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Effectiveness of project-based learning model with English language in higher education: A practical case in the Degree of Tourism

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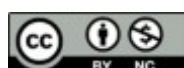
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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the implementation and impact of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in teaching English for Tourism in the Degree of Tourism at the University of A Coruña (Spain). Recognizing the growing importance of English proficiency in the flourishing Spanish tourism industry, this study aimed to enhance students' language skills and engage them in meaningful learning experiences. The results indicate that students exhibited high motivation and interest in PBL, showcasing the practical relevance of theoretical knowledge to their future careers. By adopting this innovative teaching approach, students not only improved their English fluency but also acquired crucial skills for the tourism sector. The research underscores the effectiveness of PBL with first-year students, demonstrating their ability to successfully complete 12-week projects that integrated practical application of course content and language acquisition. This study advocates for the continued use of PBL in foreign language education to bridge the gap between theoretical learning and real-world applications.

Keywords: *English for Tourism; English for Specific Purposes (ESP); project-based learning; language proficiency; intercultural communication.*



I. INTRODUCTION

English language and the tourism sector are closely related in international communication as this language enables tourists from diverse linguistic backgrounds to communicate effectively. Students enrolled in the degree of Tourism in general, and in Spain in particular, are conscious of this and know that mastering this language is essential and even more so in the Spanish tourism sector for different compelling reasons.

After the impact caused by the pandemic on tourism, which led to a 74% drop in demand according to the United Nations World Trade Organisation (UNWTO, 2021), this sector continues to experience substantial growth all over the world including Spain, reaching figures which are close to the records set in the year 2019, before the global health crisis lived. This recovery shows that tourism, one of the most affected sectors, has proven to be resilient and able to rebound despite being highly sensitive to risk scenarios as seen during the worldwide lockdown. Crises within this sector are not new and it could be stated that they are frequent, and this reality has led to the development of strategies that have forced a severe reconfiguration of many of its segments (Gössling et al., 2020; Collins-Kreiner & Ram, 2021).

In line with this continuous evolution of the tourism industry, effective communication in English has become crucial for various stakeholders, including tourists, hospitality professionals, and tourism businesses. English has emerged as the language of tourism, facilitating interactions and operations across the global tourism sector (McIntyre, 2009). Speaking English to enhance customer experiences, facilitating intercultural communication, and improving overall service quality within the Spanish tourism context has become increasingly vital for success within this sector. Numerous reasons explain why English language proficiency is of utmost importance in the Spanish tourism industry, causing a direct impact on customer satisfaction, professional development, and industry growth.

Considering this context, English language in the degree of Tourism in Spain is compulsory and the courses are designed to help future professionals as it is a basic

tool within the tourism and hospitality industry. In contrast to this reality, there is an underlying problem that reveals that throughout history the teaching and learning of languages in this country has not been particularly characterized by good results nor received the importance they deserved as was the case of the English language until the 1970s (Criado & Sánchez, 2009).

Fortunately, the teaching of languages in Spain has been highly improved and adjusted to European requirements after the different regulations and new laws on education. The application of the Communicative Language Teaching Method (CLT), with the support of the Council of Europe, was introduced officially in the last part of the 20th century. However, the reality shows that the level students reach in the English language at the end of secondary school is not uniform. In addition, the teaching methodology keeps being focused on principles that do not conform to CLT, and in some cases, the communicative skills are not developed (Cerezo, 2007).

Project-based learning (PBL) seems to be an instructional approach that allows Spanish students the opportunity to learn and use English focusing on communicative purposes applying the theory learned (content learning) during the course through the integration of tasks that can be applied to real-life situations of the tourism sector as it is product-as well as process-oriented (Stoller, 2002). PBL activities motivate students while making them use language skills collaboratively and empower them to build their confidence in the English language. It could be stated that PBL makes the students see that the learning and the use of the English language become both the means and the end (Simpson, 2011).

The next sections develop the aspects just mentioned, examine the existing literature, and describe the different stages of the project applying PBL. This research contributes to the validity of PBL in teaching English as a second foreign language, particularly for students studying a degree in Tourism.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Project-based learning is an instructional approach that emphasizes active and authentic learning experiences through the completion of projects. Its description cannot be assigned to a unique definition but, after reviewing the literature, there is an agreement to be described as centred on the learner (Bas, 2012). This flexible pedagogical method encourages students to explore complex problems, collaborate with their peers and apply critical thinking skills to solve real-world challenges. This approach, highly implemented in recent years by many researchers (Barron et al., 1998; Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Grant, 2011), engages learners in a deeper understanding of the subject matter while developing important skills such as problem-solving, communication and teamwork.

PBL involves transversality, integrating different disciplines, and often requires students to work in groups. The duration of the projects can range from long-term assignments with interim reports and tasks to short-term as well as in-depth investigations that allow students to delve into a topic and develop a comprehensive understanding.

Previous studies on this type of learning have shown numerous benefits of implementing PBL in educational settings. It enhances student engagement and motivation by presenting them with meaningful and relevant tasks (Tirado-Morueta et al., 2022). The selection of contents and exercises that can be encountered in a real professional environment helps the students to see the direct application of their knowledge, which increases their interest and investment in the learning process (Brown et al., 1989). Additionally, PBL promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills as students analyse information, make connections, and propose creative solutions (Johnson & Johnson, 2013; Maros et al. 2023). Furthermore, the collaborative nature of PBL fosters communication and teamwork abilities, which are vital in today's interconnected world (Jaya & Mortini, 2023). Different studies have demonstrated the positive impact of PBL on student achievement. For example, a meta-analysis conducted by Bell (2010) examined 43 studies and found that PBL resulted in

significantly higher achievement test scores than traditional instructional methods. Another study, conducted by Helle et al. (2007), compared students' performance between a PBL environment and a lecture-based setting, revealing that the PBL group exhibited superior understanding and application of concepts compared to the lecture group. In 2004, a previous study published by Kloppenborg and Baucus stated the validity of projects as thanks to them students are more interested in learning as they combine social skills, teamwork, communications skills, and awareness of the requirements for their future jobs.

All these positive aspects have led to the application of PBL to improve foreign language learning of English in university studies in tourism.

II.1. Project-based learning (PBL) to teach English as a foreign language in higher education: the case of English for Tourism at the University of A Coruña

The traditional learning process of the English language in Spanish classrooms has historically been characterised by a teacher-centred system rather than a student-centred method. In line with this traditional approach, teachers used to be mainly senders of theoretical content and students became passive recipients who learned a wide variety of grammatical rules instead of using language for communicative purposes. Nevertheless, this teaching approach is progressively less frequent these days albeit many secondary schools continue practicing this methodology and most first-year university students present an uneven language proficiency, conditioned by the type of instruction received.

Fortunately, this teacher-oriented approach has evolved into a more learner-centred perspective to enhance students' motivation, linguistic confidence, and autonomy. The communicative language teaching approach (CLT), whose aim is language use to improve second language acquisition and engage the learner in different social contexts and active classroom activities (Johnson, 1995; Boyd & Maloof, 2000), is one of the approaches applied in some Spanish secondary schools and the students who were taught following this type of learning show a higher confidence at university.

To cope with this generalised situation, two approaches were chosen to teach English to first-year students in the degree of Tourism at the UDC: PBL combined with CLT, which is also connected to PBL. After the adaptation of this learning model to teach foreign languages (Krashen, 1982) and prove that this systematic methodology helps students to develop their skills when learning a language (Ribé & Vidal, 1993) as well as their soft skills, such as collaborative work, critical thinking and communicative skills (Karyawati & Ashadi, 2018), different projects have been developed using PBL in English as Foreign Language classes (EFL) (Hutchinson, 1996; Fragoulis & Tsiplakides, 2009; Liu, 2016; Poonpon, 2017; Syakur et al., 2020) since then.

This study exemplifies the primary motivation to apply this method: to provide students with a more practical, effective, and meaningful approach to learning English, specifically in the field of tourism. One of the course objectives was to change the focus: a less dominant teacher who becomes a co-communicator, a transmitter, and a more passive element in the learning process whilst the student becomes an expert who controls the content and their learning. The students made their own decisions choosing one of the activities offered and had to apply the course contents given in class.

The idea behind this change of roles is mainly that these students experienced firsthand how-to-learn skills and language skills (Nunan, 1989). In addition to this, in PBL teachers play a great role, which differs completely from the traditional one, as they are assistants who help students find their learning journey (Newell, 2003) and, at the same time, become advisors who monitor the process and help their students solve problems during the different stages of the project.

The subject chosen to apply this project-based learning was Modern Language: English, a core course in the first year of the degree. This course is an introduction to English for tourism, designed to help students acquire specialized vocabulary in the tourism industry. The main content focuses on cultural heritage, tourism history, gastronomy and itineraries. The course also aims to build confidence in professional skills, including making presentations, creating tourist routes and brochures, describing monuments and sites of interest and learning public speaking to work as a tour guide.

The course is always taught during the first semester of the academic year, from September to December. Regarding the number of weeks, it usually lasts between 12-14 weeks, depending on holidays, and the content is divided into four units, designed to be taught for three weeks each.

The criteria determined to assess the course include a variety of methods that allow the teacher to test the individual and group learning of each student, given the collaborative ethos of the subject. The grading of the course relies on the following scores: all students must pass a written examination which represents 50% of the overall assessment, the group project which accounts for 20% and two speaking examinations, which are part of the project presentations and the discussions during the interim report presentations, which are 30% of the total.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

English language is included in Spanish education from pre-school (3 years-old children) until the end of high school (17-18 years-old students). After fifteen years of studying English, students should have a high proficiency in this language when starting at the university. In contrast, the reality could hardly be more different as university teachers must begin going back to the basics, reviewing grammar and pronunciation, teaching them how to speak in public and make presentations instead of proceeding directly to more academic content. One of the main problems lies in the focus, which has traditionally been on grammar and vocabulary rather than practical communication skills. Insufficient emphasis on speaking and listening skills, limited exposure to authentic English materials, absence of frequent direct contact with native speakers and large class sizes have hindered language acquisition (Neff et al., 2009). Furthermore, the limited number of weekly English classes and the lack of continuous practice opportunities outside the classroom impede the development of fluency and confidence in using the English language.

With this context in mind, the present study aims to apply PBL and answer how effective this method is in implementing the English language learning process for

students in the degree of Tourism. To encourage these students of English to apply the knowledge of their specific field acquired during the course and their language skills, this research wanted to prove if PBL could help to achieve the following primary objectives:

- Improving both oral and written levels of English of students.
- Improving students' communicative skills

Along with these primary objectives, a secondary objective that is directly interconnected to them was established: avoiding the usage of their mother tongue when working together to prepare the final project.

III.1. Participants: The Teacher and the Student's Role in PBL

In this PBL experience the teacher's role suffered a substantial change with this methodology from the traditional one and the students were informed about this difference from the first moment. This is one of the requirements of PBL to be effective (Levy, 1997) so the teacher became a new figure in charge of coordinating, guiding, and advising the students once the groups were organised and began to develop the first activity. In this case, once the students were informed about the change in the learning process, which was quite surprising for them, the content and the distinct stages of the activity were explained.

At the student level, they saw their involvement was completely active as they had to make decisions and be part of a group, working collaboratively, from the beginning. This required a high level of commitment from the first week of the project.

The activity included the official number of students enrolled during the first semester of the academic year 2022-2023 which was 60 although 52 were the ones who finally took part in the projects, as some of them had the subject validated or were repeaters who were not able to attend the classes. The students' ages ranged from 18 to 20 years old and all of them had studied English subjects stated in the curriculum in their primary and secondary schools. Their level was not homogeneous as proficiency in

English is not required and, although those coming from secondary school should have achieved a B2 level, the differences were remarkable.¹

Regarding their distribution, the students were divided into two classes to attend the sessions during the week. In this case, the students were required to work in groups of five, so the total number was 8 with 5 members and 2 with 6 students. There was not a fixed leader to represent each group as they were asked to assume this role on a rotational basis so they could live this experience equally.

III. 2. Project procedure: PBL content and stages of the project work

The procedure followed was to present the students the opportunity to develop a project as part of their final assessment to pass the subject at the end of the semester and apply the content learned during the weeks that the course lasted.

The first week was devoted to the explanation of the course content and the revision of basic aspects of the English language. During the second week, the students received the necessary information about the project development, its description, and the rubric to assess the student's work.

Following Bell (2010), the students have to receive a topic to be developed through either project work or research and the learning process can be either individual or in groups. In both cases, students are overseen and monitored by a teacher during the stages of the project to guide the students. In this case, the students were informed they had to work in groups, and they had to choose among four different projects focused on the promotion of the autonomous region of Galicia² as a tourist destination:

1 Students in Spain who want to enter a Spanish public university are required a secondary school diploma as well as have passed a group of entry exams, known as *Selectividad*, among which there is a foreign language test. The language most students choose is English, and although the level achieved is usually B2, the differences between rural and urban areas are highly notorious (Neff et al., 2009).

2 Galicia, in the north-west of Spain, has achieved a leadership position in the tourism sector in the last two decades as an important tourist destination partly due to pilgrimage routes to Santiago (Saint James Way), its gastronomy and its incredible nature (Santos & Trillo-Santamaría, 2017), promoted by rural tourism highly in demand, mainly after Covid 19 pandemic (Araújo-Vi-

- Design of a travel brochure.
- Creation of a promotional video.
- Creation of a gastronomy blog to promote Galician cuisine.
- Creation of a three-day tour in A Coruña city or a week tour around the region of Galicia

During weeks three and four, there was a general introduction to basic vocabulary, the history of tourism, the travel industry, and the importance of tourism in Spain and Galicia. In addition to this, the students received information about PBL, the distribution of the weeks for the development of the project and they were informed about the compulsory requirement of handing in an interim report to control and assess the project progress once a month.

All the groups were also informed they had to communicate their choice of one of the four projects, together with a draft, containing the main ideas and the title for their project for the fourth week. The different groups had to schedule their meetings and they could choose an internet tool (MS Teams, WhatsApp, Zoom, or Skype) for communication and video conferences if all group members approved it. Before meeting this deadline, the students had to schedule a date with the teacher to present their initial ideas, doubts, sources of information, first readings, and research on the topic to justify their choice and the validity of their project for the end of the second week. At the end of this feedback session and after reaching an agreement about the project's name and main objectives, the groups were ready to start their research in depth, gather information, distribute the tasks for the group members, and schedule their meeting sessions.

In the fourth week, each group made their first in-class presentation to report on their research progress. During this face-to-face meeting, they presented an outline of the project, covering the activity chosen, the first problems met, the internet tool used for their online meetings, and their meeting evidence (screenshots).

la et al., 2021; González et al, 2020;). Its higher level of professionalization and its promotional campaigns both by local institutions and private investors have also contributed to increasing its competitiveness within the national tourist market.

From week five to eight, the students collected the primary data and during that period the teacher provided the necessary support when required. They were required to select their primary and secondary sources and find sources from the Internet and specialised journals, with at least two sources accessed from the university library. Depending on the topic chosen and when possible, they had to take photos, conduct interviews, go on field trips and visit tourist information points and tourism-related businesses³.

At the end of week eight, each student handed in their first written interim report and in week nine they made a short presentation using a digital tool (Microsoft PowerPoint, Genially, Canva...). The evaluation criteria were based on three areas: language (paying special attention to the use of specific vocabulary), communicative abilities, and content of the presentation. After the presentation, each group was asked a few questions both by the teacher and the rest of the students.

It is necessary to mention that one of the requirements demanded of all the students was that all groups had to ask a minimum of two questions at the end of each presentation to encourage participation, catch their attention, and get their engagement in the other projects. During these short presentations, the teacher made notes on the students' work and gave the written reports back with comments, corrections, and suggestions to improve the project.

In the last three weeks, they had to solve the problems met until that moment (team members' conflicts, meeting deadlines, cooperation with team members, search for appropriate information, good range of vocabulary, improving presentations...) and incorporate the suggestions offered by the teacher regarding the contents covered during the course and their communicative skills before the final presentation in week twelve.

During the last week of the course, the teacher interviewed all the groups to offer the students the possibility to answer a few questions to evaluate the experience and to

3 Some academic aspects were also required for the presentation of the interim reports of the project as it is the use of a particular citation style. At this stage, the help of the teacher was needed and gave a masterclass to explain the specific conventions in terms of contents, structure and style that an academic text should present.

have the opportunity to talk in detail about what they learned with this methodology, highlight the most important obstacles met during those weeks as well as the most important positive aspects and the skills acquired during those weeks.

IV. PROJECT RESULTS FROM THE STUDENT’S PERSPECTIVE

One of the main reasons for choosing the PBL model was to improve student’s learning of the English language for Tourism and to encourage them to use it in a practical context. In addition to this, another objective was to avoid individuality and get the highest level of interaction. With these premises in mind, the students were asked to participate in an in-class meeting to evaluate the experience at the end of the course. They adopted a very positive attitude and the major questions they had to answer regarding the evaluation and implementation of the project were five: perception of the schedule for the activities and the in-class presentations (Q.1), application of the course content for the project (Q.2), evaluation of the communicative skills requirements (Q.3), evaluation of the group work experience (Q.4), degree of satisfaction and suggestions for future editions of the project (Q.5).

The analysis of the responses shows that the level of the student’s satisfaction is mostly positive. Regarding the timing of the whole project, most of the groups consider it correct (see Table 1), except for one group (group 8) which thinks that the other teachers should not have set assessment tasks during the week of the project presentations.

Table 1. Perception of the schedule for the activities and the in-class presentations

Q.1	
GROUP 1	“The time span scheduled for the preparation of the different tasks was well calculated, but the group members had some problems meeting because we had a lot of assignments”
GROUP 2	“Some members took the term “responsibility” and “deadline” very loosely and they seemed they did not want to participate but the group could meet the deadlines to hand in the different tasks.”

GROUP 3	"We could meet all the deadlines and we could present all the tasks"
GROUP 4	"The schedule was perfect"
GROUP 5	"Our group didn't have any problems. Of course, setting up the meetings was difficult because of the busy schedules but apart from that we would say that working with my team was a pleasure and we had enough time to complete all the stages of the project"
GROUP 6	"The group had to work hard to prepare the project and respect the deadlines"
GROUP 7	"The group had a problem on one occasion to meet one of the deadlines but, in general, everything was fine."
GROUP 8	We think this project should have a better time plan and teachers could meet and avoid setting exams in the week we have the project presentations".

Concerning the second question, the groups expressed great satisfaction with the possibility of applying the theoretical content taught during the course (Table 2) and learning the specific language and skills required for their future professional needs.

Table 2. Application of the course content for the project

Q.2	
GROUP 1	"Some members of the group had a low level of English, so it was an excellent opportunity to learn and practice English"
GROUP 2	"Thanks to the project we could use the vocabulary of the units and prepare a project which is directly connected to the tourism sector"
GROUP 3	"The preparation of the project was a very good opportunity to practice speaking, be more fluent in English, and use the specific vocabulary of our degree"
GROUP 4	"The activities were about tourism and not general English as in secondary school"
GROUP 5	"We think the project was beneficial for us because we learned to speak in public and use English in the field of tourism"
GROUP 6	"We learned to describe monuments and historical sites in English, and all the vocabulary was really useful to prepare the project"
GROUP 7	"The level of the course was a bit difficult for us but we could learn the different activities"
GROUP 8	"We learned to speak and write in English focusing on tourism and search for information"

Analysing the students’ responses to the third question (Table 3), verbal communication skills are one of their major concerns. A few students mentioned they could use electronic devices such as tablets or laptops in their school and had prepared oral presentations in different subjects (team 3 and team 5). In contrast, it was surprising to hear that a great majority had never made a group presentation in English (groups 1 and 4) or did not feel confident enough to speak in English (group 7). The case of Group 7 is an example of how the lack of soft skills, confidence, and fluency in English outshone their final project presentation despite being very creative and presenting innovative ideas.

Table 3. *Evaluation of the communicative skills requirements*

Q.3	
GROUP 1	“We were very nervous because it was the first time that some people in the group had to make an oral presentation in front of a whole class”
GROUP 2	“Our skill presentations were very low, and we didn’t feel confident during the first presentation but thanks to the teacher’s help we learned how to speak in public and make a presentation in English”
GROUP 3	“Some members of the group come from the same school, and it was not the first time we had to prepare an oral presentation so we could help the other members and guide them”
GROUP 4	“Two of the members did not want to speak in public because they said they were very bad at English, but we helped them and, in the end, they prepared an acceptable presentation”
GROUP 5	“All the group members had made oral presentations at secondary school. Good experience”
GROUP 6	“It was difficult at first and we had to make a great effort to correct body language. We spoke very slowly, and it was difficult for us to look at our classmates”
GROUP 7	“Our group knew how to make a PowerPoint, but it was very difficult to speak in English”
GROUP 8	“Good opportunity to practice English and speak in public”

The responses obtained when the groups were asked about how they evaluated the group work experience can be classified into two main groups: internal disagreements between the members of the group due to a lack of commitment or lack of motivation

because of their low English language skills (Group 1, Group 2 and Group 6) and those who overcame internal problems related to the distribution of the workload and tasks (Group 3, Group 4 and Group 5).

Table 4. *Evaluation of the Group Work Experience*

Q.4	
GROUP 1	"We had trouble organizing our time at first, but we managed to meet in the late evening hours, and everything was fine. In addition to this, the project allowed us the opportunity to help each other and now we are good friends"
GROUP 2	"It was difficult to distribute work equally among team members because some members had serious difficulties to speak English and were not motivated"
GROUP 3	"We learned to solve different problems regarding teamwork thanks to this project. The experience was incredible and fulfilling"
GROUP 4	"We needed to be organized and everyone got involved in the project"
GROUP 5	"We learned that one person doesn't have to do everything in the group and there are people who are willing to cooperate."
GROUP 6	"Working in a group can be challenging as not everyone has the same level of motivation or the same level in English."
GROUP 7	"We learned to listen to everyone's opinion and to reach an agreement."
GROUP 8	"We learned the importance of speaking English and being well-organised"

Finally, the last question (Table 5), expected by all the groups, was to know their degree of satisfaction as well as to provide some ideas and suggestions for future editions of the project. Their main message was that the teachers who were not involved in this subject were informed about the project to avoid other assessment tasks during the weeks when the presentations were scheduled. The students also provided some interesting ideas such as the creation of a blog (Group 3) to upload the projects or giving a special recognition to the best project (Group 5). The final message transmitted by all the students is that the project had been a good opportunity to improve their English and their communication skills, learn group commitment, and learn how to solve problems.

Table 5. Degree of satisfaction and suggestions for future editions of the project

Q.5	
GROUP 1	"I think the project itself is something interesting and teamwork with other students is a rewarding experience, but it would be easier if everyone took an active part in it. It is a very good experience, and it helps to make friends"
GROUP 2	"Maybe the university could offer a course about learning communicative skills and about making presentations during the first month of the course because other students were much better than our group,"
GROUP 3	"We enjoyed the project, and we learned a lot about tourism. A suggestion to implement the project could be to create a blog with the projects."
GROUP 4	"If we could change something we would like only a little better control over the people participating, so some of the other students wouldn't be so laid back about it leaving others to do almost all of the work"
GROUP 5	"Students could be more motivated if the groups could choose the best project and win a prize"
GROUP 6	"In next year's edition, the project could include more activities and more destinations".
GROUP 7	"The project was well planned, in our opinion, and all the projects were very interesting and focused on Tourism and not general English"
GROUP 8	Our group was very happy with the project but in a future edition all teachers should coordinate and avoid exams when the presentations are scheduled"

V. ENSURING THE USE OF ENGLISH AS A VEHICULAR LANGUAGE

One of the main objectives when choosing the PBL model was challenging: avoiding the use of the student's mother tongue when working together and ensuring the use of English as a vehicular language by selecting an activity connected to the Tourism sector. Several strategies were employed to achieve this that helped to guide and monitor the students throughout the project: weekly in-class monitoring; diverse group composition; interim reports and interim presentations, regular in-class feedback and assessment.

During the in-class sessions when groups worked together, strict monitoring done by the teacher ensured that English was used exclusively. The teacher regularly observed interactions among students to ensure compliance and reinforced the consistent use of English.

Another element that took an important role in the project was Erasmus students. Every year the UDC receives them in its classes and most of them are not fluent in Spanish, necessitating the use of English for all group interactions. Their presence and inclusion in the different groups compelled Spanish-speaking students to communicate in English. This strategy enhanced their language skills and ensured the project's linguistic objectives were met.

Students were also required to prepare and present interim reports in English throughout the project duration. These reports and periodic short presentations provided regular practice and served as checkpoints to assess and ensure consistent use of English. In addition to this, regular feedback was provided after each interim report and presentation, focusing on content and use of English. This iterative process allowed students to improve their language skills progressively, ensuring that English was consistently used in their collaborative activities.

By implementing these strategies, it was possible to create an immersive English-speaking environment within the field of tourism, facilitating the use of English as a vehicular language. These measures ensured that students adhered to the language requirement, thereby effectively achieving the project's objective. During the final week of the course, the teacher interviewed all groups, providing students with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences, discuss the challenges and positive aspects they encountered, and highlight the skills acquired throughout the project. This last meeting also helped the teacher assess the evolution of the students.

VI. DISCUSSION

In this study, PBL was the methodology chosen to implement a key subject within the Degree of Tourism in the UDC and it was presented as a project to learn and apply the English language after the selection of an activity connected to the Tourism sector.

Additionally, as has just been described above, interviews with all the groups were conducted to capture the experiences of students in implementing project-based

activities within their English for Tourism classes at the end of the course. This facilitated an exploration of the benefits and limitations of these activities, as well as potential strategies to overcome challenges encountered.

At the end of this round of interviews with the different groups, it was possible to identify two main findings, one of them directly connected to students and another one to the teacher responsible for the subject. The finding connected to students was their satisfaction at having been able not only to make a presentation, which was a first-time experience for some groups; but also conducting it in English and seeing the practical implementation of the theoretical concepts. In addition to this, thanks to this project-based activity they admitted having increased their level of commitment and involvement. This fact ratifies those studies in this field which state that PBL is a tool that helps students to improve their communication and social skills.

In contrast to this finding, they had to tackle two main educational weaknesses: making a presentation and improving their English level. Their first weakness was preparing a presentation as most of them admitted a lack of practice and no formal training in giving any type of presentation. Concerning the level of English, those students with a lower level of English language proficiency for the course received support and reinforcement in tutoring hours and a few of them also started to attend private lessons.

The finding garnered from the implementation of this project from the perspective of the teacher was to witness the significant practical potential of this pedagogical methodology and the high level of receptiveness by the students. They were introduced to an instructor with a markedly distinct role from the traditional secondary school teacher. This new image of the teacher as a coach and problem solver has played a pivotal role in the relationship with students who were previously accustomed to instructors who merely transmitted theoretical knowledge. However, this teaching approach centred on learners instead of centred on contents made the teacher reconduct the initial planning and incorporate some changes as the project evolved which implied increased monitoring. Additionally, the students have exhibited several shortcomings, needing additional support to complete the project.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The limited English proficiency among Spanish speakers has been a subject of discussion and concern for years in Spain as it has been exposed in this paper. The factors involved range from cultural factors to the effectiveness of English language education in schools and, in some cases, a combination of both.

Cultural factors, for instance, have played a significant role in shaping language learning attitudes and behaviours in the case of Spain, a country where there is still a lack of exposure to English in everyday life. In addition to this, limited opportunities for immersion in an English-speaking environment and a predominant use of Spanish in social interactions do not contribute to the development of English language skills. A second element considered is the Spanish educational system, and how the low effectiveness of English language education in schools has impacted directly in poor proficiency levels among students at the end of secondary education. While English is taught as a compulsory subject in Spanish schools from the age of three, the focus has traditionally been on grammar and vocabulary rather than practical communication skills. Insufficient emphasis on speaking and listening skills limited exposure to authentic English materials, and large class sizes coupled with the limited number of English classes per week hinder language acquisition and limit the development of fluency and confidence in using the English language.

With this background and with the use of the PBL model, this project with first-year university students has proved to be an effective pedagogical approach that has promoted transversality as well as active and authentic learning experiences far from the traditional teaching at secondary schools. Through engaging in this project, students have improved not only their soft skills but also their English language fluency and deepened their understanding of the subject matter, which was the main objective of this project-based experience. The results also prove students were more aware of their needs and shortcomings during the project. They also developed essential skills in the English language, self-confidence when making presentations,

enhanced their motivation, and showed a high degree of commitment to challenging problems resolved thanks to their collaborative hard work and their teacher's supervision.

The project also successfully ensured the consistent use of English as a vehicular language through a structured approach. Key strategies included (vigilant in-class monitoring, the integration of non-Spanish-speaking Erasmus students, mandatory English-language interim reports and presentations, and systematic feedback on language proficiency) contributed to achieve this objective. These measures collectively encouraged an English-speaking environment and helped to meet the project's linguistic objectives effectively. It is important to note that the success of this initiative required significant teacher involvement and considerable effort, underscoring the intensive nature of the project's implementation.

This study also submits evidence that implementing PBL effectively requires careful planning and support from educators. Their role in designing meaningful projects is crucial, providing guidance throughout the process, and facilitating reflection and evaluation. It cannot be ignored that it is also essential to align the projects with curriculum goals and learning objectives while allowing for flexibility and student autonomy.

In addition to this, the combination of the project-based methodology and the grading criteria applied, which is not exclusively based on a traditional written examination and individual speaking tasks, let the students see themselves committed to attending and see that without their presence the collaborative process disappears. The need for attendance is another important aspect of studying at a university, even more so after the lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and, in this respect, project-based learning contributes to the recovery of face-to-face interaction and the incorporation of active class discussions.

To conclude, the integration of PBL in this educational setting has shown positive effects on student achievement and based on the results, should be identified as an effective instructional strategy for teaching English for specific purposes. This research aims to be a valuable resource for educators seeking effective methodologies for English

language instruction in the tourism and hospitality industry. Mastery of this subject is increasingly important for future non-native professionals and is essential for effective communication in today's globalized hospitality and tourism sector.

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Appraisal resources in spoken promotional texts: Novice versus professional marketers

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to describe how novice and professional marketers use appraisal resources in their spoken promotional texts. To achieve this aim, content analysis was applied. The data were gathered from the performance of novice and professional marketers in presenting spoken promotional texts and were analyzed by using Martin and White's (2005) appraisal theory framework. The research findings revealed that both marketers had similarities and differences in using appraisal resources. In terms of similarity, both marketers used attitude resources, particularly appreciation resources. In terms of differences, the novice marketer had fewer types of appraisal resources than the professional marketer; the novice one also had fewer lexical items to demonstrate his/her evaluative stance than the professional marketer; and the novice marketer tended to create persuasive text with a less rigid structure. The research findings suggest ESP teachers should provide scaffolding strategies for students to practice using adequate appraisal resources to create a powerful persuasive text.

Keywords: *evaluative language; interpersonal meaning; persuasive text; spoken promotional text; systemic functional linguistics.*



I. INTRODUCTION

Promoting tourist attractions is one of the important skills that students majoring in English for tourism should master because it is one of the social practices that would be performed in their workforce. According to Alexandrescu and Milandru (2018), promotion is one of the communication strategies used to sell a product or service to pique potential customers' interest in accepting or purchasing the promoted product/service. If promotion can be done effectively, the sales targets set by the company can be achieved successfully. In so doing, the company's profit can be maximized.

To enable the students to participate effectively in the marketing practice, the English for Specific Purposes (henceforth ESP) lecturers need to provide them with both knowledge and language skills in the field of English marketing. This means that in ESP learning, students should be taught specialized English languages that are relevant to their specific social practice or future career field. In the context of English for tourism course, students are trained to perform social practices that are similar to real-world tasks. This can be viewed as a rehearsal period for the students before they enter the real world (Widodo, 2015). This also can serve as a solid bridge for students to enter their future careers. As a result, they would socially participate in their future career well (Mickan, 2012, 2017). Thus, it is important for the students to be exposed in promotional activities, such as creating spoken promotional texts.

To effectively achieve the goal of the promotional texts, the ESP students (henceforth, novice marketers) should understand how to structure their texts well by adhering to a distinct generic structure and specific language features (Hyland, 2019). One language feature that should be used by marketers in composing powerful persuasive texts is evaluative language. According to Ho (2019), evaluative language is one of the language features used as a marketing linguistic strategy as in a promotional text, which consists of appraisal resources that are used to evaluate people, actions, events, and processes in texts (Martin & White, 2005). Rooted in Systemic Functional Linguistics

(SFL), evaluative language is believed can provide various ways of linguistic realization of interpersonal meanings in language use.

This interpersonal meaning is critical for proper delivery because when doing promotions, marketers do not only convey information about the promoted destinations but also express their feelings, opinions, and judgments. Interpersonal meanings are realized in SFL through an evaluative language system that includes attitude, engagement, and graduation. The attitude subsystem in this study deals with the marketers' positive/negative emotions toward people or things, that can be divided into three: affect, appreciation, and judgement. Engagement is concerned with the marketers' perspectives on the perspectives of others, consisting of four types: proclaim, disclaim, entertain, and attribute. Graduation, consisting of force and focus, addresses the phenomenon of grading, in which feelings are amplified, and categories are blurred (Istianah & Suhandano, 2022; Wu, 2018).

Based on our preliminary observation in an ESP classroom (English for tourism), novice marketers still have limited appraisal resources to create their spoken persuasive texts. Compared to the professional marketer (the one who have experiences working in tourism marketing), the novice marketer used fewer registers to express interpersonal meanings than the professional one. They employed simple and repetitious appraisal resources, which rendered the resulting presentation boring. Different from the professional one who produced more various appraisal resources to create the warm tone of the message, the novice seemed to carelessly use appraisal resources. This might be due to their lack of experience and knowledge in creating influential, persuasive texts (Mills & Dooley, 2014; Mills & Stone, 2020; Purnamasari et al., 2021; Thu, 2021). Whereas appraisal resources are considered as an essential component in a promotional text (Xie & Teo, 2020). Thus, to create effective promotional texts, the text producers need to use the appraisal resources to express their point of view on the promoted products or services.

The disparity in performance between novice and professional marketers in promoting tourist destinations serves as the primary drive for this research. This

phenomenon is not only interesting but also crucial to be investigated. By comparing the performance of the novice and the professional marketers, the gaps in the marketers' performances can be found. These gaps might provide a link for novice marketers to possess the skills needed in their workplace. This could help them build the skills required to become professional tourist marketers. We believe that if they could have this competency, they would be able to effectively participate socially in their future workplaces.

Due to the importance of appraisal resources, numerous researchers have conducted studies to investigate how appraisal resources are used in promotional texts. Ho and Suen (2017) investigated how appraisal resources were used to promote a city's core values. Kristina et al. (2017) examined the construction of promotional texts in the Indonesian Batik industry, while Wu (2018) and Qian and Law (2021) delved into the use of appraisal resources in tourism and hotel websites in China, and Istianah and Suhandano, (2022) and Isti'anah (2020) studied tourism websites in Indonesia from the lens of ecolinguistics perspective. These studies have only examined how appraisal language is used in written promotional texts while limited studies focused on spoken promotional texts. Additionally, the previous studies were set in authentic business settings, while studies investigating how students perform spoken promotional texts were scarcely found. Existing research on students' use of appraisal language focuses on non-promotional-aimed written texts, such as in academic paper's abstracts (Alghazo et al., 2021), introduction sections (Alramadan, et al., 2020; Fitriati & Solihah, 2019), genre-based writing including descriptive texts (Mendale et al., 2019) and exposition texts (Xu & Nesi, 2019; Yu, 2021; Yuliana & Gandana, 2018), and multimodal texts (Unsworth & Mills, 2020).

These studies have provided empirical findings about the use of appraisal resources in persuasive texts. However, to our knowledge, we believe that there are still some important elements that need to be investigated further. First, the previous studies have only focused on the use of appraisal resources in written persuasive texts. Second, the previous studies provide less attention on comparing the performance of

novice and professional marketers. As a matter of fact, research aiming to compare novice and professional is important to enrich empirical findings from the sociocultural perspective. In addition, this investigation is also beneficial to reveal the gaps found between novice and professional speakers in employing appraisal resources in their persuasive texts.

To fill the empirical gaps, we conducted this study by focusing on investigating how different speakers (novice and professional marketers) used appraisal language in their spoken promotional texts. From this study, the students and the English lecturers could reflect on what they have gained so far. The research findings might be used as a guide to either maintain or improve the persuasive presentation performances of the students in persuading the customers. Accordingly, ESP lecturers should provide appropriate texts (Agustien, 2016) to achieve the purpose of communication in certain contexts.

This study could help to empirically establish what appraisal resources are appropriate for professional tourism marketers to employ in spoken promotional texts. This can give pedagogical insight into the field of ESP programs and vocational English schools dealing with the tourism industry. The study may have classroom implications for using appropriate and effective language resources to create influential promotional texts. Thus, the current study is expected to help raise teachers' and students' awareness of the importance of using appraisal resources in promotional texts.

II. APPRAISAL RESOURCES

Appraisal resources is a system of interpersonal meaning that can be used by language producers to negotiate their social relationships by telling their listeners how they feel about things or people. There are three kinds of appraisal language that can be used by the speakers to enact their interpersonal meaning. The first subsystem is attitude. Attitude is concerned with the speakers' feelings, including emotional reactions, judgments of behavior, and evaluation of things. Thus, it is divided into three regions of

feelings: affect, judgement, and appreciation. Affect refers to resources for expressing different types of feelings, such as happiness (e.g., the student is happy), security (e.g., the student is confident), and satisfaction (e.g., the student is absorbed). Judgement deals with resources for judging characters and behaviors of people in terms of social esteem and social sanction. Judgement of social esteem can be broken down into normality (how unusual someone is, e.g., It is very strange of him to act that way), capacity (how capable someone is, e.g., He is a clever man), and tenacity (how resolute someone is, e.g., He is determined to keep going). Judgement of social sanction can be viewed in terms of veracity (how truthful someone is, e.g., He is honest) and propriety (how ethical someone is, e.g., He is a generous person). Appreciation is the subsystem of resources for aesthetic evaluation of objects, artifacts, entities, presentation, and other natural phenomena. It has three subtypes: reaction (it is related to affection, e.g., The painting is beautiful), composition (it is related to perception, e.g., The picture is symmetrical), and valuation (it is related to cognition, e.g., This decoration is unique). These three resources of affect can be positive and negative and are expressed explicitly or implicitly.

The second resource of the appraisal system is engagement. It is concerned with sourcing attitudes and the interaction of voices in speech. It is concerned with the various linguistic resources that speakers use to change and negotiate the arguability of their utterances. Resources in engagement are dialogic in nature. Martin and White (2005) classify engagement into four taxonomies: disclaim (resources used to reject or negate propositions, e.g., You don't need to give up potatoes to lose weight), proclaim (resources used to represent highly warrantable propositions, e.g., Of course, he is happier now), entertain (resources used to present propositions indicating possible positions, e.g., Probably, he is lying), and attributive (resources used to present propositions as grounded in the subjectivity of an external voice, e.g., The doctor claims that it is poisonous). Disclaim and proclaim are grouped in contraction resources; meanwhile, entertain and attribute are categorized as expansion resources.

The third resource of the appraisal system is graduation. It attends to grading phenomena whereby feelings are amplified, and categories are blurred. Martin and White (2005) divide graduation into two areas: force and focus. Force refers to the system of resources to scale the intensity of meanings from low to high or vice versa or turn the volume up and down. This can be done through the intensification of quality (e.g., He is very smart) or process (e.g., He looked closely at the book) or through quantification of number, mass, or extent (e.g., It is a huge problem).

Focus can be understood as the system of resources to broaden and or narrow terms that symbolizes a particular category membership. This can be done through sharpening (e.g., He is my real friend) or softening (e.g., I am kind of upset by what you said). These two areas of graduation are also mentioned in the framework of appraisal proposed by Eggins and Slade (1997), in which they divide graduation into enrichment (resources used to add an attitudinal coloring to a meaning, augmenting (resources used to amplify attitudinal meaning), and mitigation (resources used to downplay speakers' personal expressions). Having studied graduation taxonomies of Martin and White (2005) and Eggins and Slade (1997), we decided to apply the framework of graduation proposed by Martin and White (2005) because it covers the three areas of Graduation resources mentioned by Eggins and Slade (1997).

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study aims to describe how novice and professional marketers use appraisal language in spoken promotional texts. To achieve this aim, a qualitative content analysis was employed to analyze language in discourse. According to Krippendorff (2018), content analysis entails a close reading of the text and a systematic discursive practice in which the researchers are immersed in the text to investigate the phenomenon under investigation by interpreting the text (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). In order to investigate novice and professional marketers' appraisal resources in promotional texts, we classified qualitative textual data into clusters of similar entities or conceptual categories.

The data of the study were two videos of novice and professional marketers downloaded from YouTube. The novice marketer was a male student practicing promoting Tacloban city. Meanwhile the professional marketer was a female tourism marketer promoting Tacloban city. A video project created by a student to fulfill the learning task was a video of a novice marketer's performance. In this video, the student practiced promoting a tourist destination (Tacloban City). In his promotional text, he promoted some tourism places in Tacloban city, festivals, and traditional foods. Meanwhile, the video of a professional marketer's performance was a real promotional video that was published purposively by the Tacloban city government to promote their place. In this video, the professional marketer promoted tourism spots in Tacloban city, festivals, delicacy foods, and accommodations. There are some factors to consider when selecting these two videos: a) the two videos promote the identical tourist destination (both videos promote Tacloban City); b) the video length is between 6-10 minutes; c) the videos provide sufficient data; and d) the audio and visual of the videos are clear.

The collected data were analyzed in the following ways: (i) transcribing data manually. This transcription technique was chosen because it allowed us to become acquainted with data; (ii) coding clauses. Within the clauses, we identified different types of appraisal resources. We highlighted lexical items that contained appraisal resources by using different color. We used a coding analysis template proposed by Martin and White (2005); and (iii) data classification. After the data had been identified, we classified them according to their categories. For example, the affect subsystem was assigned to lexical items such as happy, excited, and worried. Positive and negative emotions were assigned to these registers.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we present our findings and discuss them. Section one presents research findings on the novice marketer's use of appraisal resources. Section two presents research findings related to the professional marketer's use of appraisal resources.

Section three discusses research findings by comparing and contrasting novice and professional marketers' use of appraisal resources.

IV.1. Appraisal Resources Used by the Novice Marketer

Table 1 shows that the novice marketer used all types of appraisal language: attitude, engagement, and graduation. Among these resources, he used attitude resources the most, specifically appreciation, followed by graduation and engagement. The following are examples of clauses containing each subsystem.

Table 1. The Distribution of Appraisal Language by the Novice Marketer

Attitude			Engagement				Graduation	
Affect	Judgement	Appreciation	Expansion		Contraction		Force	Focus
			Entertain	Attribute	Disclaim	Proclaim		
0	0	13	1	0	2	0	12	0
0%	0%	45%	4%	0%	8%	0%	43%	0%

IV.1.1. Attitude

Data analysis revealed that the novice marketer used one of the three attitude resources: appreciation. Examples 1-5 show resources for appreciation.

- 1) Tacloban city is the most *fabulous* city in the Eastern Visayas.
- 2) which is made with a *sweet* mixture of coconut.
- 3) This *delicious* chocolate in the delicacy is known for its *soft* and *sticky* texture.
- 4) Suman is one of the *famous* Filipino delicacies.
- 5) What makes the version *stand out* is the use of Latik syrup caramelized coconut cream as a sauce.

The five samples (1-5) demonstrate how the novice marketer employed lexis, such as *fabulous, sweet, delicious, soft, sticky, famous, and stands out* in his promotional video. The lexis *fabulous* was used to appraise the city; meanwhile, other registers (*sweet, delicious, soft, sticky, famous, and stand out*) were used to evaluate Tacloban's culinary scene. These registers were employed to attract the audience's interest in trying the food.

IV.1.2. Graduation

The second most common type of appraisal language used by the novice marketer was graduation. Graduation is divided into two parts: force and focus. Between the two, the novice marketer only used force. Force determines the amount (quantification) or intensity (intensification). The clauses below are examples of forces used by a novice marketer.

- 6) Tacloban City is *the most* fabulous city in the Eastern Visayas.
- 7) Tacloban, also known as one of the *largest* city.
- 8) There are *so many* contests in Tacloban.
- 9) You will find Bukayo in *every* part of the country.
- 10) it is *the longest* bridge in the Philippines.

The novice marketer attempted to attract prospective visitors to Tacloban by intensifying and quantifying in Examples 6-10. The intensification resources (*the most, the largest, every, and the longest*) were chosen to emphasize the meanings to grasp the prospective visitors' intent to visit the city. He also used quantification resources to gain similar purpose (such as *so many*).

IV.1.3. Engagement

Another type of appraisal system used by the novice marketer was engagement. The novice marketer created a different level of intimacy through engagement resources by either affirming or distancing himself from what was said. The novice marketer performed two types of engagement among the four engagement resources used in this study: disclaim and entertain.

Disclaim was the novice marketer's first frequent type of engagement resource. He used *disclaim* to express his denial or rejection of something. This is demonstrated in the examples below.

11) (...) *but* makes it unique.

12) we *cannot* deny the fact (...) (that the spot is undeniably superb).

It is clear from the preceding clauses that the word "*but*" in Example 11 was used to express his concession or counter-expectation. Meanwhile, the negation in Example 12 indicated acceptance that the location was undeniably fantastic.

The novice marketer's second most common type of engagement was entertain. He used the modal verb to make use of this resource. The example is given below.

13) you *will* find Bukayo in every part of the country.

In Example 13, the novice marketer used a modal auxiliary (*will*) to demonstrate his range of possibilities. This clause guarantees visitors will find Bukayo (traditional bread) if they visit the location.

IV.2. Appraisal Resources Used by the Professional Marketer

Table 2 shows that the professional marketer used all types of appraisal resources. The most dominant use of appraisal used is attitude. The following subsystem of attitude is engagement and graduation, respectively. Each type of appraisal system used by the professional marketer is presented below.

Table 2. *The Distribution of Appraisal Resources by Professional Marketer*

Attitude			Engagement				Graduation	
Affect	Judgement	Appreciation	Expansion		Contraction		Force	Focus
			Entertain	Attribute	Disclaim	Proclaim		
5	0	23	14	0	3	0	8	2
8%	0	43%	24%	0	4%	0	17%	4%

IV.2.1. Attitude

Attitude is an appraisal system used to show the professional marketer’s feelings or emotions concerning people or things/phenomena. The professional marketer employed two types of attitude resources: appreciation and affect.

Appreciation is the most frequent attitude resource used by the professional marketer. The examples are presented as follows.

- 14) Tacloban is *beautiful*.
- 15) Tacloban is *a place like no other*.
- 16) Come to Tacloban for the *popular* sites and landmarks.
- 17) the Anibong *memorial* shipwrecked place to learn the history.
- 18) they are all *made with love*.
- 19) their Binagols *are beyond compared*.
- 20) The festival of lights is so so much *fun*.
- 21) You will love the people behind the *colorful* costumes.
- 22) You will love the *genuine* hospitality.
- 23) you love the *gentle* smiles.

Examples 14–23 demonstrate how the professional marketer used a variety of lexis to promote the city, cuisine, festivals, and people of Tacloban. The words “*beautiful*,” “*a place like no other*,” “*popular*,” and “*memorial*” were used to describe the city’s beauty. In example 15, the professional marketer even used a metaphor to persuade the audience that Tacloban was the only fantastic place to visit. Aside from promoting the location, the professional marketer promoted the food by using phrases like “*made with love*” (Example 18) and “*beyond compared*” (Example 19). In Example 18, the professional marketer explained why the food tasted so good. She then emphasized the excellent taste of the food, such as Binagols, which were superior to other foods. In Examples 20 and 21, the professional marketer used the words “*fun*” and “*colorful*” to promote festival festivities that prospective visitors could see and enjoy at Tacloban city. In Examples 22 and 23, the professional marketer appraised the citizen’s smiles and hospitality. These were used to emphasize that Tacloban City do not only offer the city’s beauty but also its people’s beauty.

Furthermore, affect was the second most frequent type of attitude resource used by the professional marketer. The examples are presented as follows.

- 24) You’d *like* the destinations.
- 25) you’d *love* the warm welcome.
- 26) You’ll *like* the food.
- 27) you’ll *love* the people that make them.

The registers “*like*” and “*love*” were used in the examples above to assure prospective visitors that they would be happy when they visited Tacloban City. The professional marketer assures that the prospective visitors will have positive emotions when they visit Tacloban city.

IV.2.2. Engagement

Another type of appraisal used by the professional marketer to contract or expand herself from what is spoken was engagement. The professional marketer used two types of engagement resources out of the four available: entertain and disclaim.

The examples of entertain resources used by a professional marketer are shown in the following clauses.

- 28) You'd like the destinations.
- 29) you'd love the warm welcome.
- 30) You'll like the stay.
- 31) you'll love the genuine hospitality.
- 32) I'm going to tell you.
- 33) why not stay for a while and see for yourself.
- 34) why you should come to the Tacloban.

Examples 28-31 show that the professional marketer used modals to show his range of possibilities. The modal auxiliaries were "would," "will," and "going to" which indicate decreasing the coercion and increasing imaginary advantages and expectations of the destinations. In examples 33 and 34, the professional marketer suggested that prospective visitors visit Tacloban to see and enjoy its beauty.

Moreover, another identified engagement resource was *disclaim*. The professional marketer used "but" as disclaim resource:

- 35) *But* once you are on the way [Going there is quite a journey, but once you are on the way, you make it the journey within yourself].

In Example 35, the conjunction "but" was used to contrast the visitors' experience in Tacloban. It was used to pique visitors' interest in exploring Tacloban's beauty.

IV.2.3. Graduation

In this study, the professional marketer used force and focus resources as the graduation resources. Here are some excerpts including in force.

- 36) There are *so many* places to see.
- 37) *all* the reasons why you should come to the Tacloban.
- 38) because they are *all* made with love.
- 39) The festival of lights is *so so much* fun.

40) our Sagmani, Moron, and Binagol are some of *the best*.

41) the *happiest* people in the world.

Quantification resources include the registers “*so many*” and “*all*.” In Example 36, the professional marketer used “*so many*” to emphasize that Tacloban had many places. The lexis “*so much fun*”, “*the best*”, and “*the happiest*” were classified as intensification and crucial for intensifying meanings. Even in Example 39, the professional marketer used repetition (*so so*) to emphasize that the festivals were enjoyable.

The second type of graduation in the professional marketer’s performance was focus. The variation of lexis used was also limited to “*just*”. It was used to soften the meaning of the professional marketer’s message. Focus example used by professional marketer is provided below.

42) It’s not *just* a festival.

In this example, the professional marketer claimed that the festival that prospective visitors would enjoy is not ordinary, but rather unique.

IV.3. The Similarities of Appraisal Resources Used by the Novice and Professional Marketer

Drawn from the research findings, there were five similarities in the use of appraisal resources in spoken tourism promotion videos of novice and professional marketers. *First*, the two marketers used all appraisal resources: attitude, engagement, and graduation. Attitude concerns the speaker’s feelings, including emotional reactions, behavioral judgments, and evaluation of things. Engagement concerns sourcing attitudes and the play of voices around opinions. Graduation addresses the phenomenon of grading, in which feelings are amplified, and categories are blurred (Martin & White, 2005). In the context of tourism promotion, the use of these resources is critical (Istianah & Suhandano, 2022). According to Deng et al. (2021), the primary function of a sales promotion is persuasive in that the speaker seeks a specific response from his audience. To accomplish this, the speaker must employ appraisal resources to influence and persuade the audience. This argument is consistent with Miller et

al. (2014), who state that evaluative resources have been discovered to be one of the significant components of persuasive texts, such as in product advertisements. Furthermore, our findings confirm the findings of Ho and Suen (2017), Wu (2018) and Xie and Teo (2020), who explored that appraisal resources could assist text producers in creating persuasive effects for text receivers.

Second, both marketers used appreciation the most in the attitude subsystem. A careful examination of the attitudinal system revealed that appreciation was the most preferred resource used by the two marketers of the three subsystems of attitude (affect, judgment, and appreciation). They tended to favor appreciation over the other resources to make the text sound more appreciative rather than emotional or judgmental (Hood, 2004). This is due to the nature of the text itself, which is intended to persuade the audience to visit the promoted places. Marketers have to choose special registers to evaluate the presented product to accomplish this goal. This is accomplished by utilizing appreciation resources.

Third, both marketers evaluated the product more positively than other entities. This is done to pique the audience's interest in visiting the promoted places. This is consistent with Bhatia's (2014) argument that promotion is generally directed at potential customers known to have a need (immediate or future) for the product being promoted. As a result, the most essential function of product promotion is to assess the product in terms of the target customers' perceived interests, needs, or inhibitions. The current study confirms the findings of Yang (2016), who discovered empirically that appreciation resources were used the most by their research participants in persuasive texts.

Fourth, both marketers used the fewest judgment resources. This finding appeared to contradict Puspita and Pranoto's (2017) findings. Their study results revealed that the authors of the text used judgment resources the most of the three attitudinal resources. The nature of the topic discussed in the texts may explain the discrepancy in research findings between the current study and Puspita and Pranoto's one. The topic of the current study is promoting tourist destinations. As a result, marketers place a higher value on the promoted tourist destinations.

On the other hand, Puspita and Pranoto (2021) discuss the attitude of the Japanese newspaper in narrating disaster events and found that the writers emphasized human behaviors the most. The current study's findings would provide empirical support for Liu's (2013) argument that the different nature of the topics discussed in persuasive texts may result in differences in the distribution patterns of attitudinal resources used. Furthermore, this research finding supports the claim of Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) that the choice of registers is influenced by the social purpose of the text and the context of the actions in which language is embedded.

Fifth, regarding graduation resources, both marketers relied heavily on force. Both marketers used force more than focus on the current study. By doing so, these two marketers heighten the meanings contained in the attitudinal resources. This finding is consistent with the results of Kang (2015) and Wu (2018), who discovered that instead of using more focus, their research participants preferred to use force more frequently in their persuasive texts because the use of force can help speakers achieve their communicative goals more effectively.

IV.4. The Differences of Appraisal Resources Used by the Novice and Professional Marketer

Interestingly, our data analysis revealed differences in performance between novice and professional marketers in terms of appraisal resources used. First, in comparison to the professional marketer, the novice marketer employed fewer resources in the attitude subsystem. In contrast to the professional marketer, who used appreciation and affect, the novice marketer only used appreciation. In the professional marketer's performance, she did not only appraise the place positively, but she also described the positive emotions that the visitors would experience when visiting the place. As a result, the text created by the professional marketer was more persuasive than the text created by the novice marketer. In addition to this, the professional marketer also expressed her attitude with more lexical items than the novice marketer. This disparity suggests that, compared to the professional marketer, the novice marketer lack knowledge of attitude resources. This is due to

limited repertoire for expressing their attitudes, feelings, and emotions (Morton & Llinares, 2018; Ngo et al., 2012).

Second, the professional marketer appeared to adhere to more outstanding linguistic features of persuasive text when compared to the novice marketer. According to the appraisal analysis, the novice marketer used fewer types of appraisal resources and registers to show his attitude and stance to the audience. As a result, the professional marketer appeared to produce a more rigid persuasive text structure than the novice marketer. The professional marketer attempted to persuade the audience about the product by utilizing appraisal resources. As a result, the text produced by the professional marketer is thought to have a more substantial persuasive effect than that of the novice marketer. This research finding indicates that the novice marketers may need more persuasive text structure knowledge than professionals. According to Yu (2021), students usually lack a sufficient comprehension of genre structures and linguistics strategies. This may be the result of the limited opportunities for students to practice structuring persuasive texts for communicative functions in their classrooms (Noprianto, 2017). As a result, students' texts frequently contain inappropriate structures and linguistic features.

When the students are unfamiliar with certain genres to be applied in certain contexts, the misuse of linguistic features occurred. To avoid this, students must understand text structures to achieve their communicative goals (Agustien, 2004) through the use of common grammatical patterns (Agustien, 2016) and linguistic features (Coffin, 2004). Concerning the students' difficulty understanding text structure, teachers must provide learning activities that allow students to practice performing persuasive texts in real-world contexts.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The current study has highlighted the appraisal resources used by both novice and professional marketers in their spoken promotional texts. The evidence from this

study suggests that despite some similarities, both marketers use appraisal resources differently. Since the novice marketer has less appraisal resources than the professional marketer, he appears to produce a less powerful persuasive text than the professional marketer. This research result shows the significant difference in performance between the novice and professional marketer when producing spoken promotional texts. In order to provide a solid bridge for the novice marketer to attain the required competency, the study's findings suggest that English teachers should engage students with authentic texts and provide explicit scaffolding on how to structure a rigid persuasive text through the use of appraisal resources. It is also suggested for learning material developers to explicitly provide various lexical items that can be used by the students to structure powerful promotional texts.

Declaration of interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Sustainable development goals and transversal competences through L2/3 virtual exchange

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ABSTRACT

This pilot study explores the effects of virtual exchange in the higher education setting. The core goal is to investigate the potential new training environments in second or third-language learning and relate their use to competence enhancement and sustainability awareness. Through quantitative, qualitative, and pre-/post-test methods, the researchers detected a positive trend in the online didactic application, which led to the increased capacities of international learners. Moreover, this project has provided an exciting opportunity to compare the advancements of technology and humanities undergraduates from Spain and Croatia. Given the importance of intercultural cooperation among different nationalities, this interaction process offers a new communication channel linked to sustainability and competence development in English as a Foreign Language. Besides, the debate about online collaboration's role in foreign language course design has gained fresh insights and delivered experimental data worth further consideration.

Keywords: *sustainability; transversal competences; virtual exchange; university students; second language acquisition.*



I. INTRODUCTION

Sustainability, or the capacity to maintain economic and environmental equilibrium (Kasmire, 2021), is a critical problem for today's society. The appearance of sustainability in the civil, economic, social and environmental arenas reflects the necessity to enhance global community pathways (Mensah, 2019). In the same vein, application of this topic to education paradigm is a common challenge at university on management, learning, capacity development and research levels (Hallinger & Chatpinyakoo, 2019). To what extent can online collaboration experience add value to higher education stakeholders in second/third (L2/3) language?

Keeping track of positive outcomes presented by numerous scholars, telecollaboration and virtual exchanges tend to produce international collaborations mainly focused on intercultural, language and digital competences aiming at global citizenship (Barbosa & Ferreira-Lopes, 2023; Gutiérrez & O'Dowd, 2021; Machwate et al., 2021). The innovative strategy we describe in this study is the one that brings closer the notion of sustainability goals and transversal competence to international technical and non-technical participants of this virtual exchange.

Although it is widely argued that online exchanges support the internationalisation of higher education (O'Dowd, 2022), it frequently conflicts with the necessity of giving educators assistance and extra time to implement these initiatives (Helm, 2015). As O'Dowd (2023, p.11) states, "VE refers to the different online learning initiatives and methodologies which engage learners in sustained online collaborative learning and interaction with partners from different cultural backgrounds as part of their study programmes and under the guidance of teachers or trained facilitators".

The technique chosen for this study is suitable due to its adaptability to different contexts and circumstances and open-plan design covering several meaningful areas such as sustainable development goals, active learning methodologies, language learning, and competences progressing through online interaction.

In our study, we demonstrate that virtual exchange applications offer a reliable solution to the emerging role of online interuniversity partnerships. The research questions (RQ) that could be asked include:

RQ1 How could we relate Sustainable Development Goals to virtual exchange?

RQ2 What are the possibilities for relating transversal competences to virtual exchange activities?

RQ3 What is the most significant effect of virtual exchange experience in technical and non-technical/ humanities students?

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. We justify sustainability- and competence-oriented language learning via interactive cooperation among university students. Next, using experimental methodology, we position our research on the crossroads of quantitative and qualitative terms. Furthermore, we place our results on earlier research in the field. In the end, we draw a conclusion.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

An evolution of the second/third (L2/3) language learning methods in recent years reflects how modern society addresses the crucial importance of English as a *lingua franca*. In the world of technology and science, business and education, communication and tourism, English is the most frequently spoken language (Rao, 2019). As university students must advance in a way that is competence-oriented, our study focuses on the following learning components: (a) sustainable development goals, (b) transversal competences and (c) virtual exchange, all of them connected to professional English as a Foreign Language, or EFL, setting.

II.1. Sustainable Development Goals

A major source of inspiration and vision for Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs - is the General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1 called “Transforming Our World, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (United Nations, 2015 October). It is a

driving force and “a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity” (*ibid*, 1). Thanks to this global focus, one can relate economy, society and environment through 17 specific tasks by involving relevant stakeholders in higher education institutions (Purvis et al., 2019; Zamora-Polo & Sánchez-Martín, 2019).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) present a deeper projection of new tactic of caring for human rights, gender equality and female empowerment. They are a feasible roadmap to fight against poverty and the deterioration of the planet and to encourage prosperous and peaceful human existence in harmony with the environment. It is, therefore, essential to transmit the Agenda priorities to university-level learners in a dynamic and evocative manner. To do so, only two goals were selected for the current study (United Nations, 2015, October, pp. 17, 26):

- (1) SDG 4 “Quality education: ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”;
- (2) SDG 17 “Partnerships for the Goals: strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development”.

Originally, several benefits of adopting the SDGs into academic curriculum have been highlighted by Leal Filho et al. (2021): relevance and credibility of university preparation, promotion of common concepts of sustainability, enhancement of institutional learning standards or improvement of links between students, faculty, and surrounding community, among others. In our case, the specific choice of SDG 4 is prompted by the necessity to prepare young people for the labour market, whereas SDG 17 is aligned with the need to implement efficient and focused capacity building.

II.2. Transversal competences

These days, uplifting young people’s knowledge, skills and attitudes has taken centre stage of the EU training focus. In accordance with this, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) give priority to capacity building as a vital part of the quality preparation of future specialists. By tackling not only life-long learning cultural, digital, and multilingual competences but also promoting transversal competences of decision-making,

leadership or teamwork, we prepare modern students in a variety of areas (European Commission, 2021 June; Sá & Serpa, 2018). Following Polyakova & Galstyan-Sargsyan (2020), transversal competence is defined as the ability to use acquired knowledge to resolve various problems in a related context of study.

In the above context, it might be useful to define the core idea of this process, the competence. It is the capacity to successfully complete a certain task that requires a blend of contextually appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes (European Commission, 2019 March; Polyakova & Galstyan-Sargsyan, 2019, 2020). Particularly, EU Commission experts (2021, p. 4) state that transversal skills and competences “are learned and proven abilities” considered beneficial for any life activity. Due to this, it is crucial to promote capacity development at the tertiary level.

When designing an online didactic experience, we are creating a meaningful learning scenario for undertaking transversal competences’ dimensions suggested by *Universitat Politècnica de València* (UPV). The following Transversal Competences (TCs) are established by UPV (Universitat Politècnica de València, 2022, July) and will back our investigation:

TC1: Social and environmental commitment (Act with ethics and professional responsibility in the face of social, environmental and economic challenges).

TC2: Innovation and creativity (Propose creative and innovative solutions to complex situations or problems, specific to the field of knowledge).

TC3: Teamwork and leadership (Collaborate effectively in work teams, assuming responsibilities and leadership roles and contributing to collective improvement and development).

TC4: Effective communication (Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, adapting to the characteristics of the situation and the audience).

TC5: Responsibility and decision-making (Act autonomously in learning, making informed decisions in different contexts).

II.3. Virtual exchange

The transferability and cross-disciplinary nature of knowledge become even more important in the academic world, which is experiencing rapid technological, social, and pedagogical changes. Adopting a combined approach also means taking advantage of the many opportunities that the online environment presents, particularly virtual exchanges (VE). These continuous, technologically enhanced, interpersonal educational initiatives bring language learners from various cultural backgrounds for interacting and improving L2/3, digital or intercultural capacities (EVOLVE, 2024; O'Dowd & O'Rourke, 2019).

Embracing this collaboration approach in healthcare, digital humanities or engineering education (Bowen et al., 2021; Dorroll et al., 2019; Kattwinkel et al., 2021) fosters cooperation among interconnected institutions, promotes sustainability and motivates undergraduates. Additionally, Giralt et al. (2022) propose a variety of scenarios: blended mobility format where VE is combined with real-life mobility, stand-alone learning activity in VE format or VE as a traditional or online course component. In the latter option, a balanced integration of online interaction could be the optimum choice for the current study.

Continuing with some practical implications of synchronous online exchanges, it is therefore crucial for partakers to split the process into three parts (Gutiérrez et al., 2021). Before the interaction, appropriate use of technology, netiquette, and organisational and general issues need to be attended to; during the exchange, attention is paid to communication strategies and personal correspondence; finally, after the virtual collaboration, critical reflection brings the process to an end. These mentoring recommendations are consistent with our VE, too.

A significant challenge in this field is to develop and quantify competence achievement in a virtual exchange environment. Researchers have mainly focused on digital, communication, intercultural abilities and internationalisation from a qualitative or empirical perspective in primarily asynchronous settings (Avgousti, 2018; Machwate et al., 2021; O'Dowd, 2017). This current research follows two new directions. Firstly, we

propose an approach that measures learners' perceptions before and after synchronous cooperation. Secondly, our students work on suggested topics to connect them with competence-building and understanding of sustainable goals.

III. METHODOLOGY

Following online collaboration pathways designed by renown scholars (Dooly & Vinagre, 2021; Helm, 2017; O'Dowd, 2018; Rubin & Guth, 2023), we now examine in more detail the methodological procedure. Although these guidelines contain useful pedagogic or scholarly information, it might be challenging to reconcile both interests. To face this challenge, we devised a parallel two-fold scheme comprising didactics and investigation. This division also facilitates the preparation of tasks among the project organisers to distribute certain mentoring or research components.

III.1. Study outline

The pilot study was part of the project for didactic innovation named "Plurilingualism, Sustainability, Universities", carried out by the *Universitat Politècnica de València* (UPV), Spain. This initiative was designed to promote sustainability values among undergraduates and generate an impact on the international cooperation level. By innovating in language pedagogies, we explore new communication scenarios and foster capacity development via online interaction. Additionally, Spanish learners and faculty are able to broaden cultural networks by partnering with other European universities.

The present study was designed with the objective of connecting students from two coastal cities through the project of virtual exchange. It was carried out at the *Universitat Politècnica de València* (UPV), Spain, and the University of Zadar (UniZd), Croatia, in the first semester of 2022/2023. It was aimed at the advancement of students' transversal competences as well as their awareness about Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 "Quality education" and SDG 17 "Global partnership".

Figure 1 below provides an overview of the steps required to ensure project completion. The main topics of the initiative were to compare the education systems of different countries and identify the main features of the compared systems. Various cooperative tasks such as group discussion, project work, visuals design and oral presentation were concluded using Microsoft Teams and other online tools. Three synchronous sessions and mixed group meetings were planned, each of them lasting for approximately 90 minutes. Students were also encouraged to plan as many asynchronous interactions as needed so that they could complete the assignments.



Figure 1. Virtual Exchange summary.

III.2. Participants

The study was conducted on a sample of 20 participants, i.e., 11 third- and fourth-year undergraduate students (55% of the total sample) at UPV, Spain, and nine first-year undergraduate students (45% of the full sample) at UniZd, Croatia. Spanish students were mostly male (78%, nine persons), majoring in technical studies, i.e. Industrial Engineering. On the other hand, most Croatian students were female (87%, eight persons), and they were double majoring in humanities, i.e. English Studies.

According to CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020), Spanish learners were at B1/B1+/B2 English level in contrast to Croatian learners who were at C1 English level. Participation in the project was mandatory for UPV students but voluntary for UniZd students. Thus, Spanish students were graded for their participation in the activities as well as for the

accomplished assignments, whereas Croatian students participated in the project to support international collaboration between the institutions.

III.3. Procedure

The project was carried out between 17 November - 22 December 2022. In the first session, students were divided into four mixed UPV and UniZd teams. Collaborating in separate breakout rooms, Team 1 and Team 2 were asked to read online articles about the past and present of education in Spain and Croatia, the former regarding basic education and vocational training and the latter regarding higher education with an emphasis on technology and humanities. Team 3 and Team 4 were required to search for information about the education systems in Spain and Croatia and compare them to the UK and US systems, respectively.

In the second session, students continued their collaboration to create visual support for the data collected, such as posters or infographics, using the online tool *Canva*. They were also encouraged to organise asynchronous sessions to prepare a presentation about their findings, which was planned for the last session.

In the last session, each team presented their group findings using visual support. Prior to their participation in the activities as well as at the end of the virtual exchange, the participants were required to self-evaluate their understanding and application of transversal competences and SDG 4 and 17 as well as give their comments on the initiative.

Our implementation process is based on the training approach called the Sustainable Active Virtual Learning (SAVL) model designed by Polyakova & Galstyan-Sargsyan (2022). Its primary focus on four key outputs – Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030 [S], Active Learning Methodologies & cooperation [A], Virtual exchange and digital tools [V], Language learning and competences [L] – determine the collaboration process and facilitate and assist in establishing priorities and targets.

Additionally, the following descriptive details of the VE structure give a comprehensive picture of the exchange process:

Table 1. Virtual Exchange structure. Based on Polyakova & Galstyan-Sargsyan (2022).

Course details: 2022/23 Dates: 17th November, 1st & 22nd of December 2022 15:30-17:00	University 1 / Faculty Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV), technical studies	University 2 / Faculty University of Zadar (UniZadar), humanities
Coordinators: Polyakova, O. & Lovrović, L.	Number of students: 11, mainly male	Number of students: 9, mainly female
Organisers: UPV & UniZadar		
Research support:		
1. Project name	Education Systems in different countries	
2. Aim	To design a poster / infographics (Canva.com)	
3. Objectives	a) Identify the main features of the compared systems b) Compare the education systems of different countries c) Create visual support for the data collected d) Present the group findings.	
4. Sociocultural topics Competences	SDG 4 & 17 UPV TCs	
5. Languages	L2/3 (English)	L2/3 (English)
6. Task	Activity design, process and structure (short description) Topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past and present of education in Spain & Croatia: basic education / vocational training • Past and present of education in Spain & Croatia: higher education (tech & humanities) • Education in Spain & Croatia compared to the UK system • Education in Spain & Croatia compared to the US system 	

7. Evaluation	Description and rubric
8. Number of session	3
9. Session planning	<p>Session 1 (November, 17):</p> <p>Project presentation</p> <p>Questionnaire (pre-test)</p> <p>Teaming up</p> <p>Ice-breaker</p> <p>Reading point (1 per group)</p> <p>Discussion question</p> <p>Session 2 (December, 1):</p> <p>Refer to the main points of the Session 1</p> <p>Linking words & phrases</p> <p>CANVA & G-Drive shared docs</p> <p>Poster / infographics submissions</p> <p>Session 3 (December, 22):</p> <p>Group presentations (7-10 mins / per group)</p> <p>Discussion & feedback</p> <p>Questionnaire (post-test)</p>
10. Final session	Final task presentation and virtual exchange discussion =Session 3
11. Grading and feedback	<p>Assessment of the learning outcomes</p> <p>UPV= 0,5/10</p> <p>UniZadar= speaking part of the oral exam</p> <p>Lecturers' field notes</p>
12. Research	<p>SDG 4 & 17 + UPV TCs focus</p> <p>Quantitative & qualitative research methods</p>

III.4. Research methodology

This study process relies on educational research which guiding principle is “fitness for purpose” (Cohen et al., 2018, p.173). For connecting our research questions with the research enquiry framework (Peel, 2020; Butler, 2011), we follow the stages of (1) identifying the issue, (2) collecting the data, (3) preparing and engaging with the data,

(4) analysing thematically, (5) interpreting the data analysis and (6) composing the research paper.

Regarding specific methods, here we apply quantitative and qualitative approaches. In his thorough examination of educational research methodology, Creswell (2012) defines statistical analysis of collected numerical data as quantitative approach and text data analysis as qualitative approach. Following the guidelines of Cohen et al. (2018) and due to the reduced sample size, it was possible to design a mixed questionnaire with 7 closed questions and an open-end item.

To this end, two identical pre-/post- questionnaires with Google Forms were created for the project and validated. In both cases, we asked 20 participants to share their perceptions of individual Transversal Competences and Sustainable Development Goals achievement (closed questions, 5-point Likert scale range, numerical data) and briefly comment on the VE initiative (open response, textual information).

Therefore, the data collection process was based on two questionnaires segmented by data type: numbers and texts. Two different tools have been chosen to measure each data type. On the one hand, the Statsgraphics Centurion tool provided most of the statistical assistance for the closed questions or quantitative items reliability. On the other, Wordcloud embedded in MAXQDA tool helped analyse open questions or qualitative data.

IV. RESULTS

This section offers a two-tier -didactic and research- setting of results and discusses the experiment implications. In other words, we first present learning outcomes then followed by quantitative and qualitative analyses.

IV.1. Training outcomes

After 8 weeks of project planning and running, we finally have specific implementation results aligned with sustainability and competence development. Figure 2 shows

visuals created by the four teams, each of them representing one aspect of education in different countries. As can be seen in the above illustrations, students focused on the main features of the compared education systems and presented them clearly using digital tools.

Furthermore, the benefits of this collaboration are multiple. Since students speak different native languages, they were required to speak English in order to fulfil the tasks, thus working on their L2/3 communication skills. What is more, collaborating in international teams and comparing different education systems was beneficial for the development of their intercultural competence in international contexts as recommended by Cavalheiro (2015). Also, they were able to develop their digital skills useful for future employability (Deacon et al., 2017) as they were supposed to use an online tool to create visuals. Last but not least, they were learning how to work in teams in an intercultural environment and overcoming the challenges of virtual teamwork listed by Dubé & Robey (2009).

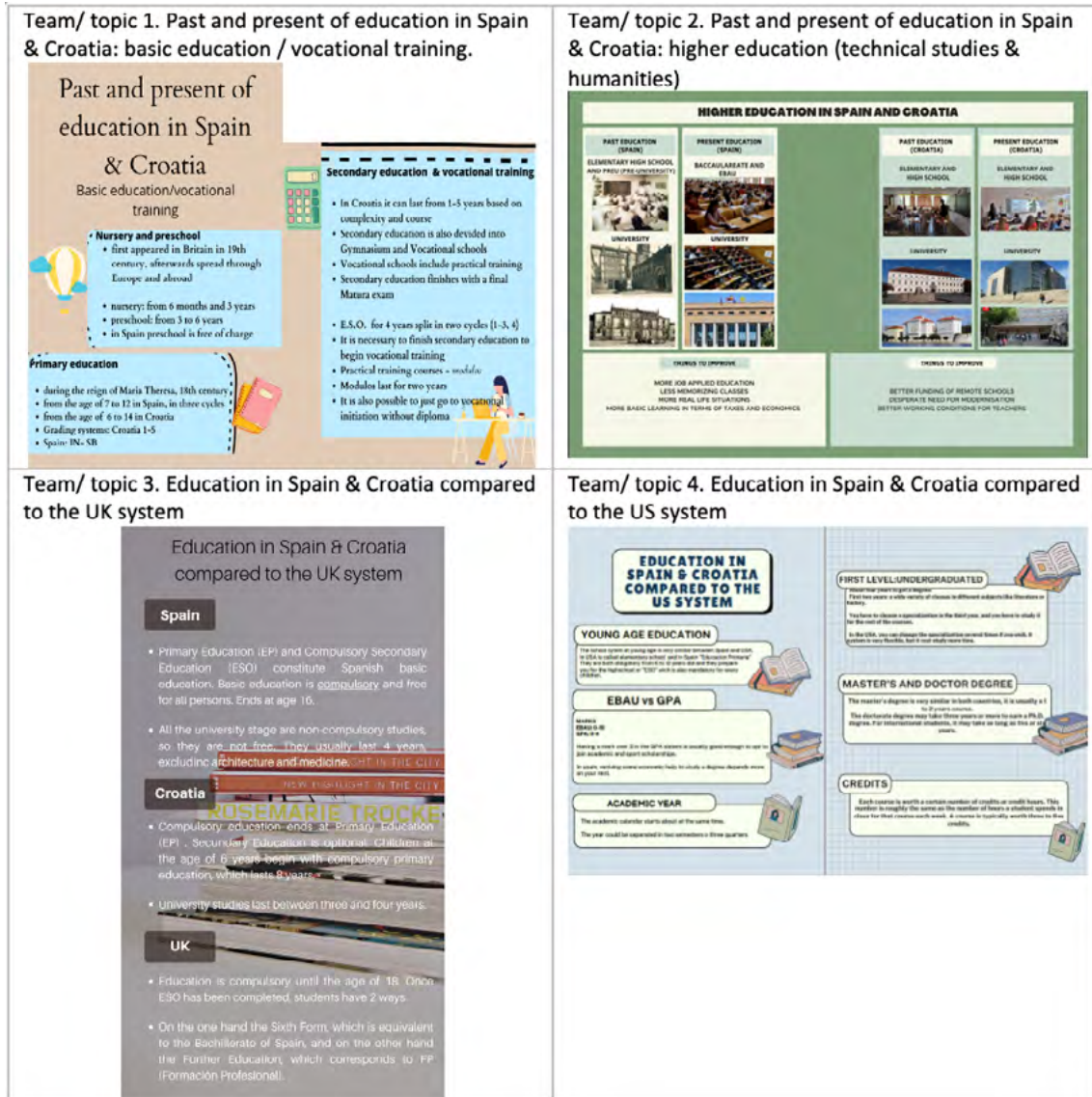


Figure 2. Virtual Exchange learning outcomes.

IV.2. Research outcomes: quantitative analysis

a) Cronbach's alpha

Before commencing a detailed scrutiny of the pre- and post-test results, the data consistency overview should be delivered. For this, Cronbach's alpha, the essential statistic indicator of reliability equalling .7 or above is often regarded as a credible threshold for a range of variables (Field et al., 2012). It can be seen from the graphs below that we obtained Cronbach's alpha for the pre-test is .72 and for the post-test .88, which shows satisfactory reliance. Attention must be paid to the pre-TC2 variable

which if omitted, would result in the greatest rise in alpha. Likewise, SDG17-post might carry a small note of caution because of the same issue.

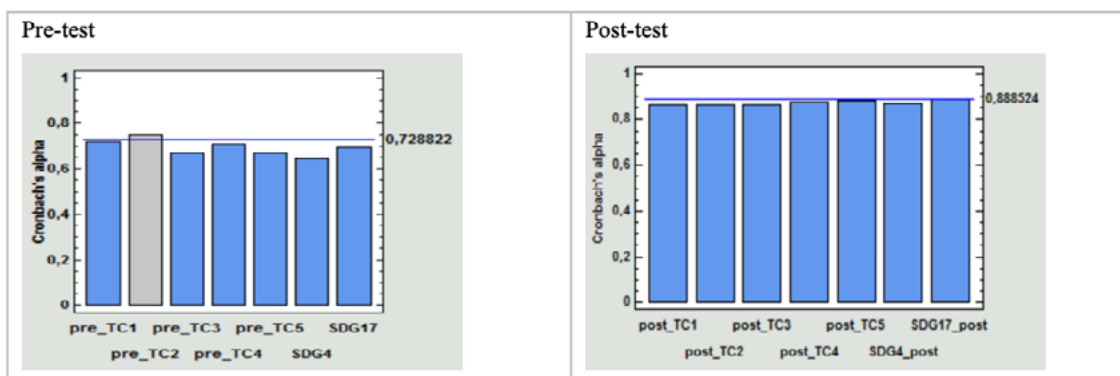


Figure 3. Pre- and post-test questionnaires' reliability.

IV.3. Research outcomes: qualitative analysis

a) Pre-test & post-test questionnaires results

To assess exchange participants' advancement, we followed a one-group pre-test and post-test pre-experimental design technique (Cohen et al., 2018). This approach to a curriculum innovation measures the differences between same-group attitudes before and after the didactics implementation. Hence, Table 2 below compares the answers of 20 participants from UPV and UniZd at the beginning and at the end of the implementation process.

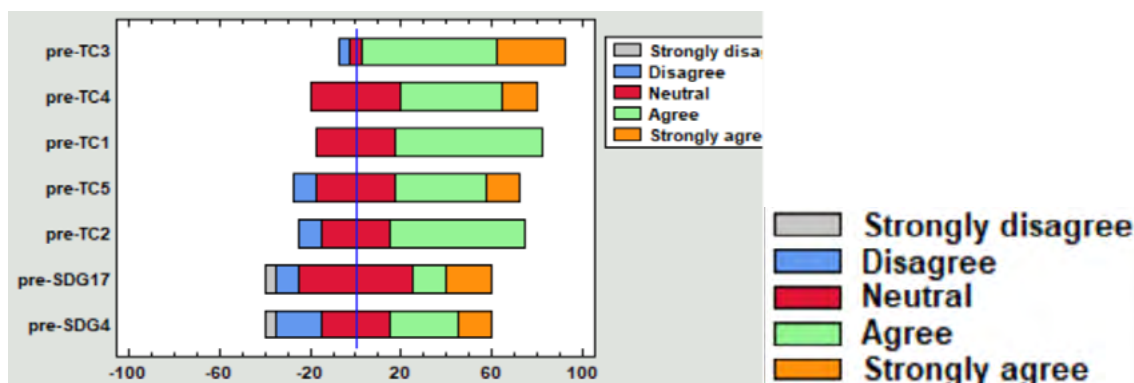
Table 2. Pre-test & post-test results, 20 students.

	Pre-test		Post-test	
	Respondents	%	Respondents	%
Question 1. Transversal competences achievement. Please, self-evaluate your understanding and application of each competence, being 1 the lowest and 5 the highest levels. [TC1: Social and environmental commitment - Act with ethics and professional responsibility in the face of social, environmental and economic challenges]:				
Strongly disagree (1)	0	0	0	0
Disagree	0	0	1	5%
Neutral	7	35%	2	10%

Agree	13	65%	10	50%
Strongly agree (5)	0	0	7	35%
Question 2. Transversal competences achievement. Please, self-evaluate your understanding and application of each competence, being 1 the lowest and 5 the highest levels. [TC2: Innovation and creativity - Propose creative and innovative solutions to complex situations or problems, specific to the field of knowledge]:				
Strongly disagree (1)	0	0	0	0
Disagree	2	10%	1	5%
Neutral	6	30%	1	5%
Agree	12	60%	10	50%
Strongly agree (5)	0	0	8	40%
Question 3. Transversal competences achievement. Please, self-evaluate your understanding and application of each competence, being 1 the lowest and 5 the highest levels. [TC3: Teamwork and leadership - Collaborate effectively in work teams, assuming responsibilities and leadership roles and contributing to collective improvement and development]:				
Strongly disagree (1)	0	0	0	0
Disagree	1	5%	1	5%
Neutral	1	5%	5	25%
Agree	12	60%	8	40%
Strongly agree (5)	6	30%	6	30%
Question 4. Transversal competences achievement. Please, self-evaluate your understanding and application of each competence, being 1 the lowest and 5 the highest levels. [TC4: Effective communication - Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, adapting to the characteristics of the situation and the audience]:				
Strongly disagree (1)	0	0	0	0
Disagree	0	0	1	5%
Neutral	8	40%	4	20%
Agree	9	45%	7	35%
Strongly agree (5)	3	15%	8	40%

Question 5. Transversal competences achievement. Please, self-evaluate your understanding and application of each competence, being 1 the lowest and 5 the highest levels. [TC5: Responsibility and decision-making - Act autonomously in learning, making informed decisions in different contexts]:				
Strongly disagree (1)	0	0	0	0
Disagree	2	10%	2	10%
Neutral	7	35%	3	15%
Agree	8	40%	11	55%
Strongly agree (5)	3	15%	4	20%
Question 6. Sustainable development goals (SDGs) achievement. Please, self-evaluate your understanding and application of each goal, being 1 the lowest and 5 the highest levels. [SDG 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all]:				
Strongly disagree (1)	0	0	0	0
Disagree	4	20%	1	5%
Neutral	6	30%	2	10%
Agree	6	30%	12	60%
Strongly agree (5)	3	15%	5	25%
Question 7. Sustainable development goals (SDGs) achievement. Please, self-evaluate your understanding and application of each goal, being 1 the lowest and 5 the highest levels. [SDG 17 - Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development]:				
Strongly disagree (1)	0	0	0	0
Disagree	2	10%	1	5%
Neutral	10	50%	5	25%
Agree	3	15%	9	45%
Strongly agree (5)	4	20%	5	25%

(a) Likert Plot, pre-test:



(b) Likert Plot, post-test:

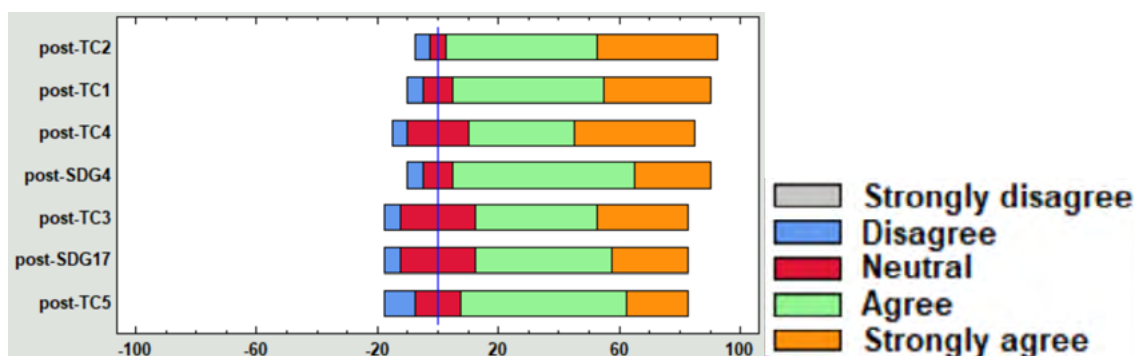


Figure 4. Likert plot of pre- and post-test data.

Table 2 and Figure 4 show the results of the pre-test and post-test, in which participants self-evaluated their understanding and application of 5 transversal competences and SDGs 4 and 17 using the Likert scale, being 1 (*strongly disagree*) the lowest and 5 (*strongly agree*) the highest level.

In the pre-test, a large number of participants (65%) showed high understanding and application of TC1 (Social and environmental commitment), whereas 35% of participants were neutral. In the post-test, a shift towards a more positive attitude can be noticed, i.e., 35% of participants strongly agreed and 50% agreed. However, 5% of participants showed the lowest level of understanding in the post-test, which was not the case in the pre-test.

As regards TC2 (Innovation and creativity), the results of the pre-test were similar with 60% of participants showing the highest level of understanding, whereas 30% were in

the middle of the scale and 10% did not show any understanding and application of the competence. In contrast, higher percentages (40% strongly agree and 50% agree) are noticeable in the post-test, whereas there is a decline in the number of participants who were neutral (5%) or disagreed (5%).

When it comes to TC3 (Teamwork and leadership), in the pre-test the majority of participants strongly agreed (30%) and agreed (60%), whereas 5% were neutral and 5% disagreed. However, in the post-test there was a tendency towards higher values with 30% of participants strongly agreeing and 40% agreeing. Also, there was a considerable number of those who were neutral and a small percentage of those disagreeing.

Even though participants showed a high level of understanding (15% strongly agreed and 45% agreed) regarding TC4 (Effective communication) in the pre-test, the values in the post-test were significantly higher (40% strongly agreed and 35% agreed). Also, there was an evident decline in the number of participants who were neutral (20% in the post-test as opposed to 40% in the pre-test). Nevertheless, in the post-test 5% of participants showed lower levels of understanding and application of the competence.

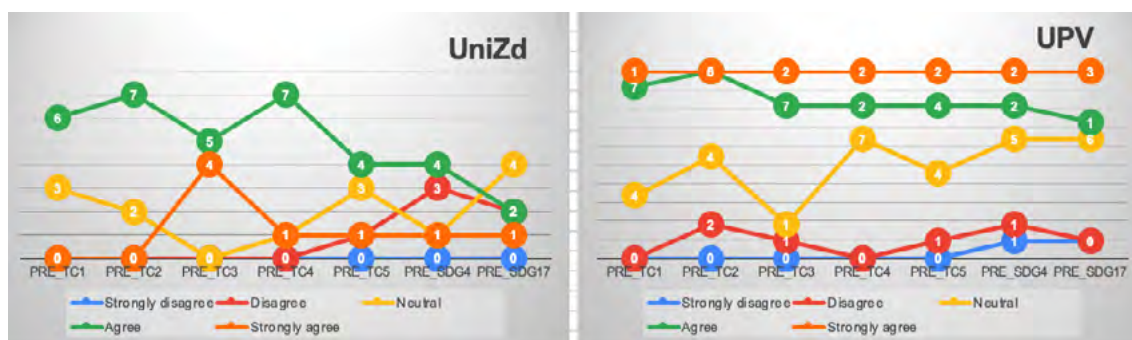
Similarly, participants showed high understanding (15% strongly agreed and 40% agreed) of TC5 (Responsibility and decision-making) in the pre-test, while 35% were neutral and 10% of them disagreed. However, in the post-test there was a tendency towards higher values with 20% of participants strongly agreeing and 55% of them agreeing with the statement. Accordingly, there was a decline in the number of those who were neutral (15%), but the number of participants who disagreed was the same (10%).

As for the understanding and application of SDG 4 “Quality education”, a tendency towards higher values is also visible in the post-test (25% strongly agreed and 60% agreed) in contrast to the pre-test in which 15% strongly agreed and 30% agreed. There was also a smaller percentage of neutral answers (10%) in the post-test compared to the pre-test (30%). Also, in the pre-test 20% of participants disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed, which is considerably higher than in the post test in which only 5% of participants disagreed.

As regards SDG 17 “Partnerships for the goals”, there are higher values in the post-test than in the pre-test as well. Precisely, 25% of participants strongly agreed and 45% agreed in the post-test, while 20% strongly agreed and 45% agreed in the pre-test. Also, there was a smaller number of those who were neutral in the post-test (25%) in comparison to the pre-test (50%). Accordingly, only 5% of participants disagreed in the pre-test, whereas in the pre-test 10% of participants disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed.

Additionally, the figures below provide the attitudes of learners measured before and after the online interaction within parameters of technical and humanities undergraduates.

Pre-test results:



Post-test results:

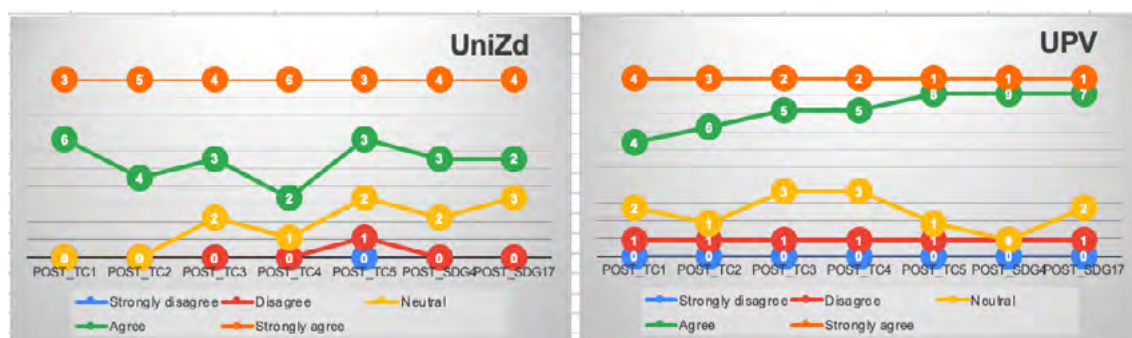


Figure 5. Graphical display of pre- and post-test data.

Figure 5 provides the overall results of the pre-test test and the post-test at both universities. It is evident that in the post-test participants showed higher values regarding their understanding and application of transversal competences and SDGs

4 and 17. However, regarding the results obtained at individual universities, it can be noticed that UPV students expressed higher values than UniZd students in the pre-test, whereas in the post-test a considerable shift towards higher values can be noticed among UniZd students as well, as shown in graphs.

b) Lecturers' field notes

The virtual exchange with the topic of *Education* was designed by the lecturers from the two universities. It took place during three synchronous sessions on Microsoft Teams and a number of asynchronous sessions organised by students. Students were divided into four teams, each discussing one of the following subtopics:

1. Past and present of education in Spain & Croatia: basic education / vocational training;
2. Past and present of education in Spain & Croatia: higher education (technical studies & humanities);
3. Education in Spain & Croatia compared to the UK system;
4. Education in Spain & Croatia compared to the US system.

The aim of the project was to design a poster/infographics using the online tool *Canva.com*, by means of which they were supposed to present their group findings. In order to do so, they needed to compare certain aspects of the education systems of different countries and identify the main features of the compared systems. Thereupon, students were required to create visual support for the data collected and to present the group findings in the final session. At the beginning and at the end of the virtual exchange, students were given a questionnaire in order to self-evaluate their understanding and application of transversal competences and SDGs 4 and 17 and to give their comments on this initiative.

c) Participants' pre-test comments

Beyond the instructors' focus, it is also revealing analyse the view stands of the students as active partakers. For addressing them, we applied a qualitative or content analysis of the last question of pre- and post-test requesting their textual comments

on the training activities. By utilizing available visual tools of MAXQDA 2020 software and adopting recommendations of Kuckartz & Rädiker (2019), we processed textual data and obtained the upcoming details:

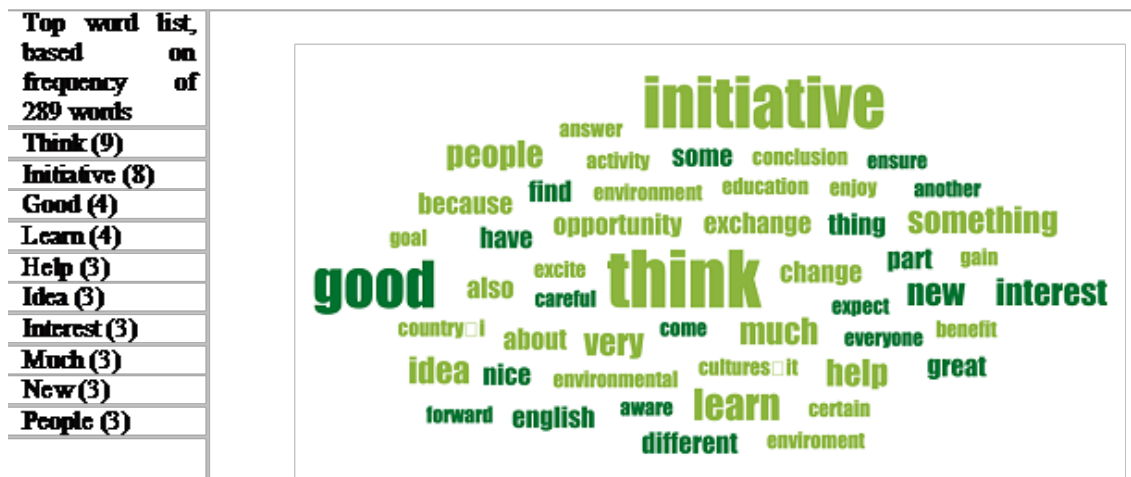


Figure 6. Word cloud information of pre-test data.

As shown in Figure 6, while giving comments about this initiative in the pre-test, participants used 289 words in total, among which the most frequently used were *think*, *initiative*, *good*, and *learn*. These show certain positive expectations of the learners.

Moreover, while reading their comments in the pre-test, they were very enthusiastic about the project as they found it beneficial for different reasons. Firstly, participants recognised the importance of the development of their intercultural competence, e.g. *“It is very interesting to meet people from another country.”* (S1); *“I find it a great opportunity for exchange of ideas and understanding thoughts of people from different cultures.”* (S2). Additionally, they expected to practice their language skills talking to native speakers of another non-English language, e.g. *“I expect enjoy the activity learning English with those students.”* (S3); *“It seems to me a good initiative to practice English and also have a good time.”* (S4).

What is more, participants were also aware of the new knowledge which could be acquired through the project, e.g. *“I find this initiative very interesting and I think that many people can benefit from it. I also think that we need to ensure the education for*

everyone and that together in this exchange we can come to certain conclusions that will help us reach our goals.” (S5); “It is a wonderful idea and I am looking forward to learning something new.” (S6); “New to this, so my knowledge on subject is mediocre, tho im willing to learn.” (S7); “I can’t wait to start and gain some new outlooks on life.” (S8); “I think that this initiative is a good way of learning something in a way that is different to what we are used to as students.” (S9).

d) Participants’ post-test comments

Due to accessibility of observations shared with us by virtual exchange students, we can look into their perceptions once the experiment was finished. Once again, the MAXQDA text processing highlights the word frequencies for building an informative visualization of data.



Figure 7. Word cloud information of post-test data.

While commenting on this initiative in the post-test (see Figure 7 above), participants used 417 words in total, which is considerably more in comparison to the pre-test. Regarding the frequency of the used words, the most repeatedly used were also the words such as *think*, *initiative*, *good*, and *learn*. However, it is evident that some additional words also came in the foreground, e.g. *like*, *English*, *experience*, *student*, *exchange* and *great*.

According to participants’ comments, their expectations were mostly fulfilled during the project of virtual exchange. They found it beneficial regarding the development

of both their intercultural competence and English language skills, e.g. *“For me, this was a great opportunity to collaborate with students from Spain and learn something new about education in Spain and Croatia, their differences and similarities.”* (S1); *“I think that this exchange has been very useful to practise English and learn things from other cultures.”* (S2); *“I really liked this virtual exchange, it showed me other ways of studying and I learned many new things about students from Valencia.”* (S3); *“But excluding that it is very useful to know new cultures and interact with other people that want to learn English.”* (S4); *“This initiative was great and useful for practising English language.”* (S5); *“This exchange has been very funny to me and my friends because we have learned English talking with Croatian people.”* (S6); *“I think that this is a great initiative to improve our English skills.”* (S7).

Furthermore, participants also appreciated the project for being innovative, e.g. *“It is an innovation and good initiative.”* (S8); *“I want to have more exchange activities like we had and really enjoyed.”* (S9); *“I think that this initiative is very well thought out and that it can help many students.”* (S10). However, a few students pointed to the shortcomings of the project, e.g. *“I think it was a very good initiative. However I think it would be better to have a little bit longer lessons so that it is possible to work closer together.”* (S11); *“It is a very interesting experience, but I think that some aspects can be improved, like the participation of the group”* (S12).

V. DISCUSSION

In designing our didactic and research procedure, we drew upon existing need for active sustainability promotion and transversal competences implementation in virtual language learning environment. Continuing with this rationale, despite the fact that O’Dowd (2019), Helm (2017), Rubin & Guth (2023) previously described this setting, we develop and apply an independent approach.

O’Dowd (2019) motivated a transnational VE model of global citizenship and suggested it as the foundation for advanced cultural and language interactive collaborations

among two nations. Instead of improving the proposal, we choose other meaningful learning outcomes such as sustainability, or SDGs, and competences, or TCs. Finally, the framework of Polyakova & Galstyan-Sargsyan (2022) is a practical choice for the didactic innovation project structure. It also enables the parties to focus on cooperation not only between students, but also actively work within the community of educators.

Sustainability

The concept of sustainability and its goals has been described before in the literature review. Notwithstanding some positive strides, it is quite challenging to apply this conceptual background to training curricula (Lenkaitis, 2022) or support the internationalisation of universities (Leal Filho et al., 2023). The task of organizing curricular activities centred on sustainability becomes increasingly intricate when integrating the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is due to the diverse range of objectives encapsulated within the SDGs, which requires a thorough and interdisciplinary approach to curriculum design and implementation. There was thus a clear necessity to establish certain priorities in this regard by selecting a limited number of goals, SDGs 4 and 17, to explore and observe their achievement.

On SDG 4, this study found that online interaction changed the focus of our learners from mainly neutral and positive to a positive and strong perception of this value. This process has been quite dynamic in the case of both technical and linguistic students. In respect of SDG 17, progress of neutral viewpoint towards more positive “agree” or “strongly agree” opinions is a valuable exchange result.

Transversal competences

A major source of motivation for adjusting transversal competences is recent work of European commission (2019, June) and Universitat Politècnica de València (2022, July). By implying five TC dimensions, UPV Institute of Education Sciences suggests a solid and quantifiable background for their attainment. Dimdiņš et al. (2022) present a thorough assessment of these transferable abilities but did not offer any small-scale evaluation version. Our approach is mainly structured upon detecting students' competence level self-assessment before and after pedagogical practice.

The research outcomes regarding the evolution of five transversal competences are in alignment, demonstrating a heightened level of positive attitude and a more robust consensus on their beneficial impact. As Figure 4 shows, it is surprising that virtual exchange moved the majority of neutral or undecided opinions to more optimistic “agree” or “strongly agree” fields. However, the observed this upward trend to be clearer in UPV data as compared to UniZd responses. Further research into this difference might be required to establish its causes.

In the process of designing and implementing our approach, we drew upon extant literature in the related fields. Diverging from prior techniques that were tailored to specific foreign language and intercultural experiences and similar training settings, our research setting encompasses mixed contexts, including engineering studies and humanities, and involves learners with varying levels of voluntary or mandatory engagement and degrees of exposure. Nonetheless, we have observed an exponential growth in the transversal competences proficiency and comprehension of sustainable goals among the diverse groups of learners at UPV (mainly male) and UniZd (mainly female).

VI. CONCLUSIONS

We established a sustainability- and competence-based and development strategy for L2/3 university students. Once the project aims and focus were chosen (Step 1), organizational framework encompassed the stages of planning and design (Step 2), implementation (Step 3) and, finally, results and evaluation (Step 4). With the help of meaningful learning goals, we have demonstrated an innovative of layering didactic and research procedures in online collaboration.

By integrating these methods in the Sustainable Development Goals and transversal competences’ project, we provided a deeper insight into the complexity of virtual exchange structure and outperformed the initial methodological SAVL model. We also discovered that virtual exchange aimed at different education systems has encouraged

technical and humanities' undergraduates to be more creative, communicative, responsible and sensible.

In the light of the experimental findings, we can answer the original research questions:

RQ1 How could we relate Sustainable Development Goals to virtual exchange?

The relevance of sustainability issues is clearly by the SDGs 4 and 17. The two-tier project setting has undertaken quality education and partnerships as the core instruction area for mixed VE groups as well as self-assessment of achievement. The participant not only showed more positive appreciation of both goals, but also highlighted intercultural value of online interaction. In the end, this purposeful cooperation raised awareness among young of the importance of sustainability. The virtual component also fostered the mentoring role of lecturers and brought them closer to the learning community. Besides, the experience inspired both lecturers to apply for new didactic innovation projects.

RQ2 What are the possibilities for relating transversal competences to virtual exchange activities?

This project has illustrated the best practices of linking digital format of communication with general capacity building of university students. Even advancing positively in terms of TC1 (Social and environmental commitment), TC2 (Innovation and creativity), TC4 (Effective communication) and TC5 (Responsibility and decision-making), the learners spotted certain challenges in TC 3 (Teamwork and leadership). On the plus side, pre- and post-test results analysis has offered positive feedback on TC4 and related it to new ways of interacting with new people, discovering engaging topics and learning English.

RQ3 What is the most significant effect of virtual exchange experience in technical and non-technical/ humanities students?

This project was undertaken to develop a meaningful curricular practice and assess its outcomes. Its contribution to harmonising instruction and research options in online setting might be considered of importance by higher education stakeholders. Here we

would like to specify the initiative effect on each of the education community parts. For students, it is about enriching active learning process by their own abilities' assessment in addition to L2/3 and intercultural proficiency. For lecturers and researchers, there is a better connection of pedagogical innovations, scholarly techniques and online cooperation systems. For universities, it has to do with a new vision of deeper knowledge on integrating sustainability and competences in the training process through a direct implication of students, faculty and society.

Although the current study is based on a small sample of technical and language studies participants, the findings explore the potential of tailored modes of virtual co-education. Several other shortcomings such as certain incompatibility of schedules need for quality interaction within mixed groups, extra time required for organising and mentoring the exchange do not alter the values of the results obtained. Future work aimed at wider implementation of these types of collaborative experiences and search for feasible solutions for this set of issues should be done in the nearest future.

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English Language Proficiency and Career Opportunities: Perceptions of Indonesian University Graduates

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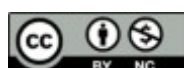
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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the crucial role of English Language Proficiency (ELP) in shaping career prospects amid Indonesia's dynamic job market. The study aims to comprehend the viewpoints of recent Indonesian university graduates on the significance of English proficiency for their professional growth, considering the escalating global interconnectedness where English is pivotal for professional communication. Conducted qualitatively with 30 graduates from diverse academic fields, the research reveals unanimous agreement among participants regarding the paramount importance of English proficiency in career advancement, particularly in international contexts. Despite this consensus, a significant gap exists between employers' expectations and graduates' actual capabilities, emphasizing the need for improved English language education at the university level. The study also highlights varied experiences of graduates in utilizing English across sectors, emphasizing its critical role in navigating professional challenges. The findings underscore the urgency for educational institutions to revise English language training to meet global economic demands. This adaptation aims to equip Indonesian graduates with practical language skills crucial for professional success and global competitiveness. The research advocates for policy and strategy revisions, encouraging policymakers and educational leaders to enhance language training frameworks in Indonesian universities for comprehensive career development.

Keywords: *English as a foreign language; education; proficiency; career; educational policy.*



I. INTRODUCTION

In an era where globalization is redefining economic and cultural boundaries, the role of English Language Proficiency (ELP) as a critical component of professional success has become increasingly evident (Valdés, Kibler, & Walqui, 2014). This global phenomenon is particularly in non-native English-speaking countries, where mastery of English is a critical factor in career advancement and international engagement. Communicating effectively in English opens doors to multinational collaboration, access to global knowledge resources, and participation in international projects, making it a vital skill in the modern, interconnected world (Gronwald, 2017). In this context, this research explores how Indonesian university graduates perceive the impact of English language proficiency on their career opportunities. The investigation is rooted in how global language dynamics intersect with local employment landscapes, particularly in the rapidly developing Indonesian economy. As countries continue to integrate into the global market, their workforce faces the challenge of adapting to the linguistic demands of this new era (Tavares, Azevedo, Marques, & Bastos, 2023). This study aims to understand how the nation's future leaders and professionals – the university graduates – view and respond to this challenge. By examining their perceptions, the research sheds light on the broader implications of English proficiency for personal and professional development in the globalized world.

The ascension of English as a global lingua franca has transformed it from a mere communication tool into a strategic asset in the global job market. English proficiency is often viewed as a gateway to better job opportunities, higher salaries, and international mobility (Camilleri, 2020). This transformation is driven by the language's widespread use in business, science, technology, and academic discourse, making it an essential skill for professionals aspiring to operate globally. In Indonesia, this trend is particularly noticeable. The country, characterized by its diverse cultural landscape and dynamic economy, is experiencing a surge in the demand for English proficiency in the workplace. This increasing demand results from various factors, including Indonesia's

active participation in international trade, the growing presence of multinational corporations, and the rising importance of the tourism sector (Verico & Pangestu, 2021).

Moreover, the Indonesian government's focus on enhancing the nation's competitiveness in the global economy has further emphasized the need for a workforce proficient in English (O'Regan, 2021). This situation has profound implications for the country's education system, particularly at the university level, where preparing students for the global job market is becoming an increasingly important objective. Against this backdrop, the study aims to explore the perspectives of Indonesian university graduates – the individuals most directly impacted by these trends – on the role of English proficiency in shaping their career trajectories and opportunities.

However, despite the recognized importance of English proficiency in the Indonesian professional setting, a notable discrepancy exists between the expectations of employers and the actual English language skills of university graduates (Zein, Sukyadi, Hamied, & Lengkanawati, 2020). Many Indonesian graduates find themselves inadequately prepared to meet the English language demands of their professional lives (Pambudi & Harjanto, 2020). This mismatch is a linguistic issue and reflects deeper educational and structural challenges. It raises critical questions about the effectiveness of English language education in Indonesian universities, particularly in terms of its alignment with the actual needs of the evolving job market. Are the teaching methodologies, curriculum design, and the overall language education strategy in Indonesian higher education institutions tailored effectively to equip students with the practical language skills they require in their professional lives (Goodson, 2018)? This gap between academic preparation and professional requirements suggests a potential disconnect in the educational process, highlighting a need for a closer examination of language education policies and practices within the country.

The current study seeks to explore the perceptions of Indonesian university graduates regarding the role of English proficiency in shaping their career paths. While existing literature extensively covers the importance of ELP for career advancement on a global

scale, there is limited insight into how these global trends translate into Indonesia's specific cultural and economic context (Lie, Chau, Jacobs, Zhu, & Winarlim, 2022). The Indonesian archipelago presents a distinct landscape for studying language proficiency and its professional implications. Moreover, studies examine the effectiveness of English language education in Indonesia, but few have delved into the perspectives of university graduates who have recently transitioned into the professional world (Sullivan & Al Ariss, 2021). This group represents a critical demographic, as they are at the forefront of confronting and navigating the challenges and opportunities that arise from the intersection of language proficiency and professional aspirations. Their insights can provide a valuable understanding of English language education and the broader socio-economic implications of language proficiency in the Indonesian context.

The relevance of this study extends far beyond mere academic interest, touching upon various facets of educational and professional realms in Indonesia. By understanding how Indonesian university graduates perceive the impact of English proficiency on their careers (Frantz, Bailey, Starr, & Perea, 2014), this research can provide valuable insights for a range of stakeholders. For educational policymakers and curriculum designers, the findings of this study offer an opportunity to reassess and potentially revamp the current English language education strategies. These insights can lead to the development of more effective English language programs tailored to better prepare students for the linguistic demands of the global job market (Warschauer, 2000). Such improvements enhance language proficiency and foster Indonesian graduates' competitiveness and global readiness.

For employers within Indonesia and internationally, the study's insights can inform recruitment strategies and professional development programs. Employers can better understand the workforce's capabilities and needs by understanding the graduates' perspectives on English proficiency and its role in their career development (Itani, Järllström, & Piekkari, 2015). This understanding is crucial for designing targeted training programs, enhancing communication skills, and ensuring a workforce with the necessary language skills to navigate the global business environment effectively.

Moreover, this study serves as a platform for the graduates to voice their experiences and challenges. Their insights have the potential to influence future educational and employment policies, ensuring that these policies are more aligned with the actual needs and aspirations of the workforce (Curaj, Deca, & Pricopie, 2018).

The motivation for this research stems from recognizing the critical role language plays in the professional and personal lives in a globalized world. English, as a global lingua franca, is more than a communication tool; it is a key that unlocks opportunities, fosters cross-cultural understanding, and enables participation in a broader dialogue (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019). This study attempts to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the implications of English proficiency in non-native English-speaking contexts. With its rich cultural diversity and dynamic economic landscape, Indonesia provides an ideal backdrop for exploration. The country's unique position as a rapidly developing economy at the crossroads of traditional values and modern global influences makes it a fascinating case for examining the role of English proficiency.

Additionally, the research aims to bridge the gap between theoretical discussions about the global role of English and the practical realities university graduates face in specific local contexts. By focusing on the perceptions of these graduates, the study offers a unique lens through which to view the complex interplay between language proficiency and career development. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how theoretical concepts about language and globalization manifest in the lives of individuals, shaping their career paths and professional identities. Ultimately, this research endeavours to enrich the academic discourse on language proficiency in professional contexts and provide actionable insights for educational and professional practices in Indonesia. By exploring the perceptions of Indonesian university graduates, the study aims to illuminate the multifaceted relationship between English language proficiency and career opportunities in the context of a rapidly evolving global economy. The findings are expected to contribute to a broader understanding of language education's role in professional development, offering perspectives that could inform policy and practice in Indonesia and similar contexts globally.

II. METHOD

Procedure

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the perceptions of Indonesian university graduates regarding the impact of English language proficiency on their career opportunities. The study used a phenomenological approach to gain in-depth insights into the participants' lived experiences and subjective perspectives. This approach aligns with the study's objective to understand the nuances of individual experiences and the meaning graduates assign to English proficiency in their professional lives.

The study focused on engaging Indonesian university graduates who completed their education within the last five years, aiming to capture fresh and relevant experiences directly linked to the current job market. It employed a purposive sampling strategy to select the participants. This approach allowed the researcher to deliberately choose individuals representing a wide range of ages, genders, various academic disciplines, and professional sectors. Such diversity ensured that the study captured a broad spectrum of perspectives and experiences, enhancing the richness and depth of the data.

This study chose the sample size based on the principle of saturation, a point in qualitative research where additional interviews cease to yield new themes or insights. In practice, this meant continuously analysing the data throughout the data collection process and stopping once it became evident that additional interviews were not providing new information. This approach led to the participation of around 30 graduates, effectively balancing the depth of individual experiences with the breadth of different viewpoints. These graduates offered diverse experiences, making their contributions invaluable for the analysis. Their varied backgrounds and recent entry into the professional world provided a rich and nuanced understanding of how English language proficiency intersects with career opportunities in Indonesia's unique context.

The age range of participants varied significantly, spanning from early 20s to mid-30s. This range included younger graduates, typically between 22 and 25, who had recently entered the job market, offering insights into the immediate impacts of university education on career opportunities. Additionally, the study involved participants in their late 20s to mid-30s who had a few years of professional experience. This group provided a longer-term perspective on how English proficiency influenced their career trajectory.

The research focused on graduates from various universities across Indonesia, including both public and private institutions. Participants worked in various professional fields: business, technology, education, and healthcare, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of different industry perspectives. The study occurred in an urban setting in Indonesia, where the concentration of multinational companies and international opportunities provided a relevant backdrop for the research.

The study invited participants to semi-structured interviews spanning 45 to 60 minutes. Interviewers conducted these sessions in Bahasa Indonesia or English, aligning with each participant's language preference. This choice aimed to facilitate a comfortable atmosphere for the participants, ensuring they could express themselves clearly and without linguistic barriers. Before commencing each interview, interviewers thoroughly briefed participants on the study's objectives, emphasizing the strict confidentiality maintained for all responses. Participants also received information about their rights within the study, including the freedom to withdraw from the research at any point without any consequences. Such measures were vital in establishing an ethical and respectful research environment. The process involved obtaining informed consent from all participants to formalize the participants' agreement to partake in the study and to ensure ethical research standards. This consent process was an essential step in ensuring that participants were fully aware of the nature of the research, their role, and the handling of the information they provided.

The interview guide, meticulously designed for this study, consisted of open-ended questions to draw out detailed and in-depth responses about the participants'

experiences and perceptions. The guide facilitated a comprehensive exploration of topics central to the study's objectives. Questions delved into how participants perceived the role of English proficiency in their job search and career advancement, offering insights into the real-world implications of language skills in the job market. Further, the guide probed into their experiences with English language education at the university level, aiming to understand the adequacy and relevance of their linguistic training to their professional needs. Additionally, questions explored the perceived value of English proficiency across various professional contexts, shedding light on how English skills are viewed in different industries and sectors within the Indonesian job market. This diverse range of questions was critical in painting a holistic picture of English proficiency in the professional lives of Indonesian university graduates.

For data analysis, the study adopted a meticulous and systematic approach. All interviews underwent a thorough process of transcription, capturing the conversations verbatim. Translators were engaged where necessary to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the data in cases where interviews occurred in Bahasa, Indonesia. Following transcription, the study employed thematic analysis to deeply dissect and understand the data. This analysis entailed an iterative process that began with a detailed reading of the transcripts to immerse in the data. Initial codes were generated, capturing key ideas and concepts from the participants' responses. The subsequent step involved searching for patterns and themes among these initial codes, which facilitated the organization of the data into meaningful clusters. This stage was iterative, involving constant comparison and refinement of themes. The final phase of the analysis involved defining and naming the themes and distilling the essence of the participants' experiences and perceptions into coherent and descriptive categories.

The study incorporated a member-checking process to enhance the trustworthiness and validity of the findings. This process involved sharing the thematic analysis with a subset of participants, allowing them to review the interpretations and provide feedback. This step was crucial in ensuring the authenticity of the findings and that

the analysis accurately reflected the participants' perspectives and experiences. The study adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects. Participant confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process. All personal identifiers were removed or altered in reporting the findings to ensure anonymity.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study thoughtfully engaged a cohort of 30 Indonesian university graduates, each of whom had completed their tertiary education within the preceding five years. This stringent temporal criterion was meticulously applied to capture contemporary and pertinent experiences directly associated with the current employment landscape. Our participants showcased diverse characteristics, enriching the study's breadth and depth. Spanning a broad spectrum of ages, participants ranged from the early 20s, representing fresh graduates who had recently embarked on their professional journeys, to those in their mid-30s, boasting a few years of valuable career experience. This age variance enriched the data by providing insights into the immediate impacts of university education and the long-term effects of English proficiency on career development. Participants hailed from many academic backgrounds, including but not limited to technology, education, healthcare, and business. This heterogeneity was intentional to ensure that the study encapsulated a holistic range of perspectives. It permitted us to delve into the sector-specific nuances of English proficiency's impact on career opportunities.

III.1. English Proficiency Levels

Within the eclectic participant pool, self-assessment of English proficiency revealed a diverse landscape. While some participants confidently appraised themselves as highly proficient across all language domains - speaking, writing, listening, and reading - others exhibited a nuanced awareness of areas within English proficiency where they believed there existed scope for enhancement. This spectrum of self-evaluation forms a foundational backdrop against the impact of English proficiency

on career opportunities. A prevailing consensus emerged among the participants regarding the paramount importance of English language proficiency in the context of their careers. They universally regarded it as an invaluable asset that wielded the power to unlock many opportunities within the professional realm. Their shared belief rested on tangible experiences, recounted vividly during the interviews, where English proficiency was pivotal in advancing their careers or adeptly navigating intricate professional challenges. The narratives they shared painted a rich tapestry of real-world scenarios. These ranged from instances where their adept English skills secured coveted job positions through successful interviews to those where their language proficiency facilitated seamless participation in international collaborations and negotiations. Such experiences were not confined to a singular sector but spanned the diverse professions in the participant group.

III.2. Career Advancement

The resonance of English proficiency within the context of career advancement reverberated profoundly among our participants. Those who had honed their English language skills to a high degree shared compelling narratives that highlighted the instrumental role of English in propelling their careers to new heights. The impact was particularly discernible when engaging with global client partners and navigating cross-border collaborations. A salient finding was the direct correlation between English proficiency and promotion opportunities. Participants attested that their adeptness in English had positioned them as valuable assets within their organizations. They shared experiences where their language prowess enabled them to effectively liaise with international clients, negotiate intricate deals, and manage global projects. In these instances, English proficiency was not merely an auxiliary skill but a pivotal determinant in their career trajectory. Beyond its functional utility, participants widely believed that a higher level of English proficiency conferred a significant competitive advantage within their respective fields. The ability to seamlessly engage with global stakeholders, articulate ideas fluently, and navigate the complexities of cross-cultural communication had catapulted them ahead of their

peers. This competitive edge was particularly pronounced in sectors characterized by international reach, reinforcing the indispensable role of English proficiency in modern career dynamics.

III.3. Professional Interactions

The realm of professional interactions bore testimony to the ubiquity of English proficiency in the everyday lives of our participants. It was not confined to specific moments or high-stakes situations but permeated their professional existence. Participants expounded on how English proficiency underpinned effective communication within their professional ecosystems. They described instances where it was pivotal in articulating complex ideas, negotiating with clients and partners, and collaborating on international projects. This effective communication extended to daily interactions with colleagues, where the seamless exchange of information in English streamlined processes and facilitated a cohesive work environment. Beyond its functional utility, participants recognized that English proficiency enhanced their ability to establish and maintain professional relationships. Engaging with colleagues, clients, and stakeholders from diverse linguistic backgrounds requires linguistic competence and cultural sensitivity. The participants who excelled in English navigated these complexities with finesse, fostering stronger connections and bolstering their professional reputations.

III.4. Global Opportunities

The participants' aspirations and perceptions regarding global opportunities further underscored the overarching significance of English proficiency within their career narratives. For some participants, English proficiency symbolized a gateway to international or global career opportunities. They articulated their aspirations to work abroad, recognizing that English proficiency was an indispensable prerequisite for thriving in an international work environment. The allure of international experiences, bolstered by the belief that English proficiency was a universal key to unlocking these opportunities, showcased the enduring appeal of global careers among our cohort.

Educational Preparation

Participants' reflections on their university education provided valuable insights into the role of academia in shaping their English proficiency and readiness for the professional world. This dimension of our study encapsulated a nuanced spectrum of perspectives, showcasing the complexities of how universities prepare graduates in terms of language skills. Within this cohort, participants exhibited a range of opinions regarding the adequacy of their university education in cultivating English proficiency. Some participants expressed contentment with the level of preparation they received, acknowledging that their institutions had equipped them with a solid foundation. They credited their university programs for instilling linguistic competence and providing opportunities for language enhancement.

In contrast, some participants desired improvements in university English language training. They articulated the need for more robust and immersive language programs that could better prepare students for the demands of the professional world. Some participants felt that the emphasis on English within their curricula had been insufficient, leaving them to bridge the proficiency gap post-graduation. These findings illuminated participants' diverse expectations and experiences regarding their educational journey. The dichotomy between those who felt adequately prepared and those who desired enhancements underscored the variability in English language training across different universities and programs. It also highlighted the challenges universities face in tailoring language education to meet the diverse needs of their student body.

III.5. Personal Experiences and Observations

Participants' narratives regarding personal experiences and observations provided a poignant dimension to our study, offering a glimpse into the tangible impact of English proficiency on career trajectories. Additionally, these reflections unearthed perceptions of how language skills influenced professional success, both personally and personally. Personal anecdotes shared by participants vividly illustrated how English

proficiency had significantly influenced their career journeys. These narratives ranged from securing coveted job positions due to superior language skills to successfully leading international projects. Such accounts underscored the real-world implications of language proficiency, demonstrating that it extended beyond a mere qualification to a tangible asset in pursuing professional goals. Participants also keenly observed the correlation between strong English proficiency and career success among their colleagues and peers. They noted that individuals who excelled in English tended to thrive in their careers, often ascending the professional ladder more rapidly. These observations reinforced the notion that English proficiency was not only an individual attribute but also a characteristic that contributed to organizational success and leadership potential.

III.6. Future Perspectives

The participants' reflections on future perspectives offered valuable foresight into the enduring relevance of English language proficiency within the Indonesian job market. It encapsulated their collective wisdom, emphasizing the evolving role of English skills in career prospects and the broader employment landscape. Participants extended heartfelt advice to current university students, underlining the importance of English proficiency for their future careers. They encouraged students to proactively enhance their language skills, recognizing that proficiency in English was a cornerstone of success in an increasingly interconnected world.

Additionally, participants engaged in forward-looking discussions regarding the evolving role of English language proficiency in the Indonesian job market. They predicted that English proficiency would continue to be a valuable and sought-after skill, enabling individuals to access a broader spectrum of employment opportunities and connect with a global professional community. The participants' insights suggested that the landscape of career preparation was evolving, with English language proficiency becoming an ever-more critical factor. Their perspectives aligned with the broader trends of globalization and internationalization, where English proficiency was increasingly perceived as a prerequisite for professional advancement and competitiveness.

IV. DISCUSSION

The comprehensive interview data drawn from 30 Indonesian university graduates offers illuminating insights into English language proficiency's multifaceted and far-reaching impact of English language proficiency on their career opportunities. These findings underscore English proficiency's paramount importance in the contemporary job market, transcending demographic factors such as career stage, sector, and professional interactions.

IV.1. Universality of English Proficiency Perception

The resounding consensus among the 30 Indonesian university graduates interviewed in this study underscores the universal acknowledgment of the pivotal role played by English language proficiency in shaping career opportunities. Regardless of their career stage, be it recent graduates in their early 20s or those with several years of professional experience in their mid-30s, participants unanimously recognized the critical importance of English proficiency in navigating the contemporary job market. This unanimity indicates a broader trend in which English proficiency has transitioned from a mere desirable asset to an imperative skill, reflecting the inexorable forces of globalization and internationalization shaping the employment landscape.

This overwhelming agreement among the participants also sheds light on the evolving dynamics of the Indonesian job market, where English proficiency is increasingly viewed as a critical differentiator among candidates. The ability to communicate effectively in English is seen as a means to compete in a more globalized job market and as a crucial tool for professional development and networking. Consequently, there is a growing demand for English language training and resources that are more accessible and aligned with the specific needs of Indonesian professionals. This shift underscores a more extensive cultural and educational transformation, where proficiency in English is not just a professional requirement but a gateway to broader opportunities and a more profound understanding of the global professional ecosystem.

IV.2. Enhanced Employability through English Proficiency

The findings of this study substantiate the assertion that English proficiency significantly enhances employability. Participants contributed compelling narratives that vividly illustrated how their language skills had directly influenced job selection and interview outcomes. These narratives highlight the tangible advantage that linguistic competence in English confers upon candidates in a highly competitive job market. In essence, language proficiency emerges not merely as a desirable trait but as a practical asset capable of decisively tipping the scales in favour of job seekers.

Moreover, the study reveals that English proficiency extends beyond basic communication skills, encompassing the ability to understand and adapt to cultural nuances and business etiquettes inherent in international workplaces. This comprehensive skill set enables candidates to engage more effectively in diverse business environments, often making them more appealing to multinational corporations and organizations with global outreach. Such adaptability and cultural awareness, powered by linguistic proficiency, are increasingly critical components of a well-rounded professional profile. Therefore, English proficiency not only opens doors to employment opportunities but also enhances the capacity for meaningful international collaboration and career growth in a globally interconnected professional landscape.

IV.3. Language Skills as Catalysts for Career Advancement

The influence of English proficiency on career advancement emerges as a prominent theme within the dataset. Participants who excelled in English shared anecdotes that provided compelling evidence of how their language skills facilitated their entry into the professional sphere and accelerated their upward trajectory. They narrated experiences where linguistic competence had opened doors to promotions and leadership roles, particularly in contexts involving international clients and projects. This finding underscores the undeniable link between language skills and career progression, emphasizing that linguistic proficiency is more than a mere qualification; it is a tangible asset that can propel individuals to leadership positions within their respective fields.

In addition to facilitating initial employment and promotions, participants also highlighted the role of English proficiency in enhancing professional credibility and influence. Those adept in English often found themselves in positions where they could effectively bridge communication gaps between diverse teams, act as liaisons in international projects, and contribute to strategic decision-making processes. Their ability to articulate complex ideas fluently and confidently in English bolstered their professional standing and enabled them to foster stronger relationships with colleagues, clients, and stakeholders across cultural boundaries. Therefore, this aspect of linguistic competence transcends mere job performance, elevating individuals to become critical contributors and influencers in their organizations and shaping them into global professionals equipped to navigate and lead in an increasingly interconnected world.

IV.4. Sector-Specific Nuances of English Proficiency

One of this study's nuanced yet significant findings pertains to the sector-specific impact of English proficiency. While the technology and business sectors consistently place a high premium on English proficiency, it is noteworthy that the healthcare and education sectors also acknowledged the growing relevance of this skill. This nuanced observation reveals that the role of English proficiency in shaping career opportunities is not uniform across all industries. Instead, it suggests that specific sectors may require targeted strategies to effectively harness the full potential of language skills. The sector-specific nuances underscore the need for tailored approaches in addressing the diverse linguistic demands of different professional domains.

In light of this, it becomes imperative for language training programs to be customized according to sector-specific needs. For instance, the healthcare sector may benefit from a curriculum that emphasizes medical terminology and patient communication, while the education sector might require a focus on academic language and instructional skills. Such specialized training enhances the relevance of language proficiency in these fields and ensures that professionals are better equipped to handle their respective sectors' unique challenges and communication demands. This approach fosters sector-specific competency and improves these industries' professional standards and service quality.

The study, therefore, advocates for a more strategic and sector-sensitive approach to English language education, recognizing that one-size-fits-all solutions are inadequate in addressing the varied and complex demands of today's professional landscape.

IV.5. Educational Institutions and Language Training

Participants' perspectives on their university education offer valuable insights into the role of educational institutions in preparing graduates for the professional world. The mixed views regarding the efficacy of university English language training underscore the need for continuous improvements in English language curricula. Universities play a pivotal role in equipping graduates with the language skills necessary for success in the professional realm. Therefore, this finding serves as a clarion call for educational institutions to adapt and align their language programs with the evolving demands of industries to enhance graduates' employability effectively. The participants' diverse perspectives highlight the importance of fostering an educational environment that imparts linguistic competence and cultivates the practical language skills required in real-world professional contexts.

Furthermore, the feedback suggests a growing need for educational institutions to integrate real-world applications into their language training programs. This integration could include industry-specific language modules, practical communication workshops, and partnerships with multinational corporations for experiential learning. Such initiatives could bridge the gap between academic language proficiency and the practical demands of the global workforce. By fostering a more holistic and applied approach to language education, universities can empower students with theoretical knowledge and the confidence and skills to navigate diverse and dynamic professional environments. This evolution in language training is crucial in preparing students to become effective communicators and agile professionals in a rapidly changing global job market.

IV.6. Aspirations for Global Opportunities

The aspirational aspect of English proficiency, where participants expressed their intentions to work abroad, further substantiates its indispensable role in global career

opportunities. This aspiration mirrors broader internationalization trends, where language skills are considered a passport to a global career and a gateway to diverse professional experiences. The participants' desire for global opportunities underscores the enduring appeal of English proficiency to transcend geographic boundaries and access a broader spectrum of international career prospects. Moreover, the mastery of English not only serves as a key to unlocking international career paths and fosters a deeper understanding of diverse cultures and global perspectives. This linguistic proficiency enables individuals to engage more effectively in international teams, understand diverse viewpoints, and adapt to varying business practices. The participants' emphasis on English proficiency highlights its role as a functional skill but as a crucial component for cultural literacy and international collaboration. Such linguistic dexterity becomes invaluable, enabling professionals to navigate and contribute to a multicultural and dynamic global workforce.

IV.7. Implications for Policymakers and Educational Institutions

The findings derived from this study carry significant implications for policymakers and educational institutions alike. The resounding consensus among participants regarding the pivotal role of English language proficiency in career opportunities underscores the necessity for a sustained emphasis on language skills within Indonesia's educational and professional domains in Indonesia. Policymakers must recognize the profound influence of language proficiency on employability and tailor policies to address the evolving landscape of language skills within the contemporary job market. On the other hand, Educational institutions are responsible for aligning their language programs with industry demands to ensure that graduates are adequately prepared for the dynamic and interconnected world of work. The diverse perspectives offered by the participants in this study serve as a compelling argument for the perpetuated emphasis on English proficiency in education and professional development, reflecting the evolving nature of language skills in shaping career trajectories.

The findings of this study also highlight the need for a holistic approach to language education that extends beyond traditional classroom instruction. The evolving

dynamics of the global job market demand a more integrated, practical approach to English language training, encompassing experiential learning, industry collaborations, and exposure to real-world linguistic environments. Educational institutions should consider partnerships with businesses and international organizations to offer students practical opportunities to apply their language skills professionally. This partnership could include internships, project collaborations, and participation in international conferences and workshops. Such experiences enhance language proficiency and equip students with a deeper understanding of the cultural and communicative nuances essential for global professional success. Furthermore, this approach would foster a more seamless transition from academic learning to professional application, better-preparing graduates for the challenges of a dynamic, linguistically diverse workplace. The integration of practical language application within educational programs is paramount in ensuring that graduates do not merely possess theoretical knowledge of English but are proficient in its practical, day-to-day use in a professional setting.

V. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the culmination of this rigorous exploration into the impact of English language proficiency on the career opportunities of 30 Indonesian university graduates unveils a multifaceted tapestry of linguistic competence intricately woven into the fabric of their professional lives. The insights gleaned from this investigation, enriched by candid and reflective interviews with participants, have illuminated a comprehensive panorama of the indispensable role played by English proficiency in shaping the trajectories of these graduates within the contemporary job market. This culmination offers a compelling testament to the universal recognition among participants, spanning diverse career stages, sectors, and professional interactions, regarding the instrumental importance of English language skills in their career journeys.

While this study offers invaluable insights into the perceptions and experiences of Indonesian university graduates, it also illuminates potential avenues for future research

to explore more deeply and extensively. Future studies could delve into the specific linguistic demands of various professional sectors, shedding light on how proficiency in English resonates within distinct industries to gain a more granular understanding of the nuanced impact of English proficiency on career opportunities. Longitudinal studies tracking the career trajectories of graduates over an extended period could provide illuminating insights into the enduring effects of English language proficiency on professional success, thus addressing the need for comprehensive research that spans the continuum of their professional lives. Furthermore, comparative studies scrutinizing the regional dynamics of language proficiency within Indonesia could yield valuable insights into the geographic variations that may influence career prospects and linguistic competence.

The implications of this study extend far beyond the confines of academic research, carrying profound significance for policymakers and educational institutions that shape the educational landscape in Indonesia. The unequivocal consensus among participants regarding the central role of English language proficiency in shaping career opportunities underscores the urgency for sustained emphasis on language skills within the framework of the Indonesian educational system. In light of these findings, policymakers are strongly encouraged to recognize the transformative influence of language proficiency on employability and formulate policies that adeptly respond to the evolving terrain of language skills within the dynamic job market.

As the crucible of knowledge and skill development, educational institutions bear a weighty responsibility in equipping graduates with the linguistic dexterity necessary for success in the professional world. The perspectives voiced by participants concerning the efficacy of university English language training serve as an unequivocal call to action. It underscores the imperative for continuous improvements in English language curricula, with institutions strategically adapting and aligning their language programs to the ever-evolving demands of industries. This vital adjustment ensures that graduates emerge equipped not only with linguistic competence but with the practical language skills that are indomitably requisite in the context of real-world professionals.

In finality, this study extends an encompassing understanding of the paramount role of English language proficiency in shaping the career trajectories of Indonesian university graduates. The findings, underscored by their remarkable pervasiveness, weave a narrative of linguistic proficiency transcending conventional boundaries. From enhancing employability to catalysing career advancement, English proficiency is showcased as a versatile and potent asset. The diversified perspectives and personal narratives shared by participants in this study collectively underscore the enduring necessity for the perpetuated emphasis on English proficiency in educational and professional contexts. In an era marked by the relentless march of globalization, Indonesia's position within the interconnected world hinges significantly on mastering language skills as a bridge to career opportunities. As the nation navigates the complexities of the globalized job market, the importance of language proficiency remains unwavering, shaping the professional odyssey of its graduates in a world bound by the power of communication and international collaboration

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Book review

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Michelle Forcier, Gerrit Van Schalkwyk, and Jack L. Turban, present their multidisciplinary, collaborative volume *Pediatric Gender Identity: Gender-affirming care for Transgender & Gender Diverse Youth* in 2020. In it, the editors offer a broad overview of the current research, clinical recommendations, and conceptual frameworks in the field concerning affirmative care for transgender and gender diverse (TGD) youth. In addition, more insight is provided on diversity support and resiliency encouragement, along with discussions about primary and specialty care, neurodevelopmental and psychosocial needs of TGD, and recognized hormonal and surgical recommendations. In this review, I will describe the main contents of the volume according to four sections: foundational knowledge, psychosocial and supportive approaches, clinical care and treatment, and cultural and legal perspectives. The first section covers Chapters 1 to 4; the second section, from Chapter 5 to 10; the third section, from Chapter 11 to 17; the remaining chapters are discussed in the last section.



The first four chapters align the increased recognition of TGD youth on a sociopolitical scope with the work within the medical and mental health communities to widen current knowledge and best cater for the needs of this marginalized population. Chapter 1 presents essential terminology regarding gender (e.g. gender identity, gender expression, transgender...) with crucial attention to the ever-evolving nature of gender diverse youth's self-identities through language. The notion of "affirmative care" is detailed through specific guidelines within medical practitioner-patient discourse (e.g. asking for the name and pronouns) without shifting this practice into a scenario in which the patient's role is to educate and support the provider.

The purpose of Chapter 2 is to establish a foundation regarding transgender youth's epidemiology for health care providers according to the increasing number of TGD people present across numerous contexts. Studies are mentioned evidencing the existence of TGD adolescents and adults across several states in the United States of America and New Zealand, concluding that there is no correlation between TGD youth identities and the local particular environment of the areas in which these studies were carried out. Among the issues regarding the high risk of mental health concerns, the alarming suicidality rate, whether through ideation or attempt, are put down in numbers for adults and teenagers (Grossman & D'Augelli, 2007; see also Toomey et al., 2018). A noticeable focus is placed upon social vulnerabilities TGD youth face regarding socioeconomic status, physical and sexual safety, and overall health. With this, the author points out the continuity of these risk factors into adulthood and how they worsen when race and cultural identity are incorporated into the formula.

The remaining chapters in this section, Chapters 3 and 4, offer an overview of the scientific approach to gender identity and development from an evolutionary perspective and the neurobiological mechanisms underlying gender diversity. On the one hand, Chapter 3 briefly overviews the historical evolution of studied related to childhood gender development and provides relevant insight on the manifestation of gender roles (Rafferty et al., 2018) and the major contributors to gender. On the other

hand, Chapter 4 expands on the previous chapters' notions by reviewing literature approaching gender diversity through neurobiology. This includes varying findings related to genetic factors, early sexual differentiation, adolescent brain, and the effects of hormone treatment on TDG youth compared to treatment-naive ones.

Moving away from the genetically-driven approach to TGD youth, the following five chapters tap into psychological and supportive approaches. Chapters 5 and 9 delve into factors related to stress, mood, and anxiety, among other mental health concerns. Chapter 5 expands the minority stress model to include TGD identities, and from this new standpoint, applies its different factors to this community. Likewise, it notes supporting sources (e.g. parents, schools, peers, as well as medical providers) and the importance of their affirmative-approach stance to reduce negative health outcomes and boost resilience among TGD youth and their families.

Chapters 7 and 8 focus on the creation of safe spaces in settings related to health and therapy and how their starting point is located within primary care. Chapter 7 recognizes the vulnerable condition in which TGD patients find themselves, which may be marked by parental rejection (Klein & Golub, 2016), peer hostility (Russell et al., 2011), and diverse forms of minority stress, notwithstanding the internalized transphobia they may be experiencing (Rood et al., 2017). As transhealth providers, the focus must be placed on the patient, as they are experts in their own thoughts and feelings. These notions are extended in Chapter 8, which departs from the crucial role primary care providers have in ensuring mental, physical, and social health among their patients. Of special mention is the screening tool provided in this chapter for adolescent and young adult guidance for gender diverse youth that health professionals could benefit from.

Continuing with the structure of the manual, Chapter 9 discusses other difficulties that may be faced among TGD people, with Chapter 10 focusing on neurodevelopmental concerns. Different studies are presented using a variety of measurements to examine coexisting related difficulties, such as social anxiety disorder, major depression, oppositional defiant disorder, specific phobias, and disorders related to anxiety,

mood, and disruption (de Vries et al., 2011). In addition to these mental health issues, other factors may lead to the application of a gender-affirmative treatment, including the capacity to make decisions on the adolescent's end after browsing treatment options and choosing according to their values and preferences, as well as the level of acceptance of their social environment. As an extension of the previous one, Chapter 10 introduces transgender and gender diverse youth care with co-occurring neurodiversity. It introduces notions related to the autism spectrum disorder, and its co-occurrence with (T)GD explained through biological, psychological, and social factors, as well as ways to assess and treat children and adolescents under this profile.

The third section introduces different treatments and procedures TGD youth may undergo from their prepubertal stages up until early adulthood. As preliminary knowledge, some theoretical background is introduced in Chapter 11; from this, it is worth recommending the section on staff engagement and education, which provides specific details on how to avoid assumptions we make about gender in the way we use everyday language and how to adjust to these presumptions.

Another keystone included in this section is Chapter 12, which places psychotherapy as pivotal to approach affirmative care for adolescents found within the gender diversity spectrum. Combined with insight from clinical practice and the growing body of literature on this matter, this chapter provides an overview of different modalities and considerations to transform mental health care into a model that affirms the identities of those seeking support.

In the case of Chapters 13 and 14, treatment paradigms are described to assess prepubertal children and adolescents, respectively. Chapter 13 recognizes the radical transformation regarding children who transgress gender norms, in addition to an increasing number of individuals seeking out services in relation to their gender identity and expression. Among them, a gender affirmative model is progressively gaining traction among practitioners, with the aim of facilitating healthier lives among children struggling with their identities.

This is further developed on Chapter 14, which addresses treatments for gender-diverse teenagers, like administering Gonadotropin-releasing hormone analogs, gender-affirming hormones, and procedures like gender-affirming surgery during pre-hormone, puberty, as well as adjunctive therapies. In that respect, the chapter authors provide a set of questions and affirmative responses on the medical provider's end to obtain a gender history about their patients.

The remaining chapters in this section (i.e., Chapters 15, 16, and 17) explore further treatments available for TGD individuals who may want to pursue other gender-affirming therapies. A common concern among the use of these treatments is related to fertility, which is covered in Chapter 15. In addition, some considerations are offered for late adolescence and early adulthood across areas like employment, healthcare, family, and higher education in Chapters 16 and 17.

The last section includes two chapters on national considerations related to the transgender community in the United States and international ones in Africa and a final chapter regarding legal issues and transgender people. Chapter 18 aims at providing information on the equipment of clinicians with relevant caveats to consider for such a diverse community. Among them, the privacy that is entailed within gender exploration is an aspect that oftentimes goes unnoticed. This is explained with insights from a fictional patient who, like many TGD people, requested their clinicians to hold details that they wanted their families or close circles to be unaware of. With this example, importance is placed upon how gender and sexual minority youth must confront stigma and shame, along with their repercussions, through silence, which may explain why this persistent stigma may cause a higher risk of suffering a mental illness.

Despite the accelerating recognition and tolerance toward diverse expressions of sexual orientation, gender identity, and sexuality, Chapter 19 draws attention to how some states and governments on an international scale continue to criminalize homosexuality, restrict certain sexual desires and practices, along with the fulfillment of human rights. Through a case study, insight is provided from the context of children

and teenagers' experience in South Africa regarding the protection, challenges, and cultural development of their gender identity.

The aforementioned context brings this section to an additional chapter delving into legal considerations for TGD youth. Using the federal-focused and state-focused scopes, Chapter 20 exemplifies legal documents that approached gender-identity-based discrimination and its prohibition across all US states. In short, the current panorama over transgender rights is still being fought over in politics and legal administrations, evidencing the need for healthcare professionals to work toward trans-affirmative laws and cultural environments to support this community.

Pediatric Gender Identity: Gender-affirming care for Transgender & Gender Diverse Youth offers a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to understanding and addressing the needs of TGD youth. By covering a wide range of topics according to the four sections designed, it provides a holistic view which healthcare professionals and educators may find valuable to understand the epidemiology, neurobiology, and pathways related to gender development, alongside practical guidance on patient-centred care, primary care, and acute care considerations.

The manual's exploration of cultural and legal perspectives evidences a nuanced understanding of the broader contexts in which the transgender community navigates, but most importantly the work that remains to be done beyond the healthcare system. In order TGD individuals to be ensured progressively safer environments, affirming care must be transferred into other areas, such as education, workplaces, legal and policy frameworks, as well as media and entertainment services.

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