow

more international students to study at Japanese universities. In this sense, EMI movement in Japan can be seen as a part of political discourse that concerns language policy (Morizumi, 2017) and that EMI is closely linked to the discourse of human resources development in HE in Japan (Yonezawa, 2014).

The internationalisation of universities in Malaysia is driven by several factors, namely a) economic: revenue generation through fee-paying international students; b) socio-cultural: encouragement of intercultural exchange; c) academic: supporting academic collaborations through teaching and learning; and (d) political: promoting the status of Malaysia as an international hub for education (Loo, 2022). Malaysia aims to be an educational hub for international students from all over the world. To achieve this, several national policies and educational blueprints were introduced. The introduction of the National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2007-2020 in 2007 by MOHE highlighted seven key strategic principles, with the fifth thrust focusing on internationalisation. This thrust aimed to target a total of 200,000 international students and place Malaysia as a top-six destination for international students by 2020 (Mohd Ismail & Doria, 2013, as cited in Munusamy & Azirah Hashim, 2021, p. 23). In 2015, the Malaysia Higher Education Blueprint 2015-2025 was launched and intended to create a HE sector that supports the target of the 11th Malaysia Plan which aims to promote Malaysia's role as a global education hub by "increasing the number of quality international students, strengthening global networking, and gaining international recognition for specialisations and niches areas of expertise" (EPU, 2015, pp. 5-29).

Communicating Internationalisation on University Websites

In the era of internationalisation, HEIs are required to market themselves and develop a brand identity to attract prospective students (Cavanagh, 2016). In other words, HEI websites should not only serve as advertisements but also serve as an "electronic storefront" of information (Loo, 2022: 81). Information displayed on the website is of utmost important for university programmes that aim to attract international students (Bradford, 2023). A study by Uniquist, (an enrolment services management company) revealed that 82 percent of international enrolments in its UK partner institutions were classified as "stealth applicants": students who had never made any direct contact with the HEI before applying. The bulk of these applicants collect information about the HEI through the respective institutions' websites (ICEF Monitor, 2019, as cited in Bradford, 2023, p. 172). By recognising these various functions, Baldry & Thibault (2006) state that websites are great "at merging disparate entities, at crossing and realigning the boundaries between diverse discourse genres, social activities and domains" (p. 103). In reality, a university's websites are designed by marketing professionals and webmasters, therefore it can be assumed that most of the content reflects the policies and thinking about English language issues that are maintained by its senior faculty and management (Jenkins, 2014).

Internationalisation in universities is partly motivated by the economic benefits resulting from the recruitment of international students rather than the promotion of international culture (Jenkins, 2014). One way of viewing a particular university's idea and incorporation of internationalisation is by examining its university website as shown by Hewings (2012), Jenkins (2014), Morizumi (2017), Loo (2022) and Bradford (2023). Hewings (2012) studied the websites of universities in non-English speaking countries, i.e. the University of Cape Town and the University of Valencia to show that these universities use English websites in order to "attract would-be students, donors or sponsors" (p. 110) apart from providing information about the university.

Jenkins (2014) explored in detail 60 universities' websites (including 6 universities in Japan and 2 in Malaysia) concerning their EMI degree courses to identify the potential links between 'international' and 'English language'. Findings from her study showed that linguistic diversity is not a distinctive feature of universities in Japan, even though the English language websites from Japan evidently show their institutions as multicultural. This is based on her findings that require students to achieve certain test scores on Anglophone international tests (e.g. TOEFL) for admission into EME programmes and the presence of native English on the written and spoken texts on the websites. In contrast, one of the Malaysian universities show more hybridity featuring photos of campus life and upcoming cultural events. However, the presence of the local language is not given prominence and less frequently highlighted in comparison to the English language. In summary, Jenkins (2014, p. 96) mentioned that these programmes link native English with internationalisation and international skills for future careers.

Morizumi (2017) applied the methods used by Jenkins (2014) and focused on a private university in Japan by investigating the university's institute of international studies' English and Japanese webpages. She also explored the idea of how these webpages represented internationalisation and/or globalisation and how the conceptualisation of English language in relation to internationalisation and/or globalisation was depicted. Morizumi's findings showed that these webpages lacked reference to classes taught in English and English language requirement. Instead, the webpages highlighted study abroad opportunities, international exchange and Japanese/English learning programmes. The webpages seem to display an "East-meets-West" (p. 145) discourse.

The Japanese webpages target a Japanese audience rather than an international one as it is "peppered with the terms 'international' and 'global'" (p. 140). There is no description using the term "truly international person", rather the term 'global' is used in the context of 'global human resource' (p. 145). At least, from the Japanese perspective, the idea of an international or global minded person is related to a global economy and the success rate of the university's graduates upon graduation (Morizumi, 2017). In contrast, the English webpages target students from universities that have "exchange agreements" (p. 138) with the university. This suggests that the internationalisation efforts of this institute is not driven by economic benefits, as is the usual practice of other universities who "advertise themselves to a wider audience" (Jenkins, 2014).

In the Malaysian context, there is limited research on university websites focusing on HE internationalisation (Ooi, Ho & Amri, 2010). One such study by Loo (2022) focused on the voices of international students' from public and private universities in Malaysia. This study examined 40 websites through the lens of "academic capitalism framing" (p. 81) using a discourse analysis approach. The analysis involved the use of significant collocations such as "international" and "student(s)" (p. 83). Findings revealed that international students in Malaysia were seen as customers, with serviced promises made to them to help ease their relocation to study in Malaysia. In addition, international students would also partake in social mobility as a result of interactions with other international students (Loo, 2022).

Dumanig & Pe Symaco (2020) investigated how internationalisation of higher education was portrayed in the mission and vision statements of selected universities in Malaysia and the Philippines. The mission and vision statements from 20 public and private universities were selected and analysed using a critical discourse analysis approach incorporating textual and discourse practice. Findings revealed that the mission and vision statements of universities in

Malaysia and the Philippines are in line with the policies in their own respective country. Both countries also share similarities when it comes to interpreting internationalisation in higher education, such as they both place prominence on the “importance of producing global and competent graduates, and obtaining international recognition and world-class education” (Dumanig & Pe Symaco, 2020, p. 1).

Bradford (2023) conducted a qualitative content analysis study using the ROAD-MAPPING framework developed by Dafouz and Smit (2016, 2020) of public English-medium education (EME) programmes found on university websites in Japan. She looked at the promises made by undergraduate English-taught programmes in Japanese universities to the outside world (i.e. prospective students). The study specifically focused on the messages delivered to both international and domestic students in terms of the skills obtained throughout the duration of the study and the potential employment opportunities available to them upon completion. Her study reported that in Japan, EME programmes consist of two broad categories, “emphasising either disciplinary or intercultural learning” (p. 171).

ROAD-MAPPING Framework EMEMUS Online

The mass amount of research on English-medium education in multilingual university settings (EMEMUS) led Smit (2019) as cited in Bradford (2023, p. 174) to coin the term “looking inside perspective,” i.e. looking at something as how it is rather than how it should be going on in EMEMUS, besides from a “looking outside perspective” which sees the formation of EMEMUS to the outside world (171). Smit (2019) recommends scholars to investigate how HEIs publicly display EMEMUS on websites and introduces us to “EMEMUS online” (Bradford, 2023, p. 172). Drawing inspiration from EMEMUS online, this study will examine how internationalisation is structured in the undergraduate EMI programmes found in selected university websites in Japan and Malaysia.

The six dimensions of the ROAD-MAPPING framework are the Roles of English (in relation to other languages) (RO), Academic Disciplines (AD), (Language) Management (M), Agents (A), Practices and Processes (PP), and Internationalisation and Glocalisation (ING) (Dafouz & Smit, 2020, p. 46) (see Figure 1). A core advantage of the framework is that it allows EME researchers and practitioners to view EME as a whole while at the same time allowing room to discuss the specificities of the phenomenon (Bradford, 2023). Though all the dimensions are thought to have equal standing, the dimensions are all interconnected (Smit, 2019; Dafouz & Smit, 2020, p. 46). For example, when Smit (2019) cited in Bradford (2023, p. 174) applied the ROAD-MAPPING as a conceptual framework to investigate how EMEMUS is represented online at the University of Vienna, she found that the Agents (A) and Practices and Processes (PP) dimensions were connected more to the institution (A = the university) and website (PP = the design and realisation of the website) as opposed to EME. This made Smit (2019) as cited in Bradford (2023, p. 174) focus on the other four dimensions (RO, AD, M and ING) in her analysis.

The ROAD-MAPPING framework also allows researchers to focus on and examine elements of the EME without losing track of the bigger picture of EME (Dafouz & Smit, 2020, p. 46). Taking a cue from Bradford’s study (2023), the current study uses the ROAD-MAPPING framework as a conceptual tool to design the study and organise the results while examining the EME at the “meso, programme, level” (p. 174). This analytical lens is applied to the ROAD-MAPPING dimensions and should shed light on how universities in Japan and Malaysia structure the Roles of English (RO) as a medium of instruction in the undergraduate EMI

programmes by asking what fields of study are offered by the universities in Japan and Malaysia by the undergraduate EMI programmes (AD), whether any form of English language support is offered by universities in Japan and Malaysia in the undergraduate EMI programmes (M), what the English language requirements for student applicants prior to enrolling in the programme are (M), who the target audience of the undergraduate EMI programmes in Japan and Malaysia is (A) and how the universities in Japan and Malaysia position their undergraduate EMI programmes at the international level (ING)?

Previous studies mainly looked at webpages by examining the “explicit and implicit social constructions of meaning” and critical discourse analysis approach (e.g., Saarinen & Nikula, 2013; Jenkins, 2014; Dumanig & Pe Symaco, 2020). This study applied the methodology used by Bradford (2023, p. 174) by taking on a “positivist view and uses content analysis to examine the textual data on English-language EME programme webpages” (Hardy et. al, 2004). A content analysis approach is suitable for studying second language texts (i.e. English) because it will reduce the risk of the researcher’s tendency to “read too much” into the data due to their own cultural understanding and/or tendencies (Bradford, 2023, p. 174).

Another reason for choosing the ROAD-MAPPING framework was that it demonstrates a solid use of how to differentiate the features within and across various university settings, which is particularly useful for a comparative study design (Shao & Carson, 2023).

The Study: EMI in Japan and Malaysia

In the last ten years, the number of English-taught degree programmes has been increasing in Japan. Currently, there are a total of 87 programmes across 39 universities where a student is able to get an undergraduate degree wholly in the English language (Bradford, 2023). In Malaysia, the data for this study was obtained from university websites of public universities in Malaysia. These universities were identified from the Education Malaysia Global Services (EMGS) webpage (<https://educationmalaysia.gov.my/programmes/programme-results#page-2>). For this exploratory study, a doable sample of 9 undergraduate EMI programmes (5 in Japan and 4 in Malaysia) were purposely chosen based on three criteria proposed by Brown & Iyobe (2014): size, status and position of the EMI programme (see Table 2) and also to reflect the diversity of the programmes offered. These three aspects of the programme structure paved the way for selecting programmes thought to represent the scope of EMI programmes in Japan and Malaysia.

The sample consisted of 5 programmes from 4 national universities in Japan and 4 programmes from 4 public universities in Malaysia. There are a variety of small, medium and large HEIs with a balance of liberal arts and science programmes in both countries. Data was collected from publicly available documents (e.g., brochures, syllabi, course descriptions, pamphlets) about each of the EMI programmes from the English-language webpages of the institutions:

- Level of English language proficiency requirements for domestic and international students
- Fields of study offered
- Medium of Instruction (MoI)
- Language support
- Student admission for domestic and international students

The data was coded according to the descriptive codes on the five ROAD-MAPPING dimensions: RO, AD, M A, and ING.

Findings and Discussion

The main findings of this comparative study applied the ROAD-MAPPING framework to help navigate the findings and discussion.

Roles of English

In the context of higher education, the Roles of English (in relation to other languages) is exemplified through its unparalleled standing as the prime language for spreading scientific knowledge and language of education (Jenkins, 2014). Based on the EMI programmes studied, the Japanese universities websites display explicitly that the medium of instruction is in English. The G30 (Global 30) International Programme clearly states on its Admission webpage, “Since October 2011, Nagoya University has been offering the G30 International Programs which are full-degree programs taught in English”. It continues to state that no Japanese proficiency is required prior to enrolment. Interestingly, even though it is a English medium programme, the Japanese language is given importance after students enrol in the programme. Such is the case for the International Programme on Japan in East Asia by the University of Tokyo College of Arts and Sciences, that says “the program also puts importance on the acquisition of a certain level of Japanese proficiency”. For EMI programme graduates who wish to work in Japan, a certain command of Japanese language proficiency is expected. The Integrated Science Programme (ISP) at Hokkaido University places great emphasis on the use of English as the “international language of science” and informs the students that they will be able to master a “majesty of professional level English”. Meanwhile, the Malaysian universities sample show a mixture in the medium of instruction, either in English, Malay, Arabic, Chinese or Tamil. For example, Universiti Malaya’s

Academy of Islamic Studies offers five EMI programmes: a) Bachelor of Shariah, b) Bachelor of Muamalat Management, c) Bachelor of Usuluddin, d) Bachelor of Al-Quran and Al-Hadith and e) Bachelor of Shariah and Law. In these programmes, the medium of instruction is trilingual with 50% taught in Malay, 30% in Arabic and only 20% in English. However, the situation is in reverse for EMI programmes in the Engineering and Science disciplines. The Bachelor of Computer Science (Software Engineering) in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) states under the “General Information” tab, that the language(s) of instruction for the full-time programme is in English. A similar statement appeared on the website of the School of Aerospace Engineering, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), “Please note that the medium of instruction for all science and engineering courses at USM is in English. Exceptions to this policy are for non-English language courses and some university courses”. For EMI programmes in Malaysia, it is observed that the role of English is considerably dependent on the subject discipline.

Academic Disciplines

The fields of study (or Academic Disciplines) offered by the universities in Japan for the undergraduate EMI programmes seem to link to internationalisation: “...to broaden students horizon by building a truly global campus with a diverse community of faculty and students from around the world,” (University of Tokyo). Another example is found in Tohoku University’s website whereby “Prospective students will have excellent opportunities...as well as train their international sense, under the supervision of top-level researchers”. Meanwhile, universities in Malaysia tend to equate the academic disciplines with industry demands and professionalism. This can be seen in the Prospective Students description of USM’s Aerospace Engineering programme: “Our curriculum has been designed with **clear objectives and**

outcomes that meet the needs of the aerospace industries and other stakeholders (emphasis in bold by USM). A similar occurrence was displayed on the webpage description for the Bachelor of Laws (Honours) programme offered by the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM), “The programme aims to produce graduates who possess sufficient knowledge, skills, aptitude in both law and shari’ah to serve the profession, society, nation, ummah and humanity”.

Language Management

For plenty of EMI programmes worldwide, evidence of English proficiency is one of the entry requirements. It is used as a way to curb the intake of non-native students (Shohamy, 2013). The Nagoya University Japan-in-Asia Cultural Studies (JACS) is a programme that explores the interrelationship between Japan and other east Asian countries. Interestingly, this programme promotes learning about Japanese culture and traditions fully in English. As such, the programme sets a benchmark score of Overall Band 6 or higher or TOEFL iBT (80). Other examinations that are frequently mentioned are Duolingo English Test, Pearson English Language Test and Cambridge English Qualifications. Even though Japanese proficiency is not required prior to enrolment, the JACS programme requires students to take Japanese language courses from beginner to advance level after enrolling in it. Programmes in the science and engineering discipline also demand a high level of English proficiency, i.e. an IELTS Band 6.5 is required for the International Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering Course (IMAC) at Tohoku University. The situation is slightly different in Malaysian HEIs. There seems to be a difference in the level of English proficiency required for domestic and international students. For domestic students, the English proficiency under the General University conditions is benchmarked against the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) with a minimum score of Band 2 (Equivalent to CEFR A2). For international students, the English proficiency level is considerably higher compared to domestic students. At Universiti Malaya, international students should achieve an IELTS Band 5, TOEFL score 500 (PBT), 173 (CBT) or 60 (IBT) or Band 3 in MUET. However, there are specific English requirements for each EMI programme. For example, the law programme at IIUM requires a higher level of English proficiency for both domestic and international students (Band 4 in MUET, CEFR B2 equivalent). We can see that the pattern for English language entry requirement for Asian HEIs usually assess non-native students to a “native English benchmark such as that of TOEFL and IELTS” (Jenkins, 2014, p. 104). Where CEFR is mentioned, it is usually C1, which is one level below that of a native speaker. In terms of Language Support, the courses are structured to teach general language proficiency skills such as Academic English Advanced I (Nagoya), English Course (Tokyo), Professional Communication Skills (UTM). However, one programme by Tohoku University offered a English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course entitled, “English in Technology I and II”. This course aims to train students’ ability of English communication as scientist and engineer.

Agents

Based on the sample, the target audience of the undergraduate EMI programmes in Japan and Malaysia is both domestic and international students. The Integrated Science Programme by Hokkaido University, however, only accepts international students.

Internationalisation and Globalisation

In Japan, the government positions EMI programmes for universities to climb up in the rankings and pull international talent along with developing domestic students to overcome the ageing population problem (Bradford & Brown, 2018). These internationalisation attempts are illustrated in the International Program on Environmental Sciences philosophy of the

University of Tokyo College of Arts and Sciences – “that of ‘interdisciplinarity’ and ‘internationalism’- the International Program on Environmental Sciences integrates arts and sciences to conduct multi-faceted research on the complex problem of the environment”. One programme places emphasis on the international and highly skilled faculty members (Hokkaido). Other programmes (Tohoku, Nagoya, Tokyo) mention the interactional exchange that students will gain as a result of joining the programme. Compared to the Japanese HEIs, the EMI programmes in Malaysian HEI’s seem to highlight the professionalism and quality aspect more to meet industry or employability needs. This is present in the programme description of IIUM’s Bachelor of Law programme: “A person who is an LLB graduate is considered a qualified person and is able to start their pupillage immediately. [Legal Profession Act 1976].”. The Bachelor of Computer Science (Software Engineering) programme by UTM lists down all the professional skills certificate programmes that requires all students to pass. Some of these certified programmes include Occupational Safety and Health Awareness (OHSA) and Test of English Communication Skills for Graduating Students (TECS): TECS 1001 (Paper 1 – Oral Interaction) and TECS 1002 (Paper II – Writing).

Conclusion

This study applied the ROAD-MAPPING framework by Dafouz & Smit, (2020) and conducted a comparative analysis on the representation of internationalisation of undergraduate EMI programmes on university websites in Japan and Malaysia. It aimed to provide insights into the diverse context that EMI operates in: Outer Circle country (Malaysia) and Expanding Circle country (Japan) and its influence on the implementation of EMI in Asian higher education. The EMI programme components consisted of: (a) Level of English language proficiency requirements for domestic and international students; (b) Fields of study offered; (c) Medium of Instruction (MoI); (d) Language support and (e) Student admission for domestic and international students. These components were analysed according to the five ROAD-MAPPING dimensions: Roles of English (RO), Academic Discipline (AD), Language Management (M), Agency (A), and Internationalisation and Globalisation (ING). Results showed that the level of English language proficiency for local and domestic students in Japan is generally higher compared to Malaysia. In terms of language support, the courses offered in Japan and Malaysia both exist in the form of English for Academic Purposes, but are noticeably separated from the EMI programmes. The MoI is mostly English in Japan, however, in Malaysia, a bilingual or trilingual approach is used for specific courses like Law and Islamic studies.

From the findings, we can conclude that the driving forces of EMI programmes in Asian universities include at least four factors: (a) the dominance of English as the international language of science and technology; (b) the advantages of learning in English and its link to securing global professional careers; (c) international standardised tests of English language proficiency such as IELTS and TOEFL as entry requirements for non-native speakers; (d) opportunities for international exchange and networking with scholars and researchers from abroad. Implications of this study show the distinctive nature of EMI programmes that are associated with the social, institutional and socioeconomic actuality where it is located.

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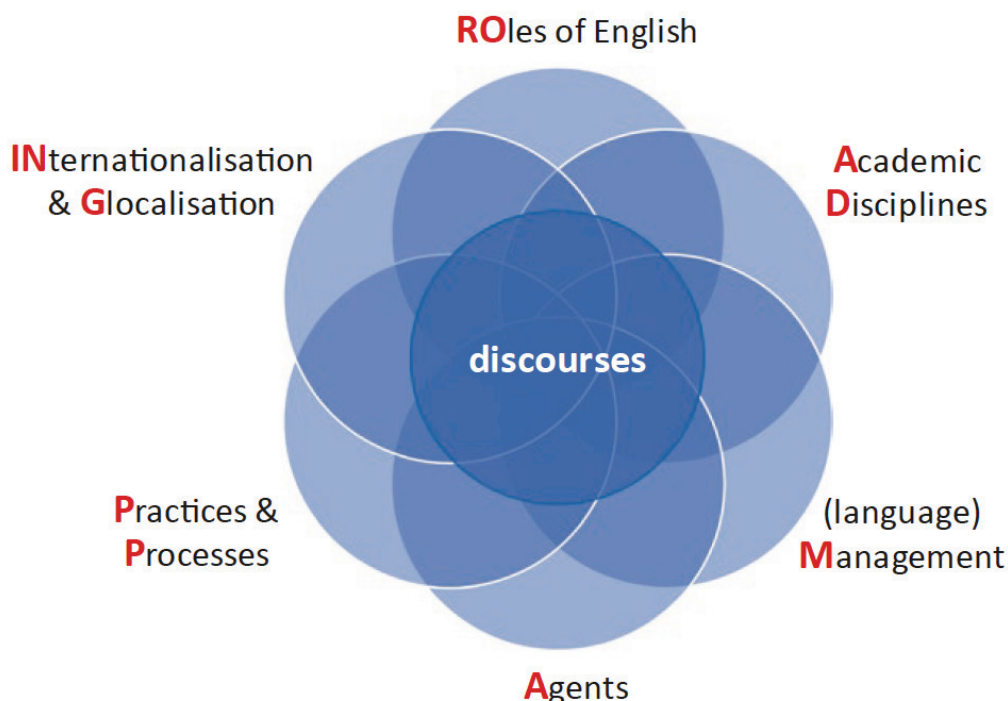
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Figure

Figure 1 : The ROAD-MAPPING framework for EMEMUS (Dafouz & Smit, 2016, p. 404; Dafouz & Smit, 2020, p. 47)



Tables

Table 1 : OECD and partner countries offering tertiary programmes in English (2012)

| USE OF ENGLISH IN INSTRUCTION | OECD AND PARTNER COUNTRIES |
|---|--|
| All or nearly all programmes offered in English | Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States |
| Many programmes offered in English | Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden |
| Some programmes offered in English | Belgium (Fl.), Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Japan, Korea, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Switzerland, Turkey |
| No or nearly no programmes offered in English | Austria, Belgium (Fr.), Chile, Greece, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, Portugal, Russian Federation, Spain |

Source: OECD, compiled from brochures for prospective international students by OAD (Austria), CHES and NARI (Czech Republic), Cirus (Denmark), CIMO (Finland), EduFrance (France), DAAD (Germany), Campus Hungary (Hungary), University of Iceland (Iceland), JPSS (Japan), NIIED (Korea), NUFFIC (Netherlands), SIU (Norway), CRASP (Poland), Swedish Institute (Sweden) and Middle-East Technical University (Turkey). (OECD, 2014: 346)

Table 2 : Criteria for Categorising Universities (Adapted from Brown & Iyobe, 2014)

| Criteria | Details |
|-----------------|--|
| Size | Small (<2,500 students) Medium (2,500 – 10,000 students) Large (>10,000 students) |
| Status | University National / Public |
| Position of EMI | Established / Newly forming Positioned as language / content programme or multiple EMI programmes |

Table 3 : Universities and degree programmes studied in Japan (Adapted from Bradford, 2023)

| University | Type | EMI Programme | University size (approx. undergraduate employment) | Major field of study | Year EMI programme established | Approx. number of students admitted each year (of which international students) |
|---------------------|----------|--|--|--|--------------------------------|---|
| Nagoya University | National | Japan-in-Asia Cultural Studies Program (JACS) | 10,000 | Humanities | 2011 | (5-10) |
| Hokkaido University | National | Integrated Science Program (ISP) | 12,000 | Cross-disciplinary science | 2017 | (12) |
| University of Tokyo | National | International Program on Japan in East Asia International Program on Environmental Sciences | 14,000 | Humanities Environmental Sciences | 2015 | (5) |
| Tohoku University | National | International Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering | 10,000 | Engineering | 2010 | (N/A) |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--|------------------|--|--|--|--|
| | | Course (IMAC) | | | | |
|--|--|------------------|--|--|--|--|

Table 4: Universities and degree programmes studied in Malaysia

| University | Type | EMI Programme | University size (approx. undergraduate employment) | Major field of study | Year EMI programme established |
|---|-------------|---|---|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Universiti Malaya | Public | Bachelor of Muamalat Management | 17,182 | Islamic Studies | 1996 |
| Universiti Teknologi Malaysia | Public | Bachelor of Computer Science (Software Engineering) | 16,424 | Engineering | N/A |
| Universiti Sains Malaysia | Public | Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) Aerospace Engineering | 15,000 | Engineering | 1999 |
| International Islamic University Malaysia | Public | Bachelor of Laws (Honours) | 17,731 | Law | 1983 |

Enhancing SCT in High-Risk Work Environments: A Comprehensive Framework for Effective Communication

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Abstract

This paper emphasizes the imperative of measuring SCT on oil and gas platforms for enhanced safety, environmental protection, and global energy sustainability. This study addresses the unique challenges of high-risk platforms, emphasizing the pivotal role of SC and CS in fostering a robust safety culture, focusing on technical, structural, and process safety dimensions. The research explores their impact on personnel SCT, which is crucial in environments where incidents can be fatal. The proposed framework incorporates indicators for key personnel management variables, outlining the interdependence of SC, CS, and SCT. It also explores the creation of perceptions regarding management commitment to safety by positioning it as a leadership construct using a multidimensional commitment framework. The research examines worker SCT from affective, normative, and calculative perspectives. The research will employ a mixed-methods design (Quantitative + Qualitative) with interviews (n=10) and surveys (n=250). The study will investigate the theoretical conceptualization of SCT among workers. The study offers a predictive framework considering diverse demographics and communicative events, aiming to lower incident rates and near misses, emphasizing the correlation between SC, commitment, and incidents. This research provides a holistic perspective for managing critical personnel resources on oil and gas platforms.

Keywords: Safety communication; CS; safety management system; High-risk work environment; SCT; Oil and gas industry.

1. Introduction

The genesis of numerous catastrophic accidents within global industries, both historical and contemporary, often stems from the deficiency or inadequate implementation of SC within occupational health and safety management systems (OSHMS). Despite the widespread understanding of OSHMS principles, organizations across various sectors consistently incur substantial losses and inefficiencies due to increased work-related illnesses and injuries. Emphasizing safety communication (SC) as a pivotal variable is crucial for addressing these challenges. A 2022 report from the International Labour Organization (ILO) on "employees' health and safety" underscores the imperative for heightened efforts in enhancing SC to improve employees' health and safety. The report highlights that, globally, over 2.3 million occupational accidents occur annually, contributing to an estimated daily death toll of over 6000 employees (Moon, 2022; Safety, 2014).

Furthermore, the ILO approximates that globally, one worker succumbs to occupational injuries every 15 seconds, and approximately 160 workers contract work-related illnesses

(Demba, Ceesay, & Mendy, 2013; Moon, 2022; Safety, 2014). In addition to causing occupational injuries and diseases, workplace accidents have far-reaching financial implications for organizations (Kheni, Dainty, & Gibb, 2008; Nwankwo, Arewa, Theophilus, & Esenowo, 2022). Numerous studies within the domain of behavior-based safety posit that hazardous incidents are primarily instigated by unsafe or inappropriate actions of workers, prompting extensive research on behaviours fostering safety and injury prevention (Takala et al., 2014). It is imperative to note, however, that workplace safety is not exclusively attributable to human error, as various other factors may also significantly contribute to safety outcomes (Berglund, 2020; Zheng, Xiang, Song, & Wang, 2010).

In industrial safety, the impact of organizational dynamics, particularly the influence of managerial decisions and behaviour, is unequivocal (Oppong, 2014; Sugiono, Ali, & Miranda, 2020). Within this framework, the nexus of SC, communication satisfaction (CS), and safety commitment (SCT) emerges as pivotal for cultivating a robust safety culture within organizations. As a linchpin organizational factor, leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping safety performance (Amponsah-Tawiah & Dartey-Baah, 2011; Oppong, 2014). The strategic implementation of SC, led by adept leaders and managers, becomes paramount in articulating safety expectations, goals, and values to all workforce levels. A well-crafted SC strategy contributes to cultivating a positive safety climate, a factor consistently associated with promoting safe behaviours (Abad, Lafuente, & Vilajosana, 2013; Neal, Griffin, & Hart, 2000). Whereas, CS, reflecting an individual's positive assessment of organisational communication, dovetails seamlessly with SC. When employees perceive that safety-related information is communicated effectively, it enhances their satisfaction with overall communication processes (ABDIEN, 2019). This positive synergy fosters a conducive environment for understanding and adhering to safety protocols.

Furthermore, direct managers and supervisors exemplify SCT as a foundation in effective OHSM (Jalalkamali, Ali, Hyun, & Nikbin, 2016; Jaupi & Llaci, 2015). Leaders who articulate and demonstrate an unwavering commitment to safety principles instil a sense of responsibility and dedication among employees toward maintaining a safe work environment, fostering a resilient safety culture. Establishing robust SC channels, ensuring CS, and nurturing a pervasive culture of SCT among leadership, collectively contribute significantly to promoting safe behaviours and mitigating the risk of workplace injuries (Zahiri Harsini et al., 2020).

This study aims to present a specialised conceptual framework tailored for the oil and gas industry, focusing on dimensions crucial to safety and communication. Specifically, it delves into SC and CS, recognising their significance in ensuring a comprehensive and effective strategy within the industry. The theoretical discussion highlights the role of communication strategies, particularly SC, in conveying crucial information during various stages. The proposed conceptual framework, designed for the oil and gas sector, explicitly integrates SC and CS as crucial dimensions. It emphasises their importance in creating a conducive environment for successful and safe operations, providing valuable insights for practitioners and policymakers.

a. Background

Mitigating accidents on a site becomes achievable through meticulous safety planning, adept management procedures, and establishing a safety-centric culture. A pivotal aspect of accident prevention lies in the early identification of risks before operational activities commence.

While the causes of accidents may vary across sectors, they invariably align with accident causation theories (Hosseinian & Torghabeh, 2012). Notably, in the late 1920s (Heinrich, Petersen, & Roos, 1980) conducted a comprehensive study on industrial accidents, revealing that a staggering 88% of 75,000 accidents were linked to risky workers' behaviour. These stats underscore the significance of addressing human errors in accident prevention. The Human Factor Theory, accident/incident theory, Behaviour-Based Safety (BBS), Turner's model, and the Swiss cheese model all echo this sentiment (Andersson, 2012). Human errors are a predominant factor, placing the responsibility for accident prevention squarely on the shoulders of both management and employees, necessitating a collaborative effort.

Integrating SC and CS emerges as crucial components in this context. Effective SC becomes the conduit for conveying risk-related information, fostering an environment where employees are well-informed and engaged in accident prevention measures. Simultaneously, promoting CS enhances the receptiveness and understanding of safety protocols, establishing a culture where employees feel heard and valued. As management endeavours to develop safety systems for enhancing job safety, employees need to comprehend these systems and adhere to safety rules, compliance, and active participation. While both employees and management share responsibility, the organisation plays a central role in supporting its workforce through training and education to enhance SC (Abad et al., 2013; Vinodkumar & Bhasi, 2010; Zerguine, Tamrin, & Jalaludin, 2018). SC influences optimal safety outcomes (Alcantara, Whetten, & Alcantara, 2021; Griffin & Neal, 2000).

While prior research has delved into various safety-related concerns, such as exploring the mediating role of CS in safety management and behaviour (Griffin & Neal, 2000; Zerguine et al., 2018), there has been a notable gap in studies about SC and OHSMS within the Malaysian oil and gas sector. Notably, there is a dearth of research focused on work-related accidents and injuries, a critical aspect in this high-risk industry (Achaw & Boateng, 2012; Acheampong & Akumperigya, 2018; Toseafa, Bata, & Toseafa, 2018). The scarcity of such studies is noteworthy, especially considering that previous research has highlighted significant deficiencies in applying OHSMS and policies within this sector. Despite the burgeoning nature of Malaysia's oil and gas sector, a substantial body of literature documents severe catastrophes and critical workplace accidents prevalent in the global oil and gas industry (Hayes, 2012; Hopkins, 2008; Oppong, 2014).

In the context of this study, it is anticipated that the growing occurrence of occupational accidents and work-related injuries in developing countries, such as Malaysia, stems not only from the ineffective implementation of safety management systems but also from insufficient SC and CS or lack of effective communication among workers. Therefore, investigating such aspects in a high-risk industry holds significant relevance for managers, safety practitioners, and policymakers. This study addresses this gap by offering insights into the mediating role of CS in the relationship between SC and SCT. The framework encompasses the impact of SC on SCT within each oil and gas organisation considered in the study, as outlined in the discussion section.

b. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is two-fold. Firstly, it contributes significantly to organisational behavioural studies and communication domains. A deep dive into the nuanced dynamics of SC advances the comprehension of how effective communication can mould safety culture and

commitment, especially within high-risk work environments such as offshore oil and gas platforms. Secondly, this research bears substantial practical importance, furnishing valuable knowledge to steer organisations in nurturing the well-being and advancement of their employees amid challenging circumstances. It aims to pinpoint the crucial elements of organisational culture and employee engagement while investigating the pivotal role organisations can play in this dynamic.

In thriving organisations where robust organizational communication is pivotal for cultivating a resilient safety culture, this study aligns with the pressing necessity for organisations to empower employees to actively contribute to safety, quality, and overall success not merely out of obligation but through genuine commitment. Essentially, this research furnishes actionable insights that can assist organisations in ameliorating safety, elevating employee well-being, and instilling a culture of safety and excellence in high-hazard settings like offshore oil and gas platforms. Examining communication variables such as SC, communication climate, and CS provides a guide for organisations navigating the complexities of fostering a robust safety culture and ensuring the dedication of their personnel.

2. Safety and Health Communication Nexus

In occupational safety, an accident is commonly defined as an unplanned event resulting in injury, damage, or loss. Historically, work-related accidents were considered inevitable and viewed as a natural part of the work cycle. Early perceptions, clouded by insufficient evidence or biased perspectives, often attributed accidents to random acts of nature. The emergence of the 'accident proneness theory' in the early modern era suggested a predisposition for specific individuals to be more accident-prone, a notion widely contested by contemporary researchers.

Today, the prevailing view acknowledges that accidents result from a complex interplay of factors rather than individual predispositions. Various accident causation models aim to unravel the intricate web of contributory elements, encompassing both unsafe working conditions (such as lack of effective communication, inadequate safeguards, suboptimal tools, etc.) and unsafe acts (instances where safety rules are disregarded, potentially involving chemical handling without proper protection, or working under the influence). In the context of post-COVID-19 world, where the significance of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) is heightened, new labour market demands, such as teleworking and the diligent use of protective measures, underscore the need for innovative approaches to health and safety. education emerges as a pivotal strategy to instil a proactive safety culture, empowering future generations with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate OSH challenges.

In this dynamic landscape, SC, CS, and SCT become linchpins for fostering a safety culture. Effective communication ensures workers are well-informed about safety protocols, which increases CS. Concurrently, a strong commitment to safety, embedded in organisational practices and employee mindset, further strengthens the preventive approach to OSH issues. This proactive stance aligns with the broader goals of inclusive and equitable education, as outlined in SDG 4, emphasising the importance of relevant skills for employment and entrepreneurship.

3. Literature Review

a. Safety Communication (SC)

In the contemporary business landscape, increasing numbers of enterprises place SC at the forefront of their core values. This heightened focus on a secure workplace boosts employee

morale and proves advantageous for the overall business trajectory. As per the "Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index (Insurance, 2020)," an investment of \$1 in workplace safety can yield an impressive \$4 return on investment. SC emerges as a pivotal tool across all business facets, and the workplace is no exception.

Effectively communicating safety hazards, regulations, goals, warnings, area guidelines, rules, and progress reports to employees through various media channels is essential for establishing a truly protected workplace (Alcantara et al., 2021). The broader context of SC encompasses organizational safety culture, leadership, and group climates (Paolucci, Sangiorgi, & Mariani, 2021). Incorporating researcher-based evaluation and feedback mechanisms for operational and production workers significantly enhances daily oral SC, resulting in elevated levels of safety performance in the workplace environment (Mambwe, Mwanaumo, Thwala, & Aigbavboa, 2021; Rasool, Samma, Wang, Zhao, & Zhang, 2019).

Several scholars, in their conceptualizations and evaluations of safety culture across various industries, have underscored the importance of SC (Cigularov, Chen, & Rosecrance, 2010; Kim & Scott, 2019; Pinto, Nunes, & Ribeiro, 2011). A robust safety culture entails a shared set of organizational ideals aimed at risk reduction, where individuals across the organizational hierarchy prioritize the creation of a safe workplace (Lyndon et al., 2015). Poor safety culture and communication have been implicated in notorious health and safety catastrophes, highlighting the potency of strategies to foster improved safety practices (Vecchio-Sadus, 2007).

While employee errors are not the primary source of blame, inadequate management actions, such as neglecting the establishment of effective communication channels or disregarding employee feedback, can result in substantial financial losses (Johnsen et al., 2020). Enhancing health and SC systems, including refining communication channels, recording essential information, and employing effective employee feedback mechanisms, can potentially elevate a company's safety culture. The hypothesis posits that effective SC, involving clear and informative discussions about safety procedures and hazards within an organization, is expected to correlate positively with individuals' level of SCT (Asibey, Amponsah, & Yeboah, 2019; Mashi, Subramaniam, & Johari, 2020). In essence, the belief is that improved communication on safety matters will lead to a more incredible dedication among employees to actively participate in safety protocols, adhere to guidelines, and foster a culture where safety is prioritized. This hypothesis forms the basis for investigating the empirical relationship between SC practices and the observed commitment to safety within a workplace. Thus, the first and second hypothesis of the study are:

H1: Safety communication will have a positive impact on communication satisfaction.

H2: Safety communication will have a positive impact on safety commitment.

b. Communication Satisfaction (CS)

The motivation of employees is deeply impacted by CS, as their engagement in organizational work relies on perceiving fulfilling communication. This encompasses various forms of satisfaction in communication, such as supervisory, integration, media, co-worker, corporate, and personal satisfaction, relevant in any organizational context. In organizations where communication is effective, there is a notable increase in employee satisfaction. Numerous studies underscore the connection between CS and incidents in high-risk work environments.

When employees lack confidence and satisfaction in received information, it reduces satisfaction levels, contributing to hazards (ABDIEN, 2019). As a result, this study aims to explore the impact of CS on SCT.

Several researchers have characterized CS as an individual's contentment with various facets of communication in interpersonal, group, and organisational settings (Downs & Hazen, 1977; Jalalkamali et al., 2016). According to (Verčič & Špoljarić, 2020), CS is generally perceived as an emotional response resulting from the fulfilment of expectations during information exchange, indicating a gratifying experience. A satisfying communication environment, characterised by clarity, openness, and effectiveness, is expected to enhance employees' acquisition and understanding of safety-related information. This hypothesis suggests that CS mediates the relationship between SC and SCT. In other words, the impact of SC on SCT is not direct but operates through the satisfaction individuals derive from communication processes. It implies that effective SC influences CS, and, in turn, this satisfaction contributes to a higher level of commitment to safety. This hypothesis reflects that the quality of CS acts as a bridge, explaining how and why SC practices can influence individuals' commitment to safety in a workplace or organisational setting (Musah, Zulkipli, & Ahmad, 2017; Trippas, Spina, Cavedon, & Sanderson, 2017). However, the third hypothesis of the study is;

H3: Communication satisfaction mediates the relationship between safety communication and safety commitment.

c. Safety Commitment (SCT)

According to (Kucherov, McDonald, Ivanov, & Rose, 2015), enhanced SCT arises when front-line individuals improve their behaviours. However, these behaviours are likely to change only under the guidance of influential leaders who foster a sense of belonging within the team. Recognising this, oil and gas companies increasingly invest in safety leadership training programs. The objective is to empower leaders to establish a personal and organisational commitment to safety, transcending daily personnel behaviour. This involves equipping leaders to drive cultural and behavioural changes on the front line and ensuring the sustainability of safety leadership within the organisation (Naji et al., 2020).

Effective communication is pivotal in aligning people, processes, tasks, and systems to achieve health, safety, and environmental (HSE) goals purposefully and cooperatively. How security is communicated significantly influences whether individuals accept and engage in safety processes, with language as an indicator of acceptance (Kalteh, Mortazavi, Mohammadi, & Salehi, 2019). This hypothesis posits that individuals who are content and satisfied with communication processes within an organisational context are likely to exhibit a higher level of commitment to safety. In simpler terms, when employees find the communication within the organisation fulfilling, clear, and compelling, it is expected to contribute positively to their commitment to safety practices (Tripathi & Agarwal, 2017). The hypothesis suggests a correlation between the satisfaction individuals derive from communication and their dedication to maintaining a safe environment. A positive communication experience may foster a more substantial commitment to safety measures and protocols. The fourth hypothesis of the study is;

H4: Communication satisfaction will have a positive impact on safety commitment.

d. High-Risk Workplace Environment

A high-risk workplace environment is characterised as involving work or processes with a high level of inherent dangers, capable of causing physical injury, mental illness, psychological impact, and exposure to biological hazards (Chau et al., 2014; Dahl & Kongsvik, 2018; Dembe, Delbos, & Erickson, 2008; Olivares, Rivera, & McLeod, 2014; Zara, Nordin, & Isha, 2023). Figure 1 presents the factors that can contribute to improve the safety at high-risk workplaces. Industries falling under this classification encompass construction, mining, manufacturing, and oil and gas. It pertains to workplaces where the nature of the work is associated with high-risk activities, including those in construction, mining, manufacturing, oil and gas, or related sectors. Certain businesses are also considered high risk when potential outcomes can lead to systemic failures, evidenced by statistics of poor compliance with work health and safety regulations (Chau et al., 2014).

The high-risk work environment significantly impacts the health and safety of millions of employees daily, characterised by stress, overtime, extended shifts, and task performances, thereby increasing the risk of injury (Lindøe, Baram, & Paterson, 2013; Liu, Nkrumah, Akoto, Gyabeng, & Nkrumah, 2020). It can also be defined as a workplace with a risk of psychological and physical damage, including the potential harm to co-workers or the distribution of risk exposure in group work experiences (Fan et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2020). Essentially, any work involving hazardous, flammable, or explosive materials that pose a threat to the worker's health, life, and overall well-being, whether physically or mentally, falls under the category of a high-risk workplace environment (Dembe et al., 2008; Sommer, Ness, & Borg, 2018).

Due to its numerous hazards, the oil and gas industry is considered a particularly high-risk work environment. Some studies define this risk in the oil and gas industry as work or processes that could lead to fatal outcomes in the case of miscommunication or a simple mistake involving multiple hazards like fire, explosion, dangerous emissions, electrical or structural damage, and potential loss of life (Tang, Leiliabadi, & Olugu, 2017; Zara et al., 2023). Another definition highlights workplaces with highly flammable materials, such as heavy hydrocarbons, naphtha B, and bitumen, where even minor miscommunication, mishandling, or maladministration can result in a significant accident (Chettouh, Hamzi, & Benaroua, 2016).

4. Communication Model

Significant efforts contribute to creating the general method for improving safety, and it is perceived that cultural and behavioural issues need to be addressed to achieve this enhancement. Although this is the best way to diversify the safety in the organisation, it might constrain its usefulness. Effective safety processes must improvise different techniques or installations during the early stages of developing their safety measures. Thus, a model has been designed to determine an organisation's safety procedures and identify and recognise actions required to improve workplace safety.

Few studies proposed a communication model that involves improving communication elements during multiple stages in work practice (Bambang Sulistyono P, Fatma Lestari, & Puji Lestari, 2022). This model is anticipated to reduce miscommunication in the overall management system. Lack of an effective communication climate and horizontal and vertical communication between leaders and followers, creating misunderstandings during operational duties. Therefore, the communication gap between supervisors and workers remains a concern. This model tends to emphasise broader contributing factors that significantly impact accidental

causes. This model demonstrated that an effective management system needs to manage major risks and must depend on measuring the work performance of the system to control hazards to ensure they are working as intended.

The communication model (also presented and briefed in Figure 2) focuses on ten significant dimensions of safety, such as safety procedure, individual safety practice, interpersonal communication with co-workers and supervisors, training and motivation, supervisory structure, self-learning, personal growth, leadership style, and employee commitment. These dimensions were also addressed in previous studies regarding workplace safety and identified factors used in other major frameworks in the different industries grounded in empirical research (Chau et al., 2014; Frazier, Ludwig, Whitaker, & Roberts, 2013; Vinodkumar & Bhasi, 2010). Based on the abovementioned dimensions, the proposed framework also considers exploring the four communication dimensions: CS, communication climate, SC, and SCT.

SC is considered a significant predictor of employee performance. The communication model demonstrates this concept clearly, which perceives communication as one of the proximal components that affect work performance. It's a common assumption that supervisors don't understand how to convey information more quickly during operation duties so subordinates can easily understand it. On the other hand, employees feel afraid to share their opinions and advise the management. Lack of effective communication is the primary cause of accidents in the oil and gas industry. However, due to miscommunication, workers and management could not complete the project on time, negatively impacting the organisation's business. Many organisations have unclear and inappropriate safety procedures and supervisory structures that cause hazards and incidents in the workplace. The oil and gas industry needs an appropriate communication model in which solid interpersonal communication develops between supervisors and workers. There is a need to propose a new communication model to improve safety practices for implementing SC. The communication model applies to encoding, interpreting, decoding, transmitting, receiving feedback, and sharing information frequently. Communication elements such as communication climate, satisfaction, and SC play a significant role in solving problems using communication media across the organization. The communication model helps the industry identify the existing safety issues and effectively achieve desirable results to improve safety in the workplace.

5. Conceptual Framework

This study has established a framework based on the hypothesis (H1 to H4) to elucidate the interconnectedness of good SC, CS, and SCT (also depicted in Figure 3). The proposed framework will prove the developed hypothesis will have a significant impact on SCT. The framework highlights three key variables: SC, CS, and SCT. In this study, SC is posited as an independent variable assumed to influence SCT, the dependent variable. The interconnection between SC and SCT is proposed to be mediated through CS. This research scrutinizes the significance of CS in mediating the relationship between SC and SCT within the Malaysian petrochemical and oil and gas industries. The study explores diverse risk reduction and accident prevention avenues by validating the framework components in the Malaysian setting.

The findings of this study aspire to contribute to an enhanced understanding of the factors influencing employee SCT and strategies for promoting positive safety behaviors. Consequently, the developed model of employee SC is anticipated to foster improvements in worker productivity, well-being, and overall safety in the workplace. The study employs

questionnaires based on "social exchange theory" (SET) to assess the efficiency of exchanges in the realms of communication, CS, and SCT (Acheampong & Akumperigya, 2018; Nwankwo et al., 2022).

a. Theory Of Planned Behaviour

Safety attitude, in addition to individual elements, plays a role in influencing risk-taking behavior (Ulleberg & Rundmo, 2003). The impact of attitude on behavior is expounded in Ajzen's theory of planned behavior (1991). One can delve into social psychology research to grasp the nuances of perspectives, particularly in persuasion (Fazio & Olson, 2014; Guldenmund, 2000). In essence, an attitude is a psychological construct involving an evaluation of an object, resulting in a positive or negative outcome, ranging from weak to vigorous (Battaglia, Frey, & Passetti, 2014; Demba et al., 2013). This evaluation can manifest as preferences such as like or dislike, good or bad, desirable or undesirable, approach or avoid, pleasant or unpleasant, and harmful or beneficial (Fugas, Silva, & Meliá, 2012; Gardner, 2003)

Attitudes encompass three classic components: cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Guldenmund, 2000; Purdham, 1980), commonly known as the tripartite (Fazio & Olson, 2007). These components correspond to what people think (cognitive), feel (affective), and do (behavioral) concerning the object (Fazio & Olson, 2007; Purdham, 1980), which in safety terms could be safety rules, injuries, hazards, personal protective equipment, safety management, or activities like phoning while driving. Attitudes evolve through a process involving a pre-formed perspective in memory and newly assessed experiences. Ajzen's theory (1991) adds that subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and attitude shape a person's intention to behave. Figure 4 illustrates that perceived behavioral control can directly influence behavior, emphasizing its importance in determining behavioral intention. Notably, the theory of planned behavior pertains to planned behavior, while safety behavior often involves non-intentional actions.

The 'MODE-model' or Motivation and Opportunity as Determinants of the attitude-behavior relation (ABDIEN, 2019; Fazio, 1990) and the 'strength-model of self-control' (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000) elucidate whether a spontaneous or well-thought-out behavior will be executed. According to (Newnam & Goode, 2019), motivation and ample opportunity are essential for contemplating future behavior, involving extensive cognitive work and energy. Without these, attitudes in memory may guide behavior without conscious deliberation (Fazio & Olson, 2007, 2014). The strength model of self-control posits that executing behavior misaligned with one's attitude requires self-control, acting as a limited resource subject to ego depletion (Acheampong & Akumperigya, 2018; Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). Consequently, a person might adhere to safety plans in normal circumstances but may engage in risky behavior when depleted of available resources.

6. Research Design

This study adopts a positivist design with a deductive approach, utilizing a mixed-methods (Quantitative + Qualitative) strategy for data collection. Semi-structured interviews and physical questionnaires will be employed to enhance clarity for respondents. The study is cross-sectional for efficiency in time and cost. The population consists of oil and gas workers, specifically from Malaysia's downstream sector, with a sample size of 250 selected from production and operational departments, as determined by the (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) table. A stratified sampling approach will be used to collect data from all levels of active industry

workers, ensuring precision and minimizing biases. Respondents from the operational and production departments are chosen for their exposure to significant occupational challenges. Data analysis will employ the Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) statistical tool, following the (Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007), allowing for model modifications based on the obtained results.

7. Discussion

The conceptual framework and accompanying guide introduced in this paper present a novel way of comprehending and evaluating SC. Originally crafted as a tool for regulatory bodies and practitioners in the oil and gas sector, its applicability extends to any industry navigating high-risk and dynamically evolving landscapes. This framework boasts several advantageous attributes facilitating a more comprehensive and systemic perspective on SC. In the subsequent sections, the study delineates the practical applications revolving around strategies of effective communication that the conceptual framework and guide facilitate. Subsequently, engage in a discussion regarding aspects warranting additional development and application.

Initially, the study developed the hypothesis (H1 to H4) after rigorously reviewing the literature and analyzing the issues encountered in safety practices. The hypothesis are designed considering their impact and influence on safety practices. Subsequently, the framework is developed on the foundation of these hypothesis. Afterward, the study delves into three ways such that the framework enriches the comprehension of SC within high-risk environments. Firstly, the framework systematically defines SC, elucidating its manifestation in contexts marked by uncertainty and interdependence. It incorporates a communication model that underscores the intricacies of information exchange in dynamic settings.

Secondly, acknowledging the inherent challenge of directly observing SC, the framework introduces a structured approach to evaluate enabling capital. These capitals encompass factors such as CS, emphasizing their pivotal role in fostering effective SC. The model posits that satisfaction in communication channels is integral to enhancing employee SCT.

Furthermore, the framework establishes a linkage between CS and SCT, elucidating how a positive communication environment contributes to a higher commitment to safety protocols. This connection underscores the importance of not only the quantity but also the quality of communication in cultivating a robust safety culture within high-risk work environments. The framework significantly strides by methodically incorporating SC into a comprehensive assessment guide. SC is a pivotal element in establishing and reinforcing organizational safety. However, the term 'communication' is often invoked broadly, encompassing various factors contributing to safety, making it challenging to precisely define and manage (Cox & Flin, 1998; Lee & Kim, 2021). Despite its recognition as a causal factor in accidents, its nebulous nature has hindered practical definition and management.

Historically, communication tools have assessed diverse elements, spanning individual motivations, group processes, job characteristics, organizational norms, and safety management systems. While this approach offers a thorough evaluation, it often stands alone, lacking systematic links to other framework components like communication skills within human capital or monitoring systems within organizational capital. To address this, the framework presents a more specific conceptualization of the social foundations of communication, enhancing the integration of SC assessment. (Bills & Agostini, 2009; Luo & Zhang, 2022) underscored the regulator's need to incorporate SC into broader assessments for

overseeing entry and ongoing operations in offshore facilities. By defining the content of SC in terms of social capital, the proposed framework offers conceptual clarity for regulators and operators. It establishes systematic links between SC assessment and other safety evaluation forms. This approach ensures a more interconnected and holistic understanding of safety within the organizational context.

The proposed study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on SC by illustrating that a psychosocially safe culture can mitigate psychological distress and reduce fatalities even in high-risk work environments. Limited research has explored this connection in contexts prone to accidents and deaths (Dollard & Bakker, 2010; Feng, Teo, Ling, & Low, 2014; Mirza, Isha, Memon, Azeem, & Zahid, 2022; Rasool, Wang, Zhang, & Samma, 2020). Furthermore, past studies predominantly used injuries as a gauge for workplace safety, neglecting the exploration of how SC influences SCT among workers. This research fills a notable void in occupational safety and health literature. Drawing on the SCT concept (Stemn, Bofinger, Cliff, & Hassall, 2019; Yang, Wang, Chang, Guo, & Huang, 2009), the proposed framework indicates that employees exhibit enhanced SCT and contribute to a positive safety culture when engaged in effective SC. While the assessment primarily centred on safety leadership, it underscored the necessity of tailoring safety approaches to the contextual demands of diverse businesses concerning workplace safety. The revelations of the study highlight that addressing human error is as pivotal as attending to physical factors to elevate worker safety performance, particularly in high-risk sectors like oil and gas. This study augments the occupational CS base by advocating for a holistic approach. Industries grappling with stressful working conditions, like oil and gas, should prioritize safety culture variables to augment employee safety performance. Future research on safety enhancement strategies should encompass safety management and SC considerations dimensions. The present study delved into the influence of SC on SCT, driven explicitly by CS, yielding valuable insights for the broader understanding of safety culture."

8. Conclusion

This study delves deeply into SC within the oil and gas industry, focusing mainly on effective communication. The research successfully constructed four hypotheses (H1 to H4) and developed a framework based on those hypotheses to improve safety practices through effective communication. The research features its vital role in disseminating critical information, ensuring a thorough understanding of safety protocols among all individuals, and recognizing SC as a linchpin for a robust safety culture. A positive safety environment, characterized by openness and trust, is pivotal in facilitating meaningful safety discussions. Furthermore, the satisfaction derived from communication processes, reflecting personnel contentment, is intricately linked to heightened engagement in safety measures.

The proposed conceptual framework enriches academic understanding and holds practical significance. By scrutinizing the impact of crucial communication variables on SCT, this study provides organizations with actionable insights, guiding them in fostering resilient safety cultures in high-risk environments. In the unique context of oil and gas platforms, these insights contribute significantly to overarching goals of heightened safety, well-being, and excellence.

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Figures:



Figure 1: High-risk Workplace Environment.

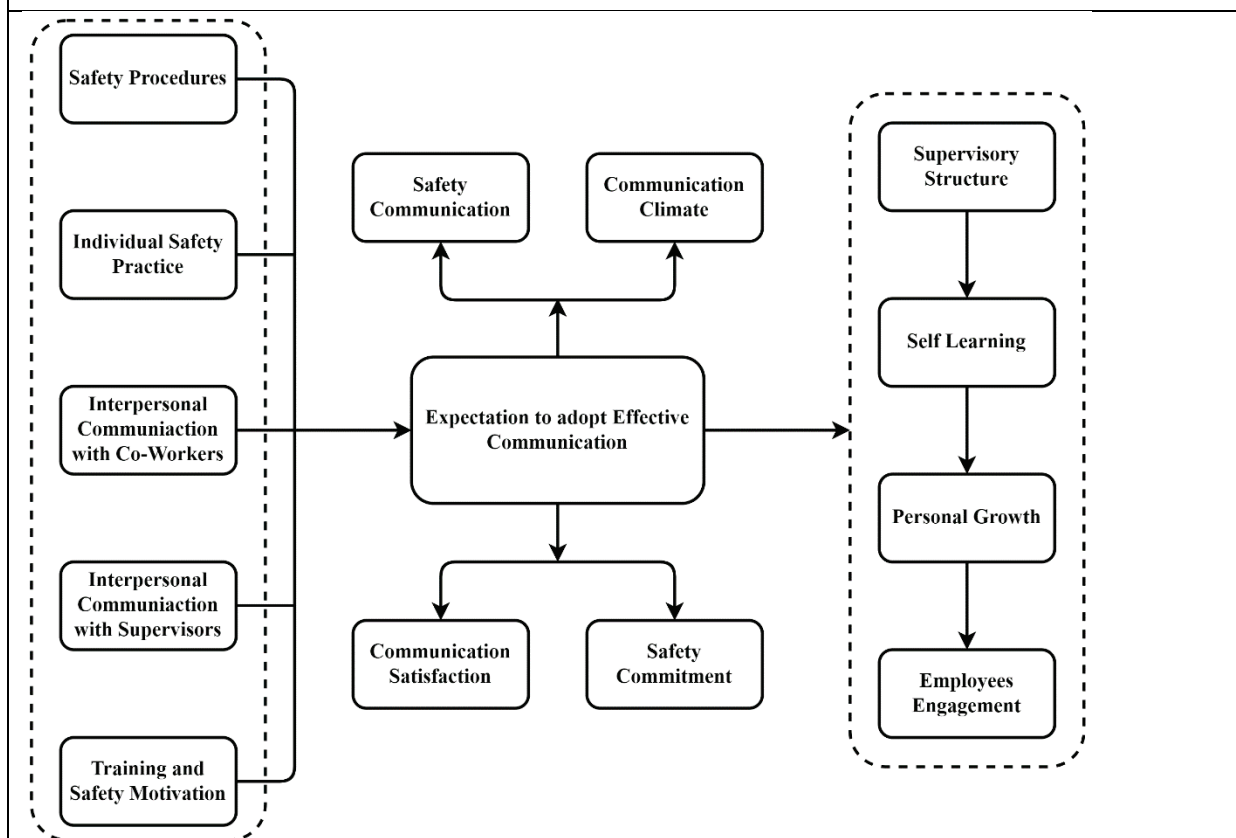


Figure 2: Communication Model.

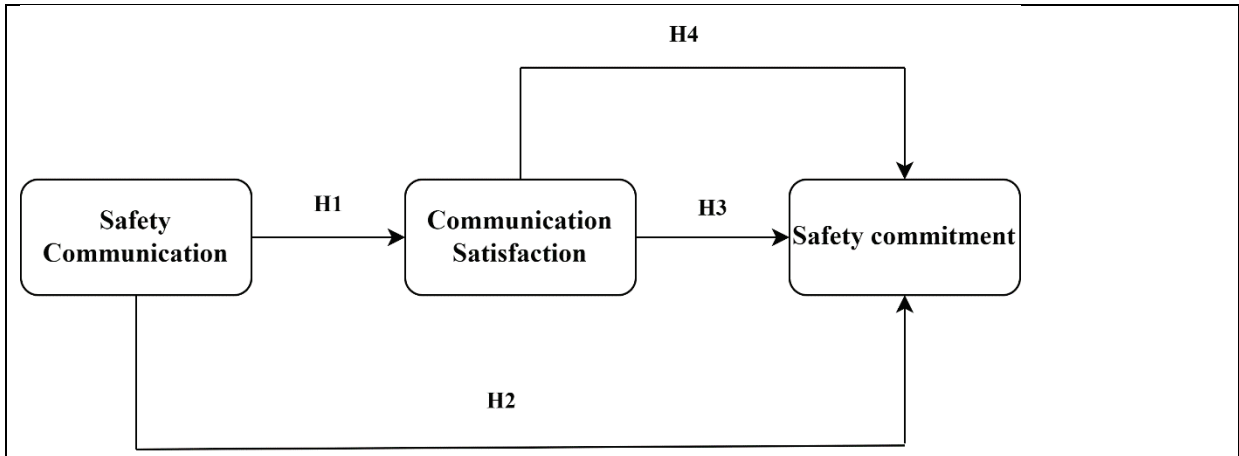


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework.

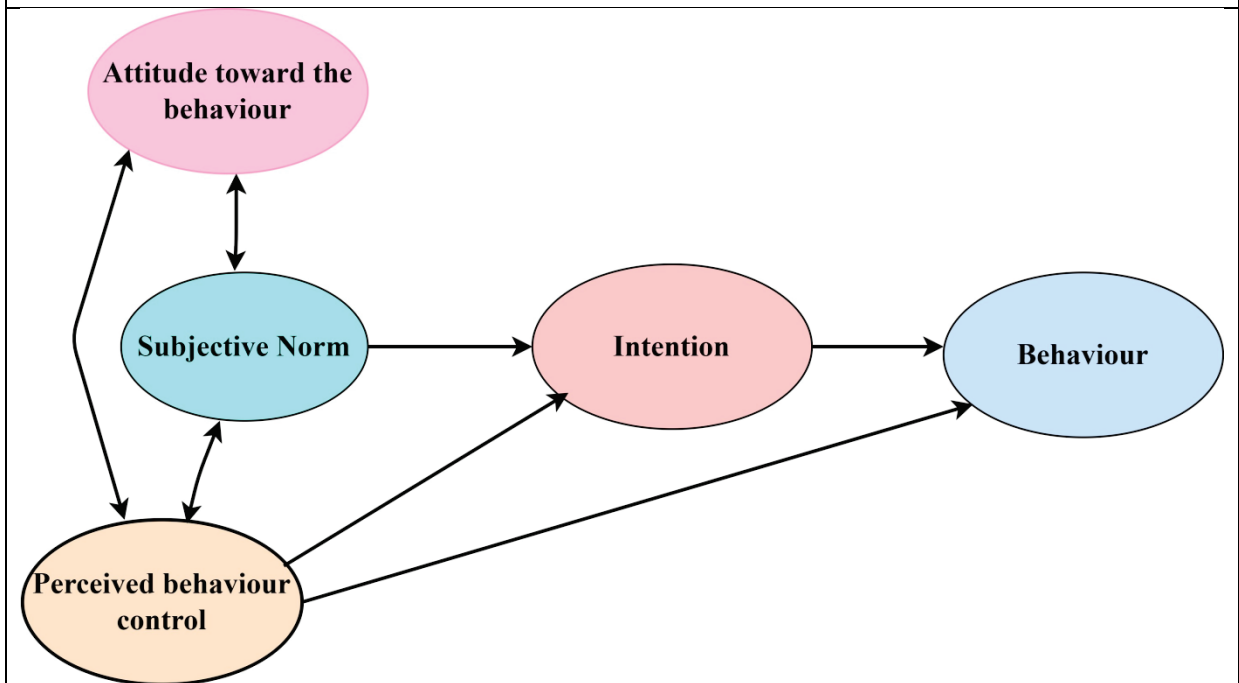


Figure 4: Theory of Planned Behaviour.

Analysis of the Top Ten Chinese Internet Buzzwords from the Perspective of Sociolinguistics

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Abstract

As the Internet expands rapidly in the era of information technology, numerous Internet buzzwords emerge and vanish swiftly. In China, it has been an annual tradition to post the top Internet buzzwords or hot words, which spark heated discussions among Internet users regarding their meanings and usage. However, there is often a lack of clear distinction between buzzwords and hot words, and the overall characteristics and value of Internet language based on the top Internet buzzwords remain largely unexplored. The change of language is, to some extent, interconnected with the change of society. Consequently, with the aim of examining the features and functions of Chinese top Internet buzzwords from the perspective of sociolinguistics, this research specifically focuses on the top ten Chinese Internet buzzwords released by *Language and Character Weekly* from 2019 to 2023 in terms of word formation, topic, and emotion. It could be found that the Internet fosters a virtual speech community that spans across regions among Internet users. The spread of popular dialects and English words contributes to the variation and change of Chinese Internet buzzwords. Moreover, these buzzwords convey diverse emotional meanings. The meaning and usage of Internet buzzwords vary in different periods of society. In conclusion, Internet buzzwords are the product of Internet development, carrying information about the characteristics of society and individuals. There is a need to be more discerning about the Chinese Internet buzzwords from the sociolinguistic perspective, which holds significant implications for understanding the trends of the annual Internet buzzwords in the future.

Keywords: Chinese Internet buzzwords, Internet language, speech community, sociolinguistics

1 Introduction

In contemporary society, the Internet has been an enduring presence, firmly establishing itself as an indispensable component in our daily lives. Crystal (2017) states that if the Internet is a revolution, it is likely to be a linguistic revolution. The rapid development of technology enables individuals to engage in online communication, thereby catalysing the appearance of a unique form of language—the Internet language.

How is Internet usage faring in China? As stated in the 51st report on China's Internet Development by the *China Internet Network Information Centre* (CNNIC, 2023), China counted a staggering 1,067 million netizens as of December 2022, representing a demographic encompassing more than 75% of the Chinese who use the Internet. Besides, the report reveals that individuals aged between 20 and 59 constitute the predominant cohort among Internet users, comprising 67% in total. Furthermore, among the different kinds of personal Internet applications such as online video, instant messaging, live streaming, online payment, etc., instant messaging commands a paramount position, claiming a remarkable 97.2% share in the year 2022.

Significantly, the Internet frequently serves as a platform for the incorporation of Internet buzzwords into people's instant messages or interpersonal communication, in other words.

Indeed, buzzwords emerge as a linguistically potent vehicle for articulating opinions and emotions, not solely within online environments but also within the broader landscape of daily life among the Chinese. Hence, conducting an investigation into the utilisation of Internet buzzwords by the Chinese assumes great significance.

In China, it is a common occurrence to encounter a detailed analysis of some hot Internet buzzwords. The 2021 top ten Internet buzzwords were used to study the spectacle effect of these buzzwords in the context of new media (Jie, 2022). Yanling and Siyu (2022) selected some examples from the list of top Internet buzzwords posted by a publication in China named *YAOWENJIAOZI* to examine the linguistic phenomenon solely from the perspective of emotional relevance. It is acknowledged that, however, the characterization of Chinese Internet buzzwords cannot be ascertained more clearly or convincingly in a certain year. In addition, Internet language can express ideology, culture, emotion, and so on; thus, it is not so persuasive to undertake the features and functions of Internet buzzwords solely from one aspect; that is to say, there is a dearth of comprehensive investigations of different aspects of the characteristics of Internet buzzwords. Consequently, this study endeavours to bridge these gaps by undertaking an analysis of lists compiled by *Language and Character Weekly* from 2019 to 2023, with the following research objectives:

- (1) To examine the characteristics of the top ten Chinese internet buzzwords during the period from 2019 to 2023;
- (2) To analyse the functions of the internet language used by Internet users;
- (3) To propose suggestions on the relationship between language and society on the basis of this investigation.

The following are the corresponding questions in the research:

- (1) What are the characteristics of the top ten Chinese internet buzzwords in recent years?
- (2) What are the functions of the internet language in the virtual speech community?
- (3) What's the relationship between language and society on the basis of this investigation?

2 Literature Review

2.1 Speech Community in Sociolinguistics

The speech community is an important concept in the field of sociolinguistics. Bloomfield (1994) states that a speech community refers to a group of people who use the same set of speech signals. These shared signals serve as the linguistic glue that binds individuals within the community, distinguishing them from others who employ distinct linguistic repertoires.

Rickford (1986) suggests that, within one speech community, not only conflict but also consensus can occur. Rickford's explanation expanded upon its concept by highlighting not only the potential for conflict within these linguistic collectives but also the capacity for consensus. The variability found in speech communities is also extensive because of the rapid and constant changes in time and space. They lead to the constant evolution of speech communities, resulting in the variation and change of language.

With the assistance of the Internet, the way people communicate has shifted, with individuals converging in a virtual space as members of one or more speech communities. Danet and Herring (2007) illustrate that online users are members of one or more speech communities who bring to their online encounters shared knowledge, values, and expectations for linguistic interaction. The freedom of the Internet has enabled individuals to connect with existing communities while also forming new communities of interlocutors who have altered our

concepts of education, sharing, communication, and so on (Morgan, 2014). In essence, the swift development of the Internet has substantively facilitated the establishment of a distinct virtual speech community among its user base in China.

2.2 Internet Language and Buzzwords

It has been observed that the Internet fosters a virtual speech community and a sense of belonging among its online users. The subsequent emergence of social media platforms in the 2000s further accelerated the evolution of the Internet language (Herring, 2013). Platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, notable for their imposition of character limits, have notably incentivized concise and inventive forms of linguistic expression.

Similarly, various online social media platforms in China like Weibo, Boke, WeChat, and so on have broken the traditional mode of media communication, which subtly changed the existing individuals' language communication methods, thereby bringing about a revolution in communication and paving the way for the emergence of a novel phenomenon recognised as the Internet language. The expeditious spread of Internet language wields a considerable influence over public discourse, as exemplified by the widespread utilisation of Internet buzzwords as a prevailing linguistic trend in contemporary China.

Buzzwords refer to voguish words or phrases (Merriam-Webster, 2023) that have become fashionable because they have been used a lot in a particular subject area (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). The buzzwords, hereby, can refer to certain words or phrases popular in a certain area, vanishing quickly sometimes. As different fields are also part of our daily affairs, Internet buzzwords are actually being used in our daily conversation and are in a state of change all the time in such a media era (Lee, 2019). According to Danet and Herring (2006), new buzzwords continuously emerge in response to shifts in online culture, technological advancements, or current events. The Internet buzzwords are the social variance of the modern language, each with its own unique value. Thus, understanding the factors that drive the creation and dissemination of Internet buzzwords is crucial for comprehending their societal impact.

2.3 Annual Top Ten Chinese Internet Buzzwords

Internet buzzwords, being a pervasive feature of contemporary language use, assume a prominent role in the discourse that appears on the Internet. In recent years, this linguistic phenomenon has garnered increasing attention and discussion in China. Furthermore, a well-established tradition exists wherein several official publications undertake the task of ranking the most influential Internet buzzwords or hot words in society. *Language and Character Weekly*, for instance, recognised as one of the foremost authoritative publications in China, annually unveils the list of the top ten Chinese Internet buzzwords every December.

Language and Character Weekly primarily centres its attention on matters pertaining to Chinese language policy, current trends within language research, and a diverse array of linguistic phenomena that permeate the fabric of daily life. Notably, this publication disseminates two distinct annual lists: *the top ten Internet hot words* and *the top ten Internet buzzwords*, each serving unique linguistic purposes. In accordance with official statements by the publication, the hot words list places a heightened emphasis on topics generating fervent discussions, whereas the buzzwords list concentrates on linguistic elements that have achieved widespread use in online discourse. *Language and Character Weekly* started the ranking of the top ten Chinese Internet buzzwords in 2019, and its annual list is widely spread in society and reported in a lot of news.

The process of ranking the top ten Chinese Internet buzzwords follows a multi-stage procedure, such as the recommendations of online users, online voting, and expert reviews. This procedure aligns closely with the core principle of certain interest in words and down-to-earth (Methven,

2022). Within the Chinese context, it is commonplace to encounter a detailed analysis of Internet buzzwords including their origins and the concrete meaning of each buzzword. However, within the broader framework of linguistics and sociology, there are few studies on the overarching development and characteristics of these listed top Internet buzzwords. Consequently, the present research endeavours to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the top ten Internet buzzwords, as compiled by *Language and Character Weekly* from 2019 to 2023, from the perspective of sociolinguistics.

3 Methodology

This study centres its investigation on Internet language with a specific focus on the top ten Chinese Internet buzzwords, a selection drawn from *Language and Character Weekly's* annual releases during the years spanning from 2019 to 2023. The corpus includes 50 Internet buzzwords, as seen in Table 1 (Translation of these buzzwords are collected and listed in the appendix), which are collected as the primary dataset for conducting a rigorous, comprehensive and systematic analysis through a mixed-method approach.

| 年份 | 历年十大网络流行语名单 |
|------|---|
| 2023 | (1) i人/e人; (2) 显眼包; (3) 特种兵旅游; (4) ×门; (5) 遥遥领先; (6) 多巴胺穿搭; (7) 孔乙己文学; (8) 公主/王子, 请××; (9) 你人还怪好的(嘞); (10) 挖呀挖呀挖; |
| 2022 | (1) 栓Q; (2) PUA; (3) 大冤种; (4) 小镇做题家; (5) 团长; (6) 退! 退! 退! (7) 嘴替; (8) 一种很新的××; (9) 服了你个老六; (10) ××刺客; |
| 2021 | (1) 卷; (2) 躺平; (3) 破防; (4) emo; (5) yyds; (6) 夺笋; (7) 赓续; (8) 社恐/社牛; (9) 一整个×住; (10) 普信男/女; |
| 2020 | (1) 逆行者; (2) 甩锅; (3) 后浪; (4) 打工人; (5) 爷青回; (6) 凡尔赛; (7) 你品, 你细品; (8) 有内味了; (9) 内卷; (10) 社会性死亡; |
| 2019 | (1) 阿中; (2) 盘它(他); (3) 上头; (4) 我酸了; (5) 我太难(南)了; (6) ××自由; (7) 咱也不知道, 咱也不敢问; (8) 上班996, 生病ICU; (9) X千万 |

Table 1 The corpus of top ten Chinese Internet buzzwords from 2019 to 2022

To facilitate this analytical endeavour, the research leverages established theoretical frameworks from the field of sociolinguistics. In particular, the study draws upon the tenets of the theory of speech community, which provides valuable insights into how linguistic communities within the digital landscape engage with and shape Internet language. Additionally, the analysis is guided by foundational principles related to language variation and change, a framework that enables a nuanced exploration of the evolving linguistic landscape encapsulated by Internet buzzwords.

Examining the characteristics and development of the top ten Internet buzzwords spanning the period from 2019 to 2023 necessitates a multifaceted investigation of language variation and change within the virtual speech community. In order to delve into the domain of language variation and change, the research places significant emphasis on elucidating several key facets. Firstly, it involves a meticulous exploration of the structural features governing the formation of these buzzwords. Secondly, the study delves into the emotional and attitudinal dimensions embedded within these buzzwords across diverse contextual scenarios. Furthermore, the analysis extends to the topical utilisation of these buzzwords over distinct temporal periods.

4 Results

4.1 The Classification of the Top Ten Chinese Internet Buzzwords from the aspect of Word Formation

Presented below are the outcomes of the top Chinese Internet buzzwords from 2019 to 2023, which have been structured in accordance with the fundamental principles of word formation within the field of linguistics, as illustrated in Table 2. These categories encompass abbreviated words, blending words, dialects, homophonic words, lettered words, monosyllabic words, neology, phrases and sentences.

| Word formation | Number | Frequency |
|--------------------|--------|-----------|
| Neology | 18 | 29% |
| Phrase | 13 | 21% |
| Sentence | 8 | 13% |
| Abbreviated words | 6 | 10% |
| Dialects | 5 | 8% |
| Homophonic words | 4 | 6% |
| Lettered words | 3 | 5% |
| Blending words | 3 | 5% |
| Monosyllabic words | 2 | 3% |

Table 2 The word formation categories of the top ten Chinese buzzwords

As displayed in Table 2, neology constitutes the most prolific category, accounting for 29% (18) of the listed Internet buzzwords. Neology means the use of an established word in a new or different sense (Merriam-Webster, 2023), highlighting the proclivity for linguistic innovation and the creation of entirely new lexical entities in the new era of social media. For instance, “×|” in 2023 literally means ×gate, which is a newly created buzzword used to describe the crazy love for something. Phrases, representing multi-word constructs, constitute a substantial portion, contributing 21% (13) to the corpus. This underscores the role of multi-word expressions in encapsulating specific concepts in the Internet language. In addition to phrase, we can find that most of the buzzwords are composed of letters, numbers, symbols, etc., and some of the buzzwords belong to different categories at the same time, even if the sentences 13% (8) here are very short and brief, reflecting the inclination towards brevity and conciseness when using buzzwords online. Take “爷青回” in 2020 for example, the sentence is shorted from 7 Chinese characters to 3 characters.

Abbreviated words, consisting of shortened linguistic forms, constitute 10% (6) of the dataset. Homophonic words, lettered words, and monosyllabic words, each contributing 6% (4), 5% (3), and 3% (2), respectively, underscore the creative use of phonetic similarity and single letters as linguistic elements of Internet buzzwords. Besides, dialects account for 8% (5) of the buzzwords in Table 2, which come from some parts of China and have their own unique witty tone and sense of humour. Also, in the classification, most of the blending words, abbreviated words, homophonic words, and letter words are related to English. The appearance of dialects and English indicates the incorporation of regional and cultural linguistic variations into the digital era, revealing the diversity of language within the online community. In total, each category in the table is accompanied by a corresponding percentage value, denoting the prevalence of that specific buzzword type within the corpus.

4.2 The Classification of the Top Ten Chinese Internet Buzzwords from the aspect of Emotion

There is no doubt that emotion is a central part of our lives. Language, of course, has the function of expressing the opinion or attitude of the speaker. Internet buzzwords, as a kind of language with a special form, are often used by Internet users, and it is possible to misunderstand the meaning of the user without understanding the emotional meaning correctly. Johnston and Olson (2015) suggest that brain functions such as attention, perception, memory, or decision-making are ineludibly instilled with emotional assessments and feelings. Thus, studying the emotions of these Internet buzzwords is a very alluring and exciting area of research, and the results of the classification are shown in Table 3.

| Emotion | Number | Frequency |
|----------|--------|-----------|
| Negative | 18 | 36% |
| Positive | 15 | 30% |
| Both | 10 | 20% |
| Neutral | 7 | 14% |

Table 3 The emotion categories of the top ten Chinese buzzwords

Table 3 presents a comprehensive overview of the emotions conveyed by Internet buzzwords in diverse situations, including negative, positive, context-dependent, and neutral categories. A significant portion of Internet buzzwords, constituting 36% (18) of the total buzzwords are associated with negative emotions, surpassing the proportion of positive buzzwords. Individuals aged 19 to 59 are the main users of the Internet, according to the data of CNNIC, and they are actually under great pressure and anxiety in reality. Through the medium of the Internet, they find solace in venting their dissatisfaction, unhappiness, or other negative emotions.

In contrast to the predominant negativity, approximately 30% (15) of Internet buzzwords convey positive emotions, reflecting moments of joy, satisfaction, and contentment experienced by users. Furthermore, the intriguing aspect of this category lies in its adaptability to context. Approximately 20% (10) of Internet buzzwords have the ability to swing between negative and positive emotions based on the situational context. This flexibility underscores the dynamic nature of Internet buzzwords in the Internet era, where the same term can convey divergent sentiments depending on the circumstances. A smaller yet significant proportion of Internet buzzwords, constituting 14% (7) of the total, maintain a neutral stance. These buzzwords neither convey overtly negative nor positive emotions. Instead, they often serve as humorous or satirical expressions related to events in individuals' lives or society without explicitly manifesting emotional sentiments. For instance, “社牛” in 2021 is a kind of humorous expression that refers to someone who is energetic and funny and at the centre of activity during social occasions, without clear negative or positive emotion.

4.3 The Feature of the Top Ten Chinese Internet Buzzwords from the aspect of Topic

To comprehend this connection thoroughly, it is imperative to consider the intricate interplay between individuals' diverse cultural backgrounds, cognitive habits, and social customs in different periods since the topic used in the context has changed (see Table 4).

| Buzzwords | Previous meaning | Current meaning |
|-----------|---|--|
| 团长 | Regimental commander in the army | Group-buying organiser during the lockdown period |
| XX刺客 | A person who murders someone | Expensive goods when shopping |
| 躺平 | Lying flat of the body | Being tired of social competition |
| 逆行者 | A person who goes in a direction not allowed by traffic regulations | Chinese people defeated COVID-19 |
| 后浪 | The rear wave, or young generation | Brave younger generation during covid-19 |
| 特种兵 | Highly trained military forces to work on difficult missions. | A new travel style of young people who visit many attractions while spending the least time; |

Table 4 The changes in meaning of the same word with different backgrounds

“刺客” in Table 4 can be translated into “assassin” which refers to a person who murders others for some reason. Actually, it is given new meaning by Internet users, describing the goods that have "killer" prices that people had to pay for at a store where the price tags were partially hidden. “逆行者” in 2020 originally meant someone who walks backwards without following the traffic regulations correctly. But now it denotes someone who fought heroically for the people during COVID-19. Thus, it is crucial to acknowledge that the usage patterns of these buzzwords are not static; they are subject to change, evolving in response to varying cultural backgrounds and contextual influences.

The appearance of Internet buzzwords every year shows language change (Yan, 2021), which can also represent changes in the social, economic, and political environments. Internet users are very concerned about their daily work and lives. The 50 top Internet buzzwords encompass a wide array of topics, ranging from work-related matters (“内卷” and “躺平” in 2021, “打工人” in 2020, “上班996, 生病ICU” in 2019, etc.) to shopping (“××刺客” in 2022), examinations (“小镇做题家” in 2022), social communication (“嘴替” in 2022, “社牛/社恐” in 2021, “社会性死亡” in 2020, etc.). Nearly all of them are directly related to hot topics or current events that people are particularly interested in or concerned about in their daily lives. In that vein, our data examples represent that the Internet language, therefore, can be considered a quick and accurate reflection of the reality of people's everyday lives and social hot spots. Through the investigation of top Internet buzzwords that occurred at a certain time, the change or feature of society can be recorded and presumed. Vice versa, people in different periods pay attention to different social topics in their lives, causing the appearance and popularity of various Internet buzzwords.

5 Discussion

The Chinese top ten Internet buzzwords collected from 2019 to 2022 are classified from the angle of word formation, emotion and topics and the results are shown in last part. Following this line of thought, the forthcoming discussion, on the basis of the results, will expound upon the questions in the research.

The results of the research indicated that the current top Chinese Internet buzzwords have

unique features. Each category of the top ten Chinese Internet buzzwords from 2019 to 2022 is accompanied by a corresponding percentage value, denoting the prevalence of that specific buzzword type within the corpus. Table 2 shows the classification from the angle of word formation, showing that Chinese Internet buzzwords meet the requirements of being straightforward and time-saving as a result of the rapid, convenient, and complicated Internet as well as the use of input methods. Brooks and Ragir (2008) support the idea that language is a cultural product of a community of practitioners. The phenomenon of dialects “大冤种”, “夺笋”, and “你人还怪好嘞” in Table 1 appearing in Internet buzzwords confirms the weakened regional limitations in the virtual speech community. The Internet provides a platform for people to create and spread buzzwords. The Internet buzzwords, thus, are actually updating all the time, appearing and disappearing rapidly. In addition, with the development of the Internet and cross-cultural interaction, the use of a foreign language in buzzwords is becoming more common. For example, “栓Q” in 2022 became a sarcastic way of saying “thank you,” consisting of a Chinese character that has the same sound as “shuān”, and the English letter Q. It is often adapted by Chinese users when they feel embarrassed or speechless. The appearance of both dialect and English in the lists of top Chinese buzzwords can reflect the dispersion and fusion of the Chinese Internet language from other groups to the entire language community. In this sense, the rapid development of these leading Chinese Internet buzzwords is closely related to the emergence of the virtual speech community in today's landscape of information technology; that is to say, the Internet buzzwords are the products of the Internet age, and the virtual speech community provides a platform for their inception and dissemination.

Besides, the Internet, especially social media, provides a platform for individuals to express themselves more freely and anonymously than in face-to-face conversations. Table 3 offers an insightful visualisation of these emotional expressions, categorising them into negative, positive, context-dependent, and neutral categories, which can assist people in expressing their feelings in a humorous way and also establish emotional connections with others. For example, the dialect from northeast China “大冤种” in 2020 means a weak person who is easily cheated or tricked, or who is forced to take the blame for something that somebody else has done wrong. It often appears when a person describes himself or others unhappily. “yyds” in 2021 is a positive expression; if I say something is “yyds,” it means it's so wonderful and I enjoy it. Those deep emotions are actually comments and reflections of society or certain things encountered by Internet citizens. Thus, as a special ideograph of Internet culture, Internet buzzwords have diversified emotional meanings, and we can judge the user's life attitude, demands, or emotions reflected behind the Internet buzzwords. This requires determining how the emotional connotations and attitudes of the user connected with each buzzword may change in response to various language contexts, hence creating their dynamic usage patterns.

Additionally, almost all the Internet buzzwords of the past five years are fresh, lively, and down-to-earth, with little repetition every year and various topics related to the daily lives of individuals. As a linguistic phenomenon, the top Chinese Internet buzzwords, as previously stated, traverse a diverse spectrum of topics and have unique functions. The same buzzwords are used on different topics to show the internal change of language in the speech community along with the change in society. For example, “团长” in 2022 means regimental commander in the army before, while as a top Internet buzzword, it can be explained as the group-buying organiser who organises the buying of food for residents during the COVID period. Internet buzzwords used in different periods have the function of reflecting the changes in society, the development of the Internet, and the characteristics of the age. For instance, “团长” in 2022 refers to the group-buying organiser during the period of the pandemic, while “特种兵” indicates young people who engage in revenge tourism consumption because of the previous pandemic restrictions. Both of the two buzzwords are related to military groups before, and the

changes show a totally different society in the new era. Through the investigation of the features and functions of these Chinese Internet buzzwords as a special linguistic phenomenon on the Internet, we can have a deeper understanding of the relationship between language and society. The possibility of describing the orderly differences in a language serving a community is the key to linguistic change. Thus, investigating how these top Internet buzzwords are employed across varying topics within the specified timeframe is essential for comprehending their adaptability and resonance in the digital era.

The old words or phrases are being employed in new settings as Internet buzzwords, demonstrating the importance of studying socially conditioned variation in language. For instance, “破防” in 2021 initially referred to the ability to break through an opponent’s defences and make them defenceless when playing computer games. However, it now refers to the emotional shock of encountering someone or witnessing something, with an active or negative emotion depending on the context. All of the examples in Table 4 represent that there is a close relationship between language and society. Sociality is the essential attribute of language, and social development and changes have an impact on language. The change of society, in this sense, determines the change of language; the change and development of language always adapts to the development of society, which could be proved by the spread of overseas culture into Internet buzzwords and the new meaning of previous words in the period of the pandemic. On the one hand, language is absolutely dependent on society; on the other hand, it is adaptable to social changes. Thus, we can say that there exists a covariance relationship between language and society.

With regard to the implications of the research, the diverse array of Chinese top Internet buzzword categories is articulated herein, offering valuable insights into the taxonomy and distribution of these linguistic phenomena within the digital landscape. Understanding how these linguistic constructs take shape offers valuable insights into their lexical evolution. The structured insights presented in Tables 2, 3, and 4 serve as a valuable resource for discerning the evolving landscape of Internet language and its typological diversity. Furthermore, the investigation of these Chinese top Internet buzzwords is a significant way of discerning contemporary societal concerns, assessing the attitudes and feelings of online users towards specific occasions, and monitoring the dynamics of societal norm change across distinct temporal epochs. The activities of human beings are closely connected with the adjustment of society, and the adjustment will affect language, invariably imparting a discernible influence on language dynamics. In other words, as society changes, so does language. On the one hand, with the further development of information technology and new media, online languages will also manifest heightened complexity and diversity. Therefore, it is imperative that more study and research be undertaken henceforth to furnish comprehensive insights into how Internet language applies and develops over time.

Taken as a whole, the Internet has infiltrated every aspect of people’s life and languages in its distinct form which has been accepted by the majority of Internet users. These Internet buzzwords, as an Internet language, go beyond merely some frequently used words or phrases associated with the Internet or computer technology, and we need to acknowledge that these top Chinese Internet buzzwords transmit to the audience their underlying meaning, cultural connotation, and emotion within the prevailing context. Emanating as emblematic manifestations of contemporary popular culture, the Internet language assumes a pivotal role in the processes of individual socialisation and is a virtual representation of psychological status and demand in realistic life. As we move forward, it is crucial to acknowledge the profound import of Internet language in contemporary communication and to continually explore its evolving role in shaping our digital interactions and cultural landscapes.

6 Conclusion

Through the Internet, there is a virtual speech community where people from different regions or even countries can communicate with each other. Virtual Internet space helps Internet users have the same speech community, which provides a platform for the variation and change of Internet language, revealing the development of Chinese Internet buzzwords in these years. Language is dynamic and vibrant. With the development of society and the Internet, old varieties of language are constantly vanishing and new or refurbished varieties are emerging, illustrating an ongoing and fluid process of ebb and flow.

Doing such research on the top 10 Chinese Internet buzzwords is of great significance because it tells us how the modern Chinese language evolves in the age of information technology. The fusion of distinct linguistic components to form innovative terms is clearly examined through the investigation of the top Chinese Internet buzzwords from different angles. Also, the two variables of language and society influence, interact with, and restrict each other, and language and society are in a covariant relationship. The changeable buzzwords reflect what is changing in our society and how individuals express themselves and view the world.

People's emotions, the social condition nowadays, and people's attitudes towards certain events can be reflected simply and straightforwardly through Internet buzzwords. In conclusion, Internet buzzwords are the product of Internet development and carry information about the characteristics of society and individuals. We need to be more discerning about how these popular Internet buzzwords evolve from a sociolinguistic point of view. The following annual Internet buzzwords in the future, as a media language, should be taken and analysed too.

By tracing the development of the term 'buzzword', we know how it has been understood and operated in different aspects. As social media emerges and develops rapidly, a buzzword can be proposed and adapted quickly in society or even the world within a short time. In a digital society, all social life, social events, and social relations can be revealed through it. Studying the change and development of Internet buzzwords is of great significance to understanding language and cultural trends and making a possible prediction about the development of the annual buzzwords from the perspective of sociolinguistics.

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Appendix

The Corpus of Top Ten Chinese Internet Buzzwords from 2019 to 2022

| Year | English Translation of Chinese top ten Internet buzzwords |
|------|--|
| 2023 | (1) i人/e人: introversive person / extroversive person; (2) 显眼包: class clown / goof; (3) 特种兵旅游: special force-style tourism / tourist special troops; (4) ×门: × gate /× school; (5) 遥遥领先: get such a big lead; (6) 多巴胺××: dopamine ××; (7) 孔乙己文学: Kong Yiji literature; (8) 公主/王子, 请××: Prince / princess, please...; (9) 你人还怪好的嘞: You are the sweetest. (10) 挖呀挖呀挖: dig, dig, dig; |
| | (1) 栓Q: I have nothing to say; |

| | |
|------|--|
| 2022 | <p>(2) PUA: gaslight; (3) (大)冤种: patsy; (4) 小镇做题家: small-town swot / test god / quiz man; (5) 团长: a group-buying organizer; (6) 退! 退! 退! : Stay back! (7) 嘴替: He / She just took the words right out of my mouth! (8) 一种很新的××: something really new; (9) 服了你个老六: You are such a lame camper! (10) ××刺客: ×× assassin;</p> |
| 2021 | <p>(1) 内卷: involution / irrational internal competition; (2) 躺平: lying flat / be a couch potato; (3) 破防: overwhelmed / emotionally vulnerable; (4) emo: emotional; (5) yyds: greatest of all time; (6) 夺笋: You are so mean! (7) 赓续: sustain; (8) 社恐/社牛: social butterfly / social anxiety disorder; (9) 一整个×住: a strong degree of ...; (10) 普信男/女: He / She is full of himself / herself;</p> |
| 2020 | <p>(1) 逆行者: Hero in harm's way; (2) 甩锅: pass the buck; (3) 后浪: rising waves; (4) 打工人: laborers / wage-earners / office worker; (5) 爷青回: My youth is making a comeback; (6) 凡尔赛: humblebrag; (7) 你品, 你细品: Let that sink in. / Think about that. (8) 有内味了: That's the spirit. (9) 内卷: involution / irrational internal competition; (10) 社会性死亡: mortified / fall flat on one's face;</p> |
| 2019 | <p>(1) 阿中: Ah-chung (A personification of China); (2) 盘它(他): teach somebody a lesson/ pet him; (3) 上头: be under someone's spell; (4) 我酸了: sour grapes/ I'm so jealous. (5) 我太难(南)了: Life is so hard. / I am worn out. (6) ××自由: ×× freedom; (7) 咱也不知道, 咱也不敢问: We don't know and we don't dare to ask. (8) 上班996, 生病ICU: work by 996, sick in ICU (996 means work from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm, 6 days a week); (9) X千万条Y第一条: There are thousands of roads to ..., and ... is the first one. (10) 我不要你觉得, 我要我觉得: It doesn't matter what you think, what matters is my plan. / I'm the boss, ok?</p> |

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Japanese Language Education in the Philippines: Historical Development, Current Status and Future Prospects

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Abstract

The Philippines is one of the countries where Japanese language education is not only flourishing, but considered to be very relevant. The country has the ninth largest number of learners and the tenth largest number of teachers in the world. This is largely propelled by continuous Filipino migration and diaspora to Japan, for work, studies, and even reunion with family members who had migrated to Japan. Business and trade between Japan and the Philippines remain strong, receiving so much support from the governments of both countries. There is also ongoing increasing interest in Japanese culture and language among Filipinos. However, academic research on Japanese language education in the country is scarce, if not lacking. Thus, this article aims to provide a synoptic profile of Japanese language education in the Philippines. First, it presents the history of Japanese language education in the country, highlighting milestones pivotal to its development. Secondly, the article classifies different aspects of Japanese language education, such as academic-oriented education, occupation-oriented training, teacher networking, and events and programs held in the country. Thirdly, the article discusses the current status of Japanese language education in the Philippines such as demographics, students' motivation, and teachers' qualifications. The article highlights challenges that Japanese language education in the country confronts, such as the relatively few teachers and institutions for the population, the lack of formal training for teachers, and the limited networking for these teachers and other stakeholders. The article ends the discussion with future prospects of Japanese language education in the Philippines.

Keywords: Japanese language education, Japanese as a foreign language, Japanese in the Philippines

1. Introduction

Japanese language education is continuously flourishing globally. In 2021, Japanese was taught in 141 countries and regions at 18,272 institutions by 74,592 teachers (Japan Foundation, 2023a). Meanwhile, close to four million people were likewise reported to be learning the Japanese language.

The Philippines is one of the countries where Japanese language education is not only thriving, but considered to be very relevant. The country has the ninth largest number of learners and the tenth largest number of teachers in the world. This is largely propelled by continuous Filipino migration and diaspora to Japan, for work, studies, and even reunion with family members who had migrated to Japan. The Japanese and Philippine governments work together on various political, economic, and security matters affecting not only the country but the region and the world. There is also ongoing increasing interest in Japanese culture and language among Filipinos.

However, amidst the significant growth of the volume of Japanese language education in the Philippines, academic research on Japanese language education in the country remains limited, if not lacking. As Japanese language education in the Philippines continues to expand, some concerns and challenges have already emerged and they also need to be considered and

discussed. Hence, this article aims to provide a synoptic profile of Japanese language education in the Philippines, looking in particular at historical development, categories, profile of students and teachers, networking of stakeholders, pedagogy and instruction, and events and programs by various institutions. It also addresses challenges and provides future directions of Japanese language education in the country.

2. History and development

2.1. Foundation phase

Japanese was taught even before and during the occupation of the Japanese Empire in the Philippines. The first-ever Japanese language course in the country was offered at the Department of Linguistics of the University of the Philippines (UP), Diliman in the Academic Year 1924-1925, which means Japanese started to be taught since the dawn of the Department of Linguistics of UP which established in 1922. Since then, higher education institutions have been the major driving force in the spread of Japanese language education in the post-war Philippines. Japanese language education further expanded in the 1960s with the establishment of institutions or programs dedicated to Japan studies or Japanese language education. Included here are Japanese language courses at UP in 1964, the Japanese Studies Program at the Ateneo de Manila University in 1966, the Asian Center of UP in 1968, and the Japanese language courses by the Embassy of Japan in the Philippines in 1968 (The Japan Foundation, 2022). It is worth noting that the Ateneo's Japanese Studies Program is the first Japanese studies program not just in the Philippines but also in Southeast Asia (Japanese Studies Program, Ateneo de Manila University, 2013). It started with three Japanese instructors, namely Masao Hisatake (who also served as the program's first director), Kiyoshi Aonuma, and Yoko Yoshikawa, deployed by the Japanese government, and nine other Japanese academics also served as directors of the program until 1980. They launched a minor in Japanese Studies and produced the first group of 12 students who were awarded its certificate in 1991. This only goes to show how interested the Filipinos are in the Japanese language and society even from more than half a century ago.

2.2. Development phase

More Japan-related programs or courses were further expanded since the 1980s, marked by the establishment of these in other universities namely De La Salle University in 1983 and the Trinity University in 1984 (The Japan Foundation, 2022). The establishment of Mindanao Kokusai Daigaku (Mindanao International College) in 2002 cannot be overlooked. It is distinctive in the fact that it was established by and serves as the Philippine Nikkei Jin Kai ('Association for Japanese-Filipino Descendants')'s educational services offering the possibility of majoring in Japanese Language and Studies in its International Studies Department. Another milestone was the establishment of The Japan Foundation, Manila (JFM) in 1996, which is a branch office of a Japanese government-affiliated agency tasked to promote the Japanese language and culture in the Philippines. JFM has been supporting Japanese language education in the country through its programs, funding, and deployment of experts.

2.3. Expansion phase

Organized Japanese language education became more available to those outside of higher education since late 2000s. In 2009, Japanese started to be offered in secondary education in the country through the Special Program in Foreign Language (SPFL) of the Department of Education (DepEd) and, according to The Japan Foundation (2023b), this expansion of Japanese language education to public schools ignited the increase in the number of students, teachers, and institutions at the secondary level.

An expansion for occupation-oriented Japanese language training was brought about by Japan's policy and agreements with the Philippines that allowed Filipinos to take up specific types of occupation in Japan, namely the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP), the Philippine-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (PJEPA), and the Specified Skilled Worker (SSW).

Since 2017, when a new Technical Intern Training Act came into effect and the Philippines was among the countries that signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with Japan, private language schools have been offering Japanese language training to candidates as TITP requires more than 160 hours of training before entering Japan.

Under the PJEPA, in 2009, Japan started to accept Filipino nurses and caregivers to work in Japan in order to cope with Japan's shortage of healthcare workers. After two years of implementation, JFM launched the Pre-Arrival Japanese-Language Training for candidates to enhance their Japanese language proficiency before arriving in Japan. Meanwhile, in 2019, The Japan Foundation Test for Basic Japanese (JFT-Basic) also began to be conducted in the Philippines ahead of other countries as one of requirements to apply for the SSW visa category.

3. Categories of Japanese language education

Japanese language education in the Philippines can be categorized into two: (1) Academic-oriented education where students learn Japanese as a part of degree programs or curricula at tertiary, secondary, and primary institutions and (2) occupation-oriented education where students learn Japanese for their occupational needs in non-academic institutions. This is a helpful and relevant categorization to be made as 42.8% of students are enrolled in academic institutions while 57.2% of them are enrolled in non-academic institutions (see section 6 for further discussion) Therefore, this section discusses these two categories in detail.

3.1. Academic-oriented education

As mentioned in section 2, academic-oriented Japanese language education in the country has been led by higher education institutions. In 2021, 25 institutions offered Japanese language courses. Among them, only Mindanao Kokusai Daigaku had a Japanese language as a full college degree (Furukawa, 2023). Other institutions only offered Japanese language courses as a part of other related degree programs, such as Japanese studies, international studies, linguistics, business, tourism, and the like, and also as part of extra-curricular activities. In terms of degree level, four associate degrees, 21 bachelor's degrees, two master's degrees, and one doctorate degree are offered in these institutions. As the Japan Foundation (2023b) points out, Japanese language courses are primarily offered as foreign language elective courses with the weight of three to six units (where one unit is usually equivalent to one hour of class session), except for some institutions which offer a series of extensive courses ranging from 21 to 54 units. A joint report by the Japan Foundation, Manila and the Japanese Studies Program, Ateneo de Manila University (2020) also notes that Japanese language courses offered are skills-oriented but not research-oriented. In other words, they are more designed to train students to speak in Japanese but not exactly to do research on the language and linguistics of Japanese.

Meanwhile, at the secondary level, Japanese started to be taught in selected high schools in 2008, through the Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths (JENESYS) Programme, an exchange project by the Japanese government to strengthen people-to-people connections among the youth in Japan and Southeast Asian countries. In 2009, the Philippine government introduced Japanese into official curricula through the Special Program in Foreign Language (SPFL) initiated by the Department of Education (DepEd), together with Spanish, French, German, Mandarin (from 2011), and Korean (from 2017) (Andaya, et al, 2020). Under this program, Japanese began to be offered in public schools as an elective course. It is taught

at the basic level for 120 minutes weekly in the third year of high school and subsequently at the intermediate in the fourth year of high school as stipulated by DepEd Order no. 55, s. 2009 (Department of Education, 2009). Up until 2017, 3,020 students were enrolled in these Japanese language courses, which was equal to 28.7% among all the SPFL enrollees nationwide (Department of Education, 2017).

At the primary level, four private institutions, namely Caritas Don Bosco School, Japa-Lingo Training Center, Inc, Philippine Nikkei Jin Kai International School, and San Pedro Relocation Center National High School, offer Japanese language education within their regular curricula.

3.2. Occupation-oriented education

The Japan Foundation (2023b) reported that the number of non-academic institutions (147) in the Philippines was bigger than that of academic institutions (112), and most of them are dedicated to occupation-oriented learners who wish to work in Japan or those who are employed by Japanese companies based in the country and needing some level of Japanese proficiency to fulfill their job responsibilities. These institutions are run by different types of owners: higher education institutions that also have regular Japanese language courses, Japanese commercial companies operating in the country, and local language schools.

Private language schools need to be accredited by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) of the Philippine government. Recently, TESDA itself started offering free training on Japanese language and culture in 2023 through its National Language Skills Center.

Among the popular pathways for Filipinos to work in Japan recently are the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP), the Specified Skilled Worker (SSW), and the Philippine-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (PJEPA). As such, Japanese language courses designed for candidates of these programs are offered in private language schools.

For TITP and SSW candidates, private language schools have been offering Japanese language training to candidates. TITP was established in 1993 to transfer skills, technologies, or knowledge accumulated in Japan to developing Asian countries, but has been functioning as a de facto guestworker program. In November 2017, a new Technical Intern Training Act came into effect and the Philippines was among the countries that signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with Japan. Since then, private language schools have been offering Japanese language training to candidates as TITP requires more than 160 hours of training before entering Japan. Meanwhile, in 2019, SSW was created by the Japanese government as a new visa status to accept foreign nationals with expertise and skills in response to the labor shortage in Japan such as nursing care, construction, agriculture, etc. As SSW requires a certain level of Japanese language proficiency upon application, private language schools that have been offering Japanese language training to TITP candidates also started offer training designed for SSW candidates. In the same year, the Japan Foundation Test for Basic Japanese (JFT-Basic) also began to be conducted in the Philippines ahead of other countries as one of the requirements to apply for the SSW visa category.

The Japanese government also started accepting Filipino nurses and caregivers to work in Japan in 2008 under PJEPA, and more than 3,300 Filipino candidates had been sent to Japan by 2022 (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan, 2023). PJEPA requires candidates to undergo six-month long Japanese language training in Japan before they are deployed to work places. In addition to this training, six months of further training called the Pre-Arrival Japanese-Language Training, started in 2011 because the first two batches of Filipino candidates had a significantly low passing rate of nurse license exams during the first two years of implementation (Noborizato et al., 2014). Currently, candidates are required to take this training, consisting of more than 820 hours of integral Japanese language courses and specialized training to build up terminology in nursing and caregiving (Ota et al., 2022).

4. Schools and other institutions

There are 242 institutions that offer Japanese language education in the country. Among them, 76 are public, 163 are private, and three are Japanese-government-affiliated. As expected, the National Capital Region (NCR) has the most institutions (50%), while 22% are located in non-NCR Luzon, 16% in Visayas, and 12% in Mindanao (Matsumoto, 2023).

Table 1 summarizes the geographical distribution of students, teachers, and institutions in the Philippines. This clearly shows how students and teachers are centralized in Luzon, particularly NCR whilst other regions such as Visayas and Mindanao are less equipped with resources, which possibly results in little exposure of students to a better learning environment. However, Matsumoto (2023) also reports an increase both in the number of institutions and teachers observed in Mindanao.

Table 1

Geographical distribution of students, teachers, and institutions in the Philippines (based on Matsumoto, 2023)

| Region | | Students (%) | Teachers (%) | Institutions (%) |
|----------|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|
| Luzon | National Capital Region | 56 | 56 | 50 |
| | Outside NCR | 18 | 18 | 22 |
| Visayas | | 12 | 12 | 16 |
| Mindanao | | 14 | 14 | 12 |

5. Teachers

5.1. Profile

The Japan Foundation (2023a) reported that there are 1,111 teachers in the country. Among them, 639 or 57.5% are full-time while 472 or 42.5% are part-time. Aside from some full-time faculty in higher education institutions, many of the teachers are only classroom teachers and not teacher-researchers positioned to do research and create new knowledge of Japanese language teaching practice. It must be noted that freelance teachers who do not belong to any institution are not reflected in this survey or those who have multiple affiliations might be counted multiple times, as the Japan Foundation's survey was conducted only through existing institutions known to JF. There are 245 teachers (22.1%) who are native speakers of Japanese and they belong to 85 institutions (35.1%) in the country. Having native-speaking teachers in Japanese language education is important as they have many advantages that non-native-speaking colleagues do not have, such as more natural and up-to-date language use, exemplary language model, and they can help students immerse themselves in extra-linguistic experiences (e.g., culture, history, etc.) (cf. Medgyes, 1999; Gill & Reborva, 2001). In the Philippines, native-speaker teachers are hired in some higher education institutions and private language schools both full-time and part-time, but they are not necessarily Japanese language education experts, such as university faculty who specialize in related fields or those who live in the country with a Filipino spouse.

5.2. Qualifications

The Japan Foundation (2023b) gives a brief summary of Japanese language teachers' qualifications in the Philippines. It states that those who learned Japanese in university and/or private language schools, sometimes in Japan, are the majority of teachers in the country. However, it also points out that there are cases where individuals who do not really have expertise in the Japanese language but have studied in Japan or those with only Japanese-Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) N4, which is second to the lowest, are employed to teach due to the lack of qualified Japanese language teachers in the country. At secondary schools that offer Japanese language courses under SPFL, teachers must complete JFM's training (see

section 5.3) to teach (The Japan Foundation, 2023b) even though they concurrently handle other non-Japanese subjects (Ofune et al., 2012).

Furukawa (2023) conducted a questionnaire survey on Filipino teachers' profiles such as training teachers received, Japanese language learning experiences, and career prospects, analyzing answers from 48 teachers who belong to the Association of Filipino Nihongo Teachers (AFINITE). Among them, 26 teachers received training at JF (either Manila or Urawa) while others took it at other venues such as language schools (13 teachers), TESDA (6), and AFINITE (4). Only six teachers answered that they underwent training in the university (either in the Philippines or Japan), and even five teachers were reported to have never received any kind of formal training opportunity. In terms of length of training, 14 teachers took less than one year of training, among which were less than six months for six teachers and less than a month for five teachers. She concluded that there are few Filipino teachers who received extensive training programs for Japanese language teachers. Regarding their learning experience, more than half of the respondents were reported to have learned Japanese in language schools (25 teachers) while 18 teachers learned it through self-study.

Hayakawa et al. (2023) state that Filipino teachers of Pre-Arrival Japanese-Language Training for EPA candidates have to pass JLPT N3 or higher and be fluent to conduct lessons in Japanese upon employment. They also added that there are teachers who have stayed in Japan and who have more than ten years of experience.

5.3. Teacher training

At present, there is no organized and fully-developed teacher training for Japanese language teachers in the Philippines. However, several other forms of training are given by concerned institutions and organizations involved in Japanese language education in the Philippines. JFM principally offers training for teachers in coordination with the Department of Education and other institutions involved. Generally, one- to two-day workshops are provided both face-to-face and online, such as Practice Teaching Course and Marugoto Brush-up Course. For secondary school teachers, JFM, coordinating with DepEd, also launched training after introduction of SPFL was announced in 2009. This two-year training program includes intensive mid-semester training (100 hours), follow-up training during semesters (30 hours), and on-site training in Japan (ten days) (Ofune et al., 2012). The program aims to not only enable teachers to teach using a textbook developed by JFM but also train them to eventually train fellow teachers in the country. Nihongo Center Foundation, a private institution primarily tasked to provide preparatory Japanese language courses to outbound Filipino students, used to offer training for teachers. However, no institution is reported to offer training for teachers currently, aside from JFM (The Japan Foundation, 2023b; Furukawa, 2023).

Training programs have also been developed for those who teach occupation-oriented students. For teachers who handle SSW candidates, the Japanese Teaching Methods Program for Teachers of Specified Skilled Worker Candidates is offered. This one-month program is designed to provide teachers with a teaching methodology focusing on language proficiency needed for SSW candidates' daily life and work and a deeper understanding of Japanese society and culture that can be offered in their own class (Yamamoto et al., 2022).

Teachers with experience and higher Japanese language proficiency may apply for the Comprehensive Japanese Teaching Methods Program for Teachers of the Japanese-Language at the Japan Foundation's Japanese-Language Institute in Urawa, Japan. This program offers six-week training on teaching methodology targeted at Japanese teachers from all over the world. In 2022, two Filipino teachers from higher education institutions were selected to join this training.

5.4. Teachers' associations, academic associations, and journals

Several associations of Japanese teachers have been established in different regions in the Philippines. The biggest among them is the Association of Filipino Nihongo Teachers (AFINITE) established in 2000. Based in Metro Manila, it has approximately 70 members exclusively Filipinos annually and holds the Philippine Nihongo Teacher's Forum twice a year, in collaboration with JFM (Furukawa, 2023). Other regions also have teachers' associations: Visayas (established in 2008), Mindanao (2010), Northern Luzon (2010), Northern Mindanao (2010), Bohol (2010), Negros (2011), and Bicol (2011). However, the Japan Foundation (2023b) points out that most of these associations are not very active nowadays, except for AFINITE.

Aside from the Philippine Nihongo Teacher's Forum, there are no Philippine-based academic associations or journals exclusively dedicated to the Japanese language or its education. In the field of linguistics or applied linguistics, there are several of these in the country, such as the Linguistic Society of the Philippines' annual conference, the Philippine Journal of Linguistics, De La Salle University's International Conference on Applied Linguistics and Language Education, and the Philippine Association for Language Teaching. Nevertheless, studies presented or published in these venues are dominantly dedicated to Philippine linguistics, English language education, and mother tongue-based education. Academic research on Japanese language education in the Philippine context is mainly published in the Japan Foundation's Japanese-Language Education Bulletin, albeit most of the contributors are Japanese academics.

6. Students

6.1. Profile

The Japan Foundation (2023a) reported in its survey that there are 44,457 students in the Philippines in 2021, and the ninth-largest number of learners in the world and fourth in Southeast Asia although the number declined by 13.7% compared to the previous survey in 2018. However, the decline observed differs in numbers between academic institutions and other institutions as the Japan Foundation points out. The number of those in academic institutions decreased by 27.1% while the number of those in other institutions only decreased by 0.1%. The Japan Foundation concluded that more than two years-long restrictions on face-to-face classes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic severely affected school-based education while online classes offered gave an advantage to those who reside in remote areas where there used to be no available Japanese education. Independent learners who are not enrolled in any institutions are not reflected in this survey, as the Japan Foundation's survey was conducted only through existing institutions known to JF (cf. Ichinose, 2014).

Table 2 shows the number of students enrolled in Japanese language education in 2021 according to the types of institutions. There are 19,041 students enrolled in academic institutions (640 in primary, 9,220 in secondary, and 9,181 in tertiary) while 25,416 students are in non-academic institutions such as language schools. The larger number of students enrolled in non-academic institutions compared to academic institutions is one of the characteristics of Japanese language education in the Philippines, as Furukawa (2023) stated based on the 2018 data.

Table 2

Number of Japanese language students in the Philippines according to types of institutions (based on The Japan Foundation, 2023a, 2023b)

| Types of institutions | Numbers | Proportion (%) |
|-----------------------|---------|----------------|
| Academic institutions | 19,041 | 42.8 |
| Primary | 640 | 1.4 |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------|--------|-------|
| | Secondary | 9,220 | 20.7 |
| | Tertiary | 9,181 | 20.7 |
| Non-academic institutions | | 25,416 | 57.2 |
| Total | | 44,457 | 100.0 |

6.2. Motivations

The Japan Foundation’s (2023a) report also surveyed objectives or motivations that compel students to learn the Japanese language. Note that this survey did not ask learners directly what their motivation is. Instead, it asked respondents of the survey (i.e., teachers or institutions) what motivates their learners at respective institutions to study Japanese. Therefore, this might not reflect learners’ opinions completely.

Table 3 shows that the major objectives for Japanese language learners in the world are interest in the Japanese language and culture broadly such as the language itself (60.1%), pop culture (59.9%), and history, literature, arts, etc. (47.9%).

However, the survey conducted in the Philippines shows a different trend. As indicated in Table 3 working (62.4%) and studying (59.1%) in Japan, and having an interest in the language (59.1%) are major objectives for Filipino learners. This result reflects Filipino learners’ strong desire to live in Japan in the future and they regard learning Japanese as integral to achieving this desire. Furukawa (2023) also notes the commentary by one of the Filipino teachers, who says that finding a job or spouse and wanting to stay in Japan as long as possible is one of the typical motivations of Filipino learners.

Table 3

Objectives of Japanese-language learning (all educational stages) in the Philippines and in the world (based on The Japan Foundation, 2023a)

| Reasons for Learning Japanese | Philippines (n=242) | World (n=18,272) |
|---|---------------------|------------------|
| Future work in Japan | 62.4% | 34.2% |
| Study in Japan | 59.1% | 29.3% |
| Interest in the Japanese language | 59.1% | 60.1% |
| Interest in history, literature, arts, etc. | 56.6% | 47.9% |
| Interest in anime, manga, J-POP, fashion, etc. | 52.5% | 59.9% |
| Current or future work in home country | 45.0% | 40.6% |
| Interest in intercultural understanding and cross-cultural exchange | 38.0% | 24.0% |
| Sightseeing in Japan | 36.0% | 34.5% |
| Advancement in education in home country | 32.2% | 35.6% |
| Interest in science and/or technology | 24.4% | 23.3% |
| Mother language or heritage language | 14.5% | 9.8% |

| | | |
|--|-------|-------|
| Interest in politics, economy and/or society | 14.5% | 18.0% |
| Other | 14.5% | 5.5% |
| No answer | 5.4% | 9.3% |

Some studies revealed findings are similar to that of the Japan Foundation (2023a). Gonzales (2010) found, through a questionnaire survey of 150 college students in Metro Manila, that Japanese language learners were more motivated by career and economic enhancement compared to other language learners such as Chinese, Spanish, and French. Quintos (2021) also investigated motivational orientation in learning Japanese through a questionnaire to 481 students taking up Japanese subjects at a state university in Bataan and it was revealed that, aside from the subject being a requirement for foreign language units, interest in the language, travel, and the need for the language in their career are the primary motivations of students learning Japanese.

Regarding careers, one of my colleagues at De La Salle University conducted a short survey in 2022 on 34 alumni of International Studies major in Japanese studies. According to this survey, 25 or 73.5% of them are locally employed after their graduation while four or 11.8% are employed in Japan. Among the locally employed alumni, more than half of them (14 or 56.0%) are working in Japanese language-related fields such as local cooperates that have Japanese counterparts, Japanese companies doing business in the Philippines, and employed by Japanese companies but working remotely from the Philippines. Table 4 summarizes the result of the survey.

Table 4
Careers of 34 alumni of International Studies major in Japanese studies at De La Salle University

| Employment status | Number | Proportion |
|--|--------|------------|
| Locally employed | 25 | 73.5% |
| Related to Japanese language/Japan | 14 | 56.0% |
| Not related to Japanese language/Japan | 11 | 44.0% |
| Employed in Japan | 4 | 11.8% |
| Further studies | 3 | 8.8% |
| Self-employed | 1 | 2.9% |
| Unemployed | 1 | 2.9% |
| Total | 34 | 100% |

This implies that students who majored in Japanese see Japanese as a necessary tool to work in Japanese-related fields and there are students who actually take a career path where Japanese can be utilized.

7. Pedagogy and instruction

7.1. Pedagogical approaches and classroom practices

Among the teaching methods, the audio-lingual method is mainly employed in the classroom. Audio-lingual method uses constant drilling of grammatical constructions frequently used in everyday life or context and situation being targeted (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). This is also the prevalent methodology being employed in teaching Japanese in Japan. Teachers conduct classes in the target language even at lower proficiency classes, and even beginning classes. This strategy seemed to have been adapted in a foreign language teaching context in the Philippines. Occasionally, beginning classes taught by Filipino teacher may have

explanations and translations in English and/or the local language. This seems to be helpful among Filipino students as they usually learn an additional language with English and/or the local language as medium and bridge to learning the target language.

The Japan Foundation (2023a) also surveyed the implementation of online teaching mode since it was its first survey conducted after the COVID-19 pandemic. In the Philippines, 212 institutions out of 242 (87.6%) were reported to conduct online classes overall. Throughout types of institutions, online teaching modes were employed at a high rate: four in primary (100%), 53 in secondary (82.8%), 42 in tertiary (95.5%), and 129 in other institutions (88.4%). It is surmised that online teaching mode affected the mode of delivery and students' outcomes, particularly at the beginner level, as students are required and get used to writing three different characters unique to Japanese, yet further studies on the influence brought about by online teaching are expected.

7.2. Instructional materials

Many teachers in the Philippines employ structural syllabi mainly using traditional textbooks developed in Japan such as *Minna No Nihongo* and *GENKI*. These consist of model dialogue, grammar explanation, and pattern practices. The former is written in Japanese, although an auxiliary book is available in English, while the latter provides instructions in English. These textbooks have more than 20 years of history with multiple editions, so teachers' own experiences of learning with these textbooks probably make it easier to use them. These textbooks might not be easily available for individual learners as ordinary bookstores do not sell these in the country. Therefore, teachers tend to distribute photocopies or pdf files of these materials upon enrollment.

Some institutions also use a coursebook titled *Irodori: Japanese for Life in Japan*, designed to build the communicative skills needed to live or work in Japan based on the can-do approach, which is compatible with the JF Standard for Japanese-Language Education, a framework developed based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) specifically for Japanese language education, and the CEFR itself. Another advantage of this textbook is that it is available online including worksheets and sample teaching plans both in Japanese and English. A Filipino version of the textbook is also available through JFM's website.

For SPFL at secondary schools, locally-developed materials are used in its curricula, namely *enTree: Halina! Be a NIHONGOJIN!!*. This material was developed by a collaborative team of JFM experts and local JFL teachers, considering SPFL's objectives set by DepEd, allocated time, and Philippine contexts. The material employs a topic syllabus and can-do approach, enabling students to express day-to-day needs in Japanese. Ofune et al. (2012) find these unique materials advantageous in terms of feedback from teachers and students, their usability by less experienced teachers, and finally, the sustainability of the program.

7.3. Assessment

One of the most important assessment tools for Japanese language learners is the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test (JLPT). JLPT is a language proficiency test to evaluate and certify the Japanese language proficiency of non-native speakers. It has five levels from the easiest N5 to the hardest N1. Currently, these levels do not correspond with the CEFR, but the CEFR level is to be added to JLPT score reports for referential purposes starting in 2025.

JLPT has been conducted by the Japan Foundation and Japan Educational Exchanges and Services since 1984 and is used for various purposes such as college admission requirements, job application requirements, goals for Japanese language courses, etc. The Philippines has also been the test site since the beginning of the test in 1984. Currently, the test is offered twice a year (July and December) in four major cities across the country: Manila, Cebu, Davao, and

Cagayan de Oro (The Japan Foundation & Japan Educational Exchanges and Services, n.d.). In the recent test in July 2023, 5,668 took the test in the whole country, among which were 3,453 in Manila, 598 in Cebu, 1,565 in Davao, and 52 in Cagayan de Oro (The Japan Foundation & Japan Educational Exchanges and Services, 2023).

The Japan Foundation Test for Basic Japanese (JFT-Basic) is also used to evaluate students' achievement particularly those who wish to apply for the Specified Skilled Worker (SSW). This test is designed based on the CEFR and the JF Standard for Japanese-Language Education. This test assesses the kind of tasks the test-taker can accomplish with their Japanese language competence, with the following levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2.

8. Various Japan- and Japanese language-related activities, events, and programs

Aside from the classroom-based education discussed above, Japanese language education thrives more through various events and programs in the country.

The NIHONGO Partners, which was launched in 2013 at the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit Meeting to promote and enhance cultural exchange between Japan and other Asian countries toward the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympic Games which was eventually postponed in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This program deploys native Japanese speakers as teaching assistants to ASEAN countries for short periods ranging from about six months to a year. The Philippines has been one of the participating countries since the first implementation of the program in 2014, receiving ten batches, of more than 80 teaching assistants mainly at secondary schools up until 2023 (The Japan Foundation, n.d.). Although these teaching assistants are not necessarily Japanese language experts, they are expected to serve as resource persons of the Japanese language and culture, motivate students as native speakers, and help local teachers who may not be highly literate in Japanese language and culture (Noborizato, 2016). Local teachers are also given a chance to take part in a training program by the Japan Foundation upon deployment of NIHONGO Partners so as to enhance the efficacy of the entire program (Arima & Shinohara, 2017).

Activities to promote Japanese language and culture are also held primarily by the Japan Foundation Manila. Nihongo Fiesta is an annual event where learners, teachers, and other stakeholders including some officials get together. This event also contains Japanese language speech contests where Japanese language enthusiasts can showcase their Japanese skills. The Japanese Film Festival (JFF or often locally referred to as Eigasai) is another major event that has brought about various genres of Japanese films to the Philippines since 1997. Furthermore, smaller events, such as speech/karaoke/cosplay contests and festivals, are also organized by universities, high schools, and student organizations to showcase their learning outcomes. Among them are, UP Asian Culture Fest by the University of the Philippines' Department of Linguistics, *Natsu Matsuri* ('Summer Festival') by the Ateneo Hinomoto, a student organization of Ateneo de Manila University, and Talent Festival by SPFL high schools.

9. Challenges

There are several challenges that Japanese language education in the Philippines confronts. Among them are relatively weak Japanese language education in the country, lack of full-fledged Japanese language programs, shortage of teachers and lack of adequate/comprehensive training programs for teachers, and limited networking for teachers and other stakeholders.

9.1. Relatively weak Japanese language education

The Philippines has relatively few numbers of learners, institutions, and teachers compared to other ASEAN countries. In particular, the number of learners per 100,000 population is significantly fewer (41), as indicated in Table 5, though the Philippines is the second most populated country in the region.

Table 5

Number of Japanese language learners, institutions, and teachers in five Southeast Asian countries (based on The Japan Foundation, 2023a)

| Country | Philippines | Indonesia | Malaysia | Thailand | Vietnam |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Population | 109,035,343 | 270,203,917 | 28,334,135 | 65,981,659 | 96,208,984 |
| Leaners | 44,457 | 711,732 | 38,129 | 183,957 | 169,582 |
| per 100,000 population | 41 | 263 | 135 | 279 | 176 |
| Primary | 640 | 6,786 | 17 | 6,597 | 3,986 |
| Secondary | 9,220 | 642,605 | 19,140 | 150,240 | 30,590 |
| Tertiary | 9,181 | 27,454 | 13,715 | 19,803 | 45,752 |
| Other educational institutions | 25,416 | 34,887 | 5,257 | 7,317 | 89,254 |
| Institutions | 242 | 2,958 | 215 | 676 | 629 |
| Teachers | 1,111 | 6,617 | 484 | 2,015 | 5,644 |

In conjunction with this, the number of institutions and teachers is also relatively low at all educational levels compared to other ASEAN countries as shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Number of institutions and teachers per educational level in five Southeast Asian countries (based on The Japan Foundation, 2023a)

| | | Philippines | Indonesia | Malaysia | Thailand | Vietnam |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|----------|----------|---------|
| Primary | Institutions | 4 | 31 | 2 | 24 | 22 |
| | Teachers | 19 | 49 | 11 | 41 | 57 |
| Secondary | Institutions | 64 | 2,275 | 140 | 521 | 130 |
| | Teachers | 141 | 3,011 | 157 | 1,040 | 303 |
| Tertiary | Institutions | 44 | 164 | 43 | 74 | 88 |
| | Teachers | 178 | 804 | 155 | 383 | 753 |
| Other educational institutions | Institutions | 146 | 490 | 35 | 74 | 394 |
| | Teachers | 872 | 2,756 | 188 | 593 | 4,560 |
| Sum | Institutions | 242 | 2,958 | 215 | 676 | 629 |
| | Teachers | 1,111 | 6,617 | 484 | 2,015 | 5,644 |

The smaller number of institutions, teachers, and students of Japanese in the Philippines may be due to the dominance — or even the hegemony — of English in the Philippines. As English is a very important language in the Philippines (cf. Borlongan, 2023), Filipinos channel all their language education and endeavors to English, even at the expense of their own national language, Filipino. It can be noticed that Malaysia, the other English-using country in Table 4, has a much lower number of institutions, teachers, and students than the Philippines. English-

using Philippines and Malaysia might be having the assumption that, in the absence of sufficient proficiency in Japanese, English might still serve as the language of communication with Japan as Japan is also aspiring to be able to use English even intra-nationally. Needless to say, Indonesian, Thai, and Vietnamese are not widely used in Japan or by the Japanese as a language of communication outside Japan.

The Japan Foundation (2023b) also points out the lack of support by educational administrations such as the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education for foreign language education in the country. Further governmental support, both policy and financial, is needed to cater to an increasing number of Filipinos who wish to learn Japanese in the country.

9.2. Lack of full-fledged Japanese language degree programs

A full-fledged Japanese language degree program is quite limited and most of the Japanese language courses are offered under other related disciplines such as Japanese studies, international studies, linguistics, business, and tourism. Only Mindanao Kokusai Daigaku offers the Japanese language as a major at the collegiate level.

A degree program in a particular language is crucial in order to produce experts who are capable of the language taught and eventually understand various aspects of a country/region through the language. In comparison, there are two universities in Japan that have Filipino language majors. Osaka University with its current School of Foreign Studies, formerly Osaka University of Foreign Studies has been offering a Filipino language program since 1984 while the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies has done the same since 1992. Both institutions continuously have produced experts on Filipino language proficiency and with a deep understanding of aspects of the Philippines in various fields such as sociology, anthropology, history, political science, and literature and the arts. Half of their faculty are also products of their respective program. Given the advantage of having a degree program in a particular language, this should be where the Philippines should direct its course in the field of Japanese language education.

At the same time, degree programs in Japanese studies are also limited due to the lack of Japanese language majors and the fact that research is predominantly conducted in English (The Japan Foundation, 2022). The Japan Foundation, Manila and the Japanese Studies Program, Ateneo de Manila University (2020) explain that the lack of a doctoral program in Japanese studies in the country may be attributed to the current Philippine education system “which does not prioritize area studies beyond the Philippines” (p. 5).

9.3. Shortage of teachers and lack of adequate/comprehensive training programs for teachers

Studies and reports repeatedly point out the limited number of teachers in the country (Ofune et al., 2012; Furukawa, 2023; The Japan Foundation, 2023b). The Japan Foundation’s (2023a) survey also attests this: 77 or 31.8% of institutions answered in the survey that the number of teachers is not yet enough. Because of this, teachers with JLPT N3 to N5, which is an insufficient level for teaching, are already made to teach basic Japanese. Moreover, 150 or 62.0% institutions claim native speaker teachers are insufficient. This is partly because academic institutions are not accustomed to or willing to secure necessary work permits with complex bureaucracy for potential Japanese nationals, aside from those with spouse visas or dispatched by other institutions.

The lack of teachers can be attributed to the lack of institutions that offer systematically designed training programs for Japanese language teachers, and consequently, JFM is in charge of such training programs as discussed in section 5.3. There are few individuals holding at least

a master's degree in Japanese language or Japanese language education, which means, there are not enough qualified individuals to train Japanese language teachers in the country. The joint report by JFM and the Japanese Studies Program, Ateneo de Manila University (2020) states that only a handful number Ph.D. degree holders exist in each institution concerned and it was reasoned out that this is due to the small number of applicants in the arts, humanities, and social sciences admitted to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)'s scholarship to pursue graduate studies. And this prevents the emergence of a pool of local experts and teacher trainers on Japanese language and Japanese language education in the Philippines.

Relatively low salaries for Japanese language teachers in the country cannot be overlooked. Those with relevant Japanese proficiency may choose to work for business cooperations which offer higher salaries than Japanese language schools. There is a need to raise awareness on the value of the expertise of Japanese language teachers to improve working conditions and eventually increase the number of teachers with such expertise.

9.4. Limited networking for teachers and other stakeholders

As pointed out in section 5.4, opportunities for networking for teachers and other stakeholders are limited and teachers' association outside Manila is not very active these days. Although the Philippine Nihongo Teacher's Forum has been growing, marking its 37th meeting in October 2023, only relatively fewer teachers, who are mainly university lecturers and professors, join the forum compared to more than 1,000 teachers in the country. Thus, more local-based academic venues are needed such as through associations or journals.

10. Future prospects

10.1. Recommendations

As discussed in section 9, Japanese language education in the Philippines faces several challenges that may hinder the growing trend of Japanese language education in the country.

The lack of degree programs and teachers in the Japanese language leads to a smaller number of students compared to other ASEAN countries. Hence, putting up more degree programs dedicated to the Japanese language and its teaching at higher education institutions is required as a degree program in a particular language is crucial in order not just to increase the number of students who understand the language and culture but also sustainably produce experts who are capable of the language taught and eventually produce the next generations of experts.

Japanese language education is also crucial in conducting linguistic and areal studies of Japan. As also pointed out in section 9, scholarly research in the country is predominantly conducted in English, even in Japanese-related studies. However, Japanese language proficiency cannot be overlooked as it enables researchers to access directly more authentic and informative resources. To enhance scholarly research *through* the Japanese language and not just research about Japan and Japanese, an expansion of full-scale Japanese language degree programs is desirable.

The establishment of organized training programs, or even degree programs, to train Japanese language teachers at the tertiary level is also highly expected. Currently, Japan Foundation, Manila, a Japanese-government-affiliated institution, takes the initiative of training programs for teachers in the country or aspiring teachers have to go to Japan to receive formal training in teaching methods in Japanese. In short, channels to train local experts and teacher trainers in Japanese language and Japanese language education are still developing. Only solid and robust programs will be able to support and enhance the development of Japanese language education, secure stable employment of teachers, and, eventually, foster continuity and sustainability of Japanese language education in the country. In this regard, it is a noteworthy

development that the University of the Philippines, Diliman's Department of Linguistics started holding workshops on Japanese language education on the occasion of its centennial anniversary in 2023 as this can lead to the further development of locally organized training or even degree programs for teachers. It is also recommended that local universities establish scholarship programs in cooperation with Japanese counterparts so that aspiring teachers can receive formal training in Japanese language education in Japan.

More opportunities for these teachers and researchers to gather together to discuss scholarly research on pedagogy in Japanese are needed. Aside from the Philippine Nihongo Teacher's Forum, it is desirable that educators present their studies and practices at academic gatherings dedicated to language education, together with other foreign languages educators not just English language educators, so that they can discuss the best teaching practices of foreign languages in the Philippine context, which will also benefit Japanese language education.

10.2. Projections

The number of Japanese learners is expected to increase further as human mobility between these two neighboring countries continues to grow as well. In 2022, Filipino migrants in Japan were the fourth largest group (298,740 or 9.7%) among the total registered foreign population, after Chinese (24.8%), Vietnamese (15.9%), and Korean (13.4%) (Immigration Service Agency of Japan, 2023). Filipinos come to Japan not only for working and studying but also for sightseeing. Japan National Tourism Organization (n.d.) reported that 367,480 Filipinos came to Japan in 2023 as of November 2023. This is the eighth-largest tally among all nationalities and third among those from Southeast Asia, following Thailand and Vietnam. Business and trade between Japan and the Philippines also remain strong, receiving so much support from the governments of both countries.

Japanese language education in the Philippines will continue to flourish. For that, however, robust curricula and programs that support those who wish to systematically learn Japanese or Japanese language education are needed. The Philippine government, particularly the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education, should draw up policies and guidelines together with the Japan Foundation, Manila and other local institutions involved in Japanese language education to support foreign language education in public schools. Higher education institutions with Japanese language programs should also consider developing their programs into full degree programs to train students and educators. Solid Japanese language proficiency of Filipino people benefits not only the Japanese people who interact with them but also the Filipino people themselves and the bilateral relationship between the Philippines and Japan.

Furthermore, the online mode of teaching in Japanese language classrooms spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic has opened up a new possibility in teaching the language. As discussed in section 4, learners and educators are centralized in Luzon, particularly Metro Manila whilst other regions such as Visayas and Mindanao have fewer of them. Online classes enable these learners who used to be marginalized from the epicenter of available Japanese education to avail of formal Japanese language training more than ever. For instance, non-credit extramural Japanese language courses at Ateneo de Manila University and the University of the Philippines, Diliman continue to be offered online even after the public health restrictions have been lifted. This also suggests that Japanese language learners may further increase in the country.

11. Conclusion

Japanese language education in the Philippines has almost a century of history and is considered one of the most well-known foreign languages in the country, as the borrowed term from Japanese *Nihongo* ('Japanese language') has been used even in the official domain. As

we have seen, it has been thriving as the relationship between these two neighboring countries becomes stronger. They became even closer not just geographically but also psychologically in the 21st century as information and communication technology and cheaper flight options became more and more available. Given these facts, Japanese language education is relevant in the Philippines. Filipino people have numerous opportunities to be involved in situations where Japanese language proficiency is needed: work, study, business, family reunion, and so on. Moreover, such opportunities have become more realistic as people can now flexibly travel to Japan more than ever and some schemes to work in Japan have been put up by governments. Thus, Japanese language education in the Philippines has the potential to grow further as we have seen the growing number of learners and developing opportunities to learn the language, which makes Japanese language education a growing discipline in the country. There are still many aspects and facets to be improved even though improvement can be seen through very good cooperation with stakeholders such as the Japan Foundation, Manila and the Embassy of Japan in the Philippines. Japanese language education in the Philippines benefits not only the Filipino people who wish to pursue Japanese-related careers but also the Japanese people and the bilateral relationship with Japan, as one of its closest neighbors.

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The Filipino Language Use of Japanese Students of Filipino Descent

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Abstract

The Filipino language is taught and studied as a second or foreign language in and outside the Philippines. It is also taught in Japan, however, compared to the students of the Filipino language in America and Europe who are mostly "heritage language learners (HLLs)", the students in Japan are Japanese students who study the Filipino language because of some socio-political and socio-economic reasons (Laranjo, 2020). From time to time there are also some Japanese students whose mother or father is a Filipino (Nagaya, 2022). It has been argued that the curriculum for HLLs should be different (Kagan, 2012) from second and foreign language learners. The purpose of this study is to determine the difference between HLLs and other students of the Filipino language and the importance of considering them in the teaching of the Filipino language in Japan. To do this, semi-structured interviews were conducted on two categories of Japanese students of Filipino descent at one of the top state universities in Japan offering the Filipino language as a major - (1) three students who took or are taking Filipino as a major and (2) three students who did not take Filipino language as a major. Their answers were analyzed through thematic analysis and the two questions of this study were (1) How did the target students' background influence their decision in choosing the language they studied or are studying? (2) What do the target students know about the Filipino language and Filipino culture that non-Filipino students do not know? It was found that the students' language major choices were influenced by their proficiency in Filipino, shaped more by home exposure than residence in the language's country. Heritage learners excel in familiar sounds, everyday vocabulary and certain cultural concepts, but struggle in speaking, writing, and reading Filipino. *Keywords:* Filipino language, Filipino subject, Japanese student, heritage language learner, choice of language

1. Introduction

The Filipino language is taught and studied as a second or foreign language in and outside the Philippines. In Japan, it is taught at several universities starting with Osaka University of Foreign Studies (now Osaka University) in 1983 followed by Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS) in 1992. These two universities have the most number of Filipino subjects taught as core subjects. However, compared to the students of the Filipino language in America and Europe who are mostly "heritage language learners (HLLs)", the students in Japan are Japanese students who study the Filipino language because of some socio-political and socio-economic reasons (Laranjo, 2020). From time to time there are also some Japanese students whose mother or father is a Filipino (Nagaya, 2022). The author has also observed this in the university where she is teaching the Filipino language. Interestingly, she found that some students with Filipino descent took or are taking Filipino language classes, while some of them did not take Filipino language classes. The author assumed that since they have Filipino background, it would be easier for them to take the Filipino language courses. Contrary to this, according to Polinsky and Kagan (2007) there is a variation in "heritage learners" and "heritage speakers".

Polinsky and Kagan define "heritage learners" as "heritage speakers" who wish to recover, maintain or improve their home language by learning it inside the classroom. They defined the "heritage speaker" based on Valdes' study in 2000, as a speaker who has learned a first language other than the dominant language of the area where he/she lives now, but who has not fully learned the first language due to shifting to the dominant language and that the proficiency in this first language varies greatly among "heritage speakers" (2007, pp. 3-4). Taking this into account, it doesn't necessarily mean that a Filipino "heritage learner" or "heritage speaker" can do well in a Filipino language classroom.

The purpose of this study is to determine the difference between Filipino HLLs and other students of the Filipino language and the significance of considering them in the teaching of the Filipino language in Japan. To accomplish this goal, the following research questions were established.

RQ1: How did the target students' background influence their decision in choosing the language they studied or are studying?

RQ2: What do the target students know about the Filipino language and Filipino culture that non-Filipino students do not know?

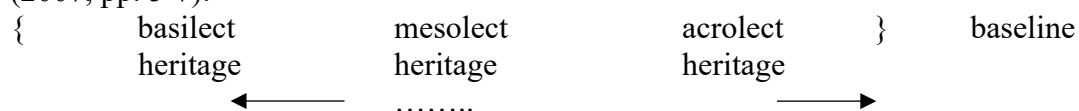
The target students being referred to in this study are the "heritage language learners (HLLs)" and the "heritage speakers" of the Filipino language who were former students, current students and students whom the author got acquainted with at the university where she teaches the Filipino language, starting from the year 2017 to the year 2022. The author requested and obtained the verbal permission of the students to interview them and to use the results of the interview for studies on "heritage language learners (HLLs)" and "heritage speakers" of Japan. This study presents a description of the students' experiences and knowledge, through a qualitative analysis of the students' evaluation of their own ability in the Filipino language and their knowledge of the Filipino culture to answer the established research questions.

2. Filipino Language Education in Japan and Related Studies

There have been studies written about the teaching of the Filipino language in Japan such as describing the challenges faced (Oue, 1997), effective methods in teaching (Antonio, 1997), curriculum and syllabus (Laranjo, 2020) and reasons for choosing the Filipino language and the prospects for teaching the language (Nagaya, 2022). There are also researches about students' production errors (Takano, 2010; Yamoto, 2018), evaluation of materials for learning Filipino (Yamoto, 2022) and development of teaching materials (Yamoto, 2018) as well as innovations in the teaching of the Filipino language (Yamoto, 2020; Figueroa, et al., 2022). However, compared to studies in other languages, these are about all the available studies written on Filipino language education in Japan. Except for the studies conducted by Yamoto (2018) on development of materials for teaching the Filipino language for youth of Filipino descent and the interaction between the students of Filipino descent in a senior high school and Japanese students who majored in Filipino language at the University of Osaka (Yamoto, 2022), the focus of the other aforementioned researches on teaching and learning the Filipino language above were all on Japanese students. These studies by Yamoto (2018 & 2022) are also unique studies that discuss considerations for the education of Japanese youth of Filipino descent regarding their linguistic and cultural heritage from the Philippines. There are other studies about Japanese youth of Filipino descent in Japan, but most of them are about their challenges in learning the Japanese language and challenges in adapting to Japanese society (Jabar, 2011; Nukata, 2015; Yamoto 2013 & 2018); also, about other challenges and problems faced (Suzuki, 2010 & 2015; Ogaya, 2020). Japanese youth of Filipino descent, like others of foreign descent are called "ha-fu (half)" and Japanese youth of Filipino descent are better known as Japanese Filipino Children or JFC (Jabar, 2011; Nukata, 2015). The image of these children in Japan is not good. Aside from being able to contribute to the very few studies about this type of Filipino

language learners or the HLLs of the Filipino language in Japan, this study is important in investigating why children who are looked down upon for being “ha-fu” are choosing to learn the Filipino language and what should be taken into consideration in teaching them. It is expected that with the continued growth of the Filipino community in Japan due to various programs of the Japanese government (Sasaki & Ogawa, 2019), the number of HLLs will also increase. But currently, there is a lack of support for HLLs of the Filipino language (Nagaya, 2022).

As mentioned above, according to Polinsky and Kagan (2007), there are those called "heritage learners" and there are those called "heritage speakers". What they refer to as "heritage learners" are those who wish to recover, maintain or improve their home language by learning it in the classroom. What they refer to as "heritage speakers" as derived from Valdes' study in 2000 are the speakers who learned the native language of one of their parents at home, so they are also called speakers "in the wild". The learned first language of the "heritage speaker" other than the dominant language of the area where he/she lives now is not fully learned due to the transition to the dominant language and the proficiency in this first language varies greatly among “heritage speakers” (2007, pp. 3-4). Because of this variation, they said that it is difficult to assess the ability of each "heritage speaker". According to them, due to the exposure of "heritage speakers" to their first language at home, "aural comprehension" is their highest ability and determining the ability of "heritage speakers" according to this ability is like a "continuum" from the most fluent speaker on one end and the speaker who can barely speak on the other end. They proposed a “continuum model” that was also used in the study of creoles (2007, pp. 5-7):



The lowest language ability is referred to as the basilect heritage and at the other end of it is the highest language ability, the acrolect heritage. The baseline is the basis for determining the minimum or maximum ability which is why, according to Polinsky and Kagan, the standard language of the first language of a "heritage speaker" should not be defined as the baseline, because what the "heritage speaker" learns is the language at home which is probably not the standard version of their language (2007, p. 9). They provided several ways to determine how close or far a heritage speaker's ability is from the baseline: (1) using speech rate or number of words per minute in a natural speech, (2) determining the known vocabulary, (3) determining the method and length of exposure at baseline and (4) determining the language spoken by the parent, along with his view or attitude toward the language at home and the culture contained in it (2007, pp. 11-15).

In this same study by Polinsky and Kagan, they identified the knowledge and characteristics of basilectal speakers, such as native-sounding speakers as "overhearers" or hearing the first language at home but not responding with it and often not spoken to in this language. They also mentioned what a basilectal "heritage speaker" knows about the morphology and syntax of his/her first language (2007, pp. 16-28).

Just as there is variation in heritage speakers, there is also variation in heritage learners and there is variation in heritage learners in the language studied in the classroom. Therefore, the gap between the ability and needs of the "heritage learner" in the curriculum must be identified. They proposed that there should be an accurate assessment of the ability of the "heritage learner" in order to place him/her in the right course. According to them, it is good to conduct three types of tests - (1) oral test, (2) short essay and (3) biographic questionnaire. They also proposed the development of purposeful curriculum for “heritage learners” (2007, pp. 33 & 35). The same was found in the results of a national survey about the "heritage language" in

the USA. It was found that there are some differences between HLLs and second language learners such as (1) language ability, (2) reason for learning their native language in the classroom and (3) their self-view, it is, therefore, important to take this into consideration in the development of the curriculum for "heritage learners" so as not to hurt and hinder the learning of the "heritage learners", but instead to further encourage their learning (Kagan, 2012).

3. Methodology

In this study, two categories of Japanese students of Filipino descent were investigated - (1) three students who took or are taking Filipino language as a major and (2) three students who did not take the Filipino language as a major. The six interviewees were university students at one of the top state universities in Japan offering the Filipino language as a major under the Philippine Studies Program. The students who were interviewed were the "heritage language learners (HLLs)" and the "heritage speakers" who were former students, current students and students whom the author got acquainted with at the university where she teaches the Filipino language, starting from the year 2017 to the year 2022. Between 2017~ 2022, there were a total of nine "heritage language learners (HLLs)" and "heritage speakers" studying at the said university, but only six were interviewed by the author for this study.

All the students who were interviewed are all female and aged 19, 21, 23, 23, 24, 26 respectively at the time of the interview. Two of the students in the category (1) are still currently taking up Filipino language courses in their university, while the other students are either already working or taking up graduate courses. All of the students have Japanese nationality, but the mothers of the five of them are Filipinos and one of them has a Filipino-Japanese mother, whose father is a Filipino. The mothers and relatives of Students D and E and the grandfather of Student A are from Metro Manila, while the mother and relatives of Student F are from Nueva Ecija, a province 3 hours away from Metro Manila. Both Metro Manila and Nueva Ecija are Tagalog-speaking areas. Student B's mother and relatives are from Butuan City, but Student B and her older sister were born in Metro Manila, and Metro Manila is the place she remembers as the place they lived in in the Philippines. Student C's mother and relatives are from Iloilo, but almost all of their relatives are now in Metro Manila. One of the languages spoken in Butuan City is a dialect of the Cebuano language which is the native language of Student B's mother, while Hiligaynon is the language being spoken in Iloilo City and the native language of Student C's mother and relatives. Table 1 shows the summary of the students' background details related to their maternal side, their Filipino side.

Table 1

Background of the Interviewees (Part 1): Their Mother's Hometown and Native Language

| Students | Mother's Hometown (*Grandfather's Hometown) | Mother's Native Language |
|-----------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Student A* | Metro Manila | Tagalog |
| Student B | Butuan City | Cebuano |
| Student C | Iloilo City | Hiligaynon |
| Student D | Metro Manila | Tagalog |
| Student E | Metro Manila | Tagalog |
| Student F | Nueva Ecija | Tagalog |

Polinsky and Kagan (2007, pp. 33 & 35) proposed conducting three types of tests to get an accurate assessment of the ability of the "heritage learner" in order to place him/her in the right course - (1) oral test, (2) short essay and (3) biographic questionnaire. This study aims to is to determine the difference between Filipino HLLs and other students of the Filipino language who are already currently enrolled in a Philippine Studies Program at one university in Japan in the hope of improving the said program and provide support to HLLs of the Filipino language in Japan.

Using the idea of Polinsky and Kagan's biographic questionnaire, this study conducted a semi-structured interview and the answers were analyzed through thematic analysis to answer the aforementioned two questions of this study - (RQ1) How did the target students' background influence their decision in choosing the language they studied or are studying?; (RQ2) What do the target students know about the Filipino language and Filipino culture that non-Filipino students do not know?

The list of main questions sent to the interviewees was in English, as it was found to be the most neutral language between students and author. Before interviewing the students, the author was not sure of their proficiency in Filipino and Japanese, meanwhile English is a required subject in their university. During the interview, the questions were translated into Japanese and the students were allowed to answer them in the language they were most comfortable with (see Appendix 1 for the list of questions). In the course of the interview, the author added some questions for clarifications and for requests to the students to elaborate on their answers. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Except for one student, all interviews were conducted and recorded individually on the Zoom platform. One student did not attend the Zoom meeting, but instead sent a written answer.

To answer RQ1, the students' answers to question #3: [Why did you choose or why did you not choose Filipino as your major?] and question #6: [What language did you use or do you use at home?] were analyzed.

In order to answer RQ2, the students' answers to the following six questions were analyzed: #6: [What language did you use or do you use at home? #7: [Did your mother or do you mother speak her native language to you?], #8: [Did you have any language difficulties when you were a kid? For example, did you get confused between using Nihongo and Filipino or maybe you had a hard time learning Kanji, etc...?], #9: [Did you have any difficulty regarding culture when you were a kid?]), #10: [Was it or is it difficult to learn Filipino? What are the difficult parts? What are the easy parts? / Or was it difficult to maintain or keep your Filipino language? Why or why not?] and #11: [Do you have an advantage over your classmates for being a half-Filipino, half-Japanese person?]

4. Findings

Table 2 shows another set of background details of the six interviewees mostly related to their background as a student. The interviewees were divided into two groups. Students A, B, C are the students who took or are taking Filipino language as a major under the Philippine Studies Program. Students D, E, F are the ones who did not take Filipino language as a major. Of the six, only Students A and B are still currently studying at the university where they are taking up Filipino language courses.

According to Table 2, two were born in the Philippines, Students B and E, lived there until the first years of elementary school. Student B, upon reaching five years old, said that their family left the Philippines and lived in Hong Kong with their relatives there for three years. Currently all interviewees live in Tokyo, the capital of Japan.

Table 2
Background of the Interviewees (Part 2): Student Background

| | Filipino Language Majors | | | Non-Filipino Language Majors | | |
|--|---|---|---|--|---|--|
| | Student A | Student B | Student C | Student D | Student E | Student F |
| Gender | F | F | F | F | F | F |
| Year of Entry to the university | 2022 | 2019 | 2016 | 2016 | 2016 | 2015 |
| Age during the interview | 19 | 21 | 23 | 23 | 24 | 26 |
| Major | School of International and Area Studies (Language: Filipino) | School of International and Area Studies (Language: Filipino) | School of Language and Culture Studies (Language: Filipino) | School of Language and Culture Studies (Language: Hindi) | School of Language and Culture Studies (Language: Indonesian) | School of International and Area Studies (Language: Mongolian) |
| Country of Birth | Japan | Philippines | Japan | Japan | Philippines | Japan |
| Age at Arrival in Japan | X | 8 years old | X | X | 9 years old | X |
| Current Address | Tokyo | Tokyo | Tokyo | Tokyo | Tokyo | Tokyo |

The university where the target students have studied or are studying has four institutions, three undergraduate schools (School of Language and Culture Studies, School of International and Area Studies, School of Japan Studies) and one graduate school (Graduate School of Global Studies), and the students are divided according to these schools. Students under the School of Japan Studies study Japanese as their major language. Students under the other two undergraduate institutions choose the language they will take as a major. Currently, the said university is offering 28 languages as majors. Students are required to take more language classes under the School of Language and Culture Studies (28 language units) than the School of International and Area Studies (20 language units). Graduate students do not need to take foreign languages.

3.1 Answer to RQ1: How did the target students' background influenced their decision in choosing the language they studied or are studying?

To answer RQ1, the students' answers to question #3: [Why did you choose or why did you not choose Filipino as your major?] and question #6: [What language did you use or do you use at home?] were analyzed.

According to the answers of the interviewees, there were three themes that appeared regarding the reasons of those who chose to major in Filipino language and two themes regarding the reasons of those who did not choose to major in Filipino language.

Table 3 shows a summary of the interviewees' reasons for choosing a language to major in.

Table 3
Reason for choosing one's language major (summary)

| Reasons for choosing one's language major | Students |
|--|------------------|
| (1)Have Filipino members in the family | Students A, B, C |
| (2)Have a desire to communicate and participate in the conversation of Filipino relatives and | Students A, B, C |
| (3)Have a desire to know the Philippines, the culture of one's mother and the Filipino language | Students A, B, C |
| (3.a) because they learned about the things mentioned above in high school | Student B |
| (3.b) because their mother did not teach the language; they found having no knowledge about the language as a handicap | Student C |
| Already possess sufficient knowledge of Filipino culture and Filipino language | Students D & E |
| Was forced to learn another language (failed to pass the requirement for the Philippine Studies Program) | Student F |

Filipino is the nationality of the mothers of five of the six students - Students B, C, D, E and F. The nationality of Student A's mother is Japanese, but her mother is half-Filipino, half-Japanese because her father who is the grandfather of Student A is Filipino. Student A's mother took on Japanese nationality when she turned 20 years old. For Students A, B, and C, having a Filipino mother or a half-Filipino, half-Japanese mother, and a Filipino grandfather—in short, having a Filipino family member—is an important factor influencing their choice of major. They said that even though they have a Filipino family member, they did not have enough knowledge of the Filipino culture and the Filipino language, therefore they felt it is important to choose Filipino as their major.

As for Student B, the desire to get to know the Philippines and her mother's culture intensified because she studied about social problems in the Philippines in high school and she wants to have more in-depth knowledge about the country.

“When I was in high school, I went to a kind of special school that educated me to look at the social problems around the world, and the closest one that I could relate to was poverty and also like nandarou (translation: what do you call it?), overstaying OFWs, like migration problems of the Philippines. That one was the most relatable for me, that's why I want to study further about it in the university.” -Student B-

In fact, there is a deeper reason why she went to a "special school" in high school and became more interested in her background as a Filipino. She had a bad experience of being "half", a word with a negative connotation in Japan that refers to being "half" or "incomplete", in junior

high school. This pushed her to temporarily abandon her “being a Japanese” and in turn gave her the opportunity to recognize and learn about her “being a Filipino”.

“...that was in junior high, when i started learning more Japanese and at the peak when I was 15, that was 2016, just before we graduated, my friend just said like *ha-fu dakara dono kono* (translation: because you're half that's why you're like this and that, etc.), she said something that kind of made me upset and after that I felt so bad and I stopped talking to her and I started to think about why Japanese are so racist to foreigners, people with foreign roots, of course she was like my best friend at that time so I was really shocked. So that kind of really influenced me into going into a Canadian international school, because there I can study only in English, of course also in Japanese, but a lot more in English.” **(shortened and some fillers removed)**
-Student B-

Student C had a desire to learn the Filipino language because her mother did not teach her, so she had no knowledge about it. She mentioned that her lack of ability to speak Filipino is a "handicap". She said that she can only communicate with her relatives in English, while her relatives talk with each other in English, Tagalog and Hiligaynon interchangeably.

“母親の家族はすごい多くて、日本よりもフィリピンのほうがたくさん親戚がいるので、みんな英語できるから、別に英語が話せばいいですけど、でもみんなマニラにほとんどいるので、大体タガログ語とヒリガイノン語を混ぜているんですけど喋っていて、その親戚といとこと話すときとかは、やっぱりどうしても英語しかできないというのは disadvantage となっているという感じなので、。。。まずそもそもハンディーみたいなのという感じだなと思っていました。できないことは。(My mother has a big family. Compared to our relatives in Japan, we have more relatives in the Philippines. Everyone can speak English so it's fine that I can communicate with them in English, but almost all of them are in Manila and they often speak in a mixture of Tagalog and Hiligaynon. When I talk to my relatives, my cousins, I can't do anything, I can only talk to them in my English and it seems like a disadvantage to me. I think that this is a handicap, my inability to speak Filipino.)” **(shortened and some fillers removed)** **-Student C-**

For Student D, she already has enough knowledge about the Philippines, so she preferred to take another language to study. Student E also expressed that she thinks she has equal language proficiency in the three languages that she knows, Japanese, Tagalog and English, leading her to explore a language other than Filipino. Despite this, she opted for a language close related to Filipino, namely Indonesian.

Finally, Student F has the most unique answer. She chose the Mongolian language as a major because she failed to pass the Philippine Studies Program the first time she took the entrance exam at the aforementioned university and on the second time she took the exam, her grade was still not good enough to enter the university. According to her, in the two years she applied, the competition to get into the Philippine Studies Program was strong, so she was forced to learn another language. Refer to Appendix 2 for the transcript of the replies of Student F and the other students regarding their reason for choosing the language to major in.

Table 4 shows the students' answers to question #6 about the language they use at home.

Table 4
Language use at home (Question #6)

| Students | Language being used at home |
|-----------|-----------------------------|
| Student A | Japanese (main) |

| Tagalog (support, but only a few times in childhood) | |
|--|---|
| Student B | English (main) Japanese (support & only with father and sister) Tagalog (support, but only a few times in childhood) & Cebuano (only a few times in childhood) |
| Student C | Japanese (main) English (support) |
| Student D | Japanese (main) Tagalog (main) English (support) |
| Student E | TagalogJapanese (main) Tagalog (main) English (main) |
| Student F | Japanese (main) Tagalog (support only a few times in childhood, but not sure about it) |

Japanese, Tagalog and English are the languages mentioned by the students that they use at home. However, looking at Table 4, except for Student B's family, Japanese is the main language at home for all of the students. The family of Students D also chose Tagalog as one of the main languages at home, while the family of Student E use Tagalog and English interchangeably with Japanese. At home, Students C and D use English when there is a need to or to support other communication needs with family members. Like in the case of Student C's family, English is only used for text communication such as LINE, a Social Networking Service (SNS) in Japan, because her mother does not know how to read and write in Hiragana, Katakana and Kanji, the three Japanese writing systems.

While some students mentioned other Philippine languages, these were primarily used by their mothers during childhood and were seldom or never spoken by the students themselves. Students A, B, C, and F were initially exposed to their mother's native language, yet their families eventually adopted Japanese or English as the primary language at home. Despite being born in the Philippines, Student B, for instance, did not learn her mother's native tongue or Tagalog, as English was chosen as the main language by her parents.

Consequently, the proficiency of Students A, B, C, and F in their heritage language did not develop, leading to a desire to learn their mother's native language. As previously mentioned, Student C found it challenging not being able to communicate in Tagalog and Hiligaynon with her relatives.

In contrast, Student D, born and raised in Japan and who has only been 3 times for only two weeks each time to the Philippines, had parents who chose both Japanese and Tagalog as the primary languages at home. Consequently, her proficiency in Tagalog and Japanese is nearly equal, and she possesses knowledge of both Filipino and Japanese cultures. Similarly, Student E's family continued using Tagalog along with English and Japanese at home, allowing her to maintain proficiency in Tagalog and consider herself equally proficient in all three languages. As noted earlier, Students D and E, already proficient in Tagalog, chose to major in another language.

3.1 Answer to RQ2: What do the target students know about the Filipino language and Filipino culture that non-Filipino students do not know?

In order to answer RQ2, the students' answers to the following six questions were analyzed: #6: [What language did you use or do you use at home? #7: [Did your mother or do you mother speak her native language to you?], #8: [Did you have any language difficulties when you were a kid? For example, did you get confused between using Nihongo and Filipino or maybe you had a hard time learning Kanji, etc...?], #9: [Did you have any difficulty regarding culture when you were a kid?]), #10: [Was it or is it difficult to learn Filipino? What are the difficult parts? What are the easy parts? / Or was it difficult to maintain or keep your Filipino language? Why or why not?] and #11: [Do you have an advantage over your classmates for being a half-Filipino, half-Japanese person?]

As presented in Table 4, with the exception of Student B's family, Japanese serves as the primary language within the students' households. Tagalog and English are employed interchangeably with Japanese to enhance communication among family members. Additionally, Tagalog and other Philippine languages, utilized by the families of Students A, B, C, and F at home, are predominantly spoken by their mothers during communication and are seldom or never used by the students themselves. This indicates that the students' proficiency in these languages is relatively low.

Student A said that she only learned a few words of Tagalog, while Student B said that she might have learned a few words of Tagalog and of the Butuan City dialect of Cebuano, but has already forgotten them. Student A said that she learned counting in Tagalog and simple words such as "kilikili (armpit)" in childhood from her grandfather while he bathed her and her siblings. As siblings, she said that they also learned the word "tange (stupid)" from their mother as she always utters the word whenever she makes a mistake. Currently, she is trying to talk to her mother in Filipino using what she has learned in the university.

Students C and F mentioned that they remember hearing words of their mother's native tongue being used at home in their childhood, however now they do not or no longer use them at home. Hiligaynon is the native language of Student C's mother, while Tagalog is the native language of Student F's mother. According to Table 3, except for Students D and E, the Tagalog language is hardly used or not used at all at home. For Student F, after the third grade in elementary, her family did not return to the Philippines as much as before that and that is where the growth of her Tagalog skills ended. She said that she could still understand some words but could no longer speak it.

For Student B, only when she started studying the Filipino language at the university that she found out that some of the words she learned at home were actually from a dialect of the Cebuano language of her mother's hometown, Butuan City. Student B then realized that all her life her mother was actually talking to her in a mixture of Tagalog and Cebuano.

Table 5 shows the students' answers regarding their ability in the languages and cultures they were exposed to.

Table 5

Other background regarding language ability and cultural knowledge (Questions #7, #8, #9)

| Questions | Filipino Language Majors | | | Non-Filipino Language Majors | | |
|--|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| | Student A | Student B | Student C | Student D | Student E | Student F |
| #7 Did your mother speak to you in her native language? | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes, but only in elementary |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------|-------|----|-------|-----|-------|
| # 8 Did you have language difficulties as a child? | Yes, but only a few | Yes | No | No | Yes | No |
| #9 Did you have any cultural difficulties as a child? | ? Yes | ? Yes | No | ? Yes | Yes | ? Yes |

As Student C mentioned, her mother never spoke to her in Tagalog or Hiligaynon so, she said that she had no difficulty learning Japanese while growing up. Student F said the same thing. Even though Student C often went home to the Philippines until she was in sixth grade, she said that she did not have a hard time, because her relatives spoke to her in English. But, as she also expressed regret that she could only participate in English conversations compared to her cousins. As for Student F, her relatives do not speak much English, especially her grandparents, so her mother was always by her side to act as her translator.

“確かに英語全然お店とか、移動するときとか全然英語で大丈夫だと思うんですけど、でも私のおばあちゃんとかあまり英語が分からなくて、うちだけなのかもしれないんですけど、そのおじいちゃん、おばあちゃん世代あまり親戚とかも英語が分からなくて、結構タガログ語でみんな話してるんで、おじいちゃん、おばあちゃんと話したいとなったときにお母さんが通訳みたいになってるんで、もっと直接話したいなと思います。だから私はタガログ語もできたほうがいいなと思います。 (*If it's just in the store or in transportation, it's definitely okay to use English. But my grandmother doesn't understand English very well. Maybe it's just my family, but my grandfather, my relatives who are the same age as my grandmother, they almost only talk in Tagalog. So, when I want to talk to my grandmother and grandfather, my mother is my translator. If I wanted to talk to them myself, I thought it would be better if I also knew Tagalog.*)” **(shortened and some fillers removed) -Student C-**

Student D has equal ability in Japanese and Tagalog and did not have difficulty in school nor did she have difficulty communicating with her relatives. Student B and Student E who had the experience of living in the Philippines had difficulty learning some of the languages they were exposed to. Student B, because she was raised in the English language, understands what her mother says to her, but she did not learn how to respond in Tagalog or Cebuano. When it came to the Japanese language, she had some bad experiences while learning it, so it was not easy for her to learn it too. In elementary school she was forced to learn it, so she lost the desire to learn it at all. When she finally learned it, she had a hard time using it in conversation at school, because she felt not being accepted by her classmates, and in junior high school she was hurt by what her friend who said something hurtful about her being "half".

Student E's difficulty was confusion in the three languages she knows, because of the expansion of her knowledge of the Japanese language. She said that she had difficulty talking to her friends in Japanese without using Tagalog or English. She also said that when talking to her Filipino family members, she finds it difficult to talk to them only in Tagalog or English without using the Japanese language. Student A, on the other hand, said that she experienced confusion in elementary school as to whether the words she was using were Japanese or

Tagalog. When she noticed that her classmates didn't seem to understand some of the words she was using, she became careful about using non-Japanese sounding words.

When it comes to culture, Student C said that she did not experience difficulties with the different cultures she knows. She said that she only found out while studying in the university, that the culture in her family's dining room was different from her classmates in high school, such as how she holds her chopsticks and correct manners in using them, as well as the way the food was prepared on the table. Student E, on the other hand, said she learned to speak softly in public, because she noticed that it was very quiet inside the buses and trains in Japan. There is a question mark next to the check about the cultural experience of Students A, B, D and F, because their stories in this part are not purely related to culture, but are mostly about how their existence as "half" and being accepted or not. Student A was teased in elementary school because her skin color was darker than her classmates. Student B heard bad words about her being a "half". Student D was teased due to her foreign-sounding name and Student F experienced exclusion from an outing with her friends in elementary school due to her mother being Filipino. Looking at these experiences from the point of view of Japanese culture, it can be said that they happened, because of the Japanese people's belief in maintaining "和 / wa" or harmony by being consistent with others, in behavior and also in outside appearance (Takehashi, 2020).

Lastly, table no. 6 also contributes to addressing RQ2. Polinsky and Kagan (2007, pp. 33 & 35) proposed conducting three types of tests to get an accurate assessment of the ability of the "heritage learner" in order to place him/her in the right course - (1) oral test, (2) short essay and (3) biographic questionnaire. Since this study investigated HLLs who are already enrolled or have already taken the Filipino language courses, the skills and knowledge of the interviewees in the Filipino language were inferred from their answers to interview questions #6, #7, #8, #9, #10 and #11. Question #10: [Was it or is it difficult to learn Filipino? What are the difficult parts? What are the easy parts? / Or was it difficult to maintain or keep your Filipino language? Why or why not?] and Question #11: [Do you have an advantage over your classmates for being a half-Filipino, half-Japanese person?] were specifically asked to Students A, B and C who took Filipino as a major.

Table 6

Background in skills and knowledge of the Filipino language (Questions #10 and #11)

| Difficult and Easy Parts in the Filipino language | Advantages Over Classmates |
|--|---|
| Difficult parts | awareness of speech sounds |
| grammar | - more wide range |
| speaking | - additional sounds to known sounds from Japanese and English |
| writing | familiarity with certain words and expressions |
| reading | - words used in everyday conversation |
| Easy parts | - low anxiety towards new words |
| (a lot of) familiar vocabulary | knowledge about Filipino culture |
| listening | - observations from mother; learned from mother |
| comprehension | availability of learning support |
| - concepts (e.g., cultural concepts) | - limited, but has someone in the family to ask questions when needed |
| - overall idea of the things being discussed | |

According to Students A, B and C, grammar is the most difficult part of learning the Filipino language, because it is very different from the grammar of Japanese and English. They said that production in the Filipino language is also difficult such as speaking and writing. However, they also mentioned that reading is equally difficult as well. On the other hand, they find listening and understanding overall content relatively easier, even if they don't comprehend everything. Familiar vocabulary and cultural concepts help them guess the overall meaning of what they hear in Filipino classes or from relatives.

When it comes to their advantage in learning the Filipino language over their Japanese classmates who are not of Filipino descent, according to the three Filipino majors, they have almost no advantage because they know almost nothing about the Filipino language and Filipino culture when they joined the program. Student A said, except for a few words and counting from one to ten, she does not know the Filipino language. In fact, she has never even set foot in the Philippines, not even once. Student B, on the other hand, said she understands 60% of the words in the textbook used in her university, but she said that she really struggles in expressing herself. What she sees as an advantage is having a mother that she can ask questions to and practise with compared to her Japanese classmates. However, she said that she does not want it to be an opportunity to be unfair to her classmates so, she does not depend on her mother that much. She also saw that it would be better to find other Filipinos to talk to other than her mother because the topics they can talk about are limited. Lastly, as mentioned above, Student C was not taught the Filipino language by her mother and had no knowledge about it when she joined the Filipino classes. Even when it comes to culture, the Filipino culture was not explained to her while growing up and what she knew was from observations of her mother's behaviors and actions.

5. Analysis and Discussion

The purpose of this study is to determine the difference between HLLs and the other students of the Filipino language as well as to determine the significance of considering the HLLs in the teaching of the Filipino language in Japan. Qualitative analysis of the answers of the interviewed six students was employed to give a description of their linguistic background and an evaluation of their ability in the Filipino language.

Similar to the study by Polinsky and Kagan in 2007, in the development of this study, two categories of speakers were found according to their "heritage language": "heritage speaker" or "in the wild" and "heritage learner". Japanese students of Filipino descent are divided into (1) those who take or are taking Filipino as a major, which can be compared to "heritage learners" and (2) who did not take Filipino as a major.

According to Table 2 and Table 4, it can be seen that there is variation in the background of the interviewees and the language spoken at home or the language learned by the students. Polinsky and Kagan (2007) also reported about this. Table 5 shows that their experience varied regarding their exposure to their parents' languages and in the language chosen by their parents to be used at home. It was clear that the parents' decision in choosing the language to be used at home has a great influence on their proficiency in the languages they are supposed to know. It appears that living in the Philippines has nothing to do with the growth of students' Tagalog language skills, as was the case with Student B, Student D and Student E. Student B lived in the Philippines until she was 5 years old, but because English was the chosen language of her parents to be used at home, she did not learn to speak Tagalog and Cebuano and she was late in learning Japanese. As for Student D, even though born and raised in Japan with limited visits to the Philippines, but had parents who chose both Japanese and Tagalog as the primary languages at home, her evaluation of her language ability in Tagalog is equal to that of Japanese. The language choices made by the parents of Students B, D, and E align with the assertion by

Polinsky and Kagan (2007, p. 15) that "determining the language spoken by the parent, together with his/her view or attitude towards the language at home and the culture contained in it," is a key factor in gauging the proximity or distance of a "heritage speaker's" proficiency from the baseline, as discussed in relevant studies.

Tables 2, 4, and 5 collectively present the comprehensive background of the students, detailing the languages they use and their experiences of awareness and exposure to them. This information serves as the foundation for the students in deciding which language to major in at the university, complementing other reasons they have provided.

From Table 6, it can be seen that because Students A, B, C were exposed to the Tagalog, Cebuano and Hiligaynon languages they had an advantage in identifying sounds and everyday vocabulary, but like their classmates they have difficulty in speaking, writing and reading in the Filipino language. Although they may think that their advantage over their classmates who are Japanese students studying Filipino as a foreign language is not that great, according to Kagan (2012), these HLLs' "reasons for learning their native language in the classroom" and "their self-view" are different, therefore it is important to put them into consideration in the development of the curriculum for "heritage learners", in order for the program to not hurt or hinder the learning of the "heritage learners", but instead encourage their learning (Kagan, 2012).

6. Conclusion

This study reveals variation among "heritage speakers" highlighting the place of birth and residence of students during elementary school does not correlate with their ability in the languages they know. The language chosen by their parents for home use appears to be a main factor. The overall background of the students regarding their experiences and exposure to the languages they know can be said to be the basis for their university major choices and the depth and breadth of their knowledge about the Filipino language and Filipino culture.

The heritage learners investigated in this study claimed that they have an advantage in identifying sounds and everyday vocabulary, but like their classmates, they also struggle with speaking, writing and reading in the Filipino language. They find listening and understanding overall content relatively easier, even if they don't comprehend everything, because familiar vocabulary and cultural concepts help them guess the overall meaning of what they hear in Filipino classes or from relatives. Despite this, Heritage Language Learners (HLLs) believe they don't have a significant advantage over Japanese students learning Filipino as a foreign language. Nevertheless, Kagan (2012) emphasizes the importance of considering "their reason for learning their native language in the classroom" and "their self-view" in curriculum development for heritage learners. This approach aims to support rather than hinder their learning journey.

Currently, only a small number of Filipino Heritage Language Learners (HLLs) are recorded in Japan. However, the Japanese government's immigration programs (Sasaki & Ogawa, 2019) are expected to foster the growth of the Filipino community, leading to an anticipated increase in the population of Filipino HLLs. Consequently, studies on these "heritage learners" are crucial to fill existing gaps and contribute to the support of Filipino language HLLs (Nagaya, 2022). Additionally, these studies contribute to the expanding field of migration and migration linguistics (Borlongan, 2023).

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7. Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview questions

1. Name, age, address
2. Major, university (School of International and Area Studies or School of Language and Culture Studies + language)
3. Why did you choose or why did you not choose Filipino as your major?
4. Where were you born?
5. Tell me about your parents - about their nationality and hometown
6. What language did you use or do you use at home?
7. Did your mother or do you mother speak her native language to you?
8. Did you have any language difficulty when you were a kid? For example, you got confused between using Nihongo and Filipino or maybe you had a hard time learning Kanji, etc...
9. Did you have any difficulty regarding culture when you were a kid?
10. Was it or is it difficult to learn Filipino? What are the difficulties? What are the easy parts? /Or was it difficult to maintain or keep your Filipino language? Why or why not?
11. Do you have an advantage over your classmates for being a half-Filipino, half-Japanese person?
12. Do you think you made the right choice in choosing or not choosing Filipino as your major? Why or why not?
13. What are your plans for the future?
14. Do you think you can still use Filipino in your future endeavors?
15. What advantages or merits do you think your knowledge of the Filipino language and culture will give you or grant you in the future?
16. Do you think half-Filipino, half-Japanese children in Japan should learn Filipino formally in school? Why or why not?
17. What is your message or advice for kids or students like you in terms of learning Filipino and Filipino culture?
18. How do you see yourself? Are you Japanese or are you Filipino or are you both? Please explain your answer.

Appendix 2

Reason for choosing language major (narrative)

3. Why did you choose or why did you not choose Filipino as your major?

Bakit pinili mo o bakit hindi mo pinili ang Filipino bilang major?

Student A (Filipino Major) おじいちゃんがフィリピン人なんですけど、今そのおじいちゃんが日本にいて、そのおじいちゃんが親戚とフィリピン語でビデオ通話をちちやいころから見てて、私もその会話の中に入りたいなと思って、フィリピン語と一緒に話せるようになりたいなと思ったので、フィリピン語選びました。
(My grandfather is Filipino and that grandfather of mine is already here in Japan. When I was young, I used to see my grandfather making a video call with his relative and I used to think that I wanted to join in their conversation. I wanted to talk to them in Filipino so I chose Filipino.)

Student B (Filipino Major) There are several reasons, but when I was in high school, I wanted to know more about my Filipino background, my mother's side, and the only school that provides courses for Filipino in Tokyo was my university. There are other schools that also provide Tagalog courses, but my university is the most intensive, I think. After I joined the open campus and talked with the professors, I felt more passion from them, especially after seeing Ogawa sensei. I was really influenced by him, that's when I decided to go to my university.

When I was in high school, I went to a kind of special school that educated me to look at the social problems around the world, and the closest one that I could relate to was the poverty and also like nandarou, overstaying OFWs, like migration problems of the Philippines. That one was the most relatable for me, that's why I want to study further about it in the university. Before entering I actually wanted to study about poverty, but it was too difficult for me because I was not good in economics or numbers, so I just changed my interest to migration studies.

Mag-aaral C (Filipino Major) 母親がフィリピンの出身なんですけど、母親は私にずっと全然教えてこなかったのので、私はもう何も知らなくてフィリピン語について。大学を決めるときに、英語を勉強したいと思ったので、東京外国語大学がいいんじゃないかって、そういうふうに大学を決めたんですけど。英語科に行くぐらいの成績はなかったので、別の言語にしようと思ってたときに、フィリピン語があるんだったら、じゃそこに行こうということで決めました。

(My mother is from the Philippines, but she didn't teach me anything. So, I don't know anything about the Filipino language. When I was shopping for a university to attend, I thought that I wanted to study English so I said why not go to Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. However, my grade for the English program was not up to par. When I was shopping for another language, I found out that there is Filipino, so that's the only one I chose.)

Mag-aaral D (Hindi Major) Originally, I considered taking up Filipino as my major, but I decided to learn Hindi because I am already familiar with Southeast Asian culture, and the Philippines is one of them and Japan is part of East Asia. So, I got interested in learning about other parts of Asia, which is South Asia like India. Because in Japan, I see a lot of things related to India like curry and rice and also Buddhism, Bollywood music. I like watching movies po kasi and Bollywood is known in Japan, so those things are connected and made me want to know about India.

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Mag-aaral E (Indonesian Major)</p> | <p>One of the reasons is because I heard that Indonesian is quite similar with Filipino.</p> |
| <p>Mag-aaral F (Mongolian Major)</p> | <p>本当は選びたかったんですけど、センター試験を受けたときに、結果が悪くて、結構しかも、入試まえに例えばフィリ科とかの倍率が見れるんですけど、たしかフィリ科が高くて、このままだと入りたい大学にも入れないかもしれないと思って。すみませんこんな理由で、で元々結構色々な言葉に興味があって、ロシアとか、あいう文字にも興味があったしと思って、うちは国社なんで、中央アジアで応募して、でモンゴル語になりました。て感じですよ。私浪人してて、浪人するまえの入試ではフィリ科を受けてます。おっちゃったんですけど。(I really want to choose, but my university entrance exam result was not good. Then, before the exam I saw the acceptance rate of the Filipino program and it was so popular that I thought I might not get into the university I want. I'm sorry that this was my reason. But I am also really interested in different languages such as the Russian language and those with a different writing system. Because I was accepted to the School of International and Area Studies, I chose Central Asia, so I chose the Mongolian language. Actually, I'm already a year off and a year late. The first time I took the entrance exam, I chose the Filipino program and I failed.)</p> |

Intercultural Miscommunication in Higher Education Institutions: A Systematic Review (2013-2023)

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Abstract

This systematic review study surveys empirical research on intercultural miscommunication in higher education institutions published in Web of Science and Scopus indexing journals from 2013 to 2023 to identify thematic areas of research that are covered. Out of 96 studies initially identified using PRISMA search based on intercultural miscommunication keywords, 17 met this study's criteria. The study's findings indicate a focus on linguistic and cultural barriers, along with intercultural communication strategies. The research is predominantly concentrated in Western contexts like the UK and Australia, with only several studies conducted within Asian university settings. Furthermore, the prevailing research methodology among the empirical studies is qualitative in nature. This review study highlights a significant gap in empirical research focusing on intercultural miscommunication within Asian higher education contexts, particularly in China. As cultural and linguistic diversity among students and staff in Chinese universities frequently results in intercultural miscommunication issues, addressing this gap is crucial for developing effective intercultural communication strategies and enhancing the educational experience in these universities. This systematic review, therefore, underscores the need for more nuanced research in these areas, aiming to bridge the cultural and linguistic divides in academic environments, thus promoting a more inclusive and effective internationalization strategy in higher education.

Keywords: internationalization, intercultural miscommunication, intercultural barrier, language and culture, strategy

1. Introduction

Internationalization of higher education is a contemporary trend worldwide and an important feature of comprehensive universities. Thus, universities are actively engaging in international partnerships and collaborations, with the goal of facilitating the exchange of knowledge and expertise across borders (Leal Filho et al., 2023). According to Ivan et al. (2022), internationalization comprises several dimensions: the recruitment of international students; the involvement of foreign professors in teaching and research activities; the utilization of international languages in teaching and administration; the establishment of joint degrees and cooperative programs; and collaborative efforts in the field of research. "Belt and Road Initiative", as China's most significant international policy, has largely brought "Internationalization at Home" (IaH). As illustrated by Xu & Boudouaia (2023), IaH is the introduction of an international and intercultural dimension into the curriculum studied in a local setting, helping students gain intercultural skills and a global perspective. The strategy of attracting foreign experts and international students by Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) is strongly linked with the concept of IaH.

However, there are many challenges faced by HEIS in implementing internationalization strategies. Communication challenges, for example, can give rise to misunderstandings, fostering frustration and prejudice, ultimately leading to low educational outcomes. According to Yassin et al. (2020), language challenges, academic challenges, and research challenges were found to have a significant negative impact on learning sustainability. Li & Xue (2023) stated that institutional international curriculum mechanism needs further construction, faculty's intercultural teaching ability is insufficient, international campus environment and culture building is lacking, etc. What is more, with more foreign experts and international students in Chinese universities, there is an increase in intercultural communication. Intercultural competence, which refers to the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes (Deardorff, 2006), can ensure smooth communication among staff and students. Still, communicating with culturally and linguistically different people may lead to intercultural miscommunication and influence the learning and management of foreign experts and international students.

Some previous studies of intercultural miscommunication have been conducted in the context of HEIs. The findings reveal both the barriers and strategies for addressing intercultural miscommunication. Sato & Miller (2021) investigated seven American undergraduate students (three men and four women) at Midwestern University. Adopting in-depth, semi-structured interviews, the authors revealed some strategies for overcoming intercultural communication challenges. In addition, another study by Meletiadou (2023) surveyed 50 multilingual students who participated in a Lego Serious Play (LSP) intervention program, and concluded that LSP had a positive effect on overcoming the linguistic and cultural barriers of intercultural communication. Nevertheless, there is a dearth of studies on intercultural miscommunication conducted in China. Additionally, no literature review studies have been found related to intercultural miscommunication in the educational field. Therefore, this study investigates the trends of intercultural communication, and systematically examines the barriers resulting in intercultural miscommunication in HEIs from 2013 to 2023.

2. Literature Review

Intercultural communication typically pertains to in-person interactions between individuals from diverse cultures. This form of communication can be challenging because the sender and receiver often exist in distinct cultural contexts and have limited shared symbols. Significant potential for intercultural miscommunication exists when a message from one person to a member of another cultural group is perceived negatively. According to Zhang et al. (2020), intercultural miscommunication is defined as a breakdown in communication between speakers of different cultures and languages, resulting from cultural differences and sociolinguistic transfer. Miscommunication may arise due to the misinterpretation of pragmatic behaviors and lexical items within a particular conversational context (Paxton et al., 2021). Unsuccessful communication can impede the establishment of relationships between those in need of support and those providing it (Latifovic & Händler-Schuster, 2023). Insufficient or ineffective communication can also result in discomfort in intercultural situations, hindering the trust-building process, ultimately impacting the success of internationalized education.

A Portland well-known pioneer in the field of intercultural communication, Barna (1997) has compiled a list of six such barriers: anxiety, assuming similarity instead of recognizing differences, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice, misinterpretations of nonverbal cues, and language. Jandt (2007) explained that the primary barrier, heightened anxiety, occurs when people are uncertain about what is expected. It is only natural to become preoccupied with this emotion, making it challenging to be fully engaged in the communication transaction. The second barrier involves assuming similarity instead of recognizing differences, which can

result in a lack of awareness regarding important distinctions. Assuming that no differences exist may lead people to behave as they would in their home culture, potentially resulting in inappropriate behavior. The third barrier to effective intercultural communication is ethnocentrism, which involves negatively judging aspects of another culture based on the standards of one's own culture. According to Kuru Alici & Kaya (2022), ethnocentrism is the tendency to view one's own group as central, leading to misperceptions of others and potential social distance in intercultural interactions. The fourth barrier is stereotypes and prejudice. Stereotypes, according to Liu & Zhang (2020), are cognitive structures guiding behavior in communication. Positive feelings are associated with competent and friendly groups, while negative stereotypes can evoke negative emotions like anger, fear, or anxiety. In contrast, prejudice refers to the irrational dislike, suspicion, or hatred of a particular group, race religion, or sexual orientation (Hunter & Rothenberg, 2001). Furthermore, ethnocentrism is always associated with stereotypes and prejudice (Kuru Alici & Kaya, 2022). The fifth barrier is misinterpretations of nonverbal cues. Nonverbal symbols, such as hand signals and bodily expressions, vary from culture to culture, and it is precisely these variations that create barriers in nonverbal communication. The final barrier is language itself, where words, functioning as symbols, can become obstacles when their complete meanings are not shared. Even speakers of the same language may not necessarily share identical meanings for every word.

Anderson (2018) examined (mis)communication between Japanese students and non-Japanese instructors in English-medium Japanese university classroom settings. The analysis centers on two classroom style aspects impacted by differing teacher and student norms: 1. Turn-taking behavior, emphasizing student non-responsiveness, often characterized by extended periods of silence; and 2. Forms of address, specifically, how students address their teachers, including their use of names with or without titles. The conclusion drawn is that miscommunication can arise when there are disparities in classroom interaction and interpretation norms between teachers and students. Other scholars, Prayatni et al. (2020) in Indonesia concluded that intercultural miscommunication can result from verbal and non-verbal discursive symbols. Verbal miscommunication arises from lexical choices, paralinguistic cues, formulaic expressions, accent, and pronunciation. Non-verbal miscommunication stems from facial expressions, personal space intrusion, and eye contact. Culturally ambiguous words and expressions can also lead to miscommunication.

Overall, the results of the studies described above illustrate the barriers resulting in intercultural miscommunication. Nonetheless, there is currently limited comprehension regarding the mechanisms underlying miscommunication itself (Paxton et al., 2021). In addition, there is lack of empirical studies, especially within the context of Asian countries. Therefore, the aim of this study is to highlight research trends in intercultural miscommunication and systematically analyze the barriers leading to it.

3. Methods

Among the various approaches to research synthesis, the systematic literature review is widely regarded as a relevant and effective method for summarizing research evidence in higher education research (Chong et al., 2022). It enables the synthesis of evidence in a transparent, comprehensive, and systematic manner. The review procedure consists of search strategy, selection of the articles, and analysis (Minary et al., 2019). To gather pertinent studies, this systematic literature review was conducted following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines in Figure 1 (Liberati et al., 2009). The procedure for this study is outlined as follows.

3.1 Search Strategy

A systematic search was conducted in two prominent databases, Web of Science (WOS) and

Scopus, renowned for their extensive coverage and scope, to identify pertinent journal articles. This involved employing pertinent keywords related to: 1. “intercultural miscommunication” 2. “intercultural misunderstanding” 3. “intercultural barriers” 4. “intercultural communication barriers” 5. “intercultural challenge” 6. “intercultural communication challenge”. It is worth noting that quotation marks were employed around those keywords to ensure that they were searched as whole entities, rather than separately. Those keywords were utilized for conducting searches in those two databases. The period spans from 2013 to 2023. Following the process of duplication, the remaining articles underwent a screening and evaluation process to ensure that only eligible studies were included in the analysis.

3.2 Selection of articles

As can be seen from the PRISMA model (Figure 1), the selection of the articles includes four stages of identification, the screening, eligibility, and inclusion. During the identification stage, a search period spanning from January 1, 2013, to August 12, 2023, was implemented to identify studies addressing the topic of intercultural miscommunication by the key words mentioned in the search strategy. As a result, 25 articles were identified from WoS, while 71 were identified from Scopus. After identifying a total of 96 articles from the two databases, the authors removed 17 articles due to duplication. In the screening stage, title and abstract of 79 articles were reviewed, and 29 articles that violated the inclusion criteria of empirical studies were excluded. During the eligibility stage, 50 complete articles were thoroughly reviewed, and 33 irrelevant articles that did not meet the criteria for education field studies were excluded. Finally, 17 English-language studies remained.

In summary, the following criteria were employed to determine their inclusion:

- (1) Only studies that were conducted between January 1, 2013, to August 12, 2023 were reviewed.
- (2) Only articles published in English-written, peer-reviewed journals within the two mentioned databases of WoS and Scopus were included.
- (3) Articles reporting results from empirical research were assessed.
- (4) The primary outcome, which focuses on intercultural miscommunication in HEIs, has been evaluated.

3.3 Analysis

To analyze the data, the authors adopted a four-step integrative review method as provided by Whitemore & Knafl (2005). This method consists of data reduction, data display, data comparison, and the drawing and verification of conclusions. During the initial step of data reduction, essential information was extracted from valid articles. The elements to be extracted from the articles were chosen with the aim of discerning the differences and similarities among the selected articles pertaining to the topic. This information encompassed details such as author, publication year, country, methodology, sample, findings, and more. Following this, the extracted information was transformed into a display that consolidates data from various primary sources concerning specific variables or subgroups. Additionally, the distribution of publication year, country, and methodology are analyzed using SPSS, and displayed in charts. In the third step, the authors engaged in an iterative process of reviewing and refining the codes to identify subthemes or themes. The authors adopted NVIVO, a qualitative data analysis software, in order for the trends and themes to be extracted from the articles. Ultimately, the authors discussed the emerging themes and subthemes to ensure their coherence and alignment with the research questions: (1) What are the research trends related to intercultural miscommunication in HEIs? (2) What are the barriers resulting in intercultural miscommunication in HEIs?

4. Results

In this section, the researchers present a summary of the examined studies, highlighting the key

findings. Graphs are used to visually represent general data such as the distribution of the studies by year, country, and research design. Additionally, the studies' data is categorized based on research questions, focusing on trends in research and barriers in intercultural communication, which is the one of the main themes analyzed. The rest of the themes are from the emerging data. The themes are sequentially arranged to reflect a logical progression. This organization helps in clearly understanding the various aspects of intercultural miscommunication.

4.1 Searching Outcomes and Descriptions

The search process resulted in the identification of 96 articles that were published between 2013 and 2023. Following a thorough review and selection process, a total of 17 articles were included for further analysis and reporting. A summary of reviewed studies is presented in Table 1 below. Of these articles, 4 out of the 17 studies were conducted in the year 2016, signifying the predominant focus of research during that specific period (Figure 2 below). The remaining studies are evenly distributed across each year, with an average of one or two studies per year. The bulk of the studies (10) were carried out in Western countries, including the UK and Australia. Additionally, six studies were conducted in Asian countries, with two each in China, Japan, and Malaysia, and one in the African nation of Ethiopia. (Figure 3 below). The majority of the conducted empirical studies, specifically 11 out of 17, were grounded in a qualitative research design (Figure 4 below).

4.2 The Primary Research Trends Observed in the Studies

According to Padmanandam et al. (2021), a word cloud is a visually engaging way to represent text by highlighting frequently used words, providing a quick overview of essential information from web-oriented tools. It identifies hotspots and their evolving trends by analyzing the frequency of occurrences. In this study, the authors employed NVivo software to generate the word cloud (Figure 5 below). The key research trends in intercultural miscommunication in HEIs that have surfaced from the analysis include those such as students, intercultural communication, culture, differences, English, language, international, teachers, challenges, and development, among others. As evident from the Word Cloud, the predominant focus of studies was on students' intercultural communication within HEIs (Meletiadou, 2023; Park, 2022; Sato & Miller, 2021). Under the umbrella of internationalization, English emerged as the dominant language, with challenges in intercultural communication primarily stemming from cultural and linguistic differences (Yarosh et al., 2018; Huhn et al., 2017; Dumessa & Godesso, 2014). A minority of studies concentrate on teachers' intercultural communication and professional development (Yi & Meng, 2022; Genç, 2018; Hu et al., 2016).

4.3 Main Themes Identified

Following the comparison and discussion of the individual research analyses, we synthesized and presented the findings in a narrative format, leading to the identification of five themes: (1) international mobility in HEIs; (2) the role of English as a Lingua Franca; (3) challenges associated with intercultural interaction; (4) barriers leading to intercultural miscommunication; (5) strategies for mitigating intercultural miscommunication.

4.3.1 International mobility in HEIs

The primary theme derived from the studies is the international mobility in HEIs. Out of the 17 studies, 5 demonstrated that HEIs actively engaged in internationalization efforts (Yassin et al., 2020; God & Zhang, 2019; Huhn et al., 2017; Park, 2022; Sato & Miller, 2021). Individuals reside within the sphere of globalization, which has blurred the lines between cultures and rendered various cultural facets comparatively familiar to others (Yassin et al., 2020).

Attracting international students stands as a paramount objective in the internationalization of higher education, and universities have committed themselves to supporting these students in coexisting and collaborating within the globalized landscape (Park, 2022). Precisely, the count of international students is on the rise in various countries each year. Annually, more than half a million Chinese students venture abroad for their studies, with Western countries such as the USA and Australia serving as their primary destinations (God & Zhang, 2019). Luxembourg, Australia, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Austria, and New Zealand boast the highest proportions of international students among their respective populations (Huhn et al., 2017), and the largest contingent of international students hails from China (Sato & Miller, 2021).

4.3.2 The Role of English as a Lingua Franca

The second theme elaborated on the role of English as a Lingua Franca. As a result of the continually growing number of English speakers worldwide, stemming from diverse cultural backgrounds, English has become a prominent medium for intercultural communication (Genç, 2018). Presently, it stands as a global language, spoken to varying degrees by approximately one-fourth of the world's population. English has attained a novel status as a worldwide language. It is evident that in contemporary times, English serves as a means of communication, with non-native speakers surpassing native speakers in numbers (Babai Shishavan & Sharifian, 2016). There exists an immense demand and keen interest in acquiring proficiency in English. Numerous global organizations actively promote the development of English language skills to facilitate communication with individuals from across the globe (Genç, 2018). Furthermore, there is a necessity for the integration of culture as an essential element within the English language.

4.3.3 Challenges Associated with Intercultural Interaction

The third theme pertains to the challenges related to intercultural interaction, with 7 out of the 17 studies providing explanations on how these challenges impact intercultural interactions (Yassin et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2016; God & Zhang, 2019; Huhn et al., 2017; Yi & Meng, 2022; Yarosh et al., 2018; Park, 2022). A study provided that academic difficulties are linked to the learning processes, comprehension of instructors, and understanding the educational systems within the university (Yassin et al., 2020). In addition to the overarching challenges, Asian international students encounter entirely new and markedly distinct learning environments, and they also grapple with obstacles like acculturation and social isolation (Hu et al., 2016). This study conducted a comprehensive analysis of the divergent concepts in Chinese and Dutch education, examining them through the lens of individualism versus collectivism. It also highlighted the contrast between an emphasis on qualifications and schooling in one approach versus an emphasis on personal and moral development in the other. International students from China and other Asian countries often encounter significant challenges in forming friendships with local residents. Two commonly identified issues are communication difficulties and a lack of motivation (God & Zhang, 2019). It was stated that enhancing research skills is crucial for all students, including international ones, as they are vital for future employability; however, international students may face challenges in this regard (Yassin et al., 2020). Another study explored three major intercultural challenges in Chinese higher education for non-local teachers: a preference for interactive, student-centered classes by non-local instructors, contrasted with Chinese students' tendency to be quiet and reluctant in large, linguistically diverse classes (Yi & Meng, 2022).

4.3.4 Barriers Leading to Intercultural Miscommunication

The fourth theme concerns the presence of barriers that often result in intercultural miscommunication. Numerous studies have consistently found that both language barriers and

cultural differences can persist as significant impediments during intercultural interactions (Sato & Miller, 2021; Henderson et al., 2016; Meletiadou, 2023; Huhn et al., 2017). A finding showed the main challenge was language barrier (Henderson et al., 2016). Another study has also revealed that the primary challenge that needs to be addressed is the language barrier (Brendel et al., 2016). Owing to these language barriers, intercultural discussions often tend to remain on a somewhat superficial level. Language barriers can be categorized into several aspects, including accents, body language, intonation, pace, tone, and even nuances like sarcastic expressions, among others. Various types of accents have consistently been identified as one of the major language barriers during academic interactions, causing delays in students' adaptation to new learning environments (Park, 2022). The findings indicate that the concept of preserving dignity through the use of polite body language is at times overlooked, and the issue of how the inappropriate use of tone can lead to problems in communication (Henderson et al., 2016). Students often encounter challenges in communicating with their lecturers and fellow foreign students, primarily stemming from difficulties related to differences in intonation and speech pace (Yassin et al., 2020). When using sarcastic expressions, it's crucial to exercise caution because such expressions can potentially place international students in uncomfortable situations if they do not interpret them as jokes (Sato & Miller, 2021). Furthermore, due to the inherent diversity of cultures, misunderstandings in intercultural communication are almost inevitable. This issue is particularly prevalent among university students, especially when there is a lack of awareness regarding differing cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors (Henderson et al., 2016; Dumessa & Godesso, 2014). Another study highlighted that cultural barriers often stem from misunderstandings related to conventional cultural codes, idioms, and terminology employed within specific host settings (Yassin et al., 2020). Insufficient background knowledge in a specific area can hinder effective comprehension (God & Zhang, 2019). During interactions between speakers from diverse cultural backgrounds, there is a greater likelihood of misunderstandings, as distinct cultural groups often adhere to varying norms and rules of appropriateness in verbal communication (Babai Shishavan & Sharifian, 2016). Ethnocentrism, stereotypes, and discrimination represent another set of barriers that contribute to intercultural miscommunication.

Ethnocentric individuals often place their own culture at the pinnacle and assess other cultures through the lens of their own cultural standards. Nevertheless, ethnocentrism can result in cultural misunderstandings because it confines people to a narrow spectrum of thinking and behavior, offering them only a limited perspective on human diversity (Dumessa & Godesso, 2014). Students may hold negative stereotypes, often based on misconceptions rather than factual truths, leading to social avoidance and thereby creating intercultural miscommunication (Sato & Miller, 2021). Perceived types of prejudice varied such as negative reaction to appearance, race, and age (Henderson et al., 2016).

The causes of these misunderstandings are multifaceted, with layers that are partly rooted in cultural and educational differences, partly associated with the adjustment to a new educational system, and partly influenced by individual personalities (Hu et al., 2016). Feelings of anxiety and uncertainty when interacting with students from different cultural backgrounds can sometimes lead individuals to refrain from initiating these interactions (Khor et al., 2021). Differences in the mental programming are thus one source of misunderstandings in intercultural encounters (Hu et al., 2016). Another obstacle is the issue of comprehension, which refers to difficulties in grasping the speaker's intended message (Park, 2020). The next barrier to intercultural communication is the assumption of similarity rather than recognizing dissimilarity. When individuals behave as if they were in their own familiar cultural context within a different culture, it can lead to a host of issues (Dumessa & Godesso, 2014).

4.3.5 Strategies for Mitigating Intercultural Miscommunication

The fifth theme explores effective strategies for mitigating intercultural miscommunication. Universities should provide training for educators in fostering tolerance within the educational process (Yi & Meng, 2022; Genç, 2018; Yarosh et al., 2018). This can be achieved through organizing workshops that emphasize the significance and enriching aspects of diversity (Genç, 2018). Students can resort to attending cultural awareness seminars and workshops as a means to acquire cultural knowledge (Henderson et al., 2016). A discovery emerged from the current study, indicating that students engaged in the experiential program cultivated valuable professional skills, including storytelling, negotiation, creativity, intercultural communication, and teamwork (Meletiadou, 2023). Universities should also consider establishing intercultural communication norms that can liberate students from intercultural constraints (God & Zhang, 2019). This would enable them to more effectively employ communication strategies, resulting in higher-quality communication experiences. Previous research has consistently demonstrated that immersing oneself in a foreign country significantly enhances students' attitudes and openness toward different cultures, thereby exerting a positive influence on both their behavior and attitudes (Genç, 2018). Furthermore, building intercultural connections or alliances with the individuals involved and seeking clarification when misunderstandings arise can effectively surmount negative situations (Henderson et al., 2016).

5. Discussion

The objective of this review is to consolidate the existing body of literature concerning intercultural miscommunication, specifically concentrating on the examination of prevailing research trends and identifying the barriers that can mitigate miscommunication, along with other factors that influence intercultural communication. It is noteworthy that, to the best of our knowledge, this systematic review represents an unprecedented effort to delve into the realm of intercultural miscommunication within HEIs. The articles encompassed in this review have directed their attention towards diverse facets of intercultural miscommunication. Consequently, our review provides a relatively thorough comprehension of intercultural miscommunication within the context of HEIs.

In response to the first research question, the results show that the main research trends include students' intercultural communication within HEIs, internationalization, English as the dominant language, challenges in intercultural communication, cultural and linguistic differences, teachers' intercultural communication and professional development, etc. It can be inferred that the majority of studies on intercultural miscommunication in HEIs primarily center on the student population, with relatively limited attention given to teachers. The majority of studies dealt with barriers leading to intercultural miscommunication. These barriers encompass academic and communicational challenges that arise as a consequence of the internationalization of HEIs. The findings reveal a dearth of empirical research on intercultural miscommunication within HEIs, with the highest concentration of 4 studies conducted in the year 2016. The bulk of the studies were carried out in Western countries, including the UK and Australia, owing to their status as early destinations for overseas students. Additional studies focused on Asian countries such as China, Japan, and Malaysia, as these nations have emerged as new destinations for overseas students. Most of the conducted studies were based on a qualitative research design, with the predominant method being the utilization of interviews as the primary research instrument. The qualitative approach can effectively gather data to yield profound insights into the barriers that can give rise to intercultural miscommunication. Nevertheless, it's worth noting that the amount of data obtained through the qualitative approach may be insufficient. However, it's important to note that, as of now, there have been no prior review studies such as this one conducted on the research concerning intercultural miscommunication within the context of HEIs.

The results pertaining to the research question about the barriers contributing to intercultural

miscommunication encompass various facets, including language, culture, ethnocentrism, personality, and more. This finding aligns with Barna (1997) about the barriers of language, assuming similarity instead of differences, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice. It is undeniable that intercultural communication is intertwined with diverse challenges. Consequently, it is imperative to explore various pathways that may lead to intercultural miscommunication in order to adapt to varying intercultural communication contexts. The authors propose that barriers leading to intercultural miscommunication can be categorized into two aspects: those that hinder intercultural communication from occurring and those that result in intercultural miscommunication. Students who harbor negative stereotypes can result in social avoidance (Sato & Miller, 2021), and ethnocentrism are significant predicting barriers to avoid initiating the interaction (Khor et al., 2021). Linguistic and cultural difference are the main reason for causing intercultural miscommunication (Huhn et al., 2017).

Intercultural miscommunication in HEIs frequently arises as a consequence of internationalization, wherein a substantial number of staff and students originate from diverse countries. Universities have dedicated themselves to assisting these students to live and work conjointly in the globalised context (Park, 2022). Nonetheless, all the included studies exclusively concentrate on internationalization within the context of students studying abroad, with no empirical research conducted within the framework of IatH, also referred to as domestic internationalization. Additionally, various strategies have been identified to mitigate intercultural miscommunication. The authors found that these strategies can be categorized into three distinct aspects of improvement: knowledge, attitude, and skills. Students need to upskill in the area of cultural awareness (Henderson et al., 2016), increase tolerance of ambiguity (Meletiadou, 2023), and attend multicultural group work to gain practical competence (Brendel et al., 2016). These three components align with the theory presented by Spitzberg (1991), which posits that intercultural communication competence comprises motivation, knowledge, and skills. Consequently, the author postulates that enhancing one's intercultural communication competence can effectively reduce instances of intercultural miscommunication within HEIs.

6. Conclusion

This systematic review has synthesized research in selected articles and examined the trends in intercultural miscommunication as well as the barriers leading to intercultural miscommunication. Five themes were identified: (1) international mobility in HEIs; (2) the role of English as a Lingua Franca; (3) challenges associated with intercultural interaction; (4) barriers leading to intercultural miscommunication; (5) strategies for mitigating intercultural miscommunication. This study highlights the importance and value of identification of intercultural communication barriers and highlights the importance of training programs for enhancing the intercultural communication competence. Given the paramount significance of identifying barriers that contribute to intercultural miscommunication, forthcoming research endeavors should delve into the realm of teachers' intercultural miscommunication within the context of IaH among other under-researched topics. This investigation has the potential to yield profound insights into the structural and functional dynamics of such miscommunication. This review study has certain limitations. Firstly, it exclusively encompasses research articles found within two well-regarded databases, specifically Scopus and Web of Science. Secondly, it focuses on studies published between 2013 and 2023. Lastly, the study selection is limited to empirical research. These constraints could potentially influence the overarching findings derived from this systematic review. Furthermore, despite the diligent application of researcher triangulation techniques, the subjective assessment of the quality of the included articles, combined with the narrative approach employed in systematic reviewing, may pose challenges to the validity of the findings. More research on this topic is needed in HEI in the Asian context

given the strong emphasis on internationalization in universities in the region and the drive to seek international staff and students.

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Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram. This diagram offers an overview of the four-step selection process we employed to identify studies pertinent to the review.

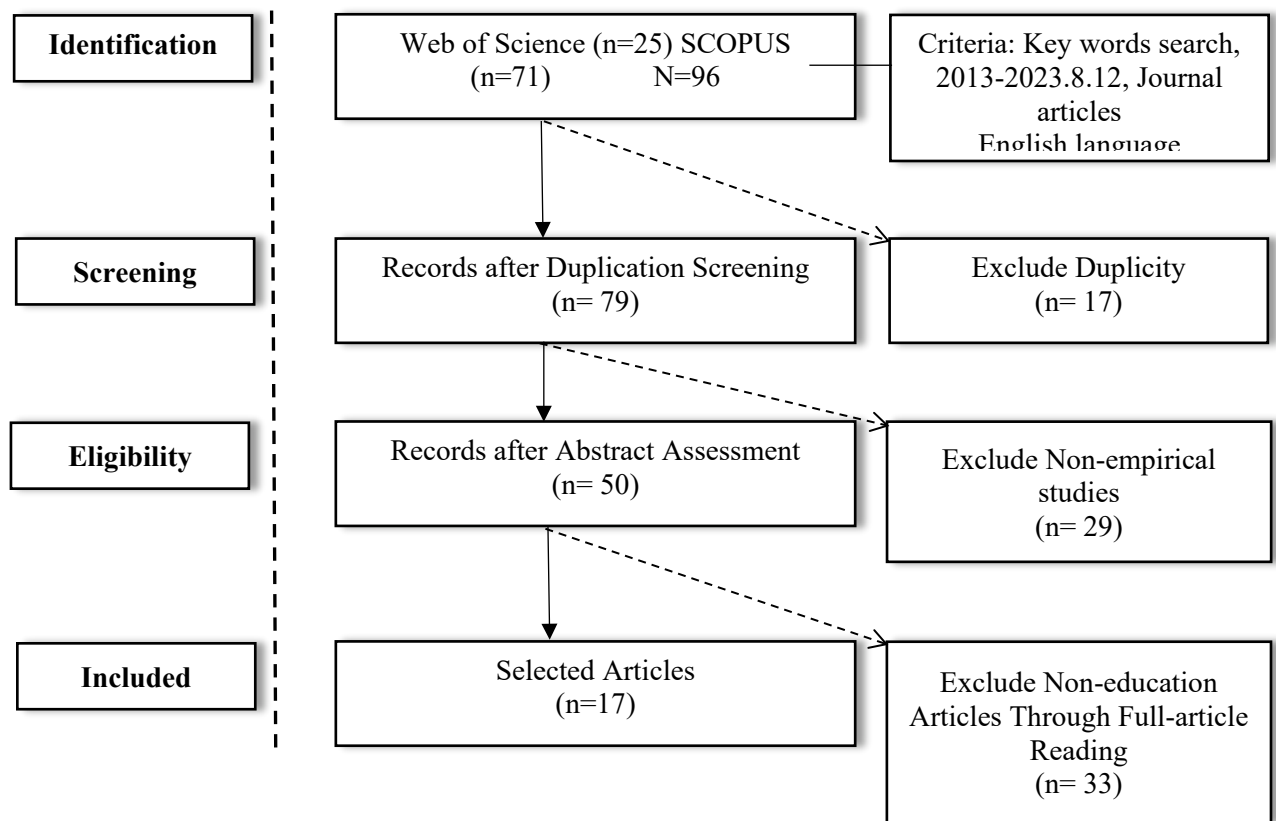


Table 1 An overview of the findings extracted from the selected studies

| Study | Country | Method | Instrument | Sample | Barriers | Findings |
|-----------------------------|-----------|--------------|---|---|--|--|
| Meletiadou (2023) | UK | Mixed method | Reflective reports and anonymous feedback | 50 multilingual students | Linguistic and cultural barriers | Students in the current study of Lego Serious Play developed valuable professional skills, such as storytelling, negotiation, creativity, intercultural communication, and teamwork. |
| Park (2022) | Australia | Qualitative | Close-ended and open-ended questions | 306 East Asian students | Accent, unfamiliarity, different speech style, the use of colloquialisms | It revealed that there were two main strategies: (a) verbal strategies, and (b) non-verbal strategies. |
| Yi & Meng (2022) | China | Qualitative | In-depth semi-structured interviews | 3 non-local English-speaking EFL teachers | Teacher-dependent and shy students, oversized classes | The non-local EFL teachers strategically shift their teacher identities and instrumentalize their non-local identity to adapt to their intercultural teaching work and to empower themselves professionally in their language teaching work. |
| Sato & Miller (2021) | Japan | Qualitative | In-depth semi-structured interviews | 7 American students | Communication styles, cultural differences, sarcastic expressions | Four different themes (seeking strategies for overcoming intercultural communication challenges, addressing challenges for explaining sarcasm concepts, finding mutual hobbies and interests, and integrating field trips into the conversational program) were extracted related to American students in interacting with Chinese international students. |
| Khor et al. (2021) | Malaysia | Quantitative | Self-administered survey questionnaire | 450 undergraduates | Anxiety, uncertainty, and ethnocentrism | When there is an opportunity to communicate with students from different cultural backgrounds, anxiety, uncertainty, and ethnocentrism will negatively influence students' willingness to initiate the communication and indirectly influence intercultural communication. |
| Kimura & Canagarajah (2020) | Japan | Qualitative | Interview excerpts and artefacts | 1 international professional | Accent | Certain professional task structures are framed in such a way that status differences are finely distributed, collaboration encouraged, and nonverbal resources treated as more important than verbal |
| Yassin et al. (2020) | Malaysia | Quantitative | Cross-sectional survey | 273 international students | Academic, language and research barriers | 1. English language, research, and academic challenges have a negative effect on learning sustainability among international students. 2. Intercultural challenges did not have a significant influence on learning sustainability |
| Benabdelkader (2019) | Australia | Mixed method | Online survey, focus group | 124 students and a series of focus groups (N= 16) | Comprehension difficulties, hard to keep the conversation going, lack of | While students were aware of language and cultural differences, many were not well prepared for challenges generated subsequently. |

| sensitivity | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|---|---|---|---|
| Genç, (2018) | Turkey | Quantitative | Questionnaire | 145 prospective English teachers | Age, gender, year of study at the university, overseas experience | Gender, year of study at the university and overseas experience are important factors connected to students' intercultural communication levels. |
| Yarosh et al. (2018) | Spain | Qualitative | Semi-structured interviews | 29 students and graduates | the differences between national and academic cultures, and the language barrier | It is important for students to conceptualize IC as a competence and thus something they can develop intentionally; to value IC development efforts and to start reflecting on their own IC level and developmental priorities. |
| Huhn et al. (2017) | Germany | Quantitative | OSCE | 1033 students | Language problems and cultural barriers | International students showed poorer results in clinical-practical exams in the field of psychosocial medicine, with conversational skills yielding the poorest scores. However, regarding factual and practical knowledge examined via a multiple-choice test, no differences emerged between international and local students |
| Brendel et al. (2016) | Germany | Qualitative | Interview | 8 students | Language barriers, prejudice, lack of understanding, cultural misinterpretation | Fieldwork in multicultural groups triggers intercultural learning processes on a personal level. |
| Hu et al. (2016) | Netherlands | Qualitative | Self-study | 1 doctoral supervisor | how formal the supervision should be, how feedback and assessment should be provided and understood | Causes of these misunderstandings are layered, partly rooted in cultural and educational differences, partly related to the transition to an independent researcher that is new to most PhD students, and partly related to supervisor and student personalities. |
| Henderson et al. (2016) | Australia | Qualitative | Focus group | 19 clinical facilitators | Prejudice, unfamiliarity with culture, stereotype, difficulty understanding English | The study provides another perspective of how each of the four categories of intercultural communication challenges were conceptualized and uniquely experienced by participants, including the actions they took to address challenges. |
| Babai Shishavan & Sharifian (2016) | Australia | Qualitative | DCT and FGI | 24 Persian native speakers, 24 Anglo-Australian undergraduate and postgraduate students | Cultural underpinnings of speech acts as well as the cultural conceptualizations attached | The production of speech acts varies from one language and culture to another. The preference for generally using more indirect refusal strategies seems to arise from the face-threatening properties of refusals. |
| Dumessa & Godesso (2014) | Ethiopia | Qualitative | Focus group discussion and in-depth interview | About 100 participants | Linguistics, cultural and former political prejudice and ethnocentrism | Causes of the intercultural communication barriers are clearly listed, such as ethnocentrism, linguistic and cultural difference, and food habit of the different students might be a source of intercultural communications challenges. |
| Qin (2014) | China | Qualitative | Participant observation, document analysis, and interview | 20 American | Roles, place, time, audience, and scripts | This five-element analytic model highlights the key elements in a communicative event and provides intercultural practitioners a practical tool to analyze the complicated reasons caused by culture in intercultural misunderstandings. |

Figure 2: Article Distribution by Year

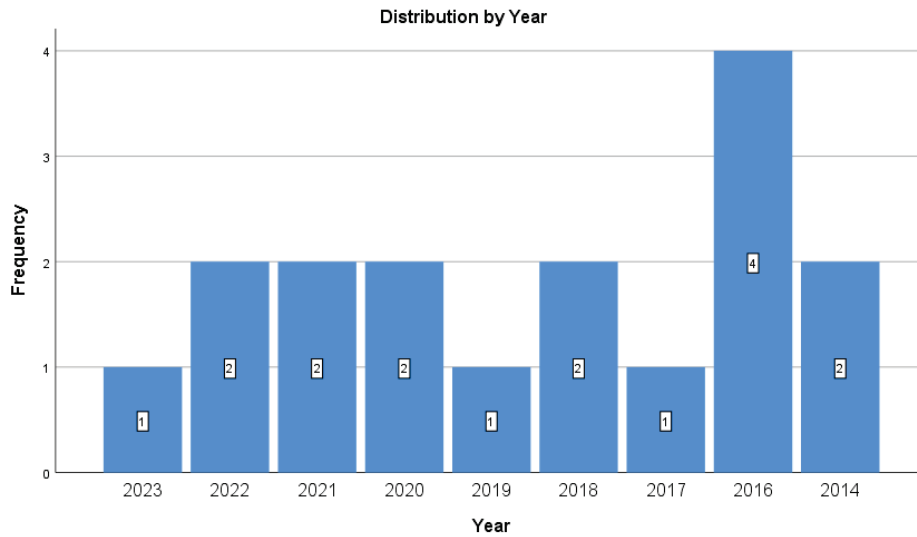


Figure 3: Article Distribution by Country

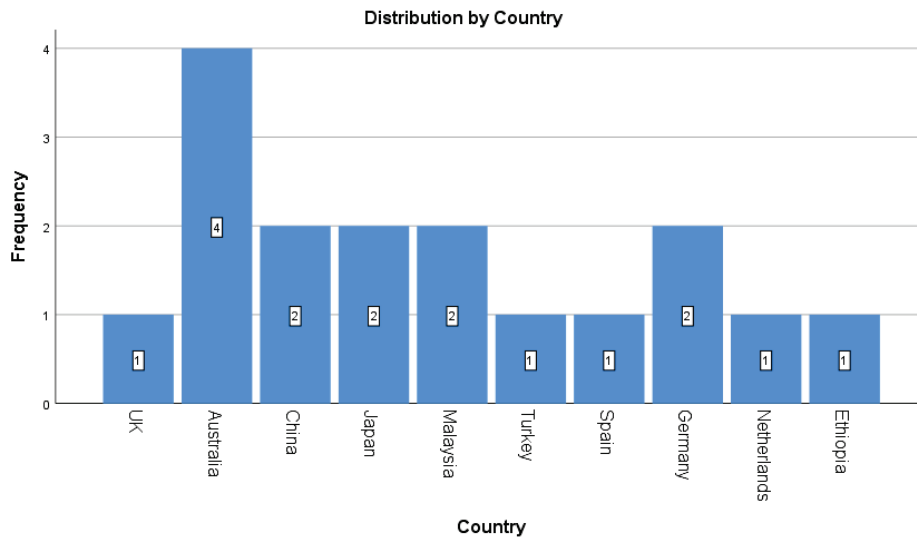


Figure 4: Article Distribution by Method

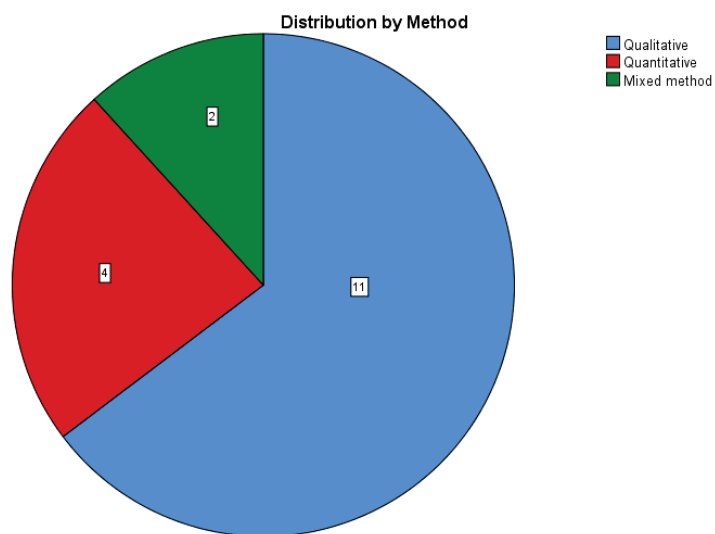


Figure 5 Word Cloud by NVivo

