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Language Learning and Identity Formation:
The Ideal L2 Self as a Guide to Teaching English to Nursing Students

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Abstract

After 18 years of teaching English at a liberal arts college, I transitioned to English education at a nursing college in 2016. Nursing colleges are characterized by students' uniform pursuit of nursing qualifications. Since English is not part of the national nursing exam, it often receives peripheral treatment.

In my first year, although students appeared engaged in English classes, end-of-year course evaluations revealed their underlying frustration. Drawing from insights gained from my previous role and fresh perspectives at the nursing college, I reconsidered the approach for the following year's classes. I became convinced that deeper integration of English with their nursing specialty was needed to unlock students' potential.

Recognizing the importance of fostering positive attitudes toward English, I focused on connecting language learning with building self-confidence. Over time, students developed a stronger affinity for English and experienced fulfillment in improving their skills.

This paper analyzes the evolution of students' mindsets through annual questionnaire surveys from 2016 to 2023. The discussion highlights essential elements needed to transition English education toward a more proactive and autonomous learning model. Dörnyei's Ideal L2 Self serves as a key concept explaining how nursing students can become more motivated and engaged in learning English.

This paper challenges traditional views of academic ability, which often emphasize the accumulation of knowledge. Language, whether foreign or native, is not merely a tool for communication; it plays a vital role in shaping one's personality and identity. Academic ability is defined by the capacity for continuous learning and personal growth. By emphasizing their future selves, aspirations, and missions as nurses, students can sustain their motivation for English learning.

Keywords: intrinsic motivation, identity formation, nursing students, Ideal L2 Self, Zoltán Dörnyei

1. Introduction

In April 2016, I began a new position at a nursing college, transitioning from 18 years of teaching English at a liberal arts college. Over the past eight years, the experiences I encountered while adapting to this new environment have provided me with unique insights into English education.

The course I will discuss in this paper is "English Reading," which was offered to all first-year students from 2016 to 2023. This course comprises 95 new students, all placed into a single class regardless of their English proficiency. The course includes a total of 30 classes held throughout the year, with each class lasting 90 minutes.

Surveys were conducted annually from 2016 to 2023, providing data from eight cohorts of first-year students during this period. Three types of questionnaires were consistently administered each year:

1) **New Student Survey**: This original survey investigates new students' attitudes toward English learning at the beginning of the course.

2) **College FD Survey**: This survey, developed by the college's Faculty Development committee, evaluates general course performance over the year, including satisfaction rate.

3) **End-of-Course Survey**: This original survey assesses the effectiveness and suitability of the teaching materials and methods used throughout the year.

This paper explores my eight years of classroom practices, analyzing survey results both quantitatively and qualitatively. The study aims to investigate strategies to engage students in English learning, specifically within the nursing field. The underlying goal is to offer readers insights into how this research can be applied in various cultural and educational contexts.

2. New Visions from First-Year Experiences

In nursing colleges, all students consistently work toward obtaining nursing qualifications within a tight schedule. Since English is not part of the national nursing exam, English classes are often considered of peripheral importance. Despite feeling apprehensive about this significant change in environment, I embraced the opportunity with determination, eager for the adventure into the unknown.

In my first year in this new position, what struck me most was the students' exemplary attitudes. Despite the large class size of nearly 100 students, I experienced almost no significant difficulties or stress in conducting the classes, thanks to their diligent, studious, and cooperative nature.

However, my initial apprehension became a reality when I received the survey results at the end of the course. Although the students appeared diligent and engaged, their overall evaluations fell far below my expectations.

This negative experience served as a wake-up call and prompted a period of soul-searching. To better understand the nursing students' needs and interests, I conducted a thorough assessment of all the survey results from the year 2016.

A review of the New Student Survey (Nakamura, 2020, p. 153) clearly indicated that students had extremely low confidence in English. As illustrated in Figure 1, almost no student reported having definite confidence in any of four skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Specifically, 84% of students said they had little confidence in speaking, 68% in writing, 56% in listening, and 42% in reading skills.

The survey also revealed a profound sense of negativity toward English language learning. Despite their evident diligence, many confessed to having a complex about English. As Figure 2 indicates, nearly 40% of students in 2016 described themselves as disliking or somewhat disliking English. This figure rose to nearly 50% in 2018 and 2019.

Figure 1: "How much confidence do you have in each skill of Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking English?" (2016: New Student Survey)
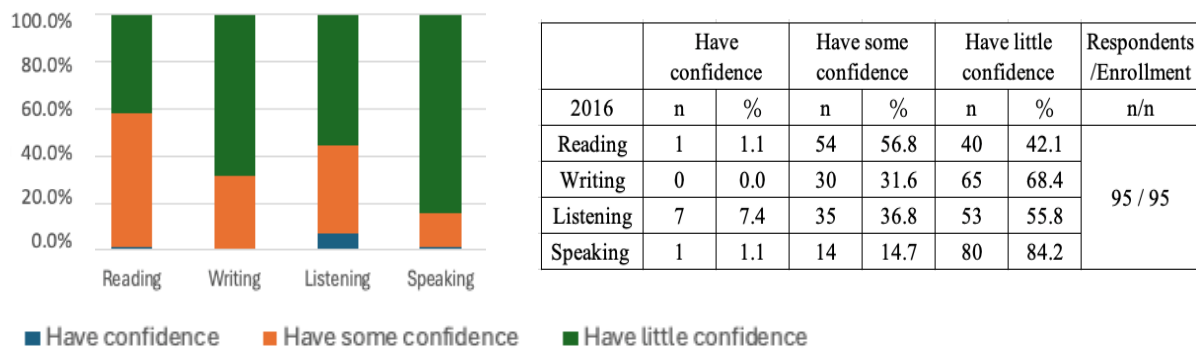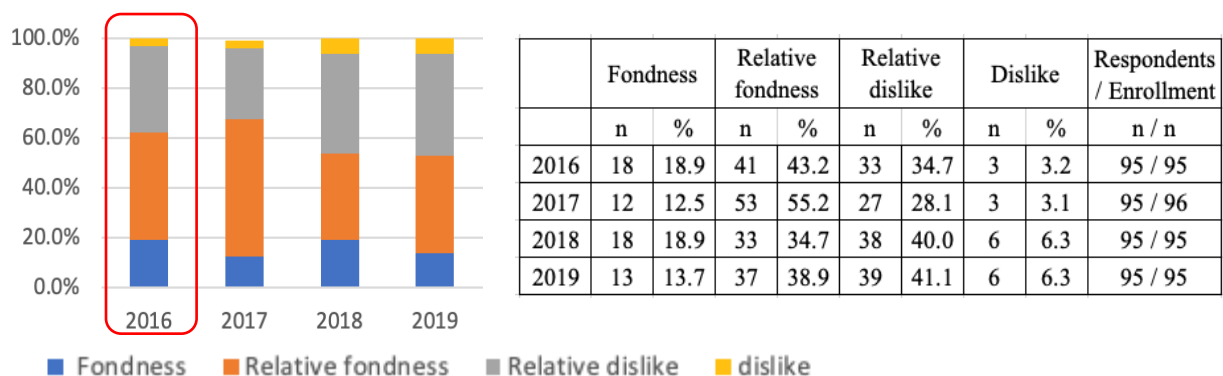
	Have confidence		Have some confidence		Have little confidence		Respondents /Enrollment
2016	n	%	n	%	n	%	n/n
Reading	1	1.1	54	56.8	40	42.1	
Writing	0	0.0	30	31.6	65	68.4	95 / 95
Listening	7	7.4	35	36.8	53	55.8	
Speaking	1	1.1	14	14.7	80	84.2	

Figure 2: "Which do you have, fondness or dislike, toward learning English at this point?" (2016-2019: New Student Survey)

	Fondness		Relative fondness		Relative dislike		Dislike		Respondents / Enrollment
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n / n
2016	18	18.9	41	43.2	33	34.7	3	3.2	95 / 95
2017	12	12.5	53	55.2	27	28.1	3	3.1	95 / 96
2018	18	18.9	33	34.7	38	40.0	6	6.3	95 / 95
2019	13	13.7	37	38.9	39	41.1	6	6.3	95 / 95

While observing the students earnestly engaging in English in class, I reflected on their high school experiences. It seemed likely that they had dedicated significant effort and perseverance to their exam studies. Unfortunately, instead of gaining confidence, their diligent efforts in English learning might have intensified their feelings of inferiority.

Drawing from the insights gained through my previous experience in liberal arts education and the new perspectives from my initial year, I began to rethink the curriculum for the upcoming year's course. After carefully considering what should be changed, retained, added or removed, I developed two key objectives focused on students' mindsets and realities.

Firstly, I aimed to design classes that would enhance students' self-esteem and build their confidence in English. Integrating English with their nursing specialty was crucial to unlocking their potential. The goal was to merge the two fields flexibly and organically. From this perspective, I considered it essential to uphold the principles of liberal arts education, which value diverse perspectives and self-liberation.

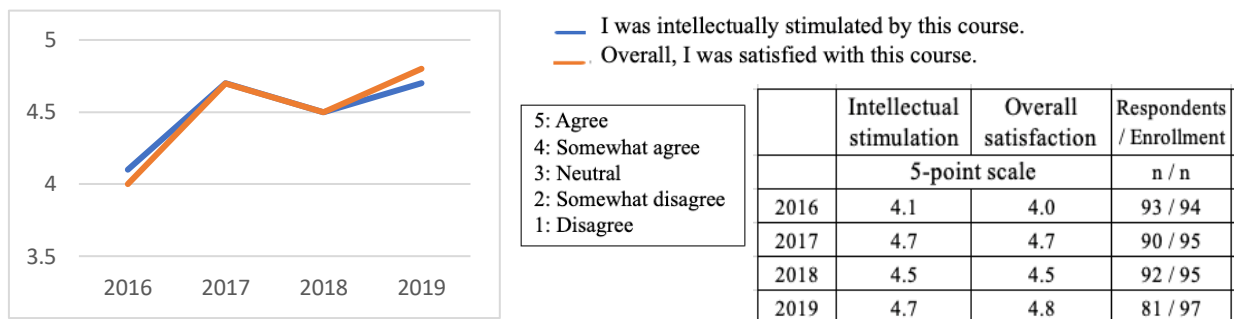Secondly, I recognized the need to accommodate the nursing students' tight schedules. It was evident that they lacked the time and flexibility to focus on learning English at the expense of their core subjects. To alleviate unnecessary pressure, I aimed to create an environment where they could fully engage in classes by streamlining the curriculum and gradually reducing the scope of the final exam.

With these objectives in mind, I approached the following year's classes with the goal of driving positive changes. Gradually, I began to see more tangible positive reactions from the students, which will be detailed in the next section.

3. The Transformative Effects of the New Visions

By gradually adopting student-focused teaching methods, the transition in the English program became both positive and transformative. Over time, many students developed a deeper appreciation for learning English and expressed a growing sense of fulfillment and satisfaction with their language improvement. As shown in Figure 3, course evaluations improved significantly over the three years following these changes, with the satisfaction score reaching 4.8 out of 5 in 2019.

Figure 3: General evaluation of the course over the past year (2016-2019: College FD Survey)

— I was intellectually stimulated by this course.
— Overall, I was satisfied with this course.

5: Agree
4: Somewhat agree
3: Neutral
2: Somewhat disagree
1: Disagree

	Intellectual stimulation	Overall satisfaction	Respondents / Enrollment
	5-point scale		n / n
2016	4.1	4.0	93 / 94
2017	4.7	4.7	90 / 95
2018	4.5	4.5	92 / 95
2019	4.7	4.8	81 / 97

At the same time, there were significant changes in students' attitudes toward learning English. Figure 4 presents a detailed breakdown of responses from all student cohorts. In section A (2016-2019), the number of students who felt their English skills had improved over the year increased dramatically. By 2019, 90% of students felt their skills had improved, up from 60% in 2016.

Section B (2020-2023) presents the results from the most recent four years. Affirmative responses have remained stable at nearly 80%, despite the potential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which some classes were conducted online. This consistency indicates that the positive changes in students' attitudes and skills have been sustained regardless of circumstances over time.

Figure 4: "How much do you think your English reading skills have improved over the past year?" (Section A: 2016-2019 & Section B: 2020-2023: End-of-Course Survey)

Section A: 2016-2019
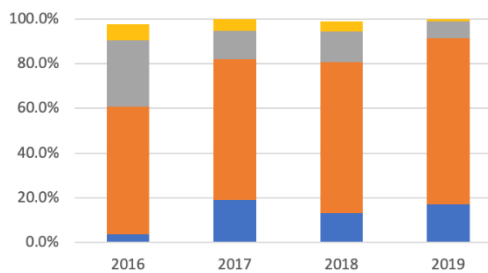
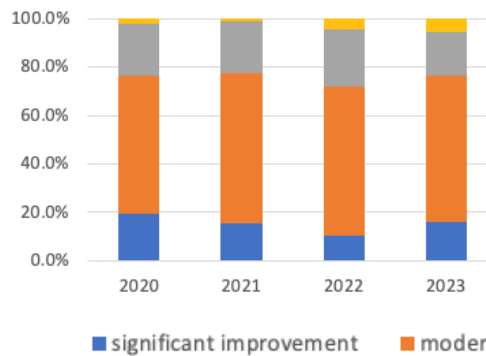|	significant improvement		moderate improvement		Little change		Slight Decline		Respondents / Enrollment
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n / n
2016	3	3.6	48	57.1	25	29.8	6	7.1	84 / 94
2017	18	18.9	60	63.2	12	12.6	5	5.3	95 / 95
2018	12	12.9	63	67.7	13	14	4	4.3	93 / 95
2019	16	16.8	71	74.1	7	7.4	1	1.1	95 / 97

Section B: 2020-2023

	significant improvement		moderate improvement		Little change		Slight Decline		Respondents / Enrollment
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n / n
2020	18	19.4	53	57.0	20	21.5	2	2.2	93 / 93
2021	13	15.5	52	61.9	18	21.4	1	1.2	84 / 95
2022	9	10.6	52	61.2	20	23.5	4	4.7	85 / 94
2023	14	15.9	53	60.2	16	18.2	5	5.7	88 / 93

■ significant improvement   ■ moderate improvement   ■ Little change   ■ Slight Decline

Below are comments from students of the 2022 cohort, reflecting on how their attitudes toward English learning have evolved after attending the course over the past year:

- "English used to be least favorite and most difficult subject in high school, but now I really enjoy it. It's the class I look forward to the most in college."
- "To learn to enjoy English, I realized it's important to start with topics I'm interested in and appreciate the insights I gain from them."
- "I have discovered new methods for learning English. I hope to keep applying what I've learned in lectures to my daily life and continue to improve my English skills steadily.
- "As I continued learning, my discomfort with English diminished, and I found myself wanting to engage more with the language, such as by reading English newspapers."

4. Educational Benefits of Authentic Materials

To explain the significant and stable changes observed, I will highlight some of the teaching materials and methods used in my classes. Due to space constraints, I will focus on two particularly well-received teaching materials: English newspaper articles and the American TV drama *ER* (*Emergency Room*).

English newspaper articles were introduced in my first year, 2016, while *ER* was integrated into my curriculum in my second year, 2017. Over the years, both materials have been continuously modified and refined. This section will examine the methodology employed for each and explore students' reactions, incorporating their feedback.

Both materials are characterized by their authenticity. They are produced by top professionals and primarily targeted at native speakers, ensuring a high level of quality. Their

compelling and entertaining content efficiently engages students, enhancing their learning experiences beyond merely acquiring language skills.

4.1 English Newspaper Articles

Many students initially feel intimidated by the amount of text in English newspapers, often assuming they are too difficult to read. However, with thoughtful selection and well-considered approach, this perception can change dramatically. When students are interested in and familiar with an article's content, they quickly realize that English newspaper are quite readable. The ability of professional journalists to convey messages concisely and clearly is a key skill that helps students engage more easily with newspaper articles.

At an introductory level, selecting articles translated from Japanese and sourced from Japanese news publications like *The Japan News* (published by *The Yomiuri Shimbun*) is particularly beneficial. These articles are structurally easier to understand and contain fewer unique expressions and idioms commonly found in native English newspapers, effectively lowering the barrier to comprehension.

Selecting recent, and socially engaging topics that appeal to students' interests has also proven effective. When students find topics both socially and personally engaging, they experience less psychological burden, which, in turn, increases their self-motivation and self-confidence.

In my previous role at the liberal arts college, I taught classes using English newspapers for many years and discussed the outcomes based on Mead's theory of 'Social Self' (Nakamura, 2006, pp. 53-62). According to Mead (1934, pp. 94-95, pp. 133-134), human communication is a social process. Individuals engage in communication with others and reflect on themselves from others' perspectives. Through repeated interactions, they form a new sense of self. The self, others, and society continuously interact and evolve, influencing one another.

At the nursing college, without drastically changing the approach I had previously taken, I gradually shifted the focus more toward nursing-related and medical topics, such as health, illness, nutrition, and medication. For instance, an article titled "Quality beats quantity when it comes to sleep" (*The Japan News,* Feb. 26, 2017) covers relevant topics like the mechanisms of deep and light sleep, the effects of aging on sleep, the purpose of cognitive behavioral therapy, the effects of caffeine on sleep, the benefits of sunlight exposure, and the downsides of long naps. These topics are undoubtedly relevant to nursing students' present and future lives, capturing their interest and motivation. In fact, many students responded positively to the feeling of 'killing two birds with one stone,' as they could learn English while also deepening their nursing knowledge.

In terms of teaching techniques, assigning students the task of summarizing each paragraph in Japanese helps them efficiently grasp the main points of the article. They complete the summary by answering a set of guiding questions I prepare beforehand. The key is for them to summarize it in their own natural and conversational Japanese. Rather than striving to provide a "model" answers, I encourage students to express what they have understood in a relaxed and informal tone, free of tension or formality.

Over time, most students notice a significant change in their approach to reading English, with improvements in both reading speed and comprehension. Essentially, there is a shift from
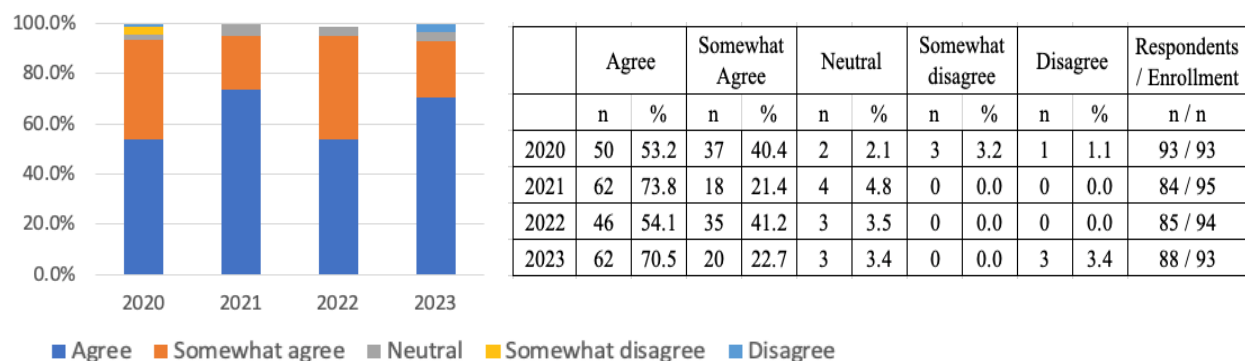
merely deciphering text to genuinely understanding the writer's message, which not only enhances reading ability but also fosters personal growth.

Below are comments from students of the 2017 cohort, illustrating their shift in mindset regarding how to read English:

- *"I realized that once I immerse myself in the content, understanding English comes naturally. By focusing on the content, reading English becomes easier."*
- *"I was surprised that my mindset naturally shifted toward deeply internalizing knowledge rather than just answering questions."*
- *"I feel like I can now read this much text effortlessly, unlike in high school when I struggled."*
- *"Even if there are words I don't understand, I can often guess their meaning. This allows me to grasp what the writer wants to convey. It's fun and exciting to read fluently, and it makes me happy."*

Figure 5 shows the survey results from the past four years (2020-2023), indicating that over 90% of respondents consistently agreed that reading English newspapers improved their English proficiency. A more detailed analysis of student responses from the first four years (2016-2019) can be found in Nakamura (2022, pp. 135-137).

Figure 5: "Did you find the newspapers helpful for improving your English proficiency?" (2020-2023: End-of-Course Survey) *Data collection has occurred annually since 2020.

	Agree		Somewhat Agree		Neutral		Somewhat disagree		Disagree		Respondents / Enrollment
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n / n
2020	50	53.2	37	40.4	2	2.1	3	3.2	1	1.1	93 / 93
2021	62	73.8	18	21.4	4	4.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	84 / 95
2022	46	54.1	35	41.2	3	3.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	85 / 94
2023	62	70.5	20	22.7	3	3.4	0	0.0	3	3.4	88 / 93

4.2 *ER* (TV drama)

Next, I will discuss the use of the TV drama *ER* (*Emergency Room*). During the 1990s, *ER* was a major hit in the United States, and I was living there at that time. Recognizing its lasting impact and potential to engage nursing students in learning English, I incorporated *ER* into my teaching resources in 2017. This section will focus specifically on how it enhanced students' listening skills.

In class, students learn both English and the underlying culture of the medical and nursing fields. They become familiar with medical terminology while being exposed to authentic English. Additionally, the cultural differences in communication styles between Japan and the U.S. pique their interest. The show's compelling storylines and humanistic portrayal of medical

professionals serve as a powerful source of inspiration, fostering an awareness of their future careers.

The class generally proceeds as follows. When showing the video, English audio is consistently used, with subtitles alternating between Japanese and English. Initially, Japanese subtitles help students understand the storyline by watching scenes. Then, English subtitles are introduced, and the video is paused to explain each line, providing detailed contextual, cultural and grammatical explanations. Finally, the video is played without subtitles to focus on listening comprehension. Additionally, students are provided with scripts to facilitate independent learning.
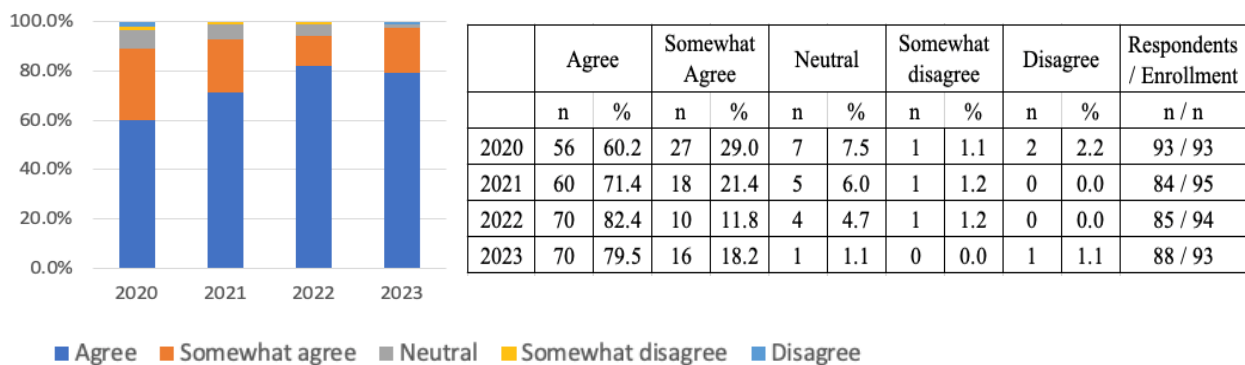
As students immerse themselves in the drama, they naturally begin to understand the words and sentences within the flow of the story. The engaging and suspenseful storytelling style, presented visually and audibly, significantly enhances students' motivation to listen and understand the content attentively.

As they progress through lessons using the *ER* material, they increasingly express surprise and delight, particularly regarding their improved English listening skills. Below are comments from students in the 2023 cohort:

- *"Through gradual understanding and reviewing words, I've noticed a remarkable improvement in my ability to comprehend spoken English. I'm amazed by how effortlessly words now resonate with me."*
- *"I was pleasantly surprised by how easily I can grasp and understand each word. It brings me joy to think that my ears may be adapting to native English."*
- *"I used to listen to English, thinking that it was impossible to understand, but I was truly amazed when my ears started to adapt, allowing me to comprehend it effectively."*
- *"I started noticing subtle facial expressions and gestures while watching the video. I believe that with repeated practice, my English proficiency will continue to improve."*

Figure 6 shows that over the past four years, more than 90% of students consistently affirmed that TV drama *ER* contributed to improving their English proficiency.

Figure 6: "Did you find ER helpful for improving your English proficiency?" (2020-2023: End-of-Course Survey) *Data collection has occurred annually since 2020.

	Agree		Somewhat Agree		Neutral		Somewhat disagree		Disagree		Respondents / Enrollment
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n / n
2020	56	60.2	27	29.0	7	7.5	1	1.1	2	2.2	93 / 93
2021	60	71.4	18	21.4	5	6.0	1	1.2	0	0.0	84 / 95
2022	70	82.4	10	11.8	4	4.7	1	1.2	0	0.0	85 / 94
2023	70	79.5	16	18.2	1	1.1	0	0.0	1	1.1	88 / 93

5. Implications of Z. Dörnyei's Ideal L2 Self

Reflecting on the past eight years, Z. Dörnyei's theory of the "Ideal L2 Self" has been instrumental in enhancing nursing students' engagement in classes. According to his "L2 Motivation Self System," learners are motivated to acquire a second language (L2) when they envision their future ideal self. This Ideal L2 Self is contrasted with the "Ought-to L2 Self," as explained below (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 86; Dörnyei, Henry, & Muir, 2016, p. 43).

The Ideal L2 Self represents a desirable self-image that an individual would like to become in the future. Dörnyei explains that strong motivation for foreign language acquisition arises when learners perceive a discrepancy between their Ideal L2 Self and their current state, prompting them to bridge this gap.

Conversely, the Ought-to L2 Self reflects the individual's belief that they must possess certain qualities to meet external expectations or avoid negative outcomes. Since it is influenced by external factors, this self-concept may not align with the learner's intrinsic desires and aspirations. Dörnyei & Ushioda (2011, p. 23) explain motivation theories from a comprehensive perspective:

> *"One of the most general and well-known distinctions in motivation theories is that of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The first type of motivation (IM) deals with behavior performed for its own sake in order to experience pleasure and satisfaction, such as the joys of doing a particular activity or satisfying one's curiosity. The second (EM) involves performing a behaviour as a means to some separate end, such as receiving an extrinsic reward (e.g. good grade) or avoiding punishment. There is also a third type of motivation, amotivation (AM), which refers to lack of motivation, whether intrinsic or extrinsic."*

The nursing students in this research are presumed to have enrolled in this college following rigorous and intense exam preparations. It is likely that they are heavily influenced by their Ought-to L2 Self, which places a high emphasis on test scores and risk avoidance. The focus on external factors can lead to a self-concept that does not align with their innate aspirations.

As learners accumulate experiences that diverge from their individual interests, many may experience feelings of inadequacy and anxiety. Students with serious personalities are more affected by the expansion and reinforcement of their Ought-to L2 Self.

As suggested by Dörnyei & Ushioda, an over-reliance on extrinsic motivation (EM) can undermine learners' intrinsic motivation (IM), potentially leading to a state of amotivation (AM). If EM is not eventually transformed into IM, learners may become increasingly demotivated in their English studies, as EM is typically effective only for a limited time.

Furthermore, Dörnyei (2001, pp. 91-92) points out that foreign language learning can threaten learners' self-esteem, as communicating with limited language ability can lead to anxiety. He argues that "language anxiety" is a decisive factor in reducing motivation and achievement. He emphasizes the importance of cultivating an "anxiety-free zone" in the

classroom by creating "a warm and supportive climate." The following insights from Dörnyei (p. 87) deserve more attention in contemporary English education:

> *"The 'self-' issues (self-esteem, self-confidence, self-efficacy, self-worth) are particularly sensitive areas in primary/secondary school learning because students are often in the developmental age when their self-image is in an ongoing flux and doubts and worries about oneself are more common feelings than confidence and pride."*

Figure 7 shows the percentages of students (2019-2023) who developed a greater sense of enjoyment and familiarity with English over the course of a year. Figure 8 illustrates the percentages of students (2022-2023) who gained confidence in and actively engaged with English. Notably, in both cases, positive responses remain around 90% in almost all survey years.

Figure 7: "Over the past year, I have experienced a growing sense of enjoyment and familiarity towards English." (2019-2023: End-of-Course Survey)
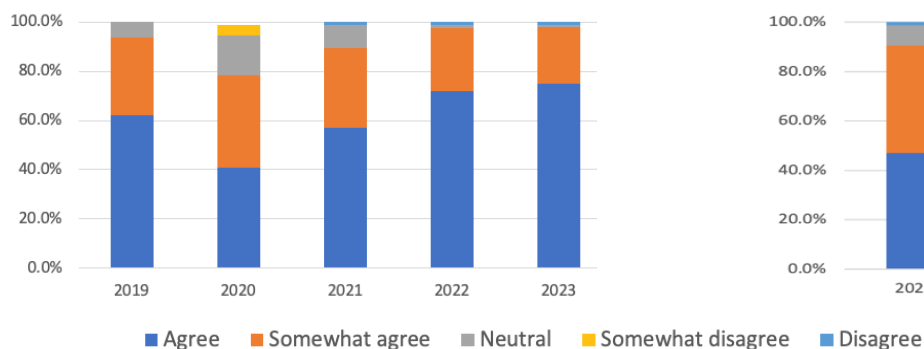*Data collection has occurred annually since 2019.

Figure 8: "Over the past year, I have gained confidence in English and become more proactive in engaging with it." (2022-2023: End-of-Course Survey)
*Data collection has occurred annually since 2022.

Figure 7

	Agree		Somewhat Agree		Neutral		Somewhat disagree		Disagree		Respondents / Enrollment
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n / n
2019	59	62.1	30	31.6	6	6.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	95 / 95
2020	38	40.9	35	37.6	15	16.1	4	4.3	0	0.0	93 / 93
2021	48	57.1	27	32.1	8	9.5	0	0.0	1	1.2	84 / 95
2022	61	71.8	22	25.9	1	1.2	0	0.0	1	1.2	85 / 94
2023	66	75.0	20	22.7	1	1.1	0	0.0	1	1.1	88 / 93
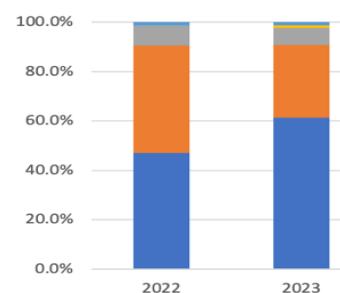
Figure 8

	Agree		Somewhat Agree		Neutral		Somewhat disagree		Disagree		Respondents / Enrollment
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n / n
2022	40	62.1	37	43.5	7	8.2	0	0.0	1	0.0	85 / 94
2023	54	40.9	26	29.5	6	6.8	1	1.1	1	0.0	88 / 93

6. Conclusion

The conventional concept of "academic ability" focuses on accumulating knowledge and the ability to provide correct answers to exams. Saeki (2003, p. 127, pp. 137-138) challenges this views by redefining academic ability as an indicator of a person's potential for future learning, rather than merely a measure of past learning. He highlights its inherent long-term nature.

My research underscores that language is not just a tool for communication; it plays a crucial role in shaping one's personality and identity. The essence of academic ability lies in the capacity for continuous learning and growth. Moreover, language is deeply intertwined with unique cultural contexts, reflecting both individual and group identities.

Rogers (1978, p. 288) summarizes key aspects of the "person-centered approach" in the concluding remarks of *On Personal Power*. Two points are particularly relevant to the aim of this paper:

- *"It has been established that where teachers share their power, and trust their students, self-directed learning takes place at a great rate than in teacher-controlled class."*
- *"It has been proven that the teacher who empathically understands the meaning of school to the student, who respects the student as a person, who is genuine in relationships, fosters a learning climate definitely superior in its effects to the 'common-sense' teacher."*

What helped me overcome the initial year's "shock" was my steadfast commitment to a student-focused approach and belief in my students' potential. As mentioned earlier, for most nursing students, English is often considered a lower priority. However, by encouraging them to envision their future selves, aspirations, and professional goals as nurses, they can maintain their motivation to learn English.

By recognizing the unique identities of leaners or groups, educators can effectively tailor language learning experiences to better align with students' aspirations and cultivate intrinsic motivation for language acquisition. This approach has the potential to significantly enhance the overall quality of English education, extending its benefits beyond the field of nursing.

One limitation of this paper is the absence of data on long-term impacts of the course on students' professional development or language skills after completing the course. Future research should focus on collecting follow-up data, specifically how students have applied their English skills in professional settings or further studies. Demonstrating the long-term effects more clearly could broaden the potential application of the findings in this paper to other educational and professional contexts.

Acknowledgments

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Issues of Spanish-English Translations of Texts on Liberation Theology, Translatorial Failures and the Mismatch with Online Decolonial Readers' Requirements.

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Abstract:

Liberation theology emerged from amongst the poor of Latin America in the late 1960s and was very popular for over 20 years and very influential in Latin America. After that, however, liberation theology started losing currency worldwide in the late 1970s or 1980s and has regained relevancy, partly because many academics are reading translated versions of texts on liberation theology from decolonial perspectives. Understanding the translations if they are being read online and from decolonial perspectives is problematic. We need to understand why. Therefore, the article focuses on the translation issues that are associated with how the texts can be interpreted if they are being read online from a decolonial perspective. The issues have been identified using a mostly qualitative mixed methodology. Translations of texts on liberation theology can also be subjected to issues associated with where the texts were published or by temporal issues. I argue that these issues have impacted on the translated texts because the language in the texts may sometimes refer to situations that only people from where the texts were published are likely to be familiar with. As the internet has a worldwide audience, the issues can lead to failures to fully comprehend the messages of the narratives of the texts, especially if the texts are being read online from decolonial perspectives. The same issues have led to political influences that can impact the interpretations of the narratives of the translated texts. I argue that the issues with the translations could be addressed if the translators were sensitive to how the texts are being read, particularly by audiences who are reading them online from a decolonial perspective.

Keywords: Liberation theology, translations, de-colonialism, narratives

Glossary:

De-colonialism is a theory which seeks to understand colonialism and its consequences from a non-Eurocentric perspective.

The term 'contextual influences' is being used in this presentation to refer to the country or place of publication of the source and translated texts as well as the temporal issues that surround the production of the translated texts and the political environments within which the source texts were authored and the translated texts produced.

Reception Theory is a theory in which the focus is on the readers of texts and how they are likely to receive the texts they are reading.

Introduction:

Liberation theology is one of the most significant theological movements of the 20th century. However, since when it emerged in the late 1960s, Liberation theology has been linked to Marxism. Furthermore, translations of texts on the theology can be subject to contextual influences. These can lead to significant distortions to or misinterpretations of the messages of the original texts. The article focuses on the translation issues that are associated with how the texts can be interpreted if they are being read online from a decolonial perspective. The article

is also focusing on the translational issues that have resulted in the distortions of the messages of the source text's narratives. I argue that if the source or translated texts were to be read online from decolonial perspectives the reader would need to be aware of how the contextual influences have impacted the narratives of the texts in order to understand what the texts are saying. Failure on the behalf of the readers to understand these things can lead to manifestations of political, ideological or theological influences.

My two research questions are 'how do differences between the source and translated texts manifest political, contextual, theological and ideological influences?' and how are contextual influences manifested in the translations?'.

Outline of My Article:

I will commence this article with an introduction to the methods used. This will be followed by a discussion of the origins & narratives of liberation theology. After this I will introduce you to the source and translated texts and the authors and translators. Following this, I will discuss my findings & the issues associated with reading the source and targets texts online from a decolonial perspective. This will be followed by the conclusion and recommendations for future research.

Methods Used:

The data has been obtained via a mostly qualitative mixed methods approach and by comparisons of excerpts from two original seminal Spanish language source texts on liberation theology with their English language equivalents. The comparisons were done using a corpus linguistics approach. The excerpts were chosen based on how likely they were to have the potential of leading to variations or issues of interpretations if they were to be read online from the perspectives of decolonial readers. To assist with the choosing of the excerpts, issues like the need for the readers to be aware of the political situation Latin America was in when the source texts were published, or the Western World was in when the target texts were published were considered.

To help the readers to see where the options used by the translators can lead to issues of interpretation if the translated texts were to be read online from a decolonial perspective, each source text excerpt that is being presented will be immediately followed by my literal translation of the excerpt. The literal translations will be followed by the translators' translations and will be in brackets and quotation marks.

Background on Liberation Theology:

Liberation theology is a popular and controversial theology that emerged amongst the impoverished and often politically aware people of Latin America in the late 1960s (Hennelly, 1990a, p. xv; 1990d; Klaiber, c1992, p. 277) partly as a response to the poverty and injustice they were experiencing and the turbulent political situation Latin America was facing at the time (Barger, 2018, pp. 1-8; 1990c; 1990d, p. xiii). Liberation theology also partly came about as a consequence of an episcopal council that was held by the Roman Catholic church in the early to mid-1960s titled the Second Vatican Council (see Hennelly, 1990b). The theology was

originally a Roman Catholic theology, but has had Protestant adherents since the 1970s (see Hennelly, 1990a, p. xxiv & xxvi). Liberation theology has profoundly impacted how Christians think about social justice issues (Tombs, 2011, p. 279) and has had political and revolutionary implications (see Berryman, 2020). It has had links with Marxism and, as a consequence, attracted criticism from the Vatican and other Christian circles, including some Evangelical Christian circles. Liberation theology was the most influential movement in Latin America from the 1960s to the 1980s (Rourke, 2016, p. 9). It resulted in people being prepared to be martyred, silenced by the Vatican for their beliefs and speaking out for Latin America's poor, illiterate people or removed from universities, seminaries and study centres (see Hennelly, 1990a, p. xv). Liberation theology was seen as being a very radical way of applying the Gospel message to the situation Latin America was in when the theology was first developed.

The Source Text Authors:

Both studied Marxist philosophy as part of their training & were very heavily influenced by it.

One of the authors - Father Gustavo Gutiérrez is a Peruvian priest who is considered to be the founding father of liberation theology. He was ministering amongst the poor people of Peru when he authored one of the two source texts this paper focuses on. The associated experiences have impacted on the narratives of his source text as they have influenced the perspectives that he communicates in the text. That text is called *La Teología De La Liberación: Perspectivas* ('La Teología)'. Its English translation is called *A Theology Of Liberation: History, Politics And Salvation* ('A Theology').

The author of the 2nd source text – Father Ignacio Ellacuría – was a Spanish born Jesuit who was martyred for speaking out against the poverty and injustice he witnessed ministering amongst the poor communities of El Salvador. His experiences witnessing both things impacted the narratives of his source text because they have had an influence upon the perspectives he has communicated in his source text. Ellacuría's source text is called *Teología Política* ('Teología). Its English translation is titled *Freedom Made Flesh: The Mission of Christ and His Church* ('Freedom').

The Translators:

Two of the translators – Sr. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson co-translated *La Teología*. When they translated that text, they demonstrated pro-liberation theology attitudes that have impacted the narratives of the translation of the source text by resulting in translated text excerpts that have accurately promulgated the messages of the source text equivalents. The translators have, therefore, used language to refer to events or situations that readers who are reading the texts online from decolonial perspectives may be unfamiliar with if they were reading the texts from decolonial perspectives.

John also worked as an editor and had degrees in Spanish American literature. Caridad, on the other hand, is a Catholic nun who did some translation work for an episcopal council that was initially very supportive of liberation theology but ended up opposing the theology at least in part because of its links to Marxism.

The 3rd translator – a gentleman called John Drury – was on the staff of an evangelically oriented Archbishop of Canterbury when he translated *Teología*. He, therefore, translated that text from within the context of an ex-colonial power. This has led to translatorial failures because it has meant that in certain areas Drury has excluded the Latin American critique by leaving 1960s Marxist critiques against capitalism out of the translation he produced. Consequently, some of his translations of source text excerpts with Marxist critiques against capitalism have been significantly distorted. In some of the places where this has happened the messages of the applicable translated text excerpts are completely different to those of the source text equivalents.

The Source & Translated Texts:

The source & translated texts were published in the 1970s. The source texts were published in Latin America and the translated texts in the USA and, in one case at roughly the same time in the UK. This is important because the language that is in some source and translated text excerpts has been affected by the country, temporal and political contextual influences. One example of how these contextual influences impact target text quotations is in Drury's rendering of the following source text excerpt (which has manifested a country contextual influence by containing links to the historical, social, economic and cultural situation El Salvador had when liberation theology started to emerge & the political, philosophical and theological millieu that gave birth to the theology);

> '*¿Son éstas dos tareas distintas? ¿No están conectadas más que extrínsecamente por un mandato de obediencia, por una pureza de intención, por una humanización previa para la evangelización, o por cualquiera otra motivación extrínseca? Sólo cuando se muestra la intrínseca conexión entre la pasión por la salvación de este mundo y la pasión por la proclamación y la realización de la fe cristiana podrá abrirse un nuevo cauce a los que no están dispuestos a mutilar una de las dos dimensiones. Dicho en otros términos, sólo una fe secular que sea plenamente fe y que sea plenamente secular y, consiguientemente sólo una teología con esas mismas características pueden ser aceptables hoy ('Are these two tasks distinct? Aren't they connected more than extrinsically by a mandate of obedience, by a purity of intention, by a humanization previous for evangelization or for whatever other extrinsic motivation? Only when the extrinsic connection between passion for the salvation of this world and the passion for the proclamation and realization of the Christian faith can open a new course to those who are not prepared to mutilate one of the dimension demonstrates itself. In other words, only a secular faith that is plainly faith and plainly secular and, consequently, only a theology with these same characteristics can be acceptable today').*

Drury has rendered this passage as;

> *Are these two tasks distinct? Are they connected by merely extrinsic motives – e.g., by a mandate of obedience, by purity of intention, by a process of humanization as mere prelude to evangelization? We must point up the intrinsic connection between a passion for the salvation of this world and a*

> *passion for proclaiming and fleshing out the Christian faith. Only then will we be able to open up a new pathway for those who are unwilling to mutilate either one of the two dimensions. To put it another way: Only a secular faith that is fully faith and fully secular, and hence only a theology with these same characteristics, can be acceptable today (cf. Ellacuría, 1973, p. 5; 1976, p. 10).*

The source text was written at a time in which a lot of political volatility in El Salvador that Drury may have been unaware of due to not being from that country existed. The target texts' readers need to be aware of the extent of the volatility of the situation so that they can fully comprehend what Ellacuría means by what he claims in the part of the quotation that goes from "we must point up" until the end of the quotation. Readers who are reading the translated text online from a decolonial perspective would need also to be able to understand that Drury is using the word 'today' to refer to characteristics that existed in the 1970s. This is because the word 'today', in the context in which Drury is using it, refers to what, for Drury, was a present period. That is the period of the mid-1970s (see Ellacuría, 1976, p. 10; Oxford University Press., 2024b).

The texts were chosen because of the ground-breaking nature of both source texts. One of the source texts is regarded as being so ground-breaking in the liberation theology field that it is widely regarded as being the magna carta of the field. It is the text from which the Spanish name for liberation theology comes. The other source text is thought of as being potentially the most significant contribution to the liberation theology field that its author made. He was a very prominent liberation theologian. Consequently, if the texts were to be read online from decolonial perspectives, the readers would need to be aware of how the contextual influences have impacted the narratives of the text they are reading so that they can comprehend the messages of the narratives.

A Discussion of the Findings to Date:

There are issues associated with how Reception Theory applies to the narratives of the texts under consideration in this presentation. These issues have led to the manifestations of contextual influences that can impact on how the texts can be interpreted if they are being read online from a decolonial perspective. These issues can lead to failures to fully comprehend the messages of the narratives of the translated texts if they are being read especially online and if the reader is unaware of the historical contexts of the source texts. The failures can only be addressed if the source texts were to be retranslated into English and the translators were to take the texts' historical contexts into consideration. Some of these have led to the manifestations of theological influences. These are due to the translators' theological viewpoints. One example of the failures is Inda and Eaglesons' rendering of the following passage;

> *"Esta función de la teología se dibuja y se afirma, gradualmente, en los últimos años. Pero tiene antecedentes en los primeros siglos de la iglesia ('This function of theology defines and affirms itself, gradually, in the last years. But it has antecedents in the first centuries of the church')."*

Inda and Eagleson have translated this passage as;

> *The function of theology as critical reflection on praxis has gradually become more clearly defined in recent years, but it has its roots in the first centuries of the church's life (cf. Gutiérrez, 1971, p. 20; 1974, p. 6)*

When *A Theology* was published the terms 'en los últimos años' and 'in recent years' were used to refer to the years leading up to the early 1970s (see Gutiérrez, 1971 publications details pages; 1974 publications details pages; Oxford University Press., 2023; Smith, 1971, pp. 37-38, 221 & 573; Williams, 1963, p. 593). It was possible to render 'en los últimos años' as 'in recent years' because the translated text was produced only a few years after the source text was written (Gutiérrez, 1971 publications details pages; 1974 publications details pages). However, to modern-day readers the term 'in recent years' means the years leading up to the early 2020s. Therefore, if the target text was to be read online from decolonial perspectives, the reader would need to be aware of how temporal issues have impacted the narratives of the text they are reading in order to be able to comprehend the messages of the narratives.

Another two examples of how the influence of Reception Theory has led to contextual influences that can impact how *A Theology* can be interpreted if it is being read online from a decolonial perspective are Inda and Eaglesons' renderings of 'realidades actuales' and 'hoy' as "present".

Inda and Eagleson have rendered 'realidades actuales' as "present" in their translation of the following passage;

> *Reflexionar sobre una acción que se proyecta hacia adelante no es fijarse en el pasado, no es ser el furgón de cola del presente, es desentrañar en las realidades actuales, en el movimiento de la historia lo que los impulsa hacia el futuro ('To reflect on an action that projects itself forward is not to it is not be the caboose of the present, it is to penetrate the present realities in the movement of history that drives the realities towards the future').*

The translators have rendered this passage as;

> *To reflect upon a forward-direct action is not to concentrate on the past. It does not mean being the caboose of the present. Rather it is to penetrate the present reality, the movement of history, that which is driving history toward the future (cf. Gutiérrez, 1971, p. 33; 1974, p. 15).*

Inda and Eaglesons' translation of 'hoy' as "present" is in their rendering of the following passage;

> *Pero es hacerlo no a partir de un gabinete sino echando raíces, allí donde late, en este momento, el pulso de la historia, e iluminándolo con la Palabra del Señor de la historia que se comprometió irreversiblemente con el hoy del devenir de la humanidad, para llevarlo hacia su pleno cumplimiento ('But it is to do so not through an armchair, without making races where the pulse of history is and illuminating with the Word of the Lord history who irreversibly committed himself to the present moment of humanity to carry it to its complete fulfillment').*

The translators have rendered this passage as;

> *But it does not mean doing this from an armchair; rather it means sinking roots where the pulse of history is beating at this moment and illuminating history with the Word of the Lord of history, who irreversibly committed himself to the present moment of mankind to carry it to its fulfillment (cf. Gutiérrez, 1971, p. 33; 1974, p. 15).*

In the 1970s 'present' meant the present time. Therefore, in the source text excerpts Gutiérrez refers to the realities of the early to mid-1970s. However, if the translated text was to be read online from a decolonial perspective, the renderings of 'realidades actuales' as "present-day realities" and 'hoy' as "present" could be problematic. This is because Latin America's present-day realities are very different to the realities the continent faced in the 1970s. For example, in the 1970s many Latin American countries that are currently democracies were under authoritarian CIA endorsed military dictatorships that benefited the wealthiest people who were living in those countries to the detriment of the people groups of those countries who were in the majority. Therefore, readers who are reading the target text excerpts online from decolonial perspectives would need to be aware of the political and economic situations Latin America faced in the 1970s in order to be able to fully understand what the phrase 'present-day realities' and the term 'present' meant.

There are also examples of how the influence of Reception Theory has resulted in manifestations of contextual influences that can impact how *Freedom* can be interpreted if it is being read online from a decolonial perspective. One is Drury's rendering of the following paragraph;

> *La pregunta es, entonces, por el matiz de esta secularización actual. Ya lo hemos apuntado: es un intento de redención de la situación catastrófica de la humanidad, del hombre social. La secularización es un proceso histórico y la forma histórica de la secularización tiene hoy al menos un nombre: es politización ('The question is, therefore, about the peculiar cast of present-day secularization. We have already indicated that it is an attempt to redeem the* catastrophic situation of humanity, of the social man. Secularization is a historical process and the historical form secularization takes today has, at least a name; it is politizication').

Drury has rendered this passage as;

> *So the next question is this: What is the peculiar cast of present-day secularization? We have already indicated that it is an effort to redeem the catastrophic situation of humanity, of man in society. Secularization is a historical process, and the historical form it takes today can be given a name at least. It is "politicization" (cf. Ellacuría, 1973, p. 5; 1976, p. 10).*

In the 1970s 'today' meant "at the present time [or] the present period or age" (Oxford University Press., 2024b). Consequently, Ellacuría, in the source texts, is stating that the name 'politicization' is the name that secularization had in the 1970s. Politicization is "the action or process of making [anything] political or of establishing upon a political basis" (Oxford

University Press., 2024a). However, if the target text was to be read online from a decolonial perspective the readers would need to be aware of the political situation Latin America was in when the source text was authored, in order to be able to fully comprehend what the term 'today' as it is being used in the target text passage means.

Conclusion:

The main conclusion of the study is that, as some of the excerpts have theological and/or political messages, the failures referred to in the section titled 'A Discussion Of The Findings To Date' have led to manifestations of political, contextual, theological and ideological influences. These have occurred because of the translators' theological viewpoints and views of Marxism as well as the political and historical contexts in which the source texts were written and the translated texts produced plus the contexts in which the source and target texts are being read if they are being read online from a decolonial perspective.

Recommendations:

As one of the implications of the findings is that there needs to be more work done on how translators can take historical contexts of the source texts into consideration if retranslations of the texts were to be done & the reasons why they would need to take the contexts into consideration. Therefore, these are areas for potential research in the translation studies field.

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The Significance of Character Verbosity in *The Merchant of Venice*:
An Exploratory Analysis

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to statistically examine Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice based on word-count of the characters' utterances. The study shows that the four main characters—Shylock, Portia, Antonio, and Bassanio—are allotted about 11,520 out of a total of 22,000 words, i.e., about 52.3% of all speech. These words are directly uttered by the four characters. or indirectly by other characters talking about them. Interestingly, Antonio, the merchant of Venice, is allotted a direct utterance of only 1500 words, and he is the subject of 7,588 words uttered by other characters, totaling 9,184. This figure justifies the choice of the merchant of Venice as the title character. Surprisingly, Portia and Shylock are given nearly identical direct and indirect utterance counts of 7, 232 and 7, 282, respectively. The study demonstrates that this almost identical equity of loquaciousness posits the two characters on an equal scale as they combat over the main character. Shylock strives to destroy him, while Portia endeavors to rescue him; the one represents a malevolent force of destruction, the other a benevolent power of construction. The victory of Portia in this combat entertains a Shakespearean gender triumph for women in this struggle. Furthermore, Shakespeare demonstrates cynicism about the possibility of benevolence in our world, as he allocates Shylock to the real world of Venice and Portia to the utopian dream world of Belmont. The study also includes a number of illustrative charts to clarify the statistical force of verbosity.

Keywords: Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice, Verbosity, word-count.

Introduction

William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (possibly written between 1596 and 1598) is an elegant comedy that features the well-known figures of Antonio, Portia, Shylock, and Bassanio. It examines human issues, such as love, friendship, justice, prejudice, retaliation, and mercy within the framework of Venetian society. Triggered by religious prejudices, the desire to destroy the opponent breeds intense animosity. Religious differences and abhorrence of others and their customs breed hatred. Abhorrence reaches a climax Between the wealthy Christian merchant Antonio of Venice and the Jewish moneylender and usurer Shylock. The mutual hatred between the two becomes the central axis around which Shakespeare weaves the entire plot.

As Bassanio approaches Shylock for a loan with Antonio as a cosigner, Shylock delves into his mind in an aside (1.3. 36-47), in which he enumerates his grievances against Antonio. He despises him first and foremost for being a Christian. Second, Antonio lends money freely without charging interest, which Shylock perceives as a conflict of interest and therefore "brings down/ The rate of usance here with us in Venice" (1.3. 39-40). Thirdly, he charges Antonio with harboring hatred for the "sacred nation" of Jews. Fourth, for his usurious bargains, Antonio lashes out and scolds him in front of all the merchants in the Rialto. For all of these reasons, Shylock has grown extremely enraged with Antonio and declares in 1.3 that he would never forgive him if he ever got the chance to exact revenge on him. Shylock's loathing of

Antonio stems from religious prejudice, conflict of interest, and the humiliation he gets from Antonio in the Rialto in front of all merchants.

Antonio joins Shylock and Bassanio in order to confirm the quest for the loan. As Shylock reminds him of his insulting treatment of him in the Rialto, calling him a "misbeliever," a "cut-throat dog," a "cur," and spitting on his Jewish gabardine (1.3. 104-06), Antonio insists that he will continue to chastise, reprimand, insult, and even spit on Shylock for charging him interest—a move that incites Shylock's utmost enmity and desire for vengeance. Despite his quest for the loan, he treats Shylock roughly as usual.

Antonio assures him that he will not change his treatment of Shylock and asks to lend the money not to a friend but to an enemy. He holds:

> *I am as like to call thee so again,*
> *To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too.*
> *If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not*
> *As to thy friends; for when did friendship take*
> *A breed for barren metal of his friend?*
> *But lend it rather to thine enemy,*
> *Who, if he break, thou mayst with better face*
> *Exact the penalty.   (1.3.125-32)*

Antonio does not relent on his attitude and treatment of Shylock. He actually gives justification for Shylock's later insistence on his contract which means the death of Antonio.

Antonio is forced to ask his opponent for money in order to provide for his friend because of Bassanio's declaration of a state of emergency. Antonio signs the contract with Shylock, which includes a penalty clause in the event that he misses the three-month deadline for loan repayment, full of confidence in his good fortune and capacity to repay the loan on schedule.

Shylock sees an opportunity to get revenge on Antonio in Bassanio's request for a loan. Subsequently, he presciently assesses Antonio's riches and anticipates that he would miss the deadline. He muses on the fact that he has knowledge from the Rialto that all of Antonio's riches is transported on his ships as they cruise to various locations. As Shylock notes (1.3. 12-9), some of his ships go to Tripolis, others to the Indies, some to Mexico, and still others are making their way across the North Sea to England. He believes that the sea poses numerous risks that could compromise that wealth, including rocks that could damage or drown the ships and pirates who could seize the cargo. He enumerates a few threats that these ships may face:

> *…there be land-rats*
> *and water-rats, water-thieves and land-thieves, I*
> *mean pirates, and then there is the peril of waters,*
> *winds and rocks. The man is, notwithstanding,*
> *sufficient. Three thousand ducats; I think I may*
> *take his bond. (1.3.20-4)*

Unfortunately, Shylock's thoughts are realized. Antonio's several ships sinking prevented him from repaying the debt on time. The narrative thickens at this point because Shylock is determined to enforce the contract. However, once Bassanio marries Portia, Antonio gains a lot of support from her when she appears in court as attorney Balthazar and skillfully pulls Antonio out of a fatal punishment. This major thread of the plot brings four characters to the

fore, namely Antonio, Shylock, Portia, and Bassanio. The study is going to test verbosity as a tool to support the thematic presentation of the characters.

Literature Review:

Critics of the play, devote their articles mainly on either Portia or Shylock, who actually are given equal verbosity and space the play. Here are some notable studies.

Trisha Olson (2004) discusses the aspect of mercy that Portia presides over in her court discussion with Shylock. The play presents a "parade of binaries" for legal students, but while most literary critics concur that it is thematically rich, the main tension is in the relationship between law and mercy and whether or not justice resolves this conflict within itself (299).

In their article on the disguised heroines of Shakespeare, Ivan Atmanagara and Marliza Yeni (2007) explain that Portia is represented in *The Merchant of Venice* as a strong, cunning woman who uses deceit to keep her riches, position, and authority. In an attempt to save Antonio, her husband's closest friend, she assumes the identity of a man and converses with him in between. In the courtroom scenario, Portia is well-respected for her knowledge of the Law of Venice and her enjoyment of her new appearance. According to Julie Hankey, the incident is unique since Portia invaded typically male territory with her masculinity, reason, and methodical speaking. Even after all of her trickery, Portia is still the real heroine of the play.

In his thesis, Weijian Wang (2015) analyzes the play in light of William Shakespeare's life and literary career, especially as it relates to *The Merchant of Venice*. He holds that Shakespeare's reasons for the play are to be better understood with a more thorough analysis of his social roles, including those of shareholder and businessman. The thesis argues that Portia is a representation of Queen Elizabeth I through an analysis of both canonical sources and recent findings, and that Shakespeare's nuanced emotions during a period of divisive politics and religion are reflected in the story and character development.

Carol Rutter (2021) holds that the fact that Portia was named an appellee in the appeal was an odd development. The choice to give Portia a try is examined in this essay. What societal, political, or religious purposes did Portia's court appearance serve? Rutter's article considers justice and mercy, law, bonds, and love and poses the question, "Did misogyny revive antisemitism at the time of the verdict?" She points out that Shakespeare's play's spectators often accuse Portia of failing to provide Shylock the "quality of mercy" she proposes. However, this misrepresents her actions in Shakespeare's court, misinterpreting how mercy can be applied as mitigation and its relationship to justice.

Cecily Ran Liao (2022) argues that he play's main heroine, Portia, is a complicated figure with idealized attributes including wealth, prestige, beauty, intelligence, kindness, and eloquence. She contends that Portia's strong contact with the defendant party exposes corruption and favoritism, and her private remarks with Nerissa are regarded as cruel and racist despite her niceties and civility. She adds that although Portia gives an amazing speech about mercy during the trial scene, her behavior toward Shylock does not align with her poignant portrayal of mercy. She explains that her intimate ties to the accused party also indicate her prejudice and corruption, which makes the unjust trial clear. Liao concludes that she is not as flawless as she appears, even if she is admired.

Although Portia gathers a lot of attention from critics as the main character in *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock's character has similarly been subject to much critical analysis. Brian Weinstein (2007), for instance, traces the concept of usury that is attached to Shylock. He argues that Shakespeare's depiction of Shylock as an abhorrent usurer is a biting indictment of anti-Semitism in Western culture. Since "usury" refers only to the cost of using borrowed money, the term has no negative connotations. He explains that since the fifth century C.E., Christians have been negatively associated with Jews who lend money; popes have forbidden usury on the grounds that it violates the Gospel. The unfavorable perception of Jews as moneylenders persists in the Christian psyche, despite shifts in Christian doctrine. Weinstein points out that Shakespeare's interpretation of Shylock shows his insight of human nature and feelings, yet he unintentionally transgresses Talmudic and biblical prohibitions against lending money. He concludes that the dramatist demonstrates the breadth of his knowledge by depicting Shylock as a Jew-usurer.

In his study of Shylock, Joseph Ross Parmet (2014) takes a different approach. He contends that, in spite of its anti-Semitic depiction of Shylock, Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* successfully criticizes early modern capitalism by using Shylock as a stand-in for the Venetian trading system. Through his negative capacity, Shylock introduces the concepts of tragicomedy and nihilism, so creating a bridge to tragedy. The drama critiques the idea of early capitalism by using Shylock as a scapegoat and mirror for exploitation.

Huang Li-hau in an article on Shylock (2019) focuses on the estrangement of Shylock. He maintains that Shylock appears to be a complete outsider and foreigner in Venice when compared to the other characters in *The Merchant of Venice*. This is because the other Venetians view him as the "Other" because he is a Jew and practices usury, both of which are detested and denigrated during the Elizabethan era, proposes Li-hau. This study examines power, identity, and ideology in Shylock's speech from Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice. It makes clear that Shylock, a Jew, is weak and lacks Jewish identity and ideas. His disregard for other people's ability to edit his language and his vicious nature ultimately lead to his demise. The study draws attention to how language can be used in society to impose authority, erase identities that are undesirable, and appropriate the ideas of others.

Tiffany Hoffman (2022) highlights the emotional struggle between Antonio and Shylock while examining the concept of what Hoffman calls "Christian shyness" in their precarious situations. For a while, Antonio's timid conscience gives in to Shylock's dominance, but in the end, Shylock overcomes his timid introspection and submits to judgment, resulting in a contentious statement.

In the critical scholarship on the play, there is no study that is concerned with the power of verbosity or even the direct and indirect methods of characterization through speech in this play. This study serves to fill in a gap in the scholarship in this regard. The statistical approach to the play is meant to provide empirical data represented in the charts and tables below.

The problem

Despite the long list of characters in the play, the plot is mainly about the four major characters involved in the combat between Shylock and Antonio, on the one hand, and Shylock and Portia, on the other, along with Bassanio, who is the cause of the conflict and the agent

that indirectly causes the intervention of Portia to rescue Antonio and defeat Shylock. The study chose to calculate the word count of these four characters to prove that the conflicts and defense of these characters are the main concerns of the play. The article endeavors to investigate the relationship between verbosity and the place of the characters and their concerns in the play. The connection between verbosity and themes and characters' importance has not been between the subject of discussion in criticism to the best of my knowledge.

Methodology

This study examines how the characters' verbosity and the play's word count contribute to its meaning through statistical analysis. Figures 1A and B illustrate the researcher's summary of the total word count of the play's individual acts. Secondly, he compiled all of the characters' direct statements as well as their indirect remarks about other characters, and he determined the proportions of each type of utterance. Figure 2 compiles all of the computation outcomes. Figures 3A and B depict the direct verbosity of the four main characters: Bassanio, Shylock, Portia, and Antonio. The four main characters' indirect verbosity is shown in Figures 4A and B. The entire verbosity, both direct and indirect, about the four main characters is the most informative.

Results

The distribution of words among the acts of the play.

Act 2, with 5606 words, has the most verbosity, as seen in Figures 1A and B. Next comes Act 3, which has 5514 words. Act 1 is the third most verbose of the three. Act 5 has the fewest words, and Act 4 is the fourth with 4049 words. This suggests that the final two acts contain the least number of words since Act 4 is entirely devoted to the court's discussions over Shylock's appeal, during which he loses both the case and his fortune. The hilarious scenario involving the rings following Antonio's courtroom rescue is the final act. The play's most verbose sections are its opening three acts, which also tell the story, examine character interactions, and introduce the play's ideas.

Figure 1 A

Act	Word count
Act 1	4195
Act 2	5606
Act 3	5514
Act 4	4049
Act 5	2636

Figure 1 B
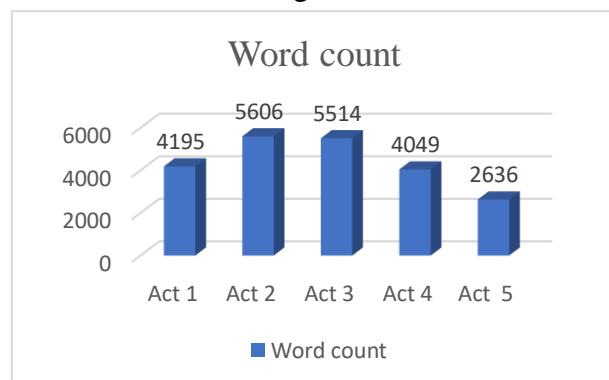
The distribution of the total verbosity among the characters of the play

The distribution of the play's total verbosity among the characters is displayed in the following table. It displays the percentage of verbosity assigned to each character as well as

the distribution of direct speech among the characters in the play's five acts. It's evident that the majority of direct verbosity is directed towards the four primary characters. But these characters don't only talk; other people also discuss them, which is accounted for in this instance as indirect verbosity. For both direct and indirect verbosity, percentages are provided.

The figure makes it evident that while others discuss Antonio, the merchant of Venice, at 7588 words—or 34.5% of the play's bulk—he is only given 1560 words, or 7.1% of the play's direct utterance. This indicates that he receives 41.6% of the play's verbosity. This clearly justifies Shakespeare's naming the play after Antonio.

Bassanio utters 2559 words; others utter 3184 words about him, both totaling 5743, which makes 26% of the total verbosity of the play.

The level of direct and indirect verbosity attributed to Portia and Shylock, who argue in court over Antonio's life, is what I find most fascinating. The majority of the play is given to the one in the ratio of 33.1% (4526 words of direct conversation and 2756 words of indirect talk) to 32.9% (2875 direct and 4360 indirect talk).

Notably, the overall bulk of verbosity in the play is 22,000 words, which we can obtain by adding up the percentages of each character. On the other hand, the total amount of discussion, including indirect speaking, comes to 29408 words. The quantity of words counted twice as direct and indirect accounts for the disparity.

character	Act1	Act2	Act3	Act4	Act5	direct total	indirect total	Total direct and indirect utterances	% direct	%indirect	total
Antonio	651	41	135	643	90	1560	7588	9148	7.1	34.5	41.6
Portia	787	336	1456	1100	847	4526	2756	7282	20.6	12.5	33.1
Bassanio	487	276	1082	375	339	2559	3184	5743	11.6	14.5	26
Shylock	1024	302	728	821	0	2875	4360	7235	13	19.8	32.9
Lorenzo	50	349	380	0	535	1314			6		
Jessica	0	303	580	0	86	969			4.4		
Narrissa	315	43	93	138	214	803			3.65		
Gratiano	264	285	235	278	291	1353			6.15		
Salarino	327	293	178	0	0	798			3.6		
Solanio	99	371	164	0	0	634			2.9		
Others	191	3007	483	694	234	4609			21		
Total	4195	5606	5514	4049	2636	22000	17888	29408	100	81.3	133.7

Figure 2   11520

Direct and indirect verbosity of the four major characters

In figures 3 A and 3 B, we notice that Portia is assigned more direct words than all the other primary characters, with 4526 words, while Shylock occupies 2nd place with 2875 words, followed by

Bassanio with 2559 words, and lastly, Antonio with 1560 words.

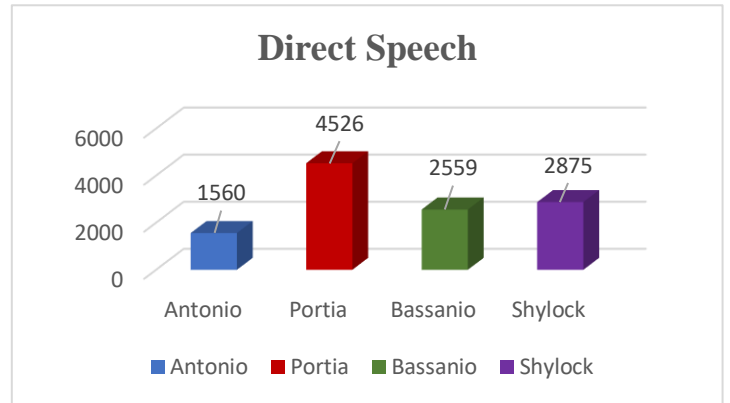| Direct Speech	
Character	**Word count**
Antonio	**1560**
Portia	**4526**
Bassanio	**2559**
Shylock	**2875**

Figure 3 A

Figure 3 B

Figures 4A and 4B display that when it comes to indirect verbosity, Antonio ranks number 1 with 7588 uttered by other characters about him. Shylock comes next with 4360 words. Bassanio occupies third place with 3184 words, followed by Portia with 2756 words.

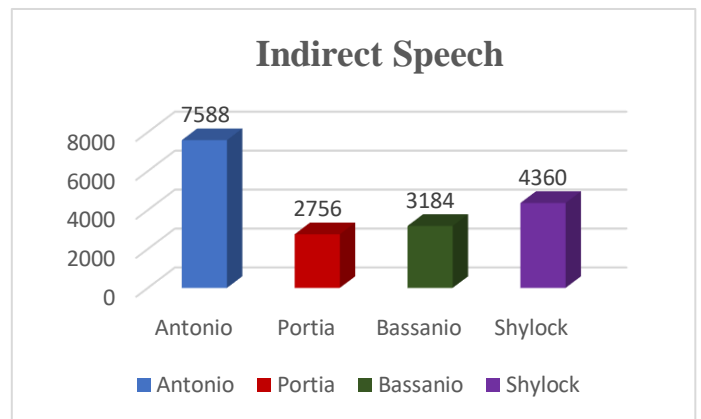| Indirect Speech	
Character	**Word count**
Antonio	**7588**
Portia	**2756**
Bassanio	**3184**
Shylock	**4360**

Figure 4 A

Figure 4 B

The total direct and indirect verbosity of the main characters is shown in Figures 5A and B. According to them, Bassanio comes in at number four with 5743 words, while Antonio comes in first with 9148 words, followed by Portia with 7282 and Shylock with 7235.

Direct and Indirect Speech	
Character	**Word count**
Antonio	**9148**
Portia	**7282**
Bassanio	**5743**
Shylock	**7235**

Figure 5 B
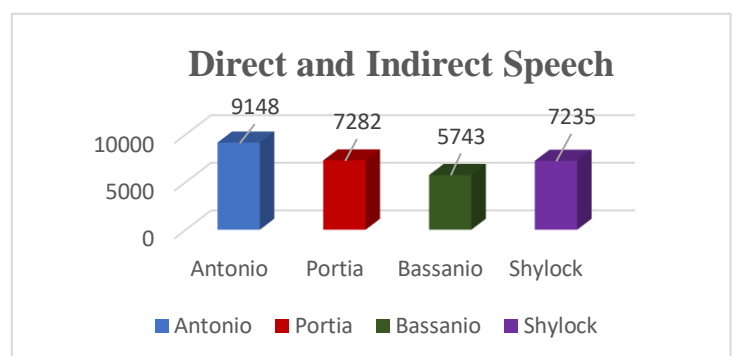

Figure 5 A

Discussion:

The statistics demonstrate a number of important issues. One such issue is that the four major characters—Antonio, Shylock, Portia, and Bassanio—are assigned 11,520 (52.4%) out of 22,000 words in the play. The long list of other characters has 10,480 words, which is 48.6% of the play. With the exception of Gratiano and Lorenzo, who utter 1353 and 1314 directly, respectively, the rest of the cast speaks less than 1000 words each.

Remarkably, Antonio is given 1560 direct utterances in the five acts. This way, he has the least amount of direct verbosity among the four characters. In contrast, Portia utters 4526 direct words, Shylock 2875, and Bassanio 2559 words. This raises the question of why Shakespeare named his play after Antonio, the merchant of Venice. In fact, the characterization of Antonio does not come only from direct speech but also from indirect speech. The total utterances of other characters about Antonio are 7588 words. These words make up 34.5% of the total text of the play. Adding these words to the direct words gives a total of 9148, or 41.6% of the total text of the play. Shakespeare's decision to title the play The Merchant of Venice is well justified by this. As seen in Figure 2, the indirect speech concerning Portia, Bassanio, and Shylock is as follows: 2756, 3184, and 4360 words, in that order. The total number of words assigned to each of these three characters that arise from adding the direct and indirect utterances is 7282, 5743, and 7235. This indicates that the proportions allotted to these three characters are 33.1%, 26%, and 32.9%.

Most surprisingly, Figures 5A and 5B show that the verbosity of the play as a whole differs by only 47, or 0.2%, with the amount of direct and indirect remarks allowed to Portia and Shylock being 7282 and 7235, or 33.1% and 32.9%, almost equal. These figures heighten the play's central conflict. Shylock and Portia are engaged in a court struggle for Antonio's life. In this competition, Shylock makes a valiant effort to take advantage of Venice's legal system in order to capture Antonio and extract a pound of flesh from his chest, so taking his life. He acts as a force of death as a result. By requesting that Shylock follow the terms of their agreement, which allow him to chop off one pound of Antonio's flesh but not one drop of blood, Portia, on the other hand, works hard and strategically to save Antonio's life.

Throughout the play, Shakespeare gives both characters an equal opportunity to voice their opinions and make their points. One adversary serves as a destructive force out for vengeance, while the other is a life-saving force that demands forgiveness and mercy. It is made clear that Shylock is a determined malevolent power who is determined to exact revenge on Antonio.

Shylock's determination to exact revenge in spite of pleas for mercy stands as a major topic in *The Merchant of Venice*. The trial scene in Act IV features Shylock refusing to back down from his demand for a pound of Antonio's flesh in accordance with their bond, despite several chances to be kind. Shylock is driven to follow his evil plans by his deep-seated desire for vengeance and his sentiments of hatred towards Antonio, despite Antonio's, Bassanio's, and Portia's pleas for him to change his mind and show compassion.

This adamancy of Shylock is motivated by a set of reasons, as the play reveals. First, Shylock has been the target of years of abuse and discrimination because of his Jewish ancestry, which has led to his deep loathing for Antonio. He sees this as an opportunity to get even with a Christian who has made fun of and ridiculed him. Second, Shylock sees the bond as a contract that gives him the right to exact revenge on those who have wronged him. His obsession with

getting his pound of flesh serves as a metaphor for his struggle for justice in a community that has rejected him. Third, in addition to the financial benefit of the bond, Shylock has a personal animosity against Antonio, which gives him the willpower to exact the severe punishment. His deep-seated need to demonstrate his dominance and seek retribution is the reason behind his inability to show mercy.

In addition to highlighting the concepts of justice and mercy, Shylock's unwavering quest of vengeance also offers a commentary on the pernicious effects of prejudice and hatred. In the end, his intransigence in the face of Portia's astute legal interpretation proves to be his undoing, as he is ultimately overcome. Shylock's steadfast pursuit of vengeance illustrates the complexity of human impulses and feelings. His character presents a tragic figure who is oblivious to chances for repentance and redemption because of his unwavering thirst for vengeance.

In contrast, Portia features as a benevolent force who saves Antonio's life by delivering him from Shylock's malevolent grasp. Through her cunning, intellect, and resourcefulness, Portia is instrumental in reversing Shylock's unrelenting hunt for Antonio's flesh. This is how Antonio begins to see Portia as a ray of hope and salvation:

In her appearance in Act IV, scene I, dressed as a young attorney to defend Antonio in the trial that Shylock has set up, Portia provides a ray of hope to rescue him. By using her shrewd legal strategies and deft legal maneuvering, Portia outwits Shylock and thwarts his efforts to secure revenge. In addition to saving Antonio's life, her deftness and fast thinking reveal Shylock's ulterior motive. Besides, despite having no personal stake in the situation and being a wealthy heiress, Portia acts selflessly to save Antonio out of justice and compassion. She goes above and beyond to make sure Antonio is protected; in order to join the male-dominated legal field, she even poses a danger to her reputation and safety by passing for a male lawyer.

Furthermore, Portia stresses the value of kindness over rigid devotion to the law when she manages to free Antonio from Shylock's bound. She emphasizes her faith in humanity and goodwill by pleading with Shylock to exercise forgiveness and compassion rather than seeking retribution. In addition to physically saving Antonio, Portia's plea for mercy also appeals to the moral sensibilities of those watching the trial.

Portia's deeds in the play stand in for salvation and redemption. She intervenes to prevent Antonio from suffering a horrible end, but she also helps the characters' perceptions of kindness, forgiveness, and justice to change. Her presence acts as a beacon of hope, pointing to the characters in the direction of harmony and reconciliation rather than darkness. In brief, Portia's role as a life-saving catalyst in saving Antonio from Shylock's evil exemplifies her bravery, intelligence, and steadfast dedication to justice and compassion. She exemplifies, by her deeds, the ability of compassion and virtue to triumph over misfortune and establish equilibrium in a conflict-ridden world. This discussion posits the two characters as the main opponents over the life of Antonio. That validates Shakespeare's creativeness in giving this two radically different characters' equal verbosity so they might each have the same opportunity to present their cases and clarify their motivations.

The uncomplimentary presentation of Shylock's character and plans in Shakespeare is in line with the English Renaissance perception of Jewish figures were largely triggered by historical narratives, cross-cultural interactions, and religious conflicts despite the absence of Jews who were expelled from England in 1290. Despite this absence, all had a significant role

in the rise of Jewish figures in the English imagination. The complicated image of Jews on stage was influenced by the ritual murder libel and other anti-Jewish prejudices that emerged in England. This paradoxical circumstance gave playwrights the opportunity to use Jewish characters—without direct representation—to explore issues of difference and otherness (Shapiro, 2016). Dessen (1974) wonders if Shylock is condemned because of his Jewishness or his evil mind and conduct? (232) Or is he merely deplored for his evil intentions and schemes like Iago, Richard III, Aaron, or Lady Macbeth?

The researcher believes that understanding Shakespeare comes from the narrative of the play, which posits Shylock in juxtaposition to Portia. In the court scene, Shylock insists on applying to law in order to endanger the life of Antonio. Portia uses law also, but to deprive Shylock of the ability to inflict his malice and prejudice on Antonio. Both use the law, one to end life, the other to save life.

Beside Shylock and Portia, interesting also is the role of Bassanio, who is given 5743 or 26% of the text of the play, in this conflict. In fact, his role is important as he is the character who involved Antonio in this loan and contract with Shylock. Besides, his marriage to Portia provides a major support to rescue Antonio from his plight. Also, he functions as a connecting link between the austere world of Venice and the utopian world of Belmont. He is given less verbosity than the three other characters not to overshadow the role of any of them.

In addition to Shylock and Portia, Bassanio's part in this fight is noteworthy as well. He is allocated 5743 direct and indirect words, or 26% of the play's text. Since he is the one who persuaded Antonio to take out this debt and sign this contract with Shylock, his role is actually quite significant. In addition, Bassanio's union with Portia offers crucial assistance in delivering his friend Antonio from his predicament. In addition, Bassanio serves as a conduit between the utopian world of Belmont and the austere world of Venice. In order to not overthrow any of the other three characters' roles, he is given less verbosity than them.

Moreover, minor characters are allotted a volume of verbosity that is proportionate to their roles in the play. For instance, Gratiano, Lorenzo, Jessica, and Nerissa are given 1353,1314, 969, 803 direct words respectively. Also, there is insignificant indirect talk addressed to them or about them compared to the major characters. However, their share of verbosity in the play can be considered a middle-range volume because they play more important roles than other minor characters.

Gratiano is a bright and devoted friend to both Antonio and Bassanio. His role, who displays his sociable nature and keen wit, provides humorous relief amidst the play's more somber themes. Gratiano's impulsive personality often gets him into amusing situations, endearing him to the audience while also emphasizing societal issues such as prejudice and religious disparity that permeated the Venetian society of the play. His loyalty to Bassanio is especially clear when he helps him win Portia, even at the cost of his own pleasure when he develops feelings for Portia's maid, Nerissa. A double wedding, which represents the blending of friendship and love, is the result of this. Ultimately, Gratiano is a crucial character in the story because he not only adds humor but also provokes thoughtful analysis of the era's social mores.

Though less glamorous than the four major characters, Lorenzo has a significant role. He portrays Jessica, the daughter of Shylock, as his romantic interest. His persona highlights the social tensions and theological tensions of the day by acting as a link between the Christian

and Jewish communities featured in the play. Lorenzo and Jessica's elopement is a revolt against Shylock's authority and the expectations her father placed on her as a Jewish lady. Lorenzo is shown as a true and committed lover throughout the play, expressing his love for Jessica with sentimental gestures and poetic remarks. His connection with Antonio entwines romantic feelings with business conflicts, further complicating his relationship with Shylock. In the end, Lorenzo plays a crucial role in advancing the plot because of his deeds, which speak to the story's main themes of love, devotion, and struggle.

A crucial but little part for Jessica, the daughter of Shylock. Her character acts as a trigger for a number of significant story points, most notably her elopement with Lorenzo, which emphasizes her wish to leave her father's harsh home and heightens Shylock's vindictive hunt for Antonio. Additionally, there is a stark contrast between Jessica and Lorenzo's connection and the more nuanced relationships between other characters, such as Portia and Bassanio. Although Jessica's motives have been disputed by critics as to whether they are self-serving or motivated by love, her character ultimately subverts 16th-century gender roles and familial allegiance standards. Jessica becomes a symbol of both the pursuit of happiness and rebellion against patriarchal norms when she takes charge of her life and disobeys her father. Simultaneously, Shakespeare's portrayal of Jessica as a noble and conscientious character safeguards against the perception of all Jews as vindictive as Shylock.

Nerissa plays an important part in the drama that is developing as Portia's devoted friend and confidante. In addition to being encouraging, Portia's lady-in-waiting is astute and shrewd, contributing to the idea of disguising themselves as men in order to free Antonio from Shylock's shackle. Nerissa's cunning is on full display in the courtroom scene when she poses as Balthazar's law clerk and helps with the legal wrangling that finally results in Antonio's release. A romantic undercurrent is also added to the story by her romance with Gratiano, which ends with their marriage. Nerissa injects humor and lightheartedness into the play throughout, counterbalancing the darker themes with her amusing interactions with Portia. Despite not being the main character, she makes significant contributions to the plot and Portia's character development, highlighting her intelligence and loyalty as qualities that improve the story as a whole.

The marriages of Lorenzo and Jessica and Gratiano and Nerissa are also significant because they parallel and echo the marriage of Bassanio and Portia. That makes Belmont a place for love, unison, and happiness to be contrasted to the world of Antonio and Shylock, which is a world of hatred, prejudice, revenge, and business.

Conclusion

Shakespeare used verbosity to rank his characters according to their significance to the play's narrative and action, as the study has demonstrated. From the number of words said by the characters or about them, both directly and indirectly, it is evident that the play revolves around the lives of Antonio, Shylock, Portia, and Bassanio. Antonio rightfully takes credit for the play's title since he exhibits the highest level of both direct and indirect verbosity.

What is remarkable, however, is the almost equal amount of verbosity given to both Portia and Shylock, who end up legally combating over the life of Antonio. The one rushes to rescue

him from the grips of death; the other determines to destroy and kill him. Portia functions as a benevolent life-saving agent, whereas Shylock serves as a malevolent life-destroying force.

Furthermore, Bassanio, the fourth and least verbose of the major characters, has an ambivalent role. He is the reason Antonio is in Shylock's plight, but he also acts as an oblique benefactor, helping Antonio escape the cruel grasp of his opponent by way of his wife Portia, for whose marriage he initially borrowed money from Shylock.

These characters—particularly the two combatants who share an equal amount of verbosity—are singled out by the play's word count statistics as the most significant characters, and the problems they face are the play's central themes. These results provide empirical support for critics' choice to devote their research to either Shylock or Portia.

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Exploring the Nexus of Language, Culture, and Identity:
Insights from Interdisciplinary Perspectives

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Abstract

This paper delves into the intricate connections between language, culture, and identity, examining how these intersecting domains shape individuals and communities. Language is a system of communication that uses symbols (such as words, sounds, or gestures) to convey meaning. Culture refers to the shared beliefs, values, practices, traditions, customs, and social behaviors that characterize a group of people. Identity is the sense of who a person is, shaped by both individual experiences and the social groups they belong to. Language serves as a primary vehicle for cultural expression and identity negotiation, reflecting and perpetuating shared beliefs, values, and practices within diverse sociocultural contexts. Key concepts in this process are: 1) Language as Cultural Marker, 2) Language as a tool of Culture and identity, 3) Culture as a Framework for identity, 4) Language as a Marker for Social Identity, and 5) Identity as a Fluid. Multifaceted Construct. By exploring the multifaceted relationships among language, culture, and identity, this paper aims to illuminate the complex dynamics at play and offer insights into the ways in which individuals construct, negotiate, and express their identities through language and cultural practices. To explore the intricate connections between language, culture, and identity, an interdisciplinary approach is essential. Various academic disciplines offer unique perspectives and methodologies for understanding how these domains interact. Here are some key disciplines that would contribute to the analysis, which include Linguistics, Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology and Cultural Studies. Various case studies were used to develop this paper. From bilingualism and language policy in state formation, to the role of language in cultural resistance and migration, these examples demonstrate how language functions as both a tool and symbol of identity, shaping the lived experiences of individuals and communities across the globe. Each case study offers a unique lens for understanding the complex and evolving relationships between language, culture, and identity in the modern world. As global flows of people, goods, media, and information intensify, languages and cultures are being reshaped in complex ways. While globalization can promote cultural exchange and linguistic diversity, it also poses significant challenges to the preservation of minority languages and cultural traditions. In examining the intersections of language, culture, and identity, it is crucial to incorporate the perspectives of marginalized communities to fully understand the dynamics at play. These communities—often sidelined in mainstream discussions—offer unique insights into how language and culture are deeply tied to power, resistance, and survival in the face of globalization, colonization, and social inequality. This study will employ both qualitative and quantitative research methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between language, culture, and identity. The findings from this study have significant implications for understanding identity in contemporary society, particularly in an increasingly globalized and multicultural world. By revealing how language acts as a bridge to cultural expression and as a core element of personal and collective identity, the research underscores the importance of linguistic diversity and cultural preservation. These insights highlight that language is not only a means of communication but also a vital tool for social inclusion, shaping how individuals and groups perceive themselves and are perceived by others.

Keywords: Cultural Expression, Language, Culture, Linguistics, Community, Belonging, Globalization

Introduction

At the intersection of Language and Culture lies our Identities as we interact with the world. "Language has an inextricable connection with cultural identity and cultural practices, which in turn shape personal identity" (Sinha, Moreno-Núñez, Tian 2020). This means at the very core of how we identify ourselves and are identified by others lie language and culture. The importance of understanding the various cultures we represent is also emphasized by how we interact, and intersect, with other cultures. "Language is the cord that ties the individual to their community, and it is by means of language that human beings become fully immersed into their culture and active participants and constructors of its subsequent development" (Sinha, Moreno-Núñez, Tian 2020). This is crucial because it illustrates the vital importance of language, culture and identity in the development of civilization, sociocultural connection and diasporic influence.

Sociocultural presence is led by linguistics, and this use of language is what creates this idea of cultural identity and puts it into words that are highly utilitarian in the way we connect to community and culture. "Language is the lifeblood of any community, and if a language dies, the cultural identity of the community and the individuals that compose it may be also threatened with extinction" (Sinha, Moreno-Núñez, Tian 2020). The understanding of not only the cultures we ascribe to, but also those we interact with, have knowledge of and will learn about in the future, make it pertinent to work together for the edification, expansion and exhibition of the plethora of cultures represented on our planet, not just those we identify with. In addition, we should be seeking out new cultures, pathways to understanding and multicultural connections in order to continue the cycle of progress and improvement.

Background and Rationale

Language, culture, and identity are deeply interconnected aspects of human experience. "Linguistic signs contribute to mediating human cognition, and it is through language that cultural *conceptualisations* are brought to life and kept alive" (Sinha, Moreno-Núñez, Tian 2020). In practice, we must preserve linguistic histories and oral traditions, push forward into the future and project these important and life-affirming aspects of culture into places where they can thrive, grow, augment and have impact. Understanding these connections is crucial for comprehending how individuals and communities evolve and function. Language is more than a means of communication; it is a fundamental component of cultural identity and a tool for expressing and negotiating one's place within a social framework. "Language is also a product of shared cultural reality, in which each sign is not only a reflection of this reality, but also a resource for making meaning and creating the reality" (Sinha, Moreno-Núñez, Tian 2020). This is important because it is this self-realization through language by means of culture and linguistics that we develop and explore not only our world but beyond the borders of time and space.

Research Objectives

This paper seeks to explore:

- How language serves as a medium for cultural expression and identity formation.

- The role of cultural practices in shaping linguistic identities.

- The dynamics of identity negotiation within multilingual and multicultural contexts.

"Identities are manifested in language as, first, the categories and labels that people attach to themselves and others to signal their belonging; second, as the indexed ways of speaking and behaving through which they perform their belonging; and third, as the interpretations that others make of those indices" (Preece 2016). All of us share in this culture of perception and interpretation of the indices we present both from within ourselves and outwardly to others. This creates our identities. Language serves as a powerful medium for cultural expression and identity formation in several significant ways:

Cultural Expression:

- Language helps preserve and transmit traditions, rituals, and customs from one generation to the next. Through stories, songs, and proverbs, cultural knowledge is shared and maintained.
- Language reflects the values, beliefs, and norms of a culture. The words and phrases used in a language can reveal what a culture prioritizes, such as respect, community, or individualism.
- Through poetry, literature, and other forms of artistic expression, language showcases the aesthetic values and creative expressions of a culture. This artistic output often serves as a repository of cultural history and identity.
- Language can act as a marker of cultural identity, distinguishing one cultural group from another. Dialects, accents, and language use can signal belonging to a particular cultural or ethnic group.

Identity Formation:

- The language individuals speak is closely tied to their personal identity. It shapes their worldview and self-perception. People often identify strongly with their native language, seeing it as a core part of who they are.
- Language fosters a sense of belonging and community. Speaking a common language can unite people within a cultural or social group, reinforcing group identity and solidarity.

o Language is the primary tool for communication and interaction. It helps individuals build and maintain relationships, negotiate social roles, and navigate their social environments.

o The language we speak influences our cognitive development and how we think. Linguistic relativity suggests that the structure and vocabulary of a language can affect how its speakers perceive and conceptualize the world.

Cultural practices play a crucial role in shaping linguistic identities. The informal oral transmission of a language occurs in a demographically-concentrated population reinforced by many intertwining systems in the community that are necessary: networks of family and friends who gather for fun, systems of care for children and elderly, and local groups gathered to engage multiple generations in a community (Fishman 1991). Here are some keyways in which cultural practices influence and shape the linguistic identities of individuals and communities:

- Cultural practices often involve storytelling, songs, and folklore, which are passed down orally through generations. These oral traditions help preserve the language and its unique expressions.

- Many cultural rituals and ceremonies are conducted in specific languages or dialects. Participating in these practices reinforces the use of the language and connects individuals to their cultural heritage.

- Different cultures have specific norms for addressing others, showing respect, and expressing politeness. These norms are deeply embedded in the language and shape how individuals use language in social interactions.

- Cultural practices also include non-verbal communication, such as gestures and body language, which complement spoken language and contribute to the overall linguistic identity.

- During cultural festivals and celebrations, language is used to express cultural identity. The use of traditional songs, prayers, and chants in the native language reinforces linguistic identity.

- Cultural artifacts, such as traditional clothing, art, and crafts, often come with specific terminologies and expressions. Knowing these terms and their meanings strengthens one's linguistic identity within the cultural context.

- Schools and educational institutions play a significant role in teaching the language and cultural values. Informal education through family and community also contributes to linguistic identity formation.

- Many communities have programs aimed at preserving and revitalizing their native languages. These programs often involve teaching cultural practices that are integral to the language.

- In multicultural and globalized societies, individuals often navigate multiple cultural and linguistic identities. Cultural practices from various traditions blend, creating hybrid linguistic identities.

- Cultural practices evolve, and so do languages. As people adapt to new cultural contexts, their language reflects these changes, leading to the creation of new linguistic identities.
- Speaking a particular language or dialect can signify membership in a specific cultural community. This sense of belonging is reinforced through community practices and social interactions.
- Language helps preserve the collective memory of a community, including its history, struggles, and achievements. Cultural practices that commemorate these events reinforce linguistic identity.
- In the face of external pressures, such as colonization or globalization, maintaining cultural practices and language can be an act of resistance. It empowers communities to assert their identity and preserve their heritage.
- Efforts to revive and sustain endangered languages often involve reinvigorating cultural practices. These revitalization efforts help strengthen linguistic identities.

The dynamics of identity negotiation within multilingual and multicultural contexts are complex and multifaceted, involving various factors that influence how individuals and communities navigate their identities. Identity is socially constructed, and thus there has been "veritable discursive explosion" around this concept of identity (Hall, Gay & Nugent 1997).

- In multilingual settings, individuals often switch between languages depending on the context, audience, and purpose. This practice, known as code-switching, allows them to express different facets of their identity.
- The choice of language in different situations can signal alignment with particular cultural or social identities. For example, using a minority language at home versus a dominant language in public spaces.
- Individuals in multicultural contexts may undergo acculturation, adapting to a new culture while retaining aspects of their original culture. This process can involve blending linguistic and cultural practices to create a hybrid identity.
- Developing cultural competence involves understanding and respecting multiple cultural perspectives and practices. This competence aids in the negotiation of identity in diverse settings.
- Power dynamics often favor dominant languages over minority languages. Individuals may feel pressure to assimilate linguistically to gain social, economic, or educational opportunities.
- Some languages or dialects are perceived as more prestigious than others. This perception can influence identity negotiation, as individuals may adopt prestigious languages to enhance their social status.
- Language and cultural practices can signify membership in particular communities. Multilingual individuals navigate their identities by engaging with multiple communities, each with its linguistic norms.

o Social networks influence identity negotiation. Interactions with peers, family, and community members help shape individuals' linguistic and cultural identities.

o Identities are not fixed; they are fluid and dynamic. Individuals in multilingual and multicultural contexts continuously negotiate their identities based on their experiences and interactions.

o Identity negotiation involves multiple intersecting factors, such as ethnicity, nationality, gender, and socioeconomic status. These intersections create unique identity experiences for each individual.

o Educational settings play a crucial role in shaping linguistic identities. Bilingual and multilingual education programs can support the maintenance and development of multiple languages and cultural identities.

o Policies regarding language use in public and private institutions impact identity negotiation. Supportive policies can promote linguistic diversity, while restrictive policies may force assimilation.

o Navigating multiple identities can lead to conflict, particularly when cultural or linguistic expectations clash. Individuals must reconcile these conflicts to achieve a coherent sense of self.

o Despite challenges, individuals often develop resilience and find empowerment through their multilingual and multicultural identities. Embracing diverse aspects of their identity can lead to greater self-awareness and cultural pride.

Conclusion

Language is not just a tool for communication but a vital medium through which cultural expression and identity formation occur. It is how humans utilize our imaginations to conjure "investment, imagined communities and imagined identities" (Norton 2013). It captures the essence of cultural heritage, shapes personal and group identities, and influences social interactions and cognitive development. Investment in one's own identity is constantly changing in time and space (Norton 2013). Understanding the role of language in these processes is essential for appreciating the richness and diversity of human cultures.

Cultural practices are integral to the formation and maintenance of linguistic identities. Through the transmission of traditions, norms, education, and social interactions, cultural practices embed language within the fabric of community life. Baker (2015) posits that we must "test the traditional assumptions concerning the purposed 'inexorable' link between a language and a culture, and in turn, identity." Understanding the role of cultural practices in shaping linguistic identities provides insight into the dynamic relationship between language and culture and highlights the importance of preserving both.

The dynamics of identity negotiation within multilingual and multicultural contexts involve navigating complex and often competing linguistic, cultural, and social factors. Individuals constantly adapt and redefine their identities through interactions with various communities, power structures, art, and personal experiences. Keen observers see art in all its forms as a cultural practice; it is a medium through which oppressed people can express resistance to the status quo (Harrison and Coakley 2020). Understanding these dynamics is

crucial for appreciating the richness and diversity of human identities in our increasingly globalized world.

This paper has highlighted the intricate nexus between language, culture, and identity, demonstrating how these elements interact to shape individuals and communities. By adopting an interdisciplinary perspective, it has provided a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which language serves as a conduit for cultural expression and identity negotiation. McAlpine argues the value of a *complementary* view of identity, *identity-trajectory,* that attends particularly to individual agency, nesting the academic within the personal and incorporating pasts as well as imagined futures; by focusing attention on the agency, resourcefulness and independence of the individual alternate ways of framing experience are explored (2012). This discussion underscores the importance of considering linguistic and cultural diversity in addressing contemporary social issues and promoting intercultural understanding.

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