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**"ELT Horizons: Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities"**

# Editorial Board



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# Editor's note

Dear reader,

From Alexander the Great to Artificial Intelligence, this issue of the e-newsletter features a remarkable variety of contributions all of which can be subsumed under the overarching notion of Foreign Language Teaching. In an era of dynamic change, interdisciplinarity, and digital revolution, the latter has followed suit accordingly, and one may be amazed by the plethora of aspects language teaching encompasses.

The papers in this issue are exemplary in this regard, addressing topics such as Neurolanguage Coaching, flipped teaching, English for Specific Purposes, a challenge-based approach, poetry, motivation through extensive reading activities, a practical toolkit, and last but not least – a reflection on the conference experience.

We, the Bulgarian English Teachers' Association, are proud that we had the opportunity to put together and derive intellectual pleasure from yet another edition of our annual international conference. We extend our cordial thanks to all participants – you help our mission to further the value of language and FLT, and to hold the teacher figure in high regard.

Read and enjoy!
Georgi Dimitrov
Editor-in-chief

# Poetry in the digital-era English language classroom

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In recent years, the English language classroom has been transformed by the presence of screens, apps, and artificial intelligence. Learners who once worked primarily with paper, pens, and printed texts now inhabit an environment filled with images, sound, and interactivity. In this visual and technology-driven context, poetry might appear to have lost its place. Often regarded as abstract, difficult, or disconnected from communicative goals, poetry has long been associated with literary study rather than language teaching. Yet this apparent mismatch is misleading. Poetry, when understood as a flexible and expressive form of language, continues to offer unique opportunities for linguistic, cultural, and

creative development — even, and perhaps especially, in the age of digital media and AI.

The reluctance to use poetry in English language teaching is well documented. Teachers frequently cite its linguistic complexity, its ambiguity, or its perceived unsuitability for functional language learning. Many see it as an art form reserved for advanced or academically oriented learners. Others worry that students will find it inaccessible or intimidating, particularly in contexts where language learning is exam-driven or focused on practical outcomes. At the same time, the modern classroom is increasingly oriented toward immediacy, visual appeal, and technology. Against this background, poetry may appear old-fashioned and difficult to integrate with digital tools.

However, recent pedagogical research and practice suggest that poetry can be revitalised precisely through the same technologies that seemed to displace it. When used thoughtfully, poetry becomes not only compatible with digital education but a particularly powerful way of fostering linguistic awareness, creativity, and emotional engagement. The modern, multimodal classroom — one that combines text, image, and sound — can in fact amplify poetry's essential qualities.

Poetry's value in language learning rests on its concentration of linguistic features. Every word in a poem matters; rhythm, sound, and structure are intimately connected with meaning. This density of expression makes poetry a particularly rich source of authentic input. Studies across a range of EFL and ESL contexts have shown that reading and listening to poetry can improve vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, and grammatical awareness. Because poems often present

language in surprising or condensed ways, they invite learners to notice patterns and relationships within the language that might otherwise pass unnoticed. Moreover, poetry's emphasis on rhythm and sound connects directly with phonological awareness and fluency — areas that are sometimes neglected in communicative teaching.

Yet the benefits of poetry extend beyond linguistic competence. Poetry stimulates imagination and interpretation. It encourages learners to engage affectively with language, to explore ambiguity, and to negotiate meaning. In this sense, poetry naturally supports higher-order cognitive and creative skills. Interpreting a poem requires analysis, empathy, and flexibility of thought; it challenges learners to hold multiple meanings in mind and to tolerate uncertainty — skills that are central to communicative competence and intercultural understanding. Through poetry, learners encounter not only language but also culture, emotion, and voice.

The digital turn in education has introduced a new layer to these possibilities. The notion of *multimodal literacy* — the ability to interpret and create meaning across different modes such as text, image, sound, and movement — has become an essential component of contemporary literacy education. Poetry, with its intrinsic connection to rhythm, imagery, and sound, lends itself naturally to multimodal expression. Digital platforms allow poems to be experienced not only as printed text but as performances, animations, visual collages, or interactive artefacts. In such contexts, poetry becomes a bridge between verbal and visual literacies.

Research on multimodal approaches to literature in EFL settings supports this perspective. Studies have shown that digital or interactive poetry can engage students more deeply, enhance comprehension, and strengthen motivation. When learners encounter poems accompanied by visuals, audio recordings, or interactive elements, they are able to process language through multiple sensory channels. This integration of modalities supports different learning styles and provides scaffolding for students who might otherwise struggle with dense or abstract language. Moreover, digital environments encourage learners to experiment with language creatively, composing and re-composing their own poetic texts, often collaboratively.

The introduction of artificial intelligence into the classroom has further expanded these opportunities. AI tools capable of generating, analysing, or transforming texts — from simple online "poem generators" to more sophisticated language models — can help learners explore form and structure, experiment with vocabulary, and reflect on style. While there are valid concerns about authenticity and creativity when using such tools, they can also act as valuable aids in the learning process. By comparing their own writing with AI-generated versions, students can become more aware of linguistic choices and stylistic nuances. Teachers, in turn, can use AI to model poetic forms, provide examples, or support differentiated learning.

At a deeper level, the combination of poetry and technology raises important pedagogical questions. What does it mean to read and create poetry in a digital age? How can teachers balance the aesthetic and emotional aspects of poetry with the analytical or technological ones? The answer seems to lie in an integrated approach that values both. Technology should not replace the human

experience of reading, feeling, and interpreting a poem, but rather extend it. When used creatively, digital tools can amplify what poetry already does best: connecting language with emotion, and individuals with ideas larger than themselves.

Teachers who incorporate poetry into a technology-rich classroom are therefore not reverting to the past but reimagining it. They are redefining what literacy means in a world where language is increasingly visual and multimodal. Poetry, once confined to the printed page, now finds new life through sound recordings, short videos, digital storytelling, and collaborative online composition. These formats mirror the way contemporary communication itself operates — through a blend of words, images, and voices. In this way, poetry becomes not a relic of the pre-digital classroom but a means of cultivating precisely the kinds of sensitivity, creativity, and interpretive skill that modern learners need.

The challenge for educators is to shift perception. Poetry should not be seen as a rarefied art reserved for the few, but as a compact and vibrant form of language that invites exploration. Selecting accessible and contemporary poems, encouraging open interpretation, and connecting poetry with students' lives and media environments can make it a meaningful part of any curriculum. When learners experience the pleasure of sound, rhythm, and imagery — and when they are invited to experiment with poetic forms themselves — the supposed distance between "poetry" and "practical language learning" begins to dissolve.

Ultimately, poetry's place in the English language classroom is not a matter of nostalgia but of relevance. In an era defined by technology, speed, and visual saturation, poetry slows language down. It draws attention to the texture of words, to the emotional and cultural dimensions of meaning. It offers a space

for reflection and for play, both of which are vital to deep learning. The digital world does not diminish poetry's power; it multiplies its forms. The teacher's role is to guide learners through these new landscapes of meaning, showing that even in the most technologically advanced classroom, the oldest art form of language still speaks directly to the human imagination.

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# Internationalization, intercultural communication and language in the age of Alexander the Great and after

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**Abstract**

I do not know if it is known in the united Europe that the single European currency, the euro, has as its precedent the single coins for Europe and Asia, which Alexander the Great forged from the untold riches of the Achaemenids. Alexander the Great, the initiator of the first European expansion – to the east, the catalyst of the productive forces of the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, the monarch who outgrew even the most enlightened mind of his time, and not only, erasing the boundaries between victors and vanquished, has survived for 24 centuries in the literary tradition. The first "image-maker" of Alexander is Callisthenes, a relative of Alexander's teacher Aristotle. The Bulgarian

literary tradition precedes the Spanish one with our Chronographic Alexandria from the 10th-12th centuries, also enriched by Alexandria, conditionally called Serbian, from the 14th century. Spain, for its part, is an inseparable part of the Romanesque world of Medieval Western Europe, with one aggravating specificity – the Arab presence.

**Key words:** national identity, European expansion, literary tradition, cosmopolitism, intercultural communication and language

# Introduction

This article, developed from the plenary presentation delivered in Bulgarian at the international conference *Foreign Language Teaching and Intercultural Communication in the Context of Internationalization and the Contemporary Era* and afterwards delivered in English at the BETA's annual Conference *ELT Horizons:Trends, Challenges and Opportunities* hosted by the UNWE, seeks to build a bridge stretching twenty-four centuries back into history. Its aim is to evoke the notion that *nihil novum sub sole* — there is nothing new under the sun—when it comes to internationalization, the use of a *lingua franca* as an instrument of those in power, and the dynamics of intercultural communication among different peoples. Little is truly new, except for the technologies of our time: the spirit of exploration and conquest, the pursuit of wealth, and, ultimately, the encoding of human experience through language — as history, myth, literature, and so forth — have long accompanied us. All of this represents a human attempt at endurance. *Verba volant, scripta manent*.

The article invites us to momentarily lift our gaze from the preoccupations of the present — from debates surrounding the introduction of the single currency, the

euro, to ongoing geopolitical tensions — reminding us that currency, subjective truth, and geopolitical strain existed before our time and will persist long after it.

# Internationalization and intercultural communication under Alexander the Great

Twenty-four centuries ago, a young prince — Alexander, son of one of the conquerors of our Plovdiv, then named Philippopolis in his honour — succeeded in taming the untamable Bucephalus. Witnessing how the youth had asserted his will over the spirited stallion, Philip is said to have exclaimed: *"My son, seek a kingdom worthy of you; Macedonia is too small for you."*

From this paternal injunction began the first major European expansion eastward — an expansion whose full potential remained unrealized due to the monarch's premature death, as the Diadochi proved unable to sustain the cohesion of the empire Alexander had forged. Yet even prior to Alexander, the Greek colonizing impulse of the first millennium BCE had disseminated Greek culture and goods along the coasts of the Mediterranean and Black Seas. Coastal cities and islands facilitated commercial exchange, paving the way for the spread of Greek political and cultural paradigms, including phonetic and articulatory models. Towns such as Mesembria (Nessebar) and Mainake (Málaga) still bear traces of that ancient spirit.

The era of Alexander, however, marks the first moment in which genuine mutual interaction among the peoples of the Old World was achieved. His campaign represents the earliest large-scale European expansion into Asia, accompanied

by a deliberate colonial policy. Much like the colonization of the New World eighteen centuries later, Alexander's expedition attracted a diverse array of participants: merchants, suppliers, engineers, speculators, artists, scholars, adventurers, image-makers, heralds, and all manner of enterprising spirits moved by humanity's perennial desire for swift and effortless gain. Although Greek commercial capital was in decline during the fourth century BCE, it was sufficient to revive the economies of Asia. Once Alexander gained control of the immense Achaemenid treasures, he launched an extensive programme of coin minting. The gold and silver coins issued under his authority revitalized economic life not only in Asia but also in Greece and in Macedon itself.

# Language

Greek — more precisely, the *koine* — became the *lingua franca* of the conquered territories. It was recognized as the official language, while local languages were gradually displaced among the upper and middle strata. Greek also became the language of commerce and trade. **So it has always been: language follows geopolitics.** Today, English fulfils this role; within the Soviet sphere, it was Russian; German expansion during the World Wars imposed its linguistic influence; French served as the language of the eighteenth century and of diplomacy; and Chinese is now making its claim to this status, grounded in the country's growing economic and technological power and its increasingly central role on the global political stage.

## Internationalization and Intercultural Communication under Alexander the Great

But let us return to Alexander — *Historia magistra vitea est*. He founded more than sixty cities in Asia, the most splendid of which was Egyptian Alexandria. Within Alexander's empire, under the umbrella of a single statehood and with the aim of equal rights, efforts were made to integrate most of the culturally advanced peoples of the time — Phoenicians, Hellenes, Assyrians, Egyptians, Indians, and others. A unified currency, linguistic standardization, monetary flows, urbanization, river and maritime infrastructure, and technological discoveries unleashed the productive forces of the Mediterranean and the Near East. A banking system also developed, and the era's interest in exploration and progress is comparable only to that of the Renaissance. Cities were made more hygienic, comfort spread into homes and dress, and philosophers forged the concept of cosmopolitanism — that is, cosmopolitans as citizens of the entire world, the limits of which the young Alexander dreamed of reaching, or rather, of encompassing entirely. The world becomes whole, becomes one, only after Columbus crosses the Atlantic, but the first attempt was Alexander's.

Alexander the Great planned the largest attempt at merging races and peoples in human history by organizing a mass wedding of 10,000 Greek and Macedonian soldiers to local Asian women. He was a reformer who transcended Greek conventionalism, yearning to erase the boundaries between victors and vanquished and to rise as a single, common emperor for all, equating himself with the gods. The young conqueror envisioned equality among people, a vision that surpassed even the most enlightened mind of the time—his mentor and teacher, Aristotle.

The extraordinary deeds and personality of Alexander naturally rendered him immortal as both historical and literary figure; the number of biographies written by supposed contemporaries exceeds even that of the Gospels — twenty-eight. From his circle of favourites, companions, seers, and advisers begins the division between myth and history.

Callisthenes is the one whom we would today call Alexander's "image-maker," tasked with recording the history of the expedition. Yet fate saw to it that the voice of Alexander's greatest panegyrist was silenced by the very man he praised. The death of Callisthenes — the son of Aristotle's niece — caused a rupture between teacher and pupil and marked the beginning of the "black legend" of Alexander. Persian servility appealed to Alexander's vast ego, and in 327 BCE he attempted to introduce *proskynesis* — the well-known Asian custom of prostrating oneself before the ruler. But Callisthenes, a proud and freedom-loving Greek only a few years older than Alexander, opposed the conqueror's attempt to enforce this ritual not only among Asians but also among Greeks and Macedonians. Alexander seemingly relented by keeping the practice obligatory only for the locals, yet he accused Callisthenes of participating in the Pages' Conspiracy, after which the historian was subjected to slander, physical abuse, imprisonment, and execution. Alexander, who had begun to deify himself, was drawn to Persian customs and aristocratic manners, admitting Persian nobles into his inner circle — but this alienated Greeks and Macedonians, and the attempt to introduce this ritual ultimately proved unacceptable to the European conquerors.

## Internationalization and Intercultural Communication after Alexander the Great

The earliest historians devoted to Alexander were of Greco-Latin origin. On the Greek side stand Diodorus of Sicily, Plutarch, and Arrian; on the Roman side, Quintus Curtius Rufus and Pompeius Trogus. Plutarch distinguishes himself through his analysis of Alexander's character, while Quintus Curtius also reveals psychological insight. Arrian, well-versed in the military achievements of the young prince, adopts a scholarly and objective approach. These early historians were products of Hellenism — by which we understand the period between Alexander's death in 323 BCE and the end of the Macedonian Ptolemaic dynasty in 30 CE, when Egypt fell under Roman control.

In speaking of literature during the Hellenistic era, it is worth recalling that— contrary to our modern cultural egocentrism — the concept of "literature" at that time encompassed written texts that today would hardly be classified as literary. The specialized writers of such texts were known as grammarians, and their field — *literature* — was designated *grammar*. Indeed, the term *literature*, a Latin translation of *grammar*, emerges metonymically. Thus, the earliest works devoted to Alexander do not correspond to contemporary scholarly or genre classifications; instead, they follow the conventions of their age, incorporating geographical and ethnographic descriptions, among others. What we might now consider eclecticism was, at the time, a reflection of the tremendous interest in newly encountered spaces and peoples — an interest in the Other, in alterity — an interest that Alexander himself institutionalized.

Alexander as a subject proved compelling for both Greek and Latin historians and storytellers, as he became a catalyst for the transformations of a new era. During the military campaign, reality itself appeared so extraordinary that

boundaries between fact and fiction blurred; history and literature, closely intertwined throughout the Hellenistic period, mutually enriched one another.

Like all megalomaniac world leaders, Alexander was likely never satisfied with the texts dedicated to him in his lifetime, despite their abundance. Arrian of Nicomedia reports that people used to claim Alexander had declared Achilles fortunate because Homer had ensured his fame would reach future generations (see Arrian 1962, pp. 59–60). Yet it was not Arrian but Pseudo-Callisthenes and the numerous branches of that tradition who ultimately satisfied Alexander's vanity. After the Bible, these texts became the most widely disseminated in the medieval world, with more than 200 versions and translations into roughly thirty languages. Originally composed in Greek, the Pseudo-Callisthenes overcame spatial and temporal barriers, spreading throughout medieval Europe, reaching eastward as far as China and Malaysia, and in Africa, Ethiopia. Linguistic boundaries proved easily surmountable, and versions soon appeared in Arabic, Syriac, Armenian and others. Emerging most likely in the third century CE, the Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition brought an end to the ancient historiographical approach to Alexander by assimilating diverse folkloric motifs and a wide range of political and ethnic interpretations, all within a framework of considerable generic diversity.

The appearance of the Pseudo-Callisthenes six centuries after Alexander's death reflects specific historical and political circumstances. In the third century CE, the Roman Empire was ruled by Alexander Severus, who adopted his imperial name in hopes of attracting good fortune at a time when Sassanian Persia was expanding its territory and posing a growing threat to Rome. Alexander Severus launched an eastern campaign with mixed success, inspired by his idol Alexander the Great, whose name he himself took, as interest in the Greak conqueror

naturally revived with rising antagonism toward Persia. In the earliest recension of the romance, the Egyptian — Alexandrian version, Alexander is not the son of Philip but of the Egyptian priest Nectanebo. At first glance, an Egyptian legend masks somewhat clumsily a politically motivated narrative: Alexander is no longer presented as a usurper but as a legitimate heir. The dichotomy of native/foreign is neutralized, and the conqueror is recast as a liberator. Unable to oppose him, Egyptians assimilated and glorified Alexander, transforming him into an internal, local — thus "ours," not foreign — figure.

The principal recensions of the Pseudo-Callisthenes are six in number and form three textual strata. The earliest known translation is the Latin version by Julius Valerius in the fourth century; richer and more entertaining is the Armenian version from the fifth century. The Slavic tradition originates with Recension Beta, whose central text is the *Chronographic Alexandrian Tale*, a Bulgarian work from the tenth to twelfth centuries. Another Slavic version, known as the Serbian *Alexandria* (fourteenth century), belongs to Recension Gamma and presents Alexander as a Christian.

During the Middle Ages, the Alexander legend extended far beyond the Greco-Roman world, reaching China, Central Asia, and Muslim Spain. In the early Middle Ages, as in the time of Alexander Severus, the renewed interest in Alexander the Great was driven by extra-literary motives — specifically, the Crusades, which began in 1096 and lasted 180 years. The Crusaders, representatives of a new European mobility (Deyermond 1987, p. 102), sought the aura of Alexander to compensate for their inconsistent success, which could hardly rival the achievements of the young conqueror who halted only at India, and then due to the physical and psychological exhaustion of his troops. Thus, in the twelfth

century, Europe saw the appearance of poems dedicated to Alexander. A major innovation of the Middle Ages was that such works were no longer composed solely in Latin but increasingly in emerging vernacular languages. The first significant poem about Alexander, now largely lost, was written in a Provençal dialect by Alberic of Besançon.

# The image of Alexander the Great in medieval Spain

Medieval Spain belonged to the wider European and Romance cultural sphere, yet it possessed its own distinguishing characteristics. Notably, because a large part of the Iberian Peninsula was Islamized following the Arab invasion, interest in the Crusades remained limited, owing to internal challenges and insufficient military and financial capacity. Spain turned its gaze eastward only in the thirteenth century, and it was not until the late Middle Ages—in the fifteenth century — that the spirit of the Crusades found literary expression, most prominently in the genre of clerical poetry. At the same time, however, Castile was the first — and nearly the only — European kingdom to use a vernacular Romance language rather than Latin for scholarly purposes. Alfonso X, the founder of Castilian prose, introduced the practice of drafting administrative documents in Castilian. Owing to the Arab invasion of the Iberian Peninsula and southern Italy, as well as the high cultural development of the conquerors, medieval Spain found itself, *mutatis mutandis*, at the forefront of assimilating Eastern culture into Europe.

As for Arabic works concerning Alexander the Great, they extend far beyond the tradition of Pseudo-Callisthenes. Even in the Qur'an (XVIII, 83), Alexander's

journeys by air and sea are objects of admiration. The Arabic thread leads directly to Morisco Spain — the community of converted Moors. Written in Spanish transliterated with Arabic characters, the image of Alexander became woven into the Muslim narrative tradition. The Alexander theme offered Morisco writers two particularly useful avenues for reflection: the transience of earthly greatness and the injustice of fate (Marcos Marín 1987, p. 38).

Many Spanish works dedicated to Alexander turn out to be translations or adaptations from French sources or, more rarely, from Provençal ones. *El libro de Alexandre* survives in two principal manuscripts: one on parchment, replete with Leonese dialectal features, and another on paper, exhibiting traits of the Aragonese dialect. The dialectal variation between manuscripts reflects the incomplete formation of linguistic norms in the Middle Ages—a period during which Romance languages were emerging from Latin and marked by linguistic fluctuation and dialect diversity, shaped primarily by communicative needs. This linguistic variety has sparked debate concerning the language of the work: whether it represents the Leonese dialect, Castilian influenced by Leonese, or some other, less clearly defined western dialect. The linguistic instability evident in the earliest manuscripts of the *Book of Alexander* also mirrors the fluid and shifting political landscape of the Iberian Peninsula, at a time when the hegemony of Castile was beginning to take shape but had not yet been firmly established.

Another major medieval Spanish work on Alexander is owed to Alfonso X el Sabio (the Wise). Studies of the translations of Pseudo-Callisthenes produced under Alfonso indicate five manuscripts. As is often the case in medieval Spain, dating and authorship remain uncertain. Alfonso X undoubtedly selected and edited the texts that constitute the *Historia novelada de Alejandro Magno*, whereas *El*

*libro de Alexandre* may have been written by Lorenzo de Astorga, Gonzalo de Berceo, or even by the king himself.

In medieval Spain, as elsewhere in Western Europe, writers once again turned to the heroes of Antiquity and Hellenism, seeking analogies and identifying in Alexander and Caesar the Greek and Roman prototypes of Charlemagne. Alexander is as "great" as Charlemagne, and paradoxically, the kingdoms of both rulers began to decline upon their deaths. For the medieval imagination, there was no drastic rupture between historical periods; heroes of Antiquity and Hellenism entered medieval literature transformed into counts and barons. The principal distinguishing feature was Christianization — everything else was considered secondary.

Among all ancient figures, Alexander proved the most appealing to the medieval mind. Medieval troubadours spread his fame throughout towns and villages. The legends surrounding the institutionalization of the twelve knights under both emperors date from the twelfth century and were subject to continuous creative reshaping.

> Grant es tu fazienda, es mucho de veer,
> Non lo podras por ti acabacer,
> Que escogiesses doze, quales tu mas quisiesses,
> Alcaldes e cabdillos a essos non pusiesses. (Cañas, 1988: 194)

In *El Libro de Aleixandre*, among the twelve companions of Alexander—Ptolemy, Cleitus, and others — Aristotle himself is also included. The transfer of this

institution from Charlemagne back to Alexander the Great opens the question of archaisms and medievalization.

Valbuena Prat considers the Spanish *El libro de Alexandre* anachronistic: *"Alexander lives in the Middle Ages as the ancient heroes do in the paintings of that epoch (…) Undoubtedly, these anachronisms lend colour to the events narrated, since they allow us to reconstruct medieval traditions and customs; the ancient theme is merely a pretext"* (my translation) (Valbuena Prat 1981, p. 129).
Certainly neither Alfonso X el Sabio (the Wise) nor the author of the *Book of Alexander* can be accused of inadvertently blurring the boundaries between Hellenism and the Middle Ages. For them, ancient history is not archaeology; moreover, the monarch himself was an inquisitive reader and author of historical and literary-historical works who sought analogies and correspondences between the two eras.

The medievalization of Alexander is further facilitated by the affinities between these two great epochs of human history — Hellenism and the Middle Ages — particularly their shared denominator: cosmopolitanism. The knight is, to some extent, devoid of national identity; on the other hand, Alexander the Great sought to efface national distinctions among the inhabitants of his empire and undertook what is, historically, the first documented attempt at planned racial mixing.

For Cañas, medievalizations represent an effort to nationalize themes originating in Antiquity, thereby lending prestige to emerging Romance-language literatures (Cañas 1988: 82).

Ultimately, the image of Alexander in medieval Spain does not exhibit originality and does not constitute a distinctive contribution to the global literary treasury on the subject. Yet the criteria and expectations for originality in that era were different. What is original is not the theme itself, but the high degree of medievalization and moralization. By medievalizing and updating the figure of Alexander, the two Spanish authors devoted to the topic — Alfonso X and the author of *El Libro de Aleixandre*—are neither naïve nor striving fruitlessly for exoticism, nor do they trivialize history. Rather, their aim is to bring the hero closer to their contemporaneous readers by rendering him more accessible and comprehensible.

# Conclusion

The human drive for exploration and conquest is age-old, and before considering Europe's westward expansion, we should not ignore the significance of the eastward expansion that spread Greek culture and inaugurated the Hellenistic era. Language follows economic power and geopolitical influence. The Bulgarian literary tradition on the theme of Alexander — developed during a period of cultural and state flourishing — precedes the Spanish one, as evidenced by our *Chronographic Alexandria* of the tenth to twelfth centuries. The criteria for genre classification and originality have varied across the centuries.

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# Flipped business ESP teaching at university: Students' language awareness enhancement

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## Abstract

The paper treats the impact of flipped teaching implementation, within Business ESP classes and among university non-philological students, on trainees' language awareness enhancement. Presented information derives from existing research on the examined approach usefulness and likewise from a conducted by the author survey among taught learners. Respondents' evaluation of applied inverted classroom procedures contribution to improved understanding of taught language and business English discourse in general is shared and analyzed.

# Introduction

The current paper sets the objective of commenting on the so-called *flipped* or *inverted classroom* teaching (FCT) approach in terms of its usefulness within language awareness (LA) enhancement of non-philological university students of Business ESP. The study is founded on already published research concerning FCT benefits as to learners' various spheres of communicative competence as well as on author's investigation of the explored method impact on students' degree of grasping of examined vocabulary, grammar categories essence, use, in terms of treated topics, and, thus, to better understanding of business English in general. An analysis of an author-designed survey performed with taught students aimed at evaluating respondents' attitude towards FCT implementation regarding learner LA represents an important research component. The significance of such examination is motivated by the really scarce studies on FCT/LA relationship, most of existing research focusing on depicting FCT in terms of definitions, characteristics, advantages and challenges, and, LA functioning as crucial prerequisite for essential language education parameters enhancement, such as, learner motivation, engagement, autonomy, anxiety lessening and communicative competence.

The article will comply with the following layout. To start with, FCT will be depicted with respect to essence and implementation benefits; next, carried out survey will be presented within the framework of investigated parameters (descriptors or FCT procedures applied) and findings, based on previously performed educational process description; then, study results will be elucidated in the perspective of language learning strategies (LLS) used in terms of each one of FCT procedures accomplishment; finally, conclusion will recapitulate

motivation for the explored approach beneficial impact on taught students' LA and will concisely make a reference to other LA-related FCT positive outcomes.

# Flipped teaching

## *FCT Essence*

FCT, in terms of its variations to suit FLT (ELT) needs, has been applied over the last decades to attain better educational results concerning students' communicative competence, engagement, motivation and autonomy, considered approach consisting essentially in inverting traditional instruction order, or assigning specific work for home preparation, this way creating the opportunity for more intense further explanation and elucidation of taught matters in class, deepening learners' cognitive abilities and promoting student classroom participation and interaction (Alghasab 2020, Keskin 2023, Al-Naabi 2020 and authors rf. to in Abdallah & Alshaye 2024). FCT devotes classes to dynamic education (Cobb & Steele 2014 in Alghasab 2020), uses careful examination, consideration, generalization, problem solving and learner interaction (Bishop & Verleger 2013 in Keskin 2023) to consolidate and upgrade individually acquired knowledge. Apparently, FCT involves lecturer role alterations, teachers becoming mentors, supporters and supervisors (Basal 2015 in Alsowat 2016).

To recapitulate, FCT is founded on 'four main pillars', or '(1) a flexible environment; (2) a learning culture; (3) intentional content; and (4) the presence of a professional educator' (FLN 2014 in Alghasab 2020: 28), this statement laying emphasis first, on the diversity of study approaches used, next, on their implementation matching learner needs and likewise on trainees participation in 'co-constructing knowledge through engagement in classroom activities' (Alghasab 2020: 28), further, on lecturer responsibility to select learner-examined matters,

and, finally, on teacher duty to supervise and evaluate student performance (Alghasab 2020).

Not to be forgotten, FCT relies not only on face-to-face communication, but also on contemporary technologies, this way sharing some features with computer assisted language learning and blended learning.

## *FCT Implementation benefits*

FCT advantages derive from the way it is performed: some classwork-designed materials within traditional teaching are assigned for home preparation, whereas classroom activities are predominantly devoted to further elucidation, exemplification, discussion, case and problem solving, peer interaction and additional study with the purpose to encourage more advanced language information processing, within taught matters, and accordingly, to achieve examined topics understanding deepening.

Based on existing research, it can be stated that FCT implementation benefits belong to three main groups: A) contributing to learners' improved skills, including grammar and lexis, and hence, to competence; B) boosting student motivation-related parameters, and C) supporting trainees' cognitive processes accomplishment.

Thus, in terms of A) language expertise, FCT is greatly responsible for language skills development (Alghasab 2020, Al-Naabi 2020, Aksoy & Tulgar 2023, Yeşilçınar 2019, Abdallah & Alshaye 2024). Alghasab 2020 likewise states pragmatic competence improvement, associated in current paper author's view to

knowledge perfecting, while Al-Naabi 2020 refers to better correctness, consistency in expression and fluency, prolonged language contact.

As to B) motivation-connected features, it is relevant to lay emphasis on FCT as prerequisite for improved motivation, engagement, student satisfaction and lowered learner anxiety, among others (Alghasab 2020, Keskin 2023, Aksoy & Tulgar 2023, Yeşilçınar 2019, Abdallah & Alshaye 2024)[1]. Keskin 2023 likewise registers self-assurance enhancement, Aksoy & Tulgar 2023, Yeşilçınar 2019 and Abdallah & Alshaye 2024 refer to improved learner autonomy stemming from the examined approach implementation.

Regarding C) cognitive processes encouragement assets, it is relevant to specify that FCT implementation is associated to critical thinking development and assisting language learning strategies application (Keskin 2023), explicitness in language learning (Yeşilçınar 2019), problem-solving abilities development (Abdallah & Alshaye 2024), deepening of language information manipulation (Aksoy & Tulgar 2023), learners assuming accountability for their study (Bergmann & Sams 2014 in Alsowat 2016), information processing in compliance with Bloom's taxonomy tenets (Al-Naabi 2020), and notably, development of higher-order thinking skills (analyzing, evaluation and creating) in terms of revised Bloom's taxonomy (Bergmann & Sams 2014 in Alsowat 2016)[2] as students are involved in classwork in 'analyzing, evaluating and creating the knowledge been assigned' and 'engage in activities that require upper-levels skills … which facilitate deeper learning (Bergmann & Sams 2014 in Alsowat 2016: 110).

[1] Not all of referred to authors mention these parameters integrally.
[2] Rf. to Bloom et al. 1956, Anderson and Krathwohl Bloom's Taxonomy Revised, Airasian et al. 2001 as to Bloom's taxonomy ordering and his work revision.

# Survey description

Prior to survey presentation with respect to explored parameters and findings, it is relevant, to facilitate results elucidation, to depict conducted teaching process in terms of its general characteristics and objectives.

A group of foreign university non-philological students training in the field of logistics were taught 2-month Business ESP classes at intermediate level, by means of FCT implementation with the objective of enhancing learner proficiency, based on already referred to research results, as well as of establishing and qualifying FCT/LA relationship through the analysis of an author-designed final meeting survey. FCT approach was applied in compliance with cognitive EFL/ESP curriculum tenets due to already revealed LA/competence relationship (Ruzhekova-Rogozherova 2022, 2023). Realizing whether FCT further contributes to taught matter student comprehension and if yes, the underlying reason why, was the essential purpose of study preparation, conducting and analysis.

Taught Business ESP contents included study materials related to topics such as business essence, business communication, company structure, investments, financial statements, along with subtopics, corresponding terminology and typically used grammar to suit themes-connected language functions. Students were regularly sent mails containing taught matter summary in terms of subjects examined, activities, tasks performed and issues discussed; each mail likewise comprised information as to home preparation, such as attachments with resources to work on, directions as to specific study materials to read and perform related tasks, additional grammar instances to complete, video links to watch and read script later for more complete understanding, tasks concerning

summarizing videos or texts, answering related questions and formulating opinions, looking up for new vocabulary and analyzing meaning, researching cognates and synonyms within terminology teaching, building word families, producing other sources or students' own illustrative grammar examples, matching vocabulary items to definitions or synonyms, exploring materials and filling in tables with related information, pointing out similarities and differences between examined entities, noticing markers determining grammar categories use, performing FL→NL translation for better understanding, working with grammar books and dictionaries, comparing, if needed, workbook tasks answers with key and trying to elucidate discrepancies if there are any, etc.

Final classes' survey was developed and carried out within the following descriptors with the objective of identifying FCT impact on students' LA. Respondents were asked to assess the degree to which (poor, satisfactory, good, very good or excellent) the approach had contributed to their comprehension of taught vocabulary, grammar categories essence, use, and, thus, to better understanding of Business English as a whole.

1. Assigning preparatory (as homework) tasks for individual and/or group work in terms of getting acquainted with *grammar reference*[3];
2. Assigning preparatory (as homework) tasks for individual and/or group work in terms of *working on grammar activities within Business English context*;
3. Assigning preparatory (as homework) tasks for individual and/or group work in terms of *reading short texts and summarizing them*;

[3] Italics did not belong to the examined survey text.

4. Assigning preparatory (as homework) tasks for individual and/or group work in terms of *terminology – checking meanings, looking for cognates, synonyms*;
5. Assigning preparatory (as homework) tasks for individual and/or group work in terms of *watching taught material related short videos and producing their oral summaries*;
6. Working on various WB tasks (in classwork) in a group, mutually stimulating tasks solution through *discussions and questioning*.

Survey results are presented within the table below.

**Table 1.** FCT impact on students' LA

| **Descriptors[4]/Usefulness degree** | **Poor** | **Satisf.** | **Good** | **Very good** | **Excellent** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** Assigning preparatory HW tasks as to getting acquainted with grammar reference | - | - | - | - | 100% |
| **2.** Assigning preparatory HW tasks as to working on grammar activities within Business English context | - | - | - | - | 100% |
| **3.** Assigning preparatory HW tasks as to reading short texts and summarizing them | - | - | - | 25% | 75% |
| **4.** Assigning preparatory HW tasks as to terminology – checking meanings, looking for cognates, synonyms | - | - | - | - | 100% |
| **5.** Assigning preparatory HW tasks as to watching taught material related short videos and producing their oral summaries | - | - | - | - | 100% |
| **6.** Performing groupwork in class on WB tasks, mutually stimulating | - | - | - | 25% | 75% |

[4] Survey descriptors are concisely presented herein.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| problem solving through student interaction | | | | | |
| **MEAN:** | **-** | **-** | **-** | **8.33%** | **91.67%** |

# Survey analysis

Based on presented results, respondents deemed FCT really fruitful in terms of improved understanding within taught vocabulary, grammar categories essence and use in the scope of examined topics, and, thus, beneficial to better comprehending Business English as a whole. Enhanced grasp means perfected LA, this concept referring to consciousness in terms of form/meaning related to all spheres of language activity, at all its levels, within one or several languages; the better LA becomes, the higher cognizance grows, language users developing the ability to reflect on language phenomena reason of existence, their mutual and complementary use, markers determining language items functioning not only within taught language/languages, but within language as a phenomenon in general[5].

Respondents had significantly improved their business ESP comprehension due to the variety of LLS (techniques, procedures or approaches) they needed to use (selectively, depending on preferences) during home preparation as well as in classwork.

Thus, *reading taught coursebook grammar reference* sections as HW required them to apply LLS aimed at grasping categories essence at necessary level; these are procedures such as *observation and analysis of patterns*, *constructing*

[5] Rf. as to LA essence, construction and relevance researchers cited in Ruzhekova-Rogozherova 2018, 2022, 2023, 2024 along with these works' author views.

*hypotheses and checking them later* (cognitive LLS); *looking for key vocabulary and grammar items*, *guessing meaning through context* (affective LLS); *predicting values, based on linguistic (incl. word-formation) and non-linguistic information* (compensatory LLS), etc.

*Working on grammar activities* as HW was related to implementing LLS, among which, *constructing and checking hypotheses*, *grammar transformations*, *comparing structures within the English language and/or with NL* (cognitive LLS); *groupwork communication* (social LLS); *using new grammar items in illustrating sentences*, *forming sets of grammar items on the grounds of common values and use* (memory-related LLS), etc.

*Reading short texts and summarizing them* as HW made students apply LLS associated to understanding text message (a number of cognitive LLS, summarizing being an integrative cognitive approach); *using key words*, *simplifying or approximating message* (compensatory LLS); *looking for key vocabulary and grammar items* (affective LLS), etc.

Researching t*erminology* as HW within the scope of *checking meanings, looking for cognates, synonyms* represents a complex approach, belonging to both, cognitive and memory-related, LLS types.

*Watching taught material related short videos and producing their oral summaries* as HW leads to implementing LLS associated, for instance, to *pattern observation*, *categories comparisons*, *constructing and checking hypotheses*, *matching understood message with script information*, *paraphrasing*, *summarizing* (cognitive LLS); *guessing values*, *approximating message* (compensatory LLS), etc.

*Groupwork interaction in class*, which was lecturer-monitored, involved *learner cooperation* in asking questions for clarification, verification, amendment, and likewise, *lecturer ↔ student communication* (social LLS), both interaction types significantly stimulating student performance in tasks solution.

Therefore, LLS use, which is meant at facilitating information processing as to taught language items, and which leads to their comprehension, and hence, to learning, memorizing and adequate implementation[6], turned out to be more intense in FCT than under the conditions of traditional education; at home referred to above LLS were applied, integrally or selectively, at a lower level, whereas in class the approaches were consolidated and upgraded, on the grounds of already achieved grasp, as a result of lecturer various instances of elucidation, exemplification, justification as well as through conclusion making deriving from teacher-monitored classwork student interaction. In compliance with Ruzhekova-Rogozherova 2018, LLS are in constant interaction with LA formation, the approaches contributing to consciousness enhancement, which preconditions, in its turn, further stages of strategies application, leading, respectively, to additional LA heightening, thus LA building representing a continuous and multistage process. FCT in Business ESP at university level proved to positively impact student understanding of taught material, and in the field, in general, and, hence, learner LA, namely due to depicted above approaches implementation stimulating multilayered LLS ↔ LA connection.

[6] Rf. as to LLS essence, types and functioning researchers cited in Ruzhekova-Rogozherova 2018, 2024 as well as these works' author's views.

# Conclusion

The current study aimed at researching flipped Business ESP teaching effect on university students' LA revealed inverted training positive influence on learner comprehension within specialized language due to the established intense and multistage language information processing through a great variety of LLS recurrent and cyclic implementation in terms of assigned study tasks solution at home and further classwork lecturer elucidation jointly applied with teacher-monitored student groupwork interaction.

The examined FCT approach was substantiated as complex one, integrating several interrelated and mutually supporting learning techniques, and, hence, recommendable for use in appropriate context: while training autonomous to some extent students and within the framework of treated topics allowing themes, subthemes and tasks for learner preparation. It is likewise unquestionable that students' competence level, needs, predispositions, along with curriculum objectives and teaching challenges have to be taken into account.

FCT within Business ESP classes at university results in other beneficial outcomes, all of them LA-related, such as enhanced student motivation, autonomy, engagement, a similar view having been shared by one of survey respondents.

Just as importantly, based on study findings, FCT in Business ESP may offer opportunities for further research related to designing flipped teaching materials and their pertinence evaluation.

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# Brain-friendly activities for young learners

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## Abstract

This paper presents a set of practical, brain-friendly activities for young learners (ages 3–7) grounded in Neurolanguage Coaching principles of emotional safety, connection, and personalisation. Through story-based flashcard routines, memory challenges, movement-rich team games, and non-flashcard activities (whisper chains, tongue twisters, tactile spelling), learners practise vocabulary, early grammar, listening, and pronunciation in developmentally appropriate ways. Classroom observations suggest higher engagement, more confident output, and improved retention when language is embedded in play, rhythm, and routine. The paper outlines step-by-step procedures, teacher prompts, and adaptation tips, concluding with recommendations for implementing these routines in diverse YL contexts.

Keywords: young learners, Neurolanguage Coaching, phonics, vocabulary, pronunciation, classroom games

# Introduction

Teaching pre-literate children demands methods that honour how young brains learn: through play, movement, music, and emotional connection. Instead of front-loaded explanation, brief, predictable routines with built-in novelty help children notice, try, and refine language with low anxiety. This paper shares classroom-tested activities that align with those principles and can be adopted "as is" or adapted for different groups.

# Framework: Neurolanguage Coaching in YL classrooms

Neurolanguage Coaching integrates neuroscience, coaching, and language teaching in a structured, learner-centred way. Three takeaways for young learners are: (1) connection before correction—model rather than interrupt, protecting emotional safety; (2) powerful, age-appropriate questions that spark imagination; and (3) personalised, brain-friendly tasks that combine language with movement, rhythm, and role-play. These principles reduce anxiety, sustain curiosity, and promote retrieval.

# Context and goals

Activities were implemented in small-group settings (ages 3–7) with mixed exposure to English. Goals: increase meaningful repetition of core vocabulary, introduce early grammar in context (e.g., plurals, "I have got…", Present

Continuous), and strengthen listening/pronunciation through playful pressure and rhythm.

# Classroom activities (step-by-step)

*1. Memory Game (with a twist) — Skills: vocabulary grouping, visual memory, early plurals, turn-taking*

Materials: paired picture cards (themes: animals, furniture, fruit)

Procedure: 1) Cards face down; learners flip two to find a match. 2) Non-matches: learners say "Not a match!" 3) Matches: name both and produce plural ("Lion—lion—two lions!"). 4) Tally pairs and prompt output: "I have got four pairs."

Why it works: safe error-making plus predictable language frames support retrieval and grammar noticing.

*2. Spring Story & The Missing Card — Skills: listening, vocabulary recall, early grammar, storytelling*

Procedure: 1) Tell a simple spring story while placing cards (sunny, rainbow, bee, kite); children complete sentence frames. 2) Close eyes; remove 1–3 cards; learners identify missing items. 3) Count and report: "I have got four cards." 4) Optional: transition into a spring song for melodic repetition.

Why it works: context + retrieval + music = durable memory traces.

*3. Jump & Shout (Team Challenge) — Skills: fast recall, listening, speaking under playful pressure, SEL/teamwork*

Procedure: 1) Form two teams with captains. 2) Two players face away; reveal a card; on "Jump!" they turn and name it—winner keeps the card. 3) Rotate pairs; count totals aloud ("Team A has 14 cards!").

Why it works: gross-motor activation and friendly competition boost motivation and speed of access to known words.

*4. The Whisper Game — Skills: careful listening, clear articulation; sentence-level practice for older YL*

Procedure: whisper a word/sentence down a line; final learner says it aloud; compare to the original. Tips: choose slightly challenging words (e.g., caterpillar); for structures, use Present Continuous (e.g., "She is eating a sandwich.").

Why it works: humour lowers anxiety; attention focuses on sound-meaning mapping.

*5. Tongue-twister Challenge — Skills: pronunciation, rhythm, confidence speaking before peers*

Procedure: choral slow practice with claps/taps → incremental speed-up → mini contest for clarity and speed. Examples: "A happy hippo hopped and hiccuped."; "He threw three free throws."

Why it works: rhythm and repetition strengthen articulatory control and prosody.

*6. The Spelling Line (Phonics/Jolly Phonics adaptable) — Skills: phonemic awareness, spelling, teamwork, tactile recognition*

Procedure: learners stand in a line; first child traces letters of a phonetic word on the back of the next; final child says the word; celebrate outcomes (even unexpected ones). Differentiation: start with CVC (cat, bed), extend to digraphs/long vowels (sheep, train, moon).

Why it works: kinesthetic encoding and collaboration support retention of grapheme–phoneme links.

# Observations and emerging impact

Engagement: movement and team roles sustain attention longer than seatwork alone.

Confidence: predictable frames ("Not a match!", "I have got…") reduce fear of error and increase voluntary output.

Pronunciation/Listening: whisper chains and tongue twisters surface sound contrasts for practice without formal drill.

Grammar in context: plurals and Present Continuous emerge naturally within game rules and teacher modelling.

# Implementation tips and adaptations

Routines first: keep structures stable; vary themes (animals, seasons, classroom objects) for novelty.

Connection before correction: recast/model; avoid interrupting flow.

Micro-differentiation: adjust the number of cards removed, race length, and word complexity.

Music bridges: short songs transition from game to calm focus.

SEL lens: celebrate teamwork language ("Good try!", "Your turn!", "Let's count together!").

# Conclusion

Brain-friendly YL lessons weave movement, story, rhythm, and gentle coaching into simple routines. The activities here provide repeatable formats that deliver high-quality practice with low anxiety—helping children speak sooner, remember longer, and enjoy the process. A practical next step is to pilot one routine

next week, gather quick notes (engagement, output, errors noticed), and iterate.

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# Applied foreign languages for administration and management: Challenges and perspectives

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## Abstract

The Bachelor's programme Applied Foreign Languages for Administration and Management (in English and a second foreign language) at NBU accepted its first students in the autumn of 2015. Since then, it has educated young people from all over the world. The design of the programme is based on the principles of plurilingualism and intercultural communication, and aims to educate competent and self-confident specialists in the field of applied foreign languages.

**Key words:** applied foreign languages, multicultural context, motivation

Since 2015 the Bachelor's programme Applied Foreign Languages for Administration and Management (in English and a Second Foreign Language) at New Bulgarian University has attracted both Bulgarian and foreign students who wish to become competent and skillful professionals in the field of Translation and Interpretation Technologies. The dynamic multicultural learning context

provides the prerequisites for a successful and motivating training aiming at mastering two foreign languages with a focus on administration and management.

The purpose of this article is to draw a parallel between the opinions of Bulgarian students and those of their foreign colleagues. The results of a survey conducted in the autumn of the 2024/2025 academic year (see Appendix) demonstrate the young people's expectations and attitudes towards the tuition in the programme alongside their criticism towards the programme design and the content of the courses. The answers confirm the unquestionable merits of the programme, but also provoke a reflection on some aspects that could be changed so as to agree with the modern educational standards. Participation in the survey is purely anonymous and voluntary. The respondents are 10 students in the first, second and third year of their studies – 6 Bulgarian and 4 foreign students, in the full-time and distance learning form of the programme.

The first question of the survey focuses on the students' motivation for choosing this particular programme. Each student can select more than one answer from the list.

**Table 1.** Why did you decide to study in Bachelor's Programme Applied Foreign Languages for Administration and Management (in English and a second foreign language)?

| **Answers** | Bulgarians | Foreigners | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| the programme is conducted in English | 40% | 30% | 70% |
| a second foreign language is taught intensively | 20% | | 20% |
| the programme offers a variety of specialised courses in the field of administration and management | 10% | | 10% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| the programme offers interesting practical training and internships | 10% | 20% | 30% |
| the programme was recommended to me by an acquaintance | 10% | 10% | 20% |
| the tuition takes place in a multicultural environment | 10% | | 10% |
| I find it easy to study foreign languages | 30% | 20% | 50% |
| after completing the programme, I will have good prospects for professional development | 20% | 10% | 30% |
| after completing the program, I will be able to work in European institutions | 30% | 20% | 50% |
| other (*please specify*) | | 10% | 10% |
| I enrolled in the programme by chance | 10% | 10% | 20% |

As an additional reason for choosing the programme, one of the foreign students indicates the following: "*One of the other reasons was my interest in the field of management"*.

The most frequently indicated reasons, chosen by at least half of the students, are three. The leading factor is the tuition conducted in English. It makes it possible to attract foreign students, but also carries the idea of a good professional perspective for the Bulgarian students. On the other hand, this training would not be successful without the second-placed motive – the respondents' aptitude towards learning foreign languages. Along with it, they put the increased chances of working in European institutions. That is the way in which the young people of today see their calling – to fully fit into the European context. They accept working in a multicultural environment as an integral part of modern life, as something that is taken for granted, and probably that is why this motive does not come first in their priorities. As Josefová and Štýrský point out, it is "necessary to be able to sense all forms of differences and dissimilar values in meeting different cultures" (Josefová and Štýrský 2016), and in the BA Applied Foreign

Languages for Administration and Management (in English and a second foreign language) the modern young people achieve this with ease.

Harmer points out that motivation can be extrinsic and intrinsic (Harmer 1991:4). From the above, it is clear that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are intertwined in the value system of the students in the programme, with the former being the leading one.

The second question requires from the respondents to assess the tuition in the programme.

**Table 2.** How do you rate the tuition in the programme?

| **Answers** | Bulgarians | Foreigners | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| excellent | 10% | | 10% |
| very good | 30% | | 30% |
| good | 10% | 30% | 40% |
| satisfactory | 10% | 10% | 20% |
| poor | | | |

The programme design and teaching practices are well received by the students – 80% rate them as good, very good or excellent. However, there is an evident difference in the way Bulgarian and foreign students perceive the programme. While the prevailing number of the Bulgarian respondents have a positive attitude, the foreign respondents are more moderate. Obviously, there is room for improvement so as to meet the requirements and expectations of the foreign students as well.

The third question focuses on the way students assess the atmosphere in the programme.

**Table 3. How do you rate the learning atmosphere in the programme?**

| **Answers** | Bulgarians | Foreigners | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| excellent | 20% | | 20% |
| very good | 20% | 30% | 50% |
| good | 10% | | 10% |
| satisfactory | | 10% | 10% |
| poor | 10% | | 10% |

For most students, both foreign and Bulgarian, the atmosphere is in compliance with their inner emotional needs and they rate it as good, very good and excellent. It corresponds to their need for interaction with colleagues and lecturers. However, the attitude of the Bulgarian students is not only positive. Still, it is worth mentioning that even when the atmosphere in the programme does not satisfy them, they do not try to change their major but continue their education in the same context.

The fourth question concerns the students' view of the necessary changes in the programme which can possibly bring it closer to their ideas and needs for professional training.

**Table 4. Would you like to change anything in the programme?**

| **Answers** | Bulgarians | Foreigners | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| **yes** | 10% | | 10% |
| rather **yes** | | 20% | 20% |
| rather **no** | 50% | | 50% |
| **no** | | 20% | 20% |
| If "**yes**" or "rather **yes**", what would you like to change? | 10% | 20% | 30% |

While 70% of students have a positive view of the programme as it is, 30% suggest possible changes. I will dwell in more detail on their recommendations:

Bulgarian student

A: *"The subjects in English, which is the first foreign language, in the first and second years seem extremely useless to me, they do not build on my level of English in any way and feel like a 'filler'".*

Analysis: During the first year of study, students' knowledge of English is consolidated and enriched. The teacher is faced with the difficult task of organising the education of students at different levels of language competence. As a result, some of them may not feel a sense of achievement to the extent they should.

Foreign students

A: *"It's a personal preference, but I would like to have more students in the programme and more engaging activities. Additionally, I would like a comprehensive and fundamental approach to learning the basics of a second foreign language."*

Analysis: Along with the underlying desire for a richer social aspect in university life, some dissatisfaction with the study of a second foreign language is also declared. The general and specialised courses in German, French, Spanish and Russian (each student chooses to study one of them as a second foreign language) are a challenge for some students with their intensity and diversity, aiming at immersing the young people in the respective language environment and gradually reaching the level of the first foreign language.

B: *"The removal of certain courses or their replacement with other courses."*

Analysis: This general recommendation points to the possibilities for enriching and modernising the programme in synchrony with the contemporary trends in the field of applied languages based on a precise analysis of the students' real needs.

The fifth question outlines the students' overall generalised assessment and their attitude towards the programme through their willingness to recommend it to their acquaintances.

**Table 5. Would you recommend the programme to your acquaintances?**

| **Answers** | Bulgarians | Foreigners | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| **yes** | 30% | 30% | 60% |
| rather **yes** | 10% | 10%* | 20%* |
| rather **no** | 20% | 10%* | 30%* |
| **no** | | | |

*One of the respondents has selected two answers – "rather **yes**" and "rather **no**".

Over two-thirds of the students have stated that they would recommend their acquaintances to enroll in the programme, which in itself is a proof of the results of the training they receive. The respondent who has selected two answers ("rather **yes**" and "rather **no**") has also given an additional explanation: *"It depends on the student's goals and preferences."*. This response gives a clear idea of the motives for the hesitation in the answer – the leading one is not the lack of personal judgment, it is rather the tolerance and respect for other people's opinions and their right of choice.

The conclusions that can be drawn from the results of the survey concern several areas. The profile of the students in the programme is outlined - critical, with high expectations about their education and professional training, satisfied and at the same time seeking new opportunities. As for the learning process, the desire of the respondents is to modernise and improve the courses studied both in the first foreign language, which in this case is English, and in the chosen second foreign language, thus getting closer to their calling - to fit successfully into the European context. Finally, according to the young people of today, the multicultural atmosphere in the programme deserves a positive assessment, but it would probably respond more accurately to the needs of the students if more dynamics and diversity were achieved.

Since 2015 the Bachelor's programme Applied Foreign Languages for Administration and Management (in English and a second foreign language) at New Bulgarian University has proven to be attractive for both Bulgarian and foreign students. Although ten years is not a long period, at the end of it comes a time for reflection, for rethinking the ways to continue the established good practices and to search for new vistas. The results of the conducted survey clearly confirm that the students in programme have found the right place for their professional realisation. The design of the curriculum and the multicultural settings enhance their chances for personal development and boost their motivation to aim high and to fully achieve their goals in life.

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**Appendix**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

*for surveying the attitudes and expectations of students towards education in Bachelor's Programme Applied Foreign Languages for Administration and Management (in English and a second foreign language)*

Dear interviewees,

Before answering the questions, please note the following:

- ☑ The survey is anonymous
- ☑ The results of the survey will be used for scientific purposes only
- ☑ The survey is aimed at supporting and improving the learning process

The survey questions require the following types of answers:

- marking the correct answer in a box with the following symbol ☑ or underlying the correct answer

- when selecting the option "*other*", specify in your own words what exactly you mean

1. Why did you decide to study in Bachelor's Programme Applied Foreign Languages for Administration and Management (in English and a second foreign language)? (*more than one answer is possible*)

☐ the programme is conducted in English
☐ a second foreign language is taught intensively
☐ the programme offers a variety of specialised courses in the field of administration and management
☐ the programme offers interesting practical training and internships
☐ the programme was recommended to me by an acquaintance
☐ the tuition takes place in a multicultural environment
☐ I find it easy to study foreign languages
☐ after completing the programme, I will have good prospects for professional development
☐ after completing the programme, I will be able to work in European institutions
☐ other (*please specify*)……
……
☐ I enrolled in the programme by chance

2. How do you rate the tuition in the programme?

excellent ☐
very good ☐
good ☐
satisfactory ☐
poor ☐

3. How do you rate the learning atmosphere in the programme?

excellent ☐

very good ☐
good ☐
satisfactory ☐
poor ☐

4. Would you like to change anything in the programme?

**yes** ☐
rather **yes** ☐
rather **no** ☐
**no** ☐

If "**yes**" or "rather **yes**", what would you like to change?

……..

5. Would you recommend the programme to your acquaintances?

**yes** ☐
rather **yes** ☐
rather **no** ☐
**no** ☐

Thank you for your participation in the survey!

# Integrating Artificial Intelligence into English Language Teaching at Mexican universities: Pedagogical opportunities and institutional challenges

**José Alejandro Vargas Díaz and Violena Nencheva**

**Alejandro Vargas** was born in Santiago de Querétaro, Mexico. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Informatics, a Master's degree in Information Systems, and a PhD in Innovation in Educational Technology from the Autonomous University of Querétaro, Mexico. He has worked at the same institution as a professor and researcher since 2010. His research area is mainly programming, networks, and cybersecurity. From 2015 to 2023, he worked as coordinator of the Software Engineering program at the Faculty of Informatics of the same university; from 2023 to 2024 - he was Academic Secretary of the Faculty and from 2024 to 2025 - the Faculty Director.

**Violena Nencheva** was born in Sofia, Bulgaria. She completed a Bachelor's degree in Finance at the University of National and World Economy in Sofia, Bulgaria; a Master's degree in International Business at the University of Dauphine – Paris, France; and a Master's degree in Business Economics at the University of National and World Economy in Sofia. She holds a PhD in Business Economics from the same university. Since 2021, she has been working at the Autonomous University of Querétaro, Mexico, where she is currently an Associate Professor and coordinator of the English area at the Faculty of Informatics. Her research areas include marketing, circular economy and renewable energies, and information technology management.

# Abstract

The incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into English language instruction within Mexican universities represents significant pedagogical possibilities, such as fostering personalized learning, offering adaptive feedback, and broadening access to high-quality resources. At the same time, it raises crucial challenges, including technological disparities, concerns over data privacy, algorithmic biases, and the risk of excessive dependence on automated systems that could limit students' critical thinking and creativity. To address these concerns, it is essential to develop institutional strategies that integrate ethical regulation, comprehensive teacher training, and sustainable implementation, ensuring that AI contributes to improved learning outcomes while safeguarding educational quality and equity.


**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence, English language teaching, Mexican universities, personalized learning, teacher training, digital literacy.

# Introduction

In Mexican higher education, proficiency in English has become an essential requirement. Its relevance extends beyond serving as a lingua franca in academic and professional settings; it also creates opportunities for international mobility and access to global scientific knowledge. At the same time, advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) are transforming educational practices worldwide. These technologies make it possible to personalize instruction, optimize assessment processes, and broaden access to diverse learning resources. The convergence of growing demand for English proficiency and the rapid development of AI establishes a particularly significant future for Mexican universities, which should

enhance their competitiveness while addressing the needs of an increasingly interconnected world.

However, the integration of AI tools into English teaching is not free of challenges. On one side, current applications provide adaptive feedback, generate context-sensitive content, and allow for complicated analyses of student performance. On the other hand, they present considerable risks: overdependence on automated systems could weaken important skills such as critical thinking and creativity; algorithmic biases may reinforce linguistic and cultural inequalities; and ethical concerns emerge concerning data privacy and transparency. In Mexico, these risks are intensified by persistent digital divides, uneven technological infrastructure, and the financial constraints faced by many institutions.

Institutional barriers further complicate this process. Inadequate teacher training, resistance to innovation in some places, and the absence of clear regulatory frameworks impede the effective and sustainable incorporation of AI in education. These conditions underscore the need for comprehensive strategies that maximize the pedagogical advantages of AI while protecting equity and academic quality.

The objective of this article is to critically analyse the integration of Artificial Intelligence into English language instruction within Mexican universities. It aims to identify both the benefits and the risks of these innovations and to show a framework based on principles of innovation, ethics, and sustainability. The article seeks to contribute to the design of evidence-based policies and pedagogical strategies capable of addressing current challenges while anticipating future demands.

# Theoretical Framework

**1.** *Artificial Intelligence in education*

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education involves the use of computational systems designed to repeat specific human cognitive abilities, such as reasoning, adaptation, and autonomous learning (Taneja & Fu, 2023). From the early tutoring systems of the 1980s to contemporary applications of machine learning, natural language processing, and advanced data analytics, AI has progressively broadened the possibilities for educational personalization and student monitoring. Recent scholarship has highlighted its application in intelligent tutoring, content generation, and automated feedback, showing its potential to enhance student motivation and academic achievement (Wang, Zainuddin, & Lin, 2025). Nevertheless, researchers also emphasize the importance of encasing these technologies within a robust pedagogical framework. Without such grounding, the role of AI risks being reduced to a merely instrumental tool rather than a catalyst for meaningful educational innovation.

*2. AI and foreign language teaching*

In the field of language education, AI has shown considerable impact by enabling personalized learning and delivering immediate feedback across phonological, syntactic, and semantic levels (Al-Smadi, Rashid, Saed, & Zrekat, 2024). AI-powered systems support the gamification of language acquisition and facilitate the integration of real-word texts, and by this way promoting contextualized and meaningful learning. Empirical research has shown that combining AI with human instruction can enhance natural motivation and support the development of both oral and written skills (Bernal Parraga et al., 2024). These findings are especially relevant for English language learning, as the immediate feedback

provided by AI promotes self-regulation and autonomous practice, while also increasing access to authentic communicative materials.

### 3. *Limitations and risks*

Although Artificial Intelligence holds considerable promise for education, its use is accompanied by notable challenges. Overdependence on automated systems can diminish opportunities for human interaction, which continues to be essential for effective second language learning (Yan et al., 2023). Moreover, algorithmic models often replicate cultural and linguistic biases, potentially limiting the authenticity and diversity of learning experiences (Kilanioti et al., 2024). These concerns are especially relevant in the Mexican context, where persistent inequalities in digital infrastructure and connectivity intensify existing educational gaps. Academicians also highlight ethical issues related to data privacy, algorithmic transparency, and the limited maturity of current technologies—factors that require thorough attention when shaping institutional policies (Chassignol, Khoroshavin, Klimova, & Bilyatdinova, 2020). Therefore, the incorporation of AI into English language teaching should be carefully evaluated to guarantee that its advantages prevail over its limitations.

## *4. Opportunities and benefits for the Mexican university context*

In the context of Mexican universities, AI can be seen as a resource that can optimize both assessment and academic support (Taneja & Fu, 2023). By automating routine tasks, emerging technologies give time for teachers to focus on more cognitively complex activities that promote deeper learning. Furthermore, the use of these tools contributes to the development of digital skills, which have become a growing requirement in the global labour market (Khan, 2024). The strategic adoption of AI, therefore, not only improves the quality of English

teaching but also strengthens the relevance of university education in Mexico in a competitive international environment.

In a comparative study of AI between Chile and Mexico, initiatives at Tec de Monterrey (TecGPT, TECbot, restructuring of more than 44 programs with AI) and at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile (ConectIA, AcademiaIA) stand out. These experiences show how to design a pedagogical, ethical, and structural integration of AI in the Latin American context, although they underscore the need for political, social, and economic support to sustain it (Gaitán Barrera & Azeez, 2024).

At UNAM, the use of generative AI is high among faculty and students, although it is often limited to information searches or instrumental support. This indicates an opportunity to increase its use toward more meaningful and complex pedagogical applications, always with adequate training to avoid underutilization or limited ethical use (Benavides-Lara et al., 2025).

A study at the UAEM Valley of Mexico shows how the integration of AI into platforms such as Duolingo, Coursera, Proctorio, among others, boosted personalized learning, reduced assessment times, and improved student performance (Ruiz Reynoso, Delgadillo Gómez, & Hernández Bonilla, 2025). The implementation led to a 25% increase in comprehension and retention; 40% less review time; and a 20% improvement in average grades, with 85% student satisfaction and 90% progress in soft skills.

Research Question: *What pedagogical benefits and institutional challenges do Mexican universities confront in the integration of Artificial Intelligence into English language teaching?*

# Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to critically examine both the pedagogical opportunities and the institutional challenges associated with the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into English language teaching at Mexican universities. It aims to identify the institutional and technological obstacles that may limit the effective adoption of AI tools, while also considering the potential risks of overdependence on technology for the development of students' critical thinking and communicative skills. In addition, the study seeks to provide practical recommendations for the responsible and balanced implementation of AI in educational backgrounds, taking into account the specific socio-educational conditions of Mexico.

# Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to acquire both numerical data on perceptions and usage of AI, as well as comprehensive analysis about experiences, challenges, and pedagogical strategies. A descriptive and exploratory design was selected to identify current practices, attitudes, and issues, while also analysing relevant dynamics and contextual factors. The use of a mixed-methods approach reflects the complexity of integrating Artificial Intelligence into English language teaching at Mexican universities, allowing for both measurement and nuanced understanding of the institutional and educational contexts involved.

Given that, the topic remains relatively new and underexplored in the Mexican context, a descriptive and exploratory design is particularly suitable for generating preliminary but strong knowledge. The study employed a purposive sample of 50 English students from the Faculty of Informatics of the Autonomous University of Querétaro, ensuring that participants had ample exposure to AI and enhancing the depth and relevance of the analysis.

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed to safeguard the rights and integrity of all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously maintained to prevent individual identification. All data collected are used solely for academic purposes, adhering to principles of accountability, transparency, and responsible handling of information.

# Discussion and results

The data collection instrument consisted of ten questions measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), organized into five key dimensions.

The first dimension examined the use and frequency of Artificial Intelligence in English classes, aiming to determine the extent to which students employ tools such as automatic translators, text correction software, or generative applications as part of their academic activities.

The second dimension focused on the perceived pedagogical impact of AI, evaluating whether its use enhances language comprehension, supports more personalized learning experiences, and fosters motivation to study English.

A third dimension focused on the challenges and concerns associated with the use of these technologies, exploring students' perceptions of potential dependence on automated systems, their effect on critical thinking and creativity, and the reliability of AI-generated responses.

The fourth dimension related to technological access and equity, investigating whether participants believe the use of AI should be increased in English classes and whether they perceive limitations regarding its availability and equitable use.

Finally, the fifth dimension focused on teacher training and preparation, gathering student opinions on the impact that AI integration will have on the future of university teaching, particularly with regard to English language learning.

**Table 1.** Data collection instrument: questions, variables and related hypotheses

| **No.** | **Questions** | **Variable / Dimension** | **Related Hypothesis** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I use AI tools to support my English classes. | Use of AI | H1: The use of AI is frequent in English classes. |
| 2 | AI is a common part of learning activities. | Pedagogical integration | H1 |
| 3 | Using AI has improved my understanding of English. | Impact on understanding | H2: AI improves language comprehension. |

| No. | Questions | Variable / Dimension | Related Hypothesis |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | AI has allowed me to practice English in a personalized way. | Personalization of learning | H3: AI facilitates adaptive learning. |
| 5 | AI has increased my motivation to learn English. | Motivation | H4: AI increases student motivation. |
| 6 | Reliance on AI can reduce my critical thinking. | Critical thinking risk | H5: There is concern about negative impact on critical thinking. |
| 7 | I am concerned about the accuracy of the AI's responses. | Reliability of AI | H6: There is concern about the quality of information. |
| 8 | The use of AI can affect creativity. | Creativity | H7: AI could limit creativity. |
| 9 | I believe that the integration of Artificial Intelligence into English learning will have a positive impact on the future of university teaching. | Future impact | H8: AI will have a positive impact on English language teaching. |
| 10 | I believe that the use of Artificial Intelligence in English classes should be increased. | Increased use of AI | H9: The use of AI in English teaching should be increased. |

**Source:** Authors 'own elaboration

Below are the results of the survey application and the impact of Artificial Intelligence on the questions given.

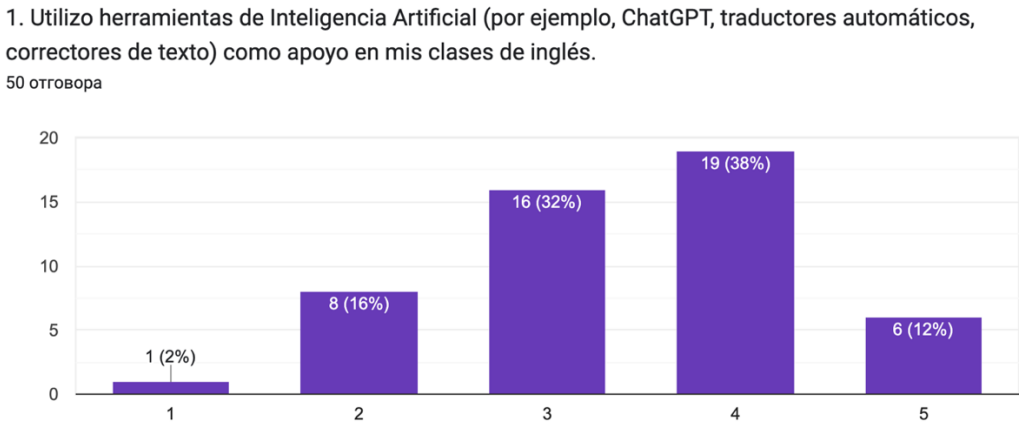


**Figure 1** shows the frequency with which students use artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as ChatGPT, machine translators, or spell checkers, to support their English classes. The most frequently selected option was Level 4, with 38% (n = 19), followed by Level 3 with 32% (n = 16). To a lesser extent, Level 2 was chosen by 16% (n = 8) and Level 5 by 12% (n = 6), while the lowest option (1) was chosen by only 2% (n = 1). These results reflect a widespread and frequent use of AI tools by students, indicating that these technologies are already significantly integrated into the English learning context.

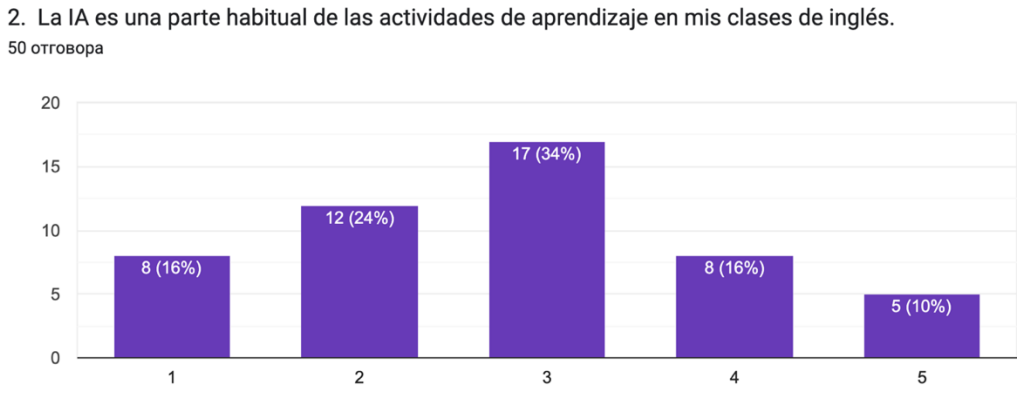


**Figure 2** presents students' perceptions of whether artificial intelligence (AI) is a regular part of their English learning activities. The most frequent choice was level 3, with 34% (n = 17), followed by level 2, with 24% (n = 12). The extremes of the scale (levels 1 and 4) reached 16% each (n = 8), while the highest level (5) was selected by 10% (n = 5). These results indicate that AI occupies an

intermediate place in learning dynamics, with varied perceptions among students: some consider it a tool already regularly integrated, while others state that its presence is not yet entirely common.

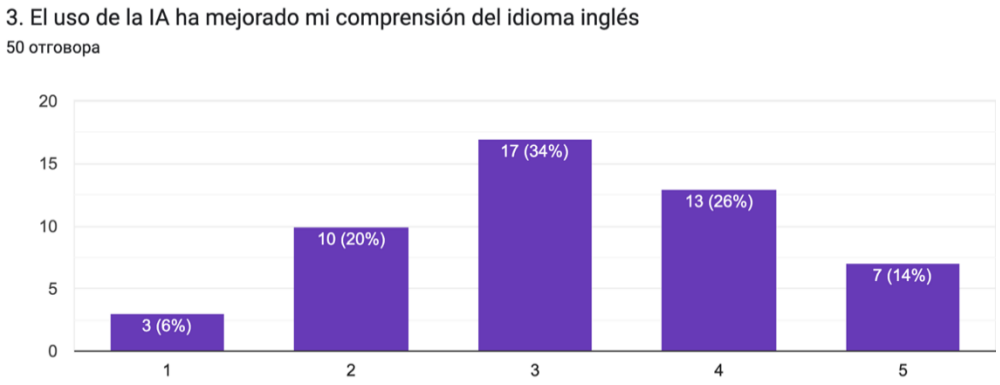


**Figure 3** presents participants' perceptions of whether the use of artificial intelligence (AI) has improved their English language comprehension. The results show that the most frequently selected option was level 3, with 34% (n = 17), followed by level 4, with 26% (n = 13). In contrast, the lowest levels (1 and 2) together account for 26%, while the highest rating (5) reached 14% (n = 7). These findings suggest that, while there is a predominantly intermediate assessment of the contribution of AI to English learning, a significant portion of respondents recognize moderate to high improvements, which demonstrates a positive, although not homogeneous, impact across the sample analysed.

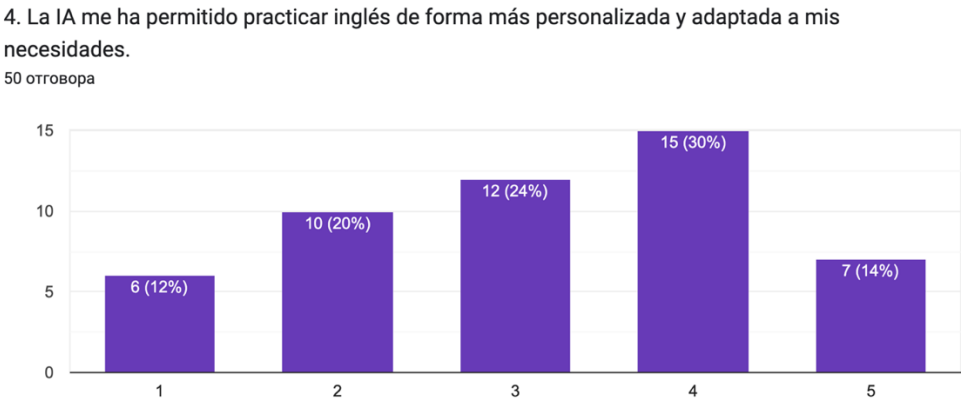

**Figure 4** shows students' assessments of the ability of artificial intelligence (AI) to enable more personalized English learning adapted to their needs. The most frequent choice was level 4, with 30% (n = 15), followed by level 3, with 24% (n = 12). In contrast, the lowest ratings (levels 1 and 2) accounted for a combined 32%, while the highest level (5) was selected by 14% (n = 7). These results suggest that, although there is a moderately positive perception of the usefulness of AI in personalizing learning, a significant proportion of students still have doubts or perceived limitations.

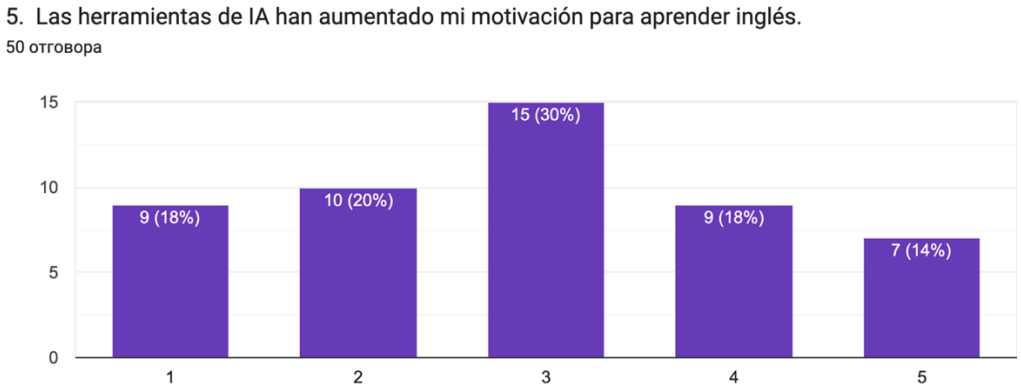


**Figure 5** shows students' perceptions of the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) tools on their motivation to learn English. The most frequent value was level 3, with 30% (n = 15), while the extremes of the scale (1 and 5) were selected by 18% (n = 9) and 14% (n = 7), respectively. Intermediate options (levels 2 and 4) reached 20% (n = 10) and 18% (n = 9). These data show a tendency toward moderate assessments, with a more balanced distribution between positive and negative perceptions. Consequently, it can be interpreted that AI generates a heterogeneous motivational effect among students, with a significant proportion recognizing an intermediate contribution, while others express diverse positions.

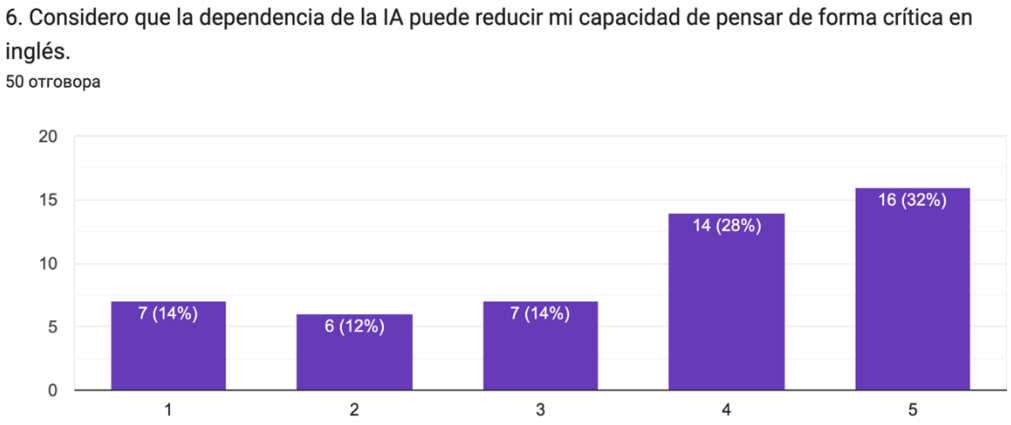


**Figure 6** presents students' perceptions of the potential risks of relying on artificial intelligence (AI) in relation to their ability to think critically in English. The majority leaned toward the higher end of the scale: 32% (n = 16) selected Level 5 and 28% (n = 14) selected Level 4. In contrast, the lower levels (1, 2, and 3) reached between 12% and 14% each, with a total of 40%. These results indicate that a considerable proportion of students perceive significant risks in relying on AI for the development of critical skills in English, suggesting a thoughtful awareness of the potential counterproductive effects of overusing this technology in language learning.

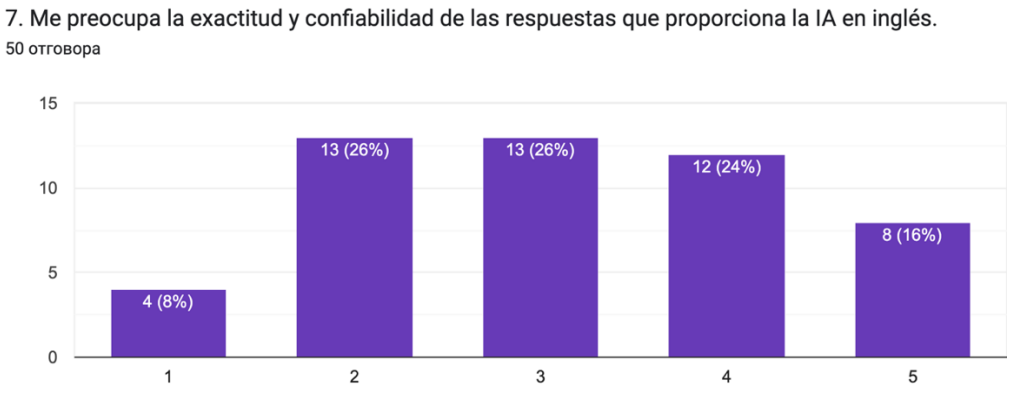


**Figure 7** shows students' level of concern regarding the accuracy and reliability of the answers provided by artificial intelligence (AI) in English. The results are relatively evenly distributed: options 2 and 3 obtained the same percentage

(26%, n = 13), closely followed by option 4 with 24% (n = 12). The highest level of concern (level 5) was selected by 16% (n = 8), while the lowest (level 1) reached 8% (n = 4). These data suggest that, while there is a considerable degree of caution regarding the reliability of AI-generated answers, the overall trend reflects moderate perceptions, without extreme polarizations. Consequently, students appear to maintain a critical and balanced stance regarding the veracity of the information received through these tools.

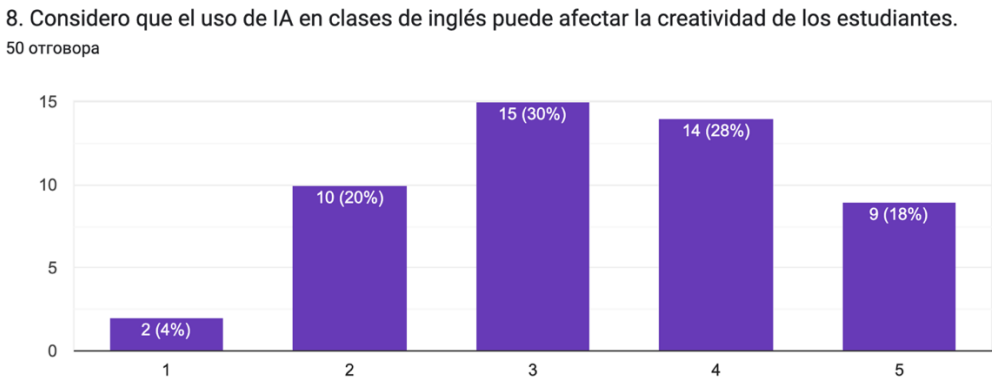


**Figure 8** presents students' perceptions regarding the potential impact of using artificial intelligence (AI) in English classes on their creativity. The highest proportion of responses was concentrated in levels 3 (30%, n = 15) and 4 (28%, n = 14), followed by level 2 at 20% (n = 10). The highest level on the scale (5) was selected by 18% (n = 9), while the lowest option (1) barely reached 4% (n = 2). These results reflect an intermediate perception with a tendency towards concern, since a considerable portion of students consider that the use of AI could limit creativity in English learning, although there is no absolute consensus.

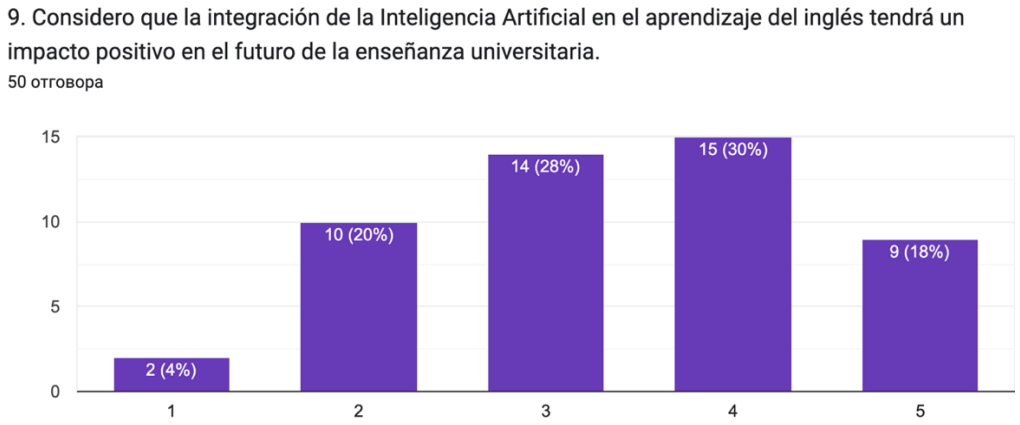


**Figure 9** shows students' perceptions of the future impact of artificial intelligence (AI) integration on English language learning at the university level. The most frequently selected option was Level 4, with 30% (n = 15), followed by Level 3, with 28% (n = 14). Similarly, 18% (n = 9) preferred the highest rating (Level 5), while the lowest responses (Level 1 and 2) represented 4% (n = 2) and 20% (n = 10), respectively. These results demonstrate a largely positive perception, with more than half of the students confident that AI will have a positive impact on university English language teaching, although some remain unsure.

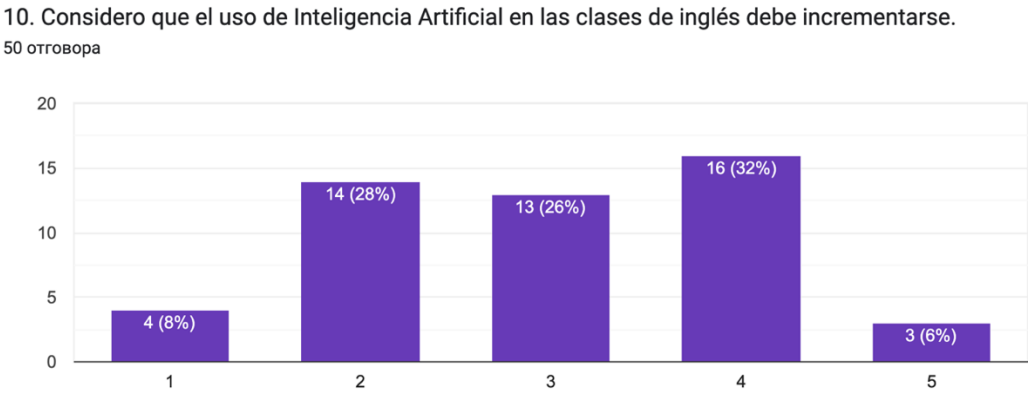


Figure 10 presents students' opinions on whether the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in English classes should be increased. The most frequently selected level was level 4, with 32% (n = 16), followed by level 2, with 28% (n = 14), and level 3, with 26% (n = 13). To a lesser extent, levels 1 and 5 obtained 8% (n = 4) and 6% (n = 3), respectively. These results show a trend toward moderately positive

perceptions regarding the increased use of AI, although some division is evident among students, with a significant proportion expressing more critical or less favourable positions.

**Table 2.** Comparative results of student perceptions on the integration of AI in English teaching (n = 50)

| Questions | Most frequent answer | General trend |
|---|---|---|
| Chart 1: Frequency of AI use | Level 4 (38%) | Frequent and autonomous use of AI |
| Chart 2: AI as a regular part of classes | Level 3 (34%) | Intermediate presence in classes |
| Chart 3: Improvement in English comprehension | Level 3 (34%) | Moderate perception of improvement |
| Chart 4: Personalized practice with AI | Level 4 (30%) | Moderately positive rating |
| Chart 5: Motivation to learn English | Level 3 (30%) | Intermediate motivational impact |
| Chart 6: Dependency risk and critical thinking | Level 5 (32%) | High perception of risk |
| Chart 7: Reliability and accuracy of responses | Levels 2 and 3 (26% each) | Critical and balanced position |
| Chart 8: Impact on creativity | Level 3 (30%) | Intermediate-high concern |

| Questions | Most frequent answer | General trend |
|---|---|---|
| Chart 9: Future impact of AI on universities | Level 4 (30%) | Positive vision of future impact |
| Chart 10: Increased use of AI in classrooms | Level 4 (32%) | Divided position, positive trend |

**Source:** Authors 'own elaboration based on data from the survey applied to university students

The results obtained show that artificial intelligence (AI) has become a progressively integrated tool in English language learning processes within Mexican university contexts. The majority of students reported frequent use of tools such as automatic translators, text correctors, and ChatGPT (Figure 1), revealing a practical appropriation of AI as a support resource. However, its incorporation into regular classroom activities (Figure 2) was perceived as more intermediate, suggesting that, although students use these technologies autonomously, they have not yet fully consolidated as a structural part of pedagogical strategies in the university classroom.

Regarding perceived benefits, students reported that AI has contributed to improving their English comprehension (Figure 3) and provided opportunities for more personalized practice (Figure 4). They also observed a positive effect on their motivation to study English (Figure 5). These observations align with previous research emphasizing AI's capacity to support adaptive learning, enhance student autonomy, and deliver immediate feedback (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019; Holmes et al., 2022). However, the data indicate that these benefits are

experienced to a moderate extent, suggesting that their impact is not yet uniform or fully consolidated across all students.

A notable concern emerging from the findings relates to students' apprehensions about overreliance on AI tools. Specifically, many participants expressed worry that excessive use of AI might impede the development of critical thinking skills (Figure 6) and limit creative capacities (Figure 8), reflecting ongoing debates about the pedagogical risks of uncritical dependence on automated technologies in language learning. Additionally, a significant portion of students questioned the reliability and accuracy of AI-generated responses (Figure 7), demonstrating a cautious and evaluative approach toward the content produced by these systems.

Despite these concerns, students generally expressed optimism regarding AI's future role in higher education. The majority anticipated that its integration could positively influence university teaching (Figure 9) and supported the expansion of AI use in English language courses (Figure 10). These findings suggest a willingness among students to embrace AI institutionally, provided that its implementation is guided by critical reflection and clear regulatory frameworks.

Overall, the results reveal two complementary trends. On one hand, students acknowledge AI's potential as a pedagogical resource capable of improving comprehension, motivation, and personalized learning. On the other hand, they raise legitimate concerns about the reliability of these systems and their possible effects on the development of essential cognitive and creative skills. This dual perspective highlights the need for a thoughtful and ethically grounded approach to teaching—one that makes good use of technology while still

protecting intellectual independence and creativity, which continue to be essential in higher education.

In practical terms, the pedagogical opportunities identified include using AI to support language practice, provide specialised feedback, and encourage student motivation. On the contrary, the institutional challenges involve ensuring that teachers receive adequate training in AI-enhanced pedagogy, establishing clear regulations for its implementation, and designing strategies that prevent technological dependence from undermining students' cognitive independence.
Taken together, these findings are consistent with emerging literature on AI in higher education, which emphasizes that the true value of these technologies lies not in replacing traditional teaching, but in complementing and enhancing it. Specifically, in the context of English instruction in Mexican universities, the evidence suggests that AI integration represents a valuable opportunity for pedagogical innovation, provided that the risks identified by students themselves are thoughtfully addressed.

# Conclusions

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into English language teaching at Mexican universities offers substantial pedagogical potential. Its anticipated benefits include personalized learning, increased student motivation, immediate feedback, and enhanced development of communication skills. Recent research also indicates that AI can help reduce learning-related anxiety and support self-regulated learning, positioning it as a significant catalyst for educational innovation.

However, these advantages are counterbalanced by various challenges. Key issues include limited teacher preparation, ongoing technological inequalities, unequal access to digital resources, and the risks associated with overdependence on automated systems, which may impede students' autonomy, creativity, and critical thinking. Additional concerns involve the continuance of linguistic biases and the lack of comprehensive institutional protocols to guide the ethical and responsible use of AI technologies.

Consequently, the effective integration of AI in English education demands a balanced strategy that combines technological innovation with sustained teacher training, the establishment of clear institutional policies, and measures to ensure equitable access to digital infrastructure. Equally critical is the cultivation of critical AI literacy, enabling both students and educators to engage with these tools in an ethical, reflective, and strategic manner. Only by this way AI can be responsibly incorporated to promote both equity and the overall quality of education in Mexican universities.

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# Using AI-powered tools for creating engaging learning materials

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In recent years AI has been permeating various spheres of everyday life. We are sure AI has been remarkably transforming and reshaping our world. How can AI support the development of younger generation?

The evolution of AI in education has also been shaped by changing educational paradigms and pedagogical approaches. From traditional classroom-based instruction to online and blended learning models, AI has played a pivotal role in supporting diverse teaching and learning environments.

At present, AI technologies are increasingly integrated into language teaching methodologies, offering educators and learners a range of tools and resources to enhance language acquisition and proficiency. These technologies leverage machine learning algorithms, natural language processing, and speech

recognition to provide personalized learning experiences tailored to individual learners' needs and preferences [2].

When discussing integration of AI into educational process we need to mention different AI technologies and systems: 1) learner-facing, used by pupils to learn, 2) teacher-facing, used by teachers to help AI in teaching activities, for example grading, and 3) system-facing, which is used by administrative staff to manage and examine pupil data [3].

Language teaching and learning present multiple opportunities for using AI-powered technologies. Even prior to the development of generative AI tools like ChatGPT, we have seen many successful applications developed using AI to create adaptive learning pathways for language learners. Generative AI tools now provide incredible potential for language practice [1].

AI-powered tools used by language teachers are various language learning apps, language generation AI, chatbots, automated grading or speech recognition software, text-to-speech tools, data and learning analytics or virtual and augmented reality.

How can educators effectively incorporate AI tools into their teaching? AI-powered tools offer a range of opportunities for educators:

- generating lesson plans, various educational resources, engaging and interactive activities,
- transforming educational materials according to students' learning styles, their abilities or needs,
- creating assessment materials and quizzes,

- grading or assessing learners' work,
- correcting learners' errors or suggesting improvements,
- providing individualized feedback,
- analysing learners' performance data and adapting learning materials to individual needs, providing personalized learning experience,
- do administrative tasks such as managing and analysing student data etc.

AI-powered tools offer effective instruments for language teaching and learning. There is a wide range of AI platforms to opt for. We would like to acquaint you with some tools that have gained our traction.

1. **Diffit**

Diffit is an AI-powered tool for teachers to create differentiated learning materials. It allows educators to adapt text to different reading levels, generate relevant resources on any topic, and create student-ready activities. It helps teachers personalize learning experiences by tailoring content to individual student needs, saving them time on lesson preparation. Diffit allows teachers to export generated content into various formats like PDFs, Google Forms, and interactive slides, making it easy to integrate into classroom activities. Teachers use Diffit to get "just right" instructional materials, saving tons of time and helping all students to access grade level content [9].

2. **Edcafe**

Edcafe AI is a powerful AI toolkit designed for educators to effortlessly generate and organize high-quality instructional and learning content using AI. This tool provides:

- Content Creation:

Edcafe AI simplifies the process of creating instructional materials by generating content based on user input (text, links, documents).

- Flashcards:

It can generate flashcards for vocabulary and key concepts, aiding in knowledge retention.

- Lesson Plans:

Edcafe AI can create structured lesson plans with clear objectives, engaging hooks, and differentiated activities.

- Interactive Content:

Edcafe AI can create interactive elements like quizzes and chatbots to enhance student engagement.

- Customizable Chatbots:

It offers customizable chatbots for on-demand student support and feedback.

- Resource Organization:

Edcafe AI offers a library-like space for educators to organize and manage their AI-generated content. [8].

3. **Napkin**

Napkin helps you transform your existing text content or AI-generated materials into visuals like diagrams, charts, scenes, and images. This tool generates the most relevant visuals based on the text and we can choose the one that best expresses our ideas. Napkin visuals are fully editable, so you can adjust content and style to maximize their impact. Visuals created in Napkin can be used anywhere. The created visuals can be easily exported and integrated into presentations created in Google Slides, Canva, or PowerPoint [7].

4. **TurboLearn AI**

TurboLearn AI is an AI-powered tool designed to improve students' academic performance, such as automating their foreign language learning processes by generating notes, flashcards, and quizzes from lecture recordings, PDFs, and other study materials. It essentially acts as an AI note-taker, summarizing information and creating study aids to simplify learning [6]. This tool turns any audio, video or PDF into instant notes, flashcards, quizzes and chatbots. TurboAI can be integrated into various applications and platforms to provide advanced machine learning and natural language processing functions [5].

5. **Twee**

These AI-powered tools make lesson planning effortless! With over 30 AI tools for teachers, you can create materials in seconds. From reading and vocabulary to writing, speaking, and grammar, explore a range of ESL tools designed to save time and bring your lessons to life. Twee also provides features for automated grading, workflow management, and integration with other educational tools [4].

The integration of Artificial Intelligence in educational system has incredibly transformed teaching process. These days teachers are equipped with diverse variety of AI-powered tools and digital resources to upgrade their teaching and improve learners' academic performance. Applying AI-powered tools has a lot of advantages for both educators and learners. Nevertheless, we should be aware of some concerns such as bias, accuracy, copyright, decreasing learners' creativity and critical thinking.

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# Teaching Walkthrus as a practical toolkit for teachers

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# Introduction

Have you ever been in a situation where you are desperate for a solution in the classroom, yet you struggle to identify what would actually make a difference? Many teachers, regardless of experience, encounter moments when strategies that once worked seem to fail, or when conversations about pedagogy with colleagues yield abstract answers rather than practical solutions. Such experiences indicate a persistent challenge in education: the gap between theory and classroom practice. As a teacher and advisor, I have found that what many teachers seek is not another trend or a new methodology, but a shared framework—a common professional language through which effective practice can be observed, discussed, and negotiated, as well as stability within the professional community.

*Teaching Walkthrus* toolkit developed by Tom Sherrington and Oliver Caviglioli (Caviglioli & Sherrington 2020) is an example of one such framework. As an

academic I acknowledge the evidence-based design, rooted in extensive pedagogy-related papers and proven working principles, which makes the toolkit more accessible. The *Teaching Walkthrus* offer teachers a visual and comprehensive guide to classroom strategies, informed by research in cognitive psychology and pedagogy. Each technique is presented as a clear five-step sequence supported by illustrations and concise, up-to-the-point explanations, making it easier for teachers to translate complex theory into manageable routines. What distinguishes *Walkthrus* design is its practicality and its grounding in educational research—most notably in Barak Rosenshine's *Principles of Instruction* (Rosenshine 2012), Daniel Willingham's cognitive model of learning (Willingham 2009), and the 5Ps model of effective feedback (Wiliam 2011).

This paper explores the practical side of using *Teaching Walkthrus* as a tool for professional growth and improvement for classroom instruction. It first outlines the toolkit and its design principles, then discusses its theoretical foundations. In the practical section, the focus shifts to selected techniques, such as Think–Pair–Share and Cold Calling, analyzing both their pedagogical value and potential pitfalls for practitioners.

# The Teaching Walkthrus: one toolkit, many solutions

One of the strengths of the project is that instead of offering prescriptive lesson plans or abstract theoretical models, it transforms essential teaching routines and classroom strategies into a user-friendly guide. Each "walkthru" illustrates a specific pedagogical technique—ranging from questioning and modeling to feedback and scaffolding—breaking it down into clear and easy to follow steps. The visual structure of these guides, created by Oliver Caviglioli, enhances

cognitive processing by simplifying complex teaching sets of behaviour into easily retrievable sequence.

The official project website states that the *Walkthrus* toolkit aims to create a shared professional vocabulary among educators. In this way, it enables teachers to reflect on, discuss, and refine their practice within a common frame of reference. The guides are adaptable across subjects and age groups, making them applicable not only to specific teaching contexts, such as ESL, but also to any educator willing to participate. Such flexibility allows individual teachers, departments, or entire schools to integrate the toolkit into professional development sessions, lesson planning, or peer observation frameworks[7].

The *Walkthrus* has been expanded into multiple series, each addressing specific areas of methodology such as curriculum planning, formative assessment, classroom culture, and professional learning communities. This structure reflects an understanding of teaching as an evolving craft enacting what Dylan Wiliam (2011) notably phrased as "Every teacher needs to improve, not because they are not good enough, but because they can be even better."

What distinguishes *Teaching Walkthrus* from similar frameworks is its balance between structure and possibility for adaptation. It offers a reliable, research-grounded framework while leaving space for professional judgment and contextualizing. Rather than dictating how teachers should teach, the toolkit provides a lens through which teachers can observe, interpret, and enhance their own practice. As educators, we are constantly reminded of the need to adapt and the

[7] As of 2025 Bulgarian Progressive Schools started the process of adopting the Teaching Walkthrus in their coaching programme. They are the official representatives of the framework for Bulgaria. Courtesy to their collaboration, I managed to graduate from Coaching Walkthrus training.

framework sustains plenty of possibilities in this respect. Only when we are skilled enough to adapt our own teaching, can we address the topic of differentiation in the classroom.

*Teaching Walkthrus* is a project that was meticulously designed and developed over an extensive period of time. The amount of work, dedication, precision, and creativity invested in its creation testifies to its depth and quality. The creators, Tom Sherrington and Oliver Caviglioli (as well as the extensive team of individuals involved in the project), identified a range of recurring challenges in education and teacher professional training, which they sought to address. Prior to *Walkthrus*, Sherrington had extensive experience as a principal and head teacher, offering a first-hand insight into what teachers truly need in their daily practice. As both a practitioner and theorist, he draws on and extends Rosenshine's *Principles of Instruction*, making sure that *Walkthrus* bridges the gap between theory and classroom application.

# Theoretical framework

Several foundational theories that have shaped modern pedagogy act as the scientific base for the *Walkthrus*. Their practical value is undeniable when it comes to successful teacher practice resulting in students' development.

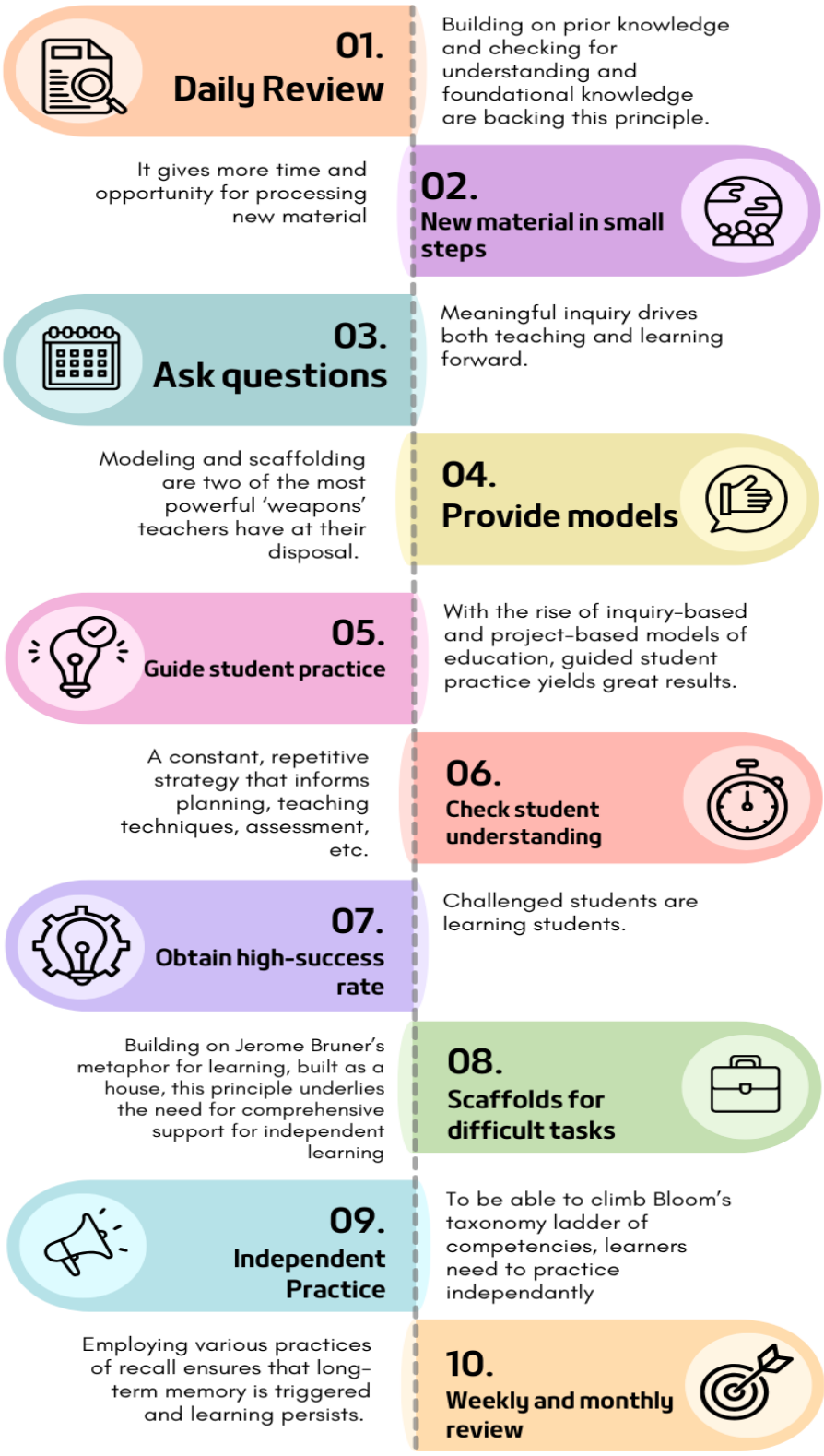
# Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction

Barak Rosenshine's *Principles of Instruction* (2012) emerged from decades of empirical classroom research that aimed to clarify what effective teachers actually do. Rosenshine proposed 17 key principles, later refined into a more concise set of guiding ideas. These principles reflect a cognitive approach to teaching

that prioritizes how students process and retain information and are illustrated in Fig.1.

**Fig. 1.** Rosenshine's 10 Principles of Instruction

# 10 ROSENSHINE'S principles of instruction

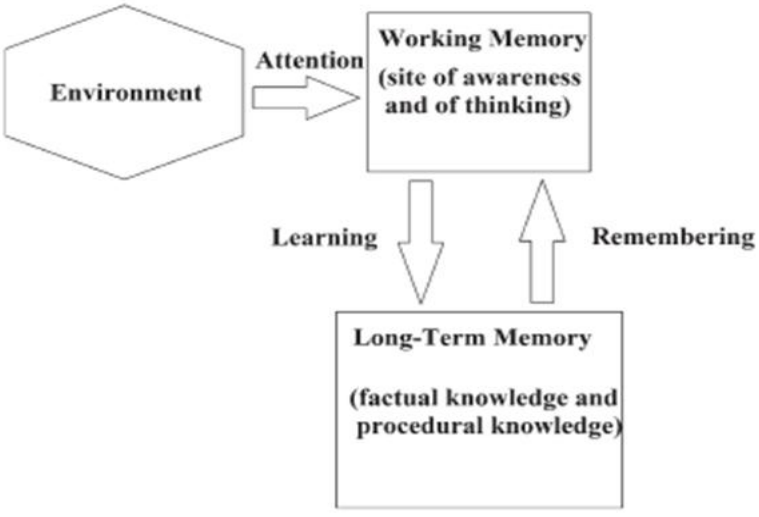


Although Rosenshine's principles have been constantly addressed in the concise way I have proposed here, *Walkthrus* capacity to model complex theory into practical formats is one of the key reasons for the growing popularity of the toolkit in Britain and now in different parts of Europe, including Bulgaria.

# Willingham's Cognitive Model of Learning

Daniel Willingham's contributions to cognitive psychology (2009, 2017) is widely recognized in education (his books have their Bulgarian translation) because the author manages to translate cognition in simple of explanation of how we acquire knowledge. His model of learning focuses on how memory, attention, and understanding interact during the learning process. Central to Willingham's view is the idea that *"memory is the residue of thought"* (Willingham 2009: 41)—that learners remember what they think about. Therefore, teachers must design lessons that direct students' cognitive attention to the material's most meaningful aspects and incorporate recall techniques in their planning and delivery.

**Fig. 2.** Willingham's model

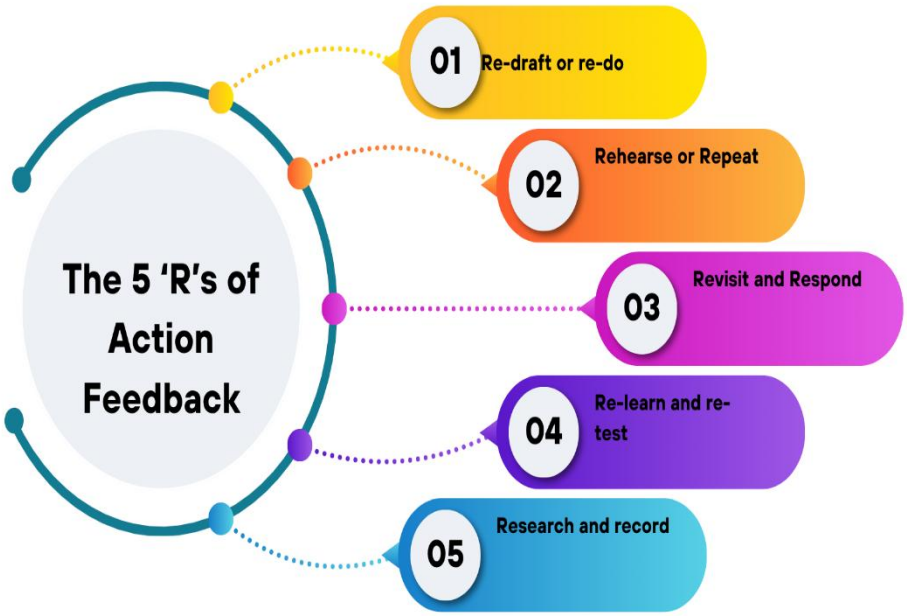


The Walkthrus craftily use those principals to develop teachers' understanding and to guide their own learning, as well as the learning of their students. In this sense, the toolkit functions not only as a pedagogical resource but also as a cognitive scaffold for teacher learning. It encourages practitioners to externalize and reflect on their thinking about teaching, promoting metacognitive awareness that is central to professional growth.

# The 5Ps of Action Feedback by Dylan William

Learning depends on modeling and scaffolding, on recall and retrieval, on practice and growth. Feedback is intrinsic to the process of learning because it provides the steps for improvement, fosters agency and growth mindset. It informs both teaching and learning and so it taps on the spiral model of advancement Bruner (1960) theorizes. Recently, Dylan Wiliam has emerged as the leading theorist who not only explains the huge role of feedback which is actionable, therefore applicable, but who provides 5-key actions that construct such feedback.

**Fig. 3.** A model of the 5Rs of Action Feedback




*Teaching Walkthrus* recognizes the fundamental takeaways of the 5Ps model and manages to incorporate them on two levels. Firstly, it provides ways for teachers to give feedback to students—focusing on next steps. Secondly, it shapes how mentors, coaches, and colleagues provide feedback to teachers engaging with the toolkit. The ultimate goal is to make the teaching-learning process beneficial for all those participating.

# The Walkthrus Techniques

*Think–Pair–Share*

The *Think–Pair–Share* technique is designed to encourage active learning through structured pairing. Initially developed by Frank Lyman (1981), it invites students first to think individually about a prompt, then to discuss their ideas with a partner, and finally to share their responses with the whole group. Within the *Teaching Walkthrus* framework, this technique is presented as a clear

sequence of steps: pose the question, allow thinking time, pair up, share ideas, and summarize key points. On paper it seems relatively easy to employ without straining with the complex pedagogical purposes underlying it—encouraging retrieval practice, elaboration, and peer learning while maintaining a manageable cognitive load.

From the perspective of Rosenshine's principles, *Think–Pair–Share* exemplifies the effective use of questioning and guided practice. It provides students with the opportunity to rehearse their ideas and improve their production before contributing to whole-class discussion, amplifying confidence and comprehension. Due to Willingham's model, we know why the strategy works: it compels students to *think* about the question posed, which in turn enhances memory retention and understanding.

However, the technique is not without pitfalls. Overuse can lead to predictability especially if questions are ill-formulated and do not serve the objectives of a lesson. Superficial application of the steps, without understanding their purpose, may also pose challenges—if the "thinking" or "pair" phases are rushed, superficial answers may replace meaningful ones and eliminate the actual thinking required. Additionally, unequal participation can occur if stronger students dominate discussions or if classroom dynamics discourage honest exchange. This is why, the *Walkthrus* encourage constant adaptation, taking into account the specifics of groups and the learning environment.

*Cold Calling*

*Cold Calling* is another core strategy within the *Teaching Walkthrus*. It draws on Rosenshine's emphasis on questioning and checking for understanding.

Popularized through Doug Lemov's *Teach Like a Champion* (2021), the technique involves students answering questions that the teacher addressed to everybody. It is not simply selecting couple of students who did not volunteer, but rather create an environment where everyone is engaged in thinking (the cognitive activation). The goal is to check for understanding and engage the class not a small minority of it (building inclusive classroom culture).

Yet, if twisted or not properly introduced, this simple technique can create a great depth of problems. If a teacher does not manage to create classroom atmosphere where errors are recognized as the path to learning and uses the technique in a punitive manner, *Cold Calling* may trigger anxiety or resistance. By acknowledging such pitfalls, The *Teaching* and *Coaching Walkthrus* support teachers in building their efficiency.

*To Walkthru or Not - That is the Question*

As a teacher and as a coach, I have experienced the widely-anticipated truth that when teachers work within a consistent, research-grounded framework, the cumulative effect on student learning is amplified. Critics often warn that frameworks applied rigidly, turn nuanced pedagogical thinking into mechanical execution. To overcome that danger, the *Teaching Walkthrus* encourage reflection and development. Each teacher needs to adapt strategies to their subject matter, learners, and environment. However, novice teachers lack the confidence and the ability to do so successfully. Experienced teachers, on the other hand, may have turned rigid in their techniques and less sensitive towards their students' needs. This is where well-structured, comprehensive and easy-to-apply toolkit such as the *Walkthrus* is specifically helpful.

In schools where professional development is collaborative and non-judgmental, the toolkit tends functions as a catalyst for dialogue and experimentation. On the contrary, in contexts where observation is associated with judgment, even the most constructive framework may result in resistance and bad results. The *Walkthrus* supports a culture where teachers are given the opportunity to explore, question, and refine rather than simply reproduce recommended practices.

# Conclusion

In the 21st century information can be overwhelming for both students and teachers. What sets apart good practitioners, however, is how they choose to evolve their craft. Critically thinking about what informs our approach to teaching and studying is essential. The *Teaching Walkthrus* might be one of many frameworks that can be adopted, but it is one of the few well-balanced and informed toolkits that promise to transform education.

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# Challenge-based Approach to Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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## Abstract

This paper examines the integration of challenge-based learning (CBL) in English as foreign language (EFL) education to develop both linguistic competencies and democratic culture competences outlined in the European Commission's Reference Framework for Democratic Culture. Through systematic analysis of contemporary research (2015-2025), the paper establishes theoretical foundations of CBL and explores its implementation potential in EFL contexts. The study presents a comprehensive framework developed by the ENLACED project for constructing digital breakout challenges that combine language skills development

with 21st-century competencies through authentic, collaborative problem-solving experiences. Findings demonstrate CBL's capacity to transform traditional EFL pedagogies by fostering intercultural dialogue, critical thinking, and active European citizenship while enhancing communicative competence.

# Introduction

The integration of challenge-based learning (CBL) in English as a foreign language (EFL) education has emerged as a pivotal pedagogical approach that aligns with contemporary educational imperatives for developing 21st-century competencies. The European Commission's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) emphasizes the critical need for fostering values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge essential for active participation in diverse, democratic societies (Council of Europe, 2018). These competencies, including critical thinking, intercultural dialogue, and collaborative problem-solving, serve as the foundation for effective citizenship in an increasingly interconnected world. The European Commission's recommendations on embedding democratic competencies in foreign language curricula underscore the potential of language education to transcend traditional linguistic boundaries and cultivate global citizenship (European Centre for Modern Languages, 2024).

Existing scholarship demonstrates growing interest in CBL implementation across various educational contexts. Christersson et al. (2022) established theoretical foundations for CBL in higher education, while Gallagher and Savage (2020) provided comprehensive analysis of CBL frameworks across institutions. Leijon et al. (2022) contributed systematic analysis of CBL characteristics and implementation variations in higher education contexts, establishing foundational

understanding of pedagogical dimensions. Van den Beemt et al. (2023) developed the CBL Compass framework, providing a conceptual tool for analysing CBL characteristics within academic curricula and contributing to standardized approaches for implementation and evaluation. However, research specifically addressing CBL applications in EFL contexts remains limited, creating a significant gap in understanding how this pedagogical approach can be effectively implemented to enhance both language proficiency and democratic competencies.

This paper is based on the analysis and synthesis of existing research works – primarily peer-reviewed publications from academic journals, institutional research, and recognized educational organizations published between 2015-2025 – to address this research gap. The study aims to provide a comprehensive framework for CBL implementation in EFL contexts, exploring theoretical foundations, practical applications, and innovative approaches such as digital breakout challenges that can transform traditional language learning paradigms.

# Theoretical foundations of challenge-based learning

Challenge-based learning represents a multifaceted pedagogical framework that engages learners in authentic, real-world problem-solving experiences. Horikoshi (2023) defines CBL as an innovative educational approach that integrates experiential learning with authentic challenges, fostering both academic achievement and personal development. This definition encompasses the fundamental principle that learners actively participate in meaningful contexts that connect academic content with practical applications.

CBL's theoretical foundation rests upon four interconnected learning paradigms:

1. Active learning principles ensure students take responsibility for their knowledge construction through mental processes of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Helker et al., 2025).
2. Experiential learning provides concrete experiences that serve as the foundation for abstract conceptualization through action-reflection cycles (Kolb, 1984).
3. Inquiry-based learning drives knowledge exploration through systematic questioning, progressing from broad concepts to specific investigative challenges.
4. Collaborative learning facilitates multidisciplinary teamwork where educators, students, and community stakeholders function as co-designers of learning experiences (University of Twente, 2024).

The CBL framework operates through three distinct phases that create a comprehensive learning cycle: *Engage*, *Investigate*, and *Act*. Each phase includes specific "checkpoints" or steps that prepare learners to progress meaningfully to the next stage, ensuring both creativity and focus are balanced throughout the learning journey (University of Twente, 2024). The *Engage phase* involves "zooming out" to explore "big Ideas" (broad societal issues and essential questions), then "zooming in" to formulate a concrete and actionable challenge, creating emotional and cognitive background for solving the challenge. During the *Investigate phase*, learners engage deeply with inquiry-based activities through guided questioning and resource exploration, building knowledge while maintaining critical focus. The *Act phase* shifts toward focused decision-making, where learners explore solutions, implement interventions, and reflect on outcomes. This iterative process requires careful moderation to support both exploratory creativity and convergence toward decision-making and action.

Gallagher and Savage (2020) point out that successful instructional design in CBL involves aligning teaching and learning dimensions such as self-directed learning, interdisciplinarity, and authentic assessment, alongside adequate support structures and resources to manage the increased learner autonomy and collaboration demands.

Helker et al. (2025) propose a comprehensive framework for capturing student learning in CBL. Challenge-based learning is described as an interdisciplinary, active learning experience where students collaboratively identify and analyse an open-ended, real-world challenge. Students work in interdisciplinary teams to engage in inquiry and design thinking processes aimed at developing context-responsive solutions. The role of the teacher shifts from traditional instructor to facilitator and coach supporting students in managing their learning process, fostering collaboration, and connecting disciplinary knowledge with real-world applications. Teachers guide reflection, scaffold problem-solving activities, and encourage self-awareness, teamwork, and entrepreneurial mindsets, thereby promoting both disciplinary depth and the development of 21st-century skills. This cyclical process of collaborative inquiry and solution development forms the core of learning within CBL environments.

# CBL implementation in the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language

Recent studies demonstrate emerging interest in CBL applications within foreign language education, though specific EFL research in this field remains limited. Wang and Meng (2024) explored task-based language teaching integration with collaborative inquiry models, revealing how CBL principles enhance language

learning through practical engagement in translation and interpretation programs. Ohki (2024) examined content and language integrated learning approaches, demonstrating how challenge-based methodologies support simultaneous content mastery and language acquisition across diverse educational contexts.

CBL's potential for EFL teaching encompasses both traditional language skills development and 21st-century competencies cultivation. Language skills development occurs through authentic communication opportunities embedded within real-world challenges, requiring integration of reading, writing, listening, and speaking abilities in meaningful contexts. Language proficiency emerges naturally as students engage with complex content and articulate solutions to authentic problems. The democratic competencies develop simultaneously through collaborative learning in teams, critical thinking application in problem-solving contexts, digital literacy integration through technology-enhanced learning environments, and intercultural competence development through stakeholder engagement (Berkane, 2025).

David et al. (2025) propose a CBL framework centred on fostering global competence, which integrates linguistic development with transversal skills essential for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue. Their approach emphasizes three core elements for linguistic competence development:

1. meaningful engagement with complex, real-world global challenges;
2. scaffolded collaborative inquiry supported by iterative feedback loops; and
3. reflection processes that promote metacognition and critical awareness.

Learners negotiate meaning through authentic discourse within diverse teams, simultaneously developing academic language proficiency and pragmatic

competence as they articulate solutions and share their findings. The framework highlights the importance of blended learning modalities enabling multimodal communication and collaboration, which enriches language acquisition beyond traditional classroom boundaries.

Moreover, CBL supports democratic values by fostering critical thinking, intercultural understanding, and responsibility through problem-solving activities linked to societal issues. In instructional design terms, David et al. advocate for structuring language tasks around authentic challenges that require integrated use of all language skills within cooperative, technology-enhanced environments, supported by continuous formative assessment targeting both linguistic accuracy and transversal competences.

Such technology-enhanced CBL-based teaching-learning approach suitable for EFL education includes WebQuests and digital breakout challenges. A WebQuest is an inquiry-based activity that engages students in exploring a specific topic through structured tasks and online resources (Mitrulescu, 2025). A digital breakout challenge is a web-based activity in which students find clues and open locks to solve the challenge. It combines gamification elements with collaborative problem-solving, creating engaging experiences that require communication and creative thinking (Breakout EDU, 2025). These formats prove effective for EFL learners as they provide clear objectives, scaffolded support, and opportunities for meaningful interaction while maintaining high engagement levels through interactive elements and collaborative dynamics that mirror real-world communication contexts.

# Constructing digital breakout challenges for teaching English as a Foreign Language

The consortium of the Erasmus+ project titled "Digitally-Enhanced Foreign Language Education for Active European Citizenship and Democratic Culture" (ENLACED; ref. no: 2024-1-RO01-KA220-HED-000249951) elaborated a framework for developing digital breakout challenges tailored for EFL contexts. This framework is grounded in challenge-based learning theory and aligned with the communicative and intercultural requirements outlined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2020). It emphasizes integrating language skills and democratic competences in a cohesive, scaffolded learning experience. The framework includes the following elements of constructing digital breakouts for EFL context:

1. *Intended Learning Outcomes*: Each challenge begins with clearly articulated intended learning outcomes that integrate both linguistic objectives and democratic competences. These are framed around knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values relevant to the course objectives and RFCDC descriptors. For language skills, learning outcomes include targeted vocabulary, grammar structures, and communication strategies. For democratic competences, learning outcomes focus on common European values, intercultural awareness, critical thinking, and collaborative problem-solving abilities.

2. *Backstory or Narrative*: A compelling narrative or backstory situates the challenge in an immersive and authentic context. It provides essential background information about the setting, key characters, themes, and the social or cultural issues students will explore. The narrative introduces a problem, conflict, or mystery that motivates learners to engage actively with the language in meaningful

ways. Role-play or identity assumption is encouraged to foster empathy and intercultural understanding. Narratives are typically scripted for a short video and supplemented with images or texts to deepen contextualization.

3. *Communicative Challenge*: The core of a digital breakout challenge is the main assignment, modelled as a communicative task embedded in the scenario. This task might take various forms, including project proposals, intercultural communication campaigns, role-plays, reports, debates, or digital storytelling. The challenge requires students to apply integrated language skills within authentic communicative acts and produce tangible outputs such as presentations, media content, or written reports. Scaffolding is provided through materials and instructions tailored to different participant roles within the challenge.

*4. Sequence of Tasks (Locks)*: The communicative challenge is composed of a sequence of interconnected tasks, each representing "locks" that learners must solve to advance. These tasks develop diverse language skills – vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, listening, speaking, and writing – and are designed as engaging puzzles or riddles. The sequence ensures progressive skill-building leading to readiness for the main communicative challenge.

5. *Discussion and Reflection*: Reflection activities are integrated throughout to enable learners to connect language use with democratic competences and intercultural dialogue, consistent with the RFCDC. Reflection prompts emphasize open-ended discussions connecting challenge content and personal learning experiences.

6. *Evaluation and Self-assessment*: Learners are encouraged to perform structured self-assessment of their progress toward the intended learning outcomes. Self-assessment fosters metacognition and learner autonomy by prompting reflection on language proficiency, collaboration, and democratic values development. Formative assessment allows ongoing feedback to guide further learning.

The ENLACED framework's strength lies in its dual focus. Language skills development is scaffolded through systematically sequenced tasks targeting all four skills (reading, listening, speaking, writing) and integrating vocabulary and grammar within meaningful communication. Learners collaborate in authentic situations, reflecting real-world language use and communication patterns. Simultaneously, democratic competences are developed through tasks requiring negotiation, perspective-taking, and problem-solving in diverse contexts. The narrative and reflection components ensure learners internalize these values and attitudes as intrinsic outcomes of the language learning process.

Designing digital breakout challenges following this framework enables EFL educators to create immersive, active learning experiences that equip learners not only with language proficiency but also with competences vital for active European citizenship and democratic culture.

# Conclusion

This study reveals that challenge-based learning offers significant potential for transforming EFL education by integrating language skills development with 21st-century competencies essential for democratic participation. The theoretical foundations demonstrate CBL's capacity to create authentic learning

experiences that foster both linguistic proficiency and transversal competencies outlined in the RFCDC framework. Evidence suggests that CBL implementation in EFL contexts can effectively address contemporary educational imperatives while maintaining engagement through meaningful, collaborative problem-solving experiences.

Digital breakout challenges emerge as particularly promising applications for tertiary EFL education, providing structured frameworks that combine gamification with authentic communication needs. However, significant research gaps remain regarding assessment methodologies, teacher preparation programs, and long-term impact evaluation of CBL approaches in diverse EFL contexts.

Future research should focus on developing validated assessment tools that measure both linguistic and democratic competencies, investigating teacher professional development needs for effective CBL implementation, and conducting longitudinal studies examining sustained impact on learner outcomes. Cross-cultural research exploring CBL adaptation across different educational systems and cultural contexts would further enhance understanding of this pedagogical approach's global applicability and effectiveness.

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# Motivating EFL learners through extensive reading activities

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## Abstract

The article describes a classroom experiment conducted at Yoan Ekzarh Balgarski Secondary School, Shumen, Bulgaria. It explores the role of extensive reading in motivating EFL learners and enhancing their language skills. Drawing on expert views in language teaching on extensive reading, the project engaged eighth-grade students with graded readers and interactive activities. Survey results revealed high student interest, increased confidence, and improved motivation to read in English both in and outside the classroom, confirming the positive impact of such initiatives.

**Key words:** *extensive reading, EFL learners, graded readers, learner motivation, reading comprehension*

# Introduction

Learners' motivation and engagement have long been recognized as key factors in successful language acquisition. Without sustained motivation, learners often struggle to engage meaningfully with English as a foreign language (EFL), particularly in reading. Traditional classroom reading, often dominated by intensive, textbook-based approaches, may not always encourage students to see reading as an enjoyable activity. Extensive reading (ER), however, offers an alternative path, since it "involves each learner independently and silently reading lots of material which is at the right level for them", and encourages students to read for meaning rather than for linguistic analysis (Nation & Waring, 2020: 4).

Extensive reading has a number of benefits for learners as it encourages them to engage with texts beyond the limitations of the curriculum, supporting vocabulary growth, reading comprehension, and overall language proficiency (Day & Bamford, 1998; Nation, 2009). However, it often remains underutilized in traditional classroom settings, where teaching is traditionally heavily focused on curriculum coverage. Bulgarian classrooms are no exception, as teaching is often exam-focused or time-constrained. Integrating extensive reading into everyday practice seems almost impossible in this context. Yet, as this project demonstrates, it is both possible and rewarding.

This article presents a classroom experiment carried out with eighth-grade students at Yoan Ekzarh Balgarski Secondary School in Shumen, Bulgaria. Over the course of the 2024/2025 school year, students engaged with two graded readers – *The Canterville Ghost* and *The Prince and the Pauper* – through weekly "Friday reading" sessions supported by a variety of interactive activities. At the end of

the project, a survey was conducted to collect student feedback on their experiences, attitudes, and perceived language gains. The results reveal both the linguistic benefits of extensive reading and its potential to enhance motivation, confidence, and enjoyment in the EFL classroom.

# Theoretical background

A common distinction in reading instruction is between *intensive reading*, generally performed and supervised in the classroom, and *extensive reading*, most often done independently. Jeremy Harmer (2007) points out that extensive reading "suggests reading at length, often for pleasure and in a leisurely way". Extensive reading is generally considered more relaxed and less demanding than intensive reading and it often happens outside the structured classroom environment. It is regarded as an effective approach to developing reading skills, especially when the reading materials are appropriate for the learner's language level (Harmer, 2007: 273).

Day and Bamford (1998; see also Day & Bamford, 2002) imply that extensive reading in EFL contexts emphasizes reading large amounts of comprehensible text for general understanding, rather than focusing on language analysis or assessment. They outline a list of characteristic features of the extensive reading approach and successful reading programmes. Regarding students, they should read as much as possible, have access to various materials on different topics, and be allowed to select what to read. Reading should be done primarily for pleasure, information, and general understanding. Ideally, reading should be "its own reward" (followed by few or no post-reading activities). Regarding the reading material, it should be within learners' language level in terms of grammar

and vocabulary, requiring minimal dictionary use. Reading should be silent, individual, and relatively fast. Regarding teachers, they should act as facilitators and mentors, guiding learners through the programme and serving as role models of readers (Day & Bamford, 1998: 8).

Similarly, Nation and Waring (2020) note that the success of an extensive reading programme depends on meeting a set of carefully balanced conditions. Firstly, texts should be "at the right level," containing predominantly familiar grammar and no more than 2% unfamiliar vocabulary. This ensures that learners can read fluently while still encountering and acquiring new items naturally. Secondly, students should be able to "read with comprehension", requiring little or no dictionary use. Comprehension not only supports incidental vocabulary learning but also sustains motivation, as learners are more likely to enjoy what they understand. Thirdly, learners must read a large quantity of material, amounting to hundreds of thousands of words over time. This sustained exposure to comprehensible input is what drives vocabulary growth, fluency, and overall language development. Fourthly, extensive reading should be carried out independently, with learners typically choosing different books according to their own interests and proficiency levels. Such autonomy is crucial for fostering motivation and engagement. Finally, reading should be done silently, since silent reading is faster than reading aloud and mirrors authentic reading practices, allowing learners to process language more efficiently (Nation & Waring, 2020: 4).

Nation (2009) provides guidelines for helping learners progress systematically through graded reader levels to enhance vocabulary acquisition and reading fluency. Research by Nation and Wang (as cited in Nation, 2009) suggests that learners should read at least one graded reader per week, complete multiple

books at each level before advancing, and read more books at later levels where earlier vocabulary frequently recurs. Ideally, learners should read 15 – 30 books per year to ensure sufficient vocabulary repetition, while early-level vocabulary may require additional study or dictionary use. While structured progression is recommended, Nation notes that learners often choose books based on interest rather than level, which "does not matter too much as long as plenty of enjoyable reading is done" (Nation, 2009: 56). Effective programmes should include both a fluency strand, with easy texts read quickly, and a meaning-focused strand, with texts at around 98% comprehension. Occasional exposure to more challenging texts can support language-focused learning. Nation also acknowledges the teacher's role in monitoring learners' progress, supporting slower or reluctant readers, and integrating reading into class time until students develop independent, motivated reading habits.

Integrating these principles into classroom practice requires careful selection of texts, scaffolding through pre-, while- and post-reading activities, and opportunities for discussion and collaboration. Digital resources, including interactive platforms and multimedia adaptations, can further enhance comprehension and engagement by providing flexible and multimodal input. This theoretical framework informed the design of the "Friday reading" sessions at Yoan Ekzarh Balgarski Secondary School, which aimed to combine extensive reading with enjoyable, interactive, and student-centered activities.

# Classroom experiment

The experiment was conducted during the 2024/2025 school year at Yoan Ekzarh Balgarski Secondary School in Shumen and involved 26 students from an innovative eighth-grade class. These students followed an intensive English programme, comprising 18 lessons per week, supplemented by an additional elective session. This extra lesson, held every Friday immediately after a regular English class, provided the foundation for a "Friday reading" tradition. To create a distinctive and engaging environment, students often arranged their chairs in a circle, an arrangement they reported as more enjoyable and different from the usual classroom setup. The students' parents supported the initiative by purchasing graded readers as supplementary materials. Selection of the titles was carried out collaboratively with the students, as their personal interest and engagement were considered essential for the success of the reading programme.

During the first term, the class worked with *The Canterville Ghost* by Oscar Wilde, retold by Virginia Evans and Jenny Dooley (Express Publishing). The graded reader consists of ten chapters, each accompanied by pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities. A distinctive advantage of this material was that it was fully digitalized: it was available in interactive whiteboard format and on an online platform, and each chapter had a short animated film version closely following the text (Fig. 1). This gave students the opportunity to consolidate their understanding by revising vocabulary, either by watching the animations or by using subtitles for additional reading support.

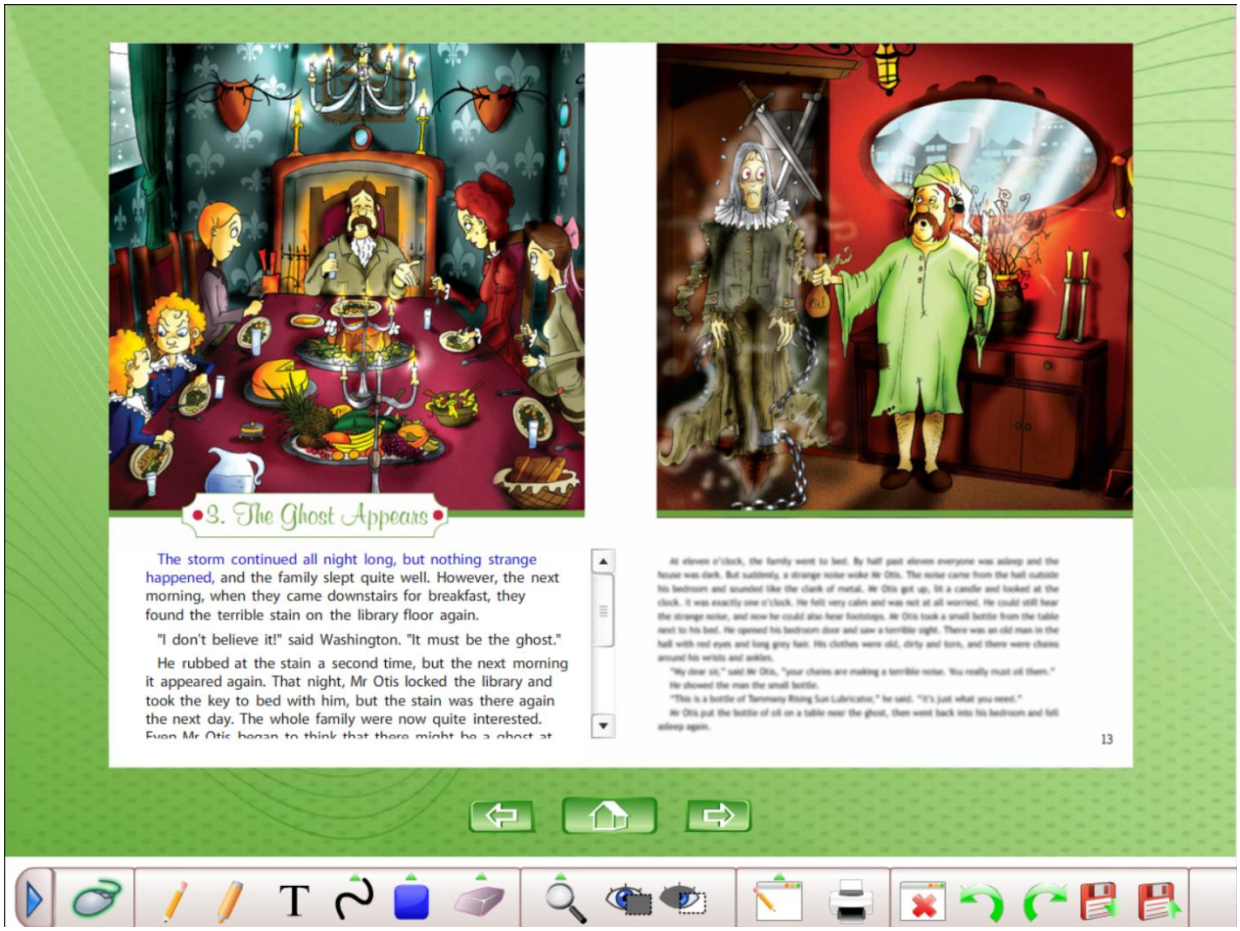


**Figure 1.** Sample pages from the interactive whiteboard version of *The Canterville Ghost* with read-aloud highlighting.

Different approaches were applied across the chapters. In some lessons, the book was used for intensive reading: students completed the full sequence of pre-, while-, and post-reading tasks (Fig. 2). In other cases, students first read silently and then engaged in group discussions. On several occasions, oral reading was used, typically in the form of chain reading, which allowed learners to practice pronunciation and maintain focus as they anticipated their turn. Student engagement with the story increased steadily, and at the climax of the plot, they were so eager to continue reading that they asked to skip the activities in order to find out what would happen next.

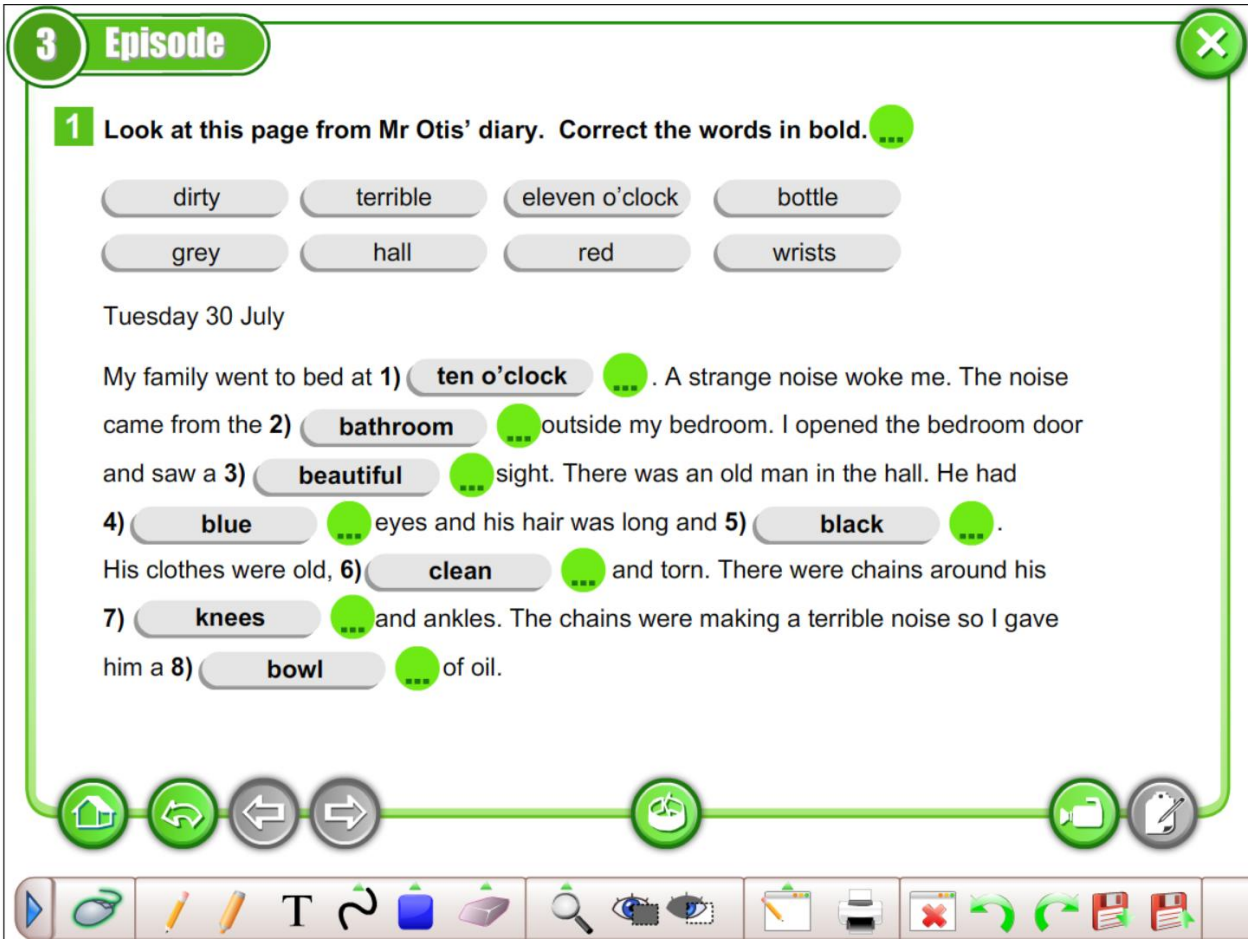


**Figure 2.** Post-reading interactive activity on the whiteboard, illustrating one of the approaches used to engage students after reading.

On 15 November 2024, which happened to be a Friday, the class also took part in the national Reading Day campaign. On that occasion, students devoted all four English lessons of the day to reading, which reinforced the special status of the "Friday reading" tradition and strengthened students' sense of belonging to a community of readers (Fig. 3).

**Figure 3.** "Friday reading" session on Reading Day, with students participating in collaborative reading activities in the classroom.

During the second term, the students worked with another classic story – *The Prince and the Pauper* by Mark Twain, retold by Virginia Evans and Jenny Dooley (Express Publishing). The novel had already been studied in Bulgarian translation as part of their Bulgarian language and literature curriculum in sixth grade, so students were familiar with the plot and characters. This prior experience allowed them to build on their literary knowledge while transferring it into English. In discussions, they revisited concepts previously explored in literature lessons, such as analyzing characters' actions and development in the plot, explaining their motivations, and interpreting the significance of character traits. As each student had a personal copy of the graded reader, they also had access to the digital version through the publisher's online platform (www.expressdigibooks.com). This provided additional flexibility, enabling them to

continue reading outside the classroom and allowing the teacher to assign follow-up tasks as homework directly through the platform.

# Results and Discussion

At the end of the school year, after completing both graded readers, a survey was conducted among the 26 participating students to gather their feedback on the reading activities and their perceived impact on learning English. The results provided strong evidence of the positive influence of extensive reading on motivation, confidence, and language development.

**Interest and engagement**. A clear majority of students (21 out of 26, or 81%) reported being "very interested" in the two graded readers (*The Canterville Ghost* and *The Prince and the Pauper*). Four students (15%) said they were "somewhat interested", and only one student (4%) indicated low interest. These findings confirm that the careful selection of accessible yet engaging stories can successfully capture learners' attention, as highlighted by Day and Bamford (1998), who emphasize the importance of choosing materials that are both interesting and comprehensible.

**Understanding and enjoyment.** Almost all respondents (23 out of 26, or 88%) stated that the reading activities (chain reading, translation, vocabulary tasks, animations, interactive board activities) helped them understand the stories "very much." Similarly, 20 students (77%) agreed that these activities made English lessons "definitely" more enjoyable, while a smaller group (6 students, 23%) said they made lessons "a little bit" more enjoyable. This demonstrates that

when extensive reading is combined with supportive classroom practices, learners perceive it as both effective and pleasurable.

**Language development.** Students reported progress in multiple areas of English. The most frequently mentioned were vocabulary (mentioned by 23 students, 88,5%) and reading comprehension (22 students, 84,6%). Many also reported improvement in speaking (19 students, 73%), grammar (11 students, 42%), and listening (9 students, 34,6%), while writing was mentioned less often but still by several students (Fig. 4). These self-reported gains echo the well-documented benefits of extensive reading for vocabulary growth (Nation, 2009) and overall language proficiency (Day & Bamford, 2002).

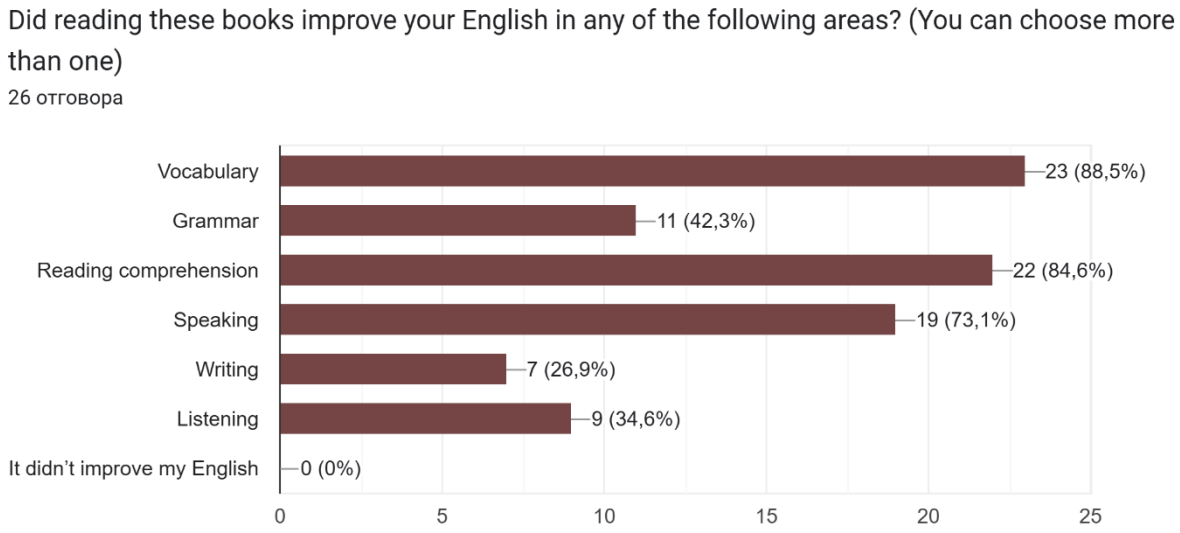


**Figure 4**. Students' self-reported areas of improvement following the extensive reading programme.

**Motivation and confidence.** Fourteen students (54%) stated that they felt much more motivated to read in English as a result of the project. Seven students (27%) reported feeling a little more motivated, while five (19%) said their motivation stayed the same. Importantly, no student reported decreased

motivation. In terms of confidence, 18 students (69%) reported feeling much more confident when reading independently in English, while another 5 (19%) felt a little more confident. Three students (12%) felt their confidence remained unchanged. This outcome illustrates how extensive reading can reduce anxiety and build learner autonomy.

**Transfer beyond the classroom.** When asked about the likelihood of reading in English outside the classroom, 12 students (46%) answered “very likely”, another 10 (38,5%) said “somewhat likely”, 4 (15,5%) were “not very likely”. While not all are ready to transfer reading habits outside school, the overall trend is encouraging and points toward the gradual development of independent reading practices.

**Sustainability of the project.** Almost all students (21 out of 26, or 80,8%) responded “Yes, definitely” when asked whether they would like to participate in a similar reading project next year. Five students (19,2%) were less certain and selected “Maybe”. None rejected the idea. This result demonstrates that extensive reading was not only a successful short-term initiative but also one with strong potential for long-term implementation.

**Preferred genres.** Students expressed clear preferences for mysteries or detective stories (20 students, 76,9%), adventures (18 students, 69,2%), and fantasy or science fiction (12 students, 46,2%). Some also expressed interest in real-life stories (11 students, 42,3%) and classic literature (6 students, 23,1%). This feedback provides valuable guidance for selecting future reading materials that balance student interest with curricular goals.

**Student voices.** The open-ended responses reinforce the quantitative data. Students described the extensive reading practice as a more interesting, more enjoyable, and less stressful way to study. One student commented: “These reading activities made learning English more enjoyable and less stressful. They helped me improve my vocabulary and feel more confident when reading and understanding texts.” Another wrote: “Reading made English feel less like a school subject and more like something fun.” Such authentic reflections highlight the motivational and affective benefits of the project.

**Discussion.** Taken together, the findings suggest that the integration of extensive reading into the EFL classroom not only supports linguistic development but also enhances learner motivation and confidence. The overwhelmingly positive attitudes expressed by students confirm that extensive reading can transform reading from a routine academic task into a source of enjoyment and personal growth. These results align closely with established research (Day & Bamford, 1998; Nation, 2009), while also demonstrating the value of contextualizing extensive reading within local curricula and traditions – such as the “Friday reading” sessions and participation in the national Reading Day campaign.

# Conclusion

The classroom experiment conducted at Yoan Ekzarh Balgarski Secondary School demonstrates that extensive reading can enhance both motivation and language development in EFL learners. Students showed improvement in vocabulary, reading comprehension, and other language skills, while also gaining confidence and enjoyment in reading English. The use of digital resources, collaborative book selection, and supportive classroom practices contributed to high

levels of engagement. Although some students may still need encouragement to continue reading independently outside school, the overwhelmingly positive responses indicate that such initiatives are sustainable and can be integrated into regular curricula. Future implementations should consider student genre preferences and provide flexible, enjoyable reading opportunities to further promote learner autonomy and lifelong reading habits.

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# My Bulgarian adventure

**Ivana Devčić**

**Ivana Devčić** is an English teacher with over 20 years of experience in primary education. She is an active member of HUPE Croatia. She had the honour of representing HUPE at ELTA Albania and has delivered workshops at IATEFL Slovenia, IATEFL Edinburgh, TESOL Hungary, BETA Bulgaria, and several regional and national conferences.

I embarked on this adventure because my proposal for the **32nd BETA Annual International Conference 2025 was accepted. It was** a wonderful opportunity to share my work and connect with educators from around the world. I was especially excited because I had never been to Sofia and there was a direct flight. For the last two years, I have visited conferences in Albania, Scotland, Slovenia, and Hungary. And I enjoyed all of them, and I guess when you start travelling, you can never get enough of it.

But my Bulgarian adventure started more like a nightmare. The night before our flight, my husband and I attempted to check in online, but the system claimed we hadn't paid—although we had. He stayed up all night trying to resolve the

issue and finally managed to fix it early in the morning via Ryanair's chat support. He immediately checked me in for the return flight, too, just to be safe.

# Day 1

After finishing my morning shift, I headed to the airport. My flight was scheduled for 14:20. The weather was a mix of fog and sunshine. I was surprised by how full the plane was. I had good company—a lovely lady on a weekend trip sat next to me.

We landed in Sofia at 15:20 local time, which is 16:20 Bulgarian time. I took the subway to G.M. Dimitrov station, then bus 280 to Student Town. The bus ticket cost 2.40 lev (about €1.20), and the subway ticket was 1.60 lev (around €0.80). The first bus closed its doors right in front of me, but luckily another one arrived a minute later. Google Maps wasn't working, so I had to rely on the old-fashioned method—asking for directions. Thankfully, some student passengers kindly explained where I needed to get off. As I was leaving the bus, another student helped me with directions to my apartment.

I arrived at the right spot, but since I couldn't read Cyrillic, I had trouble finding the exact building. After exchanging a few WhatsApp messages with the owner, I finally managed to get inside. The apartment was on the fourth floor—small but well-equipped, with a washing machine and a little balcony perfect for one smoker.

After catching up with family over the phone, I headed to the store. As I walked down the street, the sun suddenly lit up the Lidl sign like a beacon. I bought

bread, bananas, nuts, juice, paper towels, fresh cheese, salami, and vegetable lasagna—all for 40 lev (about €20). Then it was dinner, a shower, and sleep. Tomorrow, the adventure would continue.

# Day 2

I arrived at WNUE at 9:00 for registration and found the building without any trouble. Like a true teacher, I immediately bought three books for lower grades — 17 lev (around €9).

We were welcomed by the president of the society, the university dean, and a professor from the foreign languages department. The conference hosted representatives from 12 countries, including Croatia, Serbia, North Macedonia, Azerbaijan, Mexico, Poland, Turkey, Russia, and Ukraine.
One of the highlights was meeting my eTwinning friend Nadezda from Plovdiv in person for the first time.

From the first day, I'd recommend Rob Howard's lecture on the impact of AI on students and teachers. Barbara Hranjilec shared wonderful activities to support students' mental health. Alexandra Popovski spoke about the importance of mediation, especially across cultures. And Aleksandra Jevtović offered inspiring ideas for incorporating poetry into lessons.

After the workshops and talks, we enjoyed a cocktail party with live Bulgarian traditional music performed by musicians in traditional attire. There was even a raffle—I won a beautiful cloth bag designed especially for teachers!

To end the evening, I had the wild idea to walk an hour and a half to the town centre. I did it, but it wasn't the best decision the night before my own presentation. I ended up with blisters under my toes. Still, despite the darkness and unfamiliar streets, I felt safe.

# Day 3

I woke up at 7:00, had breakfast, and got ready for my workshop at 10:00. Before me, a university professor, Svetlana Dimitrova-Gyuzeleva, gave a beautiful lecture. My workshop started on time, and the participants were very engaged—we had a lot of fun!

Afterward, I had to head to the airport. I felt sad to leave; I truly felt at home. I asked some students for directions, and they were incredibly friendly. At the bus station, I met a kind young man who explained everything and even helped me carry my bags. He got off a few stops before me, but my station was the last one—Terminal 2. If you're flying from Terminal 1, you'd need to take a bus.
I arrived at the airport at 12:30. Since I had already checked in, I went straight to departures. After security, I spent the rest of my Bulgarian lev. Magnets were surprisingly expensive—€4–6. I bought an ashtray for my husband (20 lev), rose soap (4.89 lev), water, and a Snickers (about 7 levs).

The plane took off at 15:19. I returned home full of wonderful impressions. I'm so glad I chose to attend the Bulgarian conference. I met so many amazing people and felt truly comfortable in the warm and welcoming atmosphere.

I wholeheartedly recommend the BETA Annual International Conference to every educator—it's a truly enriching experience filled with inspiring talks, warm hospitality, and meaningful connections.

# Forthcoming events in the world of ELT

• **SCELT & The Bridge Forum Conference**, 6-7 February, 2026, Bratislava, Slovakia

https://www.scelt.sk/scelt-bridge-forum-2026

• **21st ATECR International Conference:** ***Modern Approaches to English Teaching and Learning*****,** 21 March, 2026, Prague, Czechia

http://www.atecr.com

• **59th IATEFL International Conference**, 21-24 April, 2026, Brighton, England, UK

https://sites.google.com/view/iateflinternationalconference2/about-the-conference/past-future-conferences

• **7th TESOL Türkiye International ELT Conference**, 15-16 May, 2026, TED Bodrum College, Muğla, Türkiye

https://tesolturkey.net/announcement/109/7th-tesol-turkiye-international-elt-conference

• **24th ELTA Serbia International Conference**, 15-16 May, 2026, Belgrade, Serbia

https://elta.org.rs/2025/10/29/2026-elta-conference/

You can also visit the following links to keep yourself posted. Events organised by our partners take precedence.

https://www.beta-iatefl.org/conferences/

https://mauricioarango.wordpress.com/upcoming-events/comment-page-1/

# Author guidelines

**If you feel you have something you would like to share:**

• Send us your *paper in MS Word format* together with a *photo of you* (in jpeg format) and a *short bio note* (of about 50 words).

• Your paper must not have been previously published and must not be under consideration for publication elsewhere.

• The length of your paper may vary: short contributions of 300 – 800 words are as good as long ones.

• Consult the *Call for Contributions* to keep yourself posted regarding deadlines and additional information.

• Pay attention to the fact that the formatting requirements have been changed so as to facilitate the preparation of your contributions.

**Please format your materials including references, if applicable, by following the instructions below**:

**TEXT**

**Page margins:** normal (2.54 cm on all sides)

**Headline and headings:** Calibri 24, bold, centred, with only the first word and proper nouns capitalised

**Main text:** Calibri 14, justified, line spacing 1.5

**New paragraph:** no indentation, leave one blank line between paragraphs and activate the option do not add space between paragraphs of the same style

**In text citations:** According to Chomsky & Hale (1968: 23) '……'

**Tables, figures, and diagrams:** should be numbered accordingly and included in the relevant part of the text; each should have an explanatory caption.

**Page numbers:** Do not number pages.

## REFERENCES

**Book:** Blevins, J. 2004. *Evolutionary phonology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Paper in a journal:** Casali, R. F. 1998. Predicting ATR activity. *Chicago Linguistic Society* 34(1). 55-68.

**Paper in conference proceedings, anthology of papers, or book chapter:** McCarthy, J. & A. S. Prince. 1999. Prosodic morphology. In J. A. Goldsmith (ed.), *Phonological theory: The essential readings*, 238-288. Malden, MA & Oxford: Blackwell.

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**Established 1991 in Sofia, BETA seeks to build a network of ELT professionals on a national and regional (Southeast Europe) level and establish the association as a recognized mediator between educators and state bodies, public and other organizations.**

**BETA members are English teaching professionals from all educational sectors in Bulgaria – primary, secondary and tertiary, both state and private. BETA activities include organizing annual conferences, regional seminars and workshops; information dissemination; networking with other teachers' associations and NGOs in Bulgaria and abroad; exchange of representatives with teachers' associations from abroad.**

**We are on the web:**

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