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The implementation of the English curriculum in upper-secondary schools in Mongolia

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ABSTRACT

Mongolia, with its rich cultural heritage and strong emphasis on education, has prioritized English language learning as a gateway to global knowledge and international engagement**.** Over the past few decades, the Mongolian government has introduced major curriculum reforms, including competency-based standards, a competency-based curriculum, and the Mongolia-Cambridge Education Initiative, all aimed at aligning English instruction with international standards. However, despite these efforts, challenges persist in the implementation of the English curriculum in upper-secondary schools.

This study examines the implementation of the English curriculum in upper-secondary schools in Mongolia through the lens of a competency-based education framework**,** drawing on Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and Piaget's constuctivist theory as theoretical foundations. Despite the growing emphasis on competency-based education worldwide, limited research has examined how English teachers and students experience upper-secondary English curriculum implementation in Mongolian schools. Addressing this gap, the study explores teachers' perception of upper-secondary English curriculum, the challenges they face in curriculum implementation, and the extent to which competency-based teaching is incorporated. It also examines students' perceptions of the rationale behind the key elements of competency-based practices, their exposure to its practices, and their overall contentment with the English course.

This study utilizes a concurrent embedded mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Within this mixed-methods approach**,** qualitative findings serve to enhance and contextualize the quantitative results**,** providing deeper insights into the realities of curriculum implementation. Data was gathered through questionnaires administered to English teachers and students across Zavkhan, Bayankhongor, and Govi-Altai provinces, as well as Ulaanbaatar city. Additionally, focus group interviews were conducted with English teachers and upper-secondary students in Ulaanbaatar. All data collection took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. For data analysis, SPSS was used for quantitative analysis, while thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data to identify key themes and patterns.

The study examines the experiences of both English teachers and students through quantitative and qualitative findings. While most teachers find the curriculum's goals clear, many struggle with assessment criteria, resource shortages, and time constraints,

which hinder effective English language teaching and learning that embeds competency-based approaches. Basic English language skills are evident among students, but they require further support in advanced competencies, particularly in listening and speaking, while flexible assessments remain underutilized. Regional disparities indicate that English language teaching and learning which embeds competency-based approaches is more effectively implemented in some provinces than in others. Qualitative insights further reveal that a reliance on textbook and grammar-focused teaching limits real-world language applications and student engagement. Assessments prioritize reading and writing over communicative skills. Overall, the study underscores the need to reconsider English curriculum implementation policies, particularly in terms of time allocation, practical workshops for professional development, and a systematic approach to involving teachers in professional development without adding undue burdens, especially when competency-based teaching and learning are intended to be effectively integrated into English language education in Mongolia.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE DISSERTATION

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CBA	Competency-based approach
CBAM	Concerns-Based Adoption Model
CBC	Competency-based curriculum
CBE	Competency-based education
CBLT	Competency-Based Language Teaching
CBME	Competency-Based Medical Education
CEFR	The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
DANIDA	Danish International Development
EEC	Educational Evaluation Center (Mongolia)
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
EU	Europian Union
ITPD	Institute for Teacher's Professional Development (Mongolia)
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MECSS	Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports (Mongolia)
MES[1]	Ministry of Education and Science (Mongolia)
MIER	Mongolian Institute for Educational Research
MNIER[2]	Mongolian National Institute for Educational Research
SoCQ	Stages of Concern Questionnaire
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

[1] The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) in Mongolia was established following a reorganization that split the former Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports (MECSS). This change took place in 2020, as part of a broader governmental restructuring. The Ministry of Culture was created as a separate entity during this process, further delineating the responsibilities and focus areas of each ministry.

[2] The Mongolian National Institute for Educational Research (MNIER) was originally known as the Mongolian Institute for Educational Research (MIER). The change from MIER to MNIER occurred to reflect its expanded role and responsibilities.

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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GUIDELINE OF CHAPTERS

The dissertation comprises eight chapters, each addressing a distinct aspect of the study. Chapter 1 introduces the study, outlining its purpose, objectives, and significance. Chapter 2 delves into the theoretical perspectives, discussing theories such as Competency-based education (CBE), Competency-based language teaching (CBLT), and Vygotsky and Piaget's theories. Chapter 3 focuses on English language education in Mongolia, covering the country's context, a historical overview, English curriculum of upper-secondary education. Chapter 4 explains the research methodology, detailing the mixed methods research design employed. Chapter 5 presents the results, including findings from questionnaires and focus-group interviews. Chapter 6 provides a discussion, where the researcher addresses the interpretation of major findings discussing with existing literature and theoretical perspective. Finally, Chapter 7 provides the conclusion and recommendation derived from the research.

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins by providing the research background, outlining Mongolia's cultural value for education and the evolving importance of English. It also details the motivation for the choice of topic, linked to the author's involvement in curriculum reform projects. The significance of the research is introduced along with the research problem and concludes with the research aims and questions.

1.1 Research background

Mongolia, with its rich cultural heritage and a profound respect for education, has always placed a high value on learning. This tradition of prioritizing education is reflected in the efforts of the Mongolian government. The English language in Mongolia has grown significantly over the past few decades. English is not only viewed as a crucial tool for international communication but also as a gateway to global knowledge and opportunities. The Mongolian government recognizes that proficiency in English can enhance the country's socio-economic development by opening doors to international trade, diplomacy, and education (UNESCO, 2020). Historically, from the academic year of 1992–1993, English language started to be taught as a compulsory foreign language from the 5th grade in Mongolian schools (Norovsambuu, 2013, as cited in Marav et al., 2022). With comprehensive government policies and international support, English is now a crucial part of Mongolia's educational system and a gateway to global opportunities. Currently, English is one of the foreign languages taught in schools alongside the Russian language. The English curriculum in Mongolia has seen significant developments, especially in recent years. The Mongolian government has implemented policies to enhance English language education, seeing it as vital for economic and international engagement. English is now mandatory in schools, with curricula designed to improve proficiency and meet international standards (Marav et al., 2022; Orosoo, 2019).

The government has undertaken substantial reforms to enhance the education sector across all levels, focusing significantly on curriculum development and implementation. Despite the commitment and extensive efforts to reform the curriculum, Mongolia continues to face challenges in effectively implementing, updating, and evaluating its educational programs. The reform process has been characterized by unpredictability and short-term measures, which complicate the consistent application

and improvement of the curriculum. These challenges are especially pronounced in the implementation of the English curriculum in upper-secondary schools (UNESCO, 2020). The English curriculum in Mongolia has undergone several significant reforms aimed at aligning educational outcomes with international standards and preparing students for global opportunities. One notable initiative is a standards-based curriculum reform which began in 1998. New state education standards were introduced in 2003. These emphasize student-centered learning methodologies and the importance of developing higher-order thinking skills; learning how to know, learning how to perform, and learning how to socialize and be a good citizen. General subject areas include science, technology, and English. While these standards are consistent with the acquisition of skills needed for work and life, the current curriculum and teaching practices are not consistent with these goals (UNESCO-IBE, 2011). The recent initiative for English curriculum reform is the Mongolia-Cambridge Education Initiative which was introduced to the teachers to provide learning tasks according to students' ability or learning levels in daily classroom practice. These reforms were designed to cater to students' varying abilities and learning levels, promoting a more inclusive and effective learning environment (Adiyasuren & Galindev, 2023).

"In Mongolia, new, competency-based educational standards were approved in 2004. Those, and development of national curricula for the transition from 10 to 11 and then 12 years of schooling (2008–2019)" (UNESCO, 2020, p. 65). Following this reform, the English curriculum embeds competency-based aspects focusing on developing students' competencies, and student-centered learning, and the goals and objectives of education are defined and measured by competencies (UNESCO Bangkok, 2009; UNESCO-IBE, 2011). Thus, in this dissertation, we do not attempt to capture the full complexity of the implementation of the English curriculum in Mongolia. Rather, it is focused on examining the realities of English language education in the classroom of public schools in Mongolia, to shed some light on teaching and learning English. This dissertation will explore the implementation of the English curriculum in upper-secondary schools in Mongolia through the lens of competency-based aspects. It examines the target groups - the teachers implementing the curriculum and the students learning within it - who actively engage with it in the classroom. Teachers play a key role in bringing the curriculum to life and using it as a guide in their teaching. Therefore, the study investigates the extent to which teachers understand the competency-based

approach and the challenges they face. On the other hand, students are the primary beneficiaries of the curriculum, experiencing its effects and gaining knowledge from it.

1.2 Motivation for the choice of topic

The initial personal motivation for this research stems from a project conducted by the Mongolian Institute for Educational Research (MIER), an organization operating under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports (MECSS). This study focused on the implementation of the curriculum in Mongolia during late 2018 and early 2019, a period during which I had the opportunity to be actively involved as a member of the research team. Throughout this project, it was observed that some secondary school educators encountered a variety of challenges while attempting to implement a curriculum. These observations triggered me to decide to delve deeper into this particular field of study, prompting further exploration of the underlying issues and potential strategies for effective curriculum implementation.

1.3 Significance of the research

This study is of considerable significance both theoretically and practically in the context of enhancing the quality of the English curriculum in Mongolia, specifically targeting upper-secondary education. Theoretically, this research proposes recommendations that help identify the factors influencing the improvement of the English curriculum in upper-secondary schools. These insights aim to contribute to existing knowledge gaps and establish a basis for further academic inquiry in this area.

On a practical level, the study provides a wealth of evidence and ideas that can support the development of policies and measures to enhance the quality of the English curriculum. This research underpins insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders involved in curriculum development and implementation. By responding to research questions, the study aims to contribute to more effective teaching and learning practices within upper-secondary English education.

1.4 Research problem

In Mongolia, curriculum reforms over the past decade have been criticized for their lack of comprehensive research, theoretical foundation, and adequate preparation (MIER, 2019a). The existing curriculum reform processes have often proceeded with

limited analysis of underlying theoretical and methodological principles, resulting in significant challenges in both teacher preparedness and student outcomes (MECSS & JICA, 2018). These issues have led to increased difficulty in curriculum implementation, particularly within upper-secondary education, where reforms are frequently introduced without sufficient public consultation or teacher involvement.

Furthermore, "In Mongolia, the competency-based educational standards were approved in 2004, along with the development of national curricula for the transition from 10 to 11 and then 12 years of schooling (2008–2019), marked the establishment of a competency-based approach to teaching and learning" (UNESCO, 2020, p. 65). In addition, the English curriculum was revised and published as the second edition in 2019 to improve upon the previous framework, and it remains the curriculum currently in use (MECSS, 2019). As the country embraced this educational shift, it became essential to examine the challenges associated with implementing the English curriculum. English has become the most important foreign language in Mongolia, succeeding Russian in prominence and holding a central role in academic and social settings (Dovchin, 2017). Despite its significance, research on the English curriculum, particularly in upper-secondary schools, remains scarce, and its competency-based dimensions have not been thoroughly explored. There is a notable lack of inquiry into the competency-based dimensions of the curriculum and the perceptions of teachers and students regarding its implementation. This research, therefore, seeks to address these gaps by investigating the impact of the English curriculum, offering insights to inform future curriculum development and enhance English language education in Mongolia.

1.5 Research aims

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the implementation of the English curriculum in upper-secondary schools in Mongolia through the lens of competency-based aspects. Both teachers and students are the main target groups and experience the implementation of the curriculum. Teachers are responsible for delivering the curriculum content and facilitating learning, while students engage with the curriculum through classroom activities, assignments, and assessments. Therefore, the research has six aims targeting English teachers and students of upper-secondary schools, with three aims for each group.

For English teachers, the research aims to: 1) explore their understanding of competency-based aspects, 2) identify the issues and challenges faced during curriculum implementation, and 3) examine the extent to which lessons incorporate competency-based teaching and learning.

For students of upper-secondary schools, the study will: 1) delve into their comprehension of the rationale behind practices that reflect elements of competency-based learning, 2) explore their exposure to English language skills and competencies, and 3) assess their satisfaction with the English curriculum. Simultaneously, this research hopes to find ways to enhance the English curriculum, thereby responding more effectively to English language teaching and learning.

1.6 Research questions

The research questions are categorized based on the target groups as follows:

For English teachers

1. How do English teachers perceive the implementation of the upper-secondary English curriculum?
2. What are the challenges of the implementation of the English curriculum of upper-secondary education?
3. To what extent do English teachers integrate competency-based teaching practices?

For students of upper-secondary schools

4. To what extent do the students perceive the rationale behind practices in English courses that reflect key elements of competency-based learning?
5. To what extent are the students exposed to the key elements of competency-based learning?
6. What is the students' contentment with the English course?

CHAPTER 2 – THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The chapter describes the theoretical perspectives employed in this research. The theoretical underpinnings of CBE, grounded in Piaget's constructivist theory and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, provide a strong basis for understanding how this educational model supports effective language acquisition. By emphasizing mastery, personalized learning, and social interaction, CBE aligns closely with the cognitive and communicative processes that underpin successful English language teaching and learning.

2.1 Definitions of key terms

Competency-based education (CBE)

According to Le et al. (2014), CBE is recognized as a transformative approach emphasizing the acquisition and demonstration of competencies of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that are essential for success in life and work. Unlike traditional models, CBE prioritizes personalized learning, allowing students to progress based on competency mastery rather than time spent in the classroom. Spady (1977) further defines CBE as a data-driven, adaptive, and performance-oriented approach that facilitates, measures, records, and certifies learning, enabling students to demonstrate explicitly stated outcomes within flexible timeframes to reflect real-world competencies. In a more structured framework, Casey (2018) outlines that students progress upon mastering competencies, which are explicit, measurable, and transferable; assessments are meaningful and enhance learning; support is timely and personalized; and learning outcomes emphasize not just knowledge acquisition but also its application, creation, and the development of essential skills and dispositions. Meanwhile, Gervais (2016) defines CBE as an outcome-based, learner-centered approach that uses diverse instructional methods and assessments to evaluate students' mastery through demonstrated knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, and behaviors, shifting the focus from traditional instruction to performance-based learning. In a complementary perspective, Curry and Docherty (2017) emphasize that CBE targets behavioral competence by assessing direct indicators of proficiency, ensuring learners demonstrate competencies throughout their education rather than just acquiring theoretical knowledge. These definitions highlight CBE's emphasis on personalized, outcome-based, and performance-oriented learning, ensuring students acquire, apply, and demonstrate competencies essential for success in real-world

settings. The focus on explicitly defined and measurable competencies allows for a more transparent and structured learning process, where mastery is continuously assessed through meaningful evaluation methods. However, the concept and practice of competency-based education will be explored in greater detail throughout this chapter.

Competency-based language teaching (CBLT)

CBLT is an application of CBE, an educational movement that emphasizes learning outcomes in language program development by applying CBE principles to language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Unlike conventional language teaching methods that emphasize content knowledge, CBLT emphasizes what learners are expected to do with the language by using it effectively in practical contexts (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). CBLT emphasizes that students learn to use the language in authentic situations likely to be encountered outside the classroom (Griffith & Lim, 2014, p. 2). Grounded in the functional and interactional perspective of language, it integrates language teaching with social contexts, shifting its focus from students' knowledge of language to their ability to use it effectively (Marcellino, 2005). Taken as a whole, these definitions highlight that CBLT applies CBE principles to language learning, emphasizing practical language use in authentic contexts, shifting the focus from content knowledge to communicative competence, and integrating language instruction with social interactions to enhance real-world applicability.

Competency-based learning (CBL)

Students progress upon demonstrating mastery, showcasing their learning when ready, with meaningful assessments that require actual demonstration of knowledge, while receiving timely, individualized support based on their learning needs (Domaleski et al., 2015 as cited in Hess et al., 2020). Similarly, Sturgis et al. (2011) claim that competency-based learning approaches ensure that students progress upon mastery, with explicit, measurable, and transferable learning objectives, meaningful assessments that enhance learning, timely and individualized support, and outcomes that emphasize applying and creating knowledge while developing essential skills and dispositions.

Torres (2015) adds to this perspective that stating that although CBL lacks a universally accepted definition, it shares key elements, including students earning credit or graduating by demonstrating mastery of all required competencies, progressing at their

own pace with additional time and personalized instruction if needed, being assessed through multiple measures that emphasize application over rote memorization, and accumulating credits through various learning opportunities beyond traditional seat time. In support of this approach, Marzano (2007, p. 15) supports the CBL approach, noting that it "ensures a consistent, structured framework for tracking student progress, setting clear expectations, and providing meaningful feedback". Similarly, Henri et al (2017) define CBL as a pedagogical approach centered on the mastery of measurable student outcomes. Together, these perspectives underscore that CBL is a structured, student-centered approach that prioritizes mastery, personalized learning, and meaningful assessment to enhance educational effectiveness.

Competence vs Competency

In educational theory and practice, the terms "competence" and "competency" are often used interchangeably, yet they have nuanced differences that are essential in the context of learning and performance. Competence is generally understood as a broader construct, encompassing an individual's combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enables them to perform tasks effectively. According to the European Commission & Directorate-General for Education (2019), competence refers to the proven ability to use knowledge, skills, and personal, social, and/or methodological abilities in work or study situations and professional and personal development. This definition underscores competence as a holistic capacity that combines multiple attributes in context specific ways, enabling individuals to meet situational demands and perform effectively in real-life scenarios.

Competency, on the other hand, refers to specific, observable behaviors or skills within a particular context. Hager and Gonczi (1996, as cited in Dellen & Kamp, 2008) describe competencies as distinct abilities or tasks that can be measured and demonstrated, such as specific tasks within an occupation. Furthermore, Competency is defined as a set of skills, related knowledge and attributes that allow an individual to perform a task or an activity within a specific function or job (UNIDO, 2002). "The concept of competency implies more than just the acquisition of knowledge and skills; it involves the mobilization of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to meet complex demands" (OECD, 2018b, p. 5). Whitty and Willmott (1991, p. 310) noted competency as "an ability to perform a task" and "encompassing intellectual, cognitive and attitudinal

dimensions, as well as performance". Competency is defined as mobilization of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values (Choi et al., 2018, p. 303). Competencies are often assessed to ensure that an individual meets predefined standards or qualifications for a role, focusing more on discrete and measurable abilities rather than the holistic, integrated capacity described by competence (Glaesser, 2019).

In sum, while competence reflects a person's broader capacity to perform across various contexts, competency refers to the individual skills or behaviors that contribute to competence. This distinction is essential for designing assessments and curricula in competency-based education, where the focus may shift between building overarching competence and achieving targeted competencies. In the context of this dissertation, which focuses on the implementation of the English curriculum in upper-secondary schools in Mongolia, the researcher will be using the concept of *competency* to analyze and respond to the research questions.

2.2 Competency-based education

CBE enables students to pursue both personal and collective well-being, rather than focusing solely on individual social or economic success. It emphasizes not just acquiring skills for a good job or high income, but also fostering the holistic growth of students as individuals who can lead fulfilling lives and contribute to creating a more just and sustainable society (Choi et al., 2018). This approach is deeply rooted in a long and diverse history, rooted in the desire to align education more closely with real-world skills and outcomes (Burke, 1989; Ford, 2014; Hodge, 2007; Spady, 1977).

CBE gained prominence in the U.S. during the mid-20th century, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, as a response to concerns about the traditional education system's effectiveness in preparing students for the workforce (Hodge, 2007). This period saw the U.S. Office of Education formally adopted CBE in the late 1960s, marking a shift from time-based to competency-based measurements of student progress (Curry & Docherty, 2017). This shift aligned with movements like mastery learning and vocational education (Burke, 1989; Curry & Docherty, 2017; Hodge, 2007). The theoretical foundations of CBE can also be traced back to the early 20th century, influenced by Frederick Taylor's scientific management, which emphasized efficiency and standardization in teaching (Curry & Docherty, 2017; Hodge, 2007). By the 1970s, CBE had become more

structured, with states like Oregon adopting competency-based graduation requirements, replacing seat time with skill-based assessments (Spady, 1977).

During the 1980s and 1990s, CBE expanded, especially in vocational education and teacher training. The development of National Vocational Qualifications in the UK exemplified this era, aligning education with labor market needs and emphasizing skills over traditional academic achievement (Burke, 1989). In line with these shifts, CBE prioritizes learning outcomes rather than what teachers provide or cover in class. The goals need to be clear, measurable, and transferable to ensure that learners achieve predetermined outcomes (Wang & Maa, 2021). CBE is based on a "constructivist approach and the individual must be actively involved in the acquisition of knowledge and skills" (Boahin, 2018, p. 3). CBE's theoretical foundation has multiple learning theory roots: behaviorists, functionalist, and humanistic learning theories. Later, CBE evolved when different theories, such as essentialism, neoliberalism, pragmatism, and constructivism mixed in (Wang & Maa, 2021).

CBE is a student-centered approach that focuses on the attainment of clearly defined, measurable competencies essential for success in professional and life roles. This model emphasizes mastery of specific skills, knowledge, and behaviors rather than time-based progression, creating a more personalized learning experience for students (Gervais, 2016). In CBE, students advance only upon demonstrating mastery of competencies, which ensures they have a deep understanding of the material before progressing (Sturgis & Casey, 2018). A central feature of CBE is its focus on explicit learning outcomes. These outcomes are carefully defined and align closely with real-world requirements, ensuring that students gain applicable and transferable skills (Wang & Maa, 2021). This outcomes-based structure also enhances transparency in education, enabling both students and educators to clearly understand the expectations and competencies that need to be achieved. By aligning curriculum and assessment with these outcomes, CBE creates a more structured and goal-oriented learning environment (Burke, 1989).

In CBE, assessments play a crucial role in the learning process, going beyond traditional testing to include performance-based evaluations. These assessments are designed to measure the practical application of skills in realistic contexts, allowing students to demonstrate their competencies in ways that are meaningful and relevant to their future roles (Hess et al., 2020). This performance-based assessment approach is also

flexible, enabling students to be assessed when they are ready rather than at predetermined times, thus accommodating different learning paces and reinforcing mastery (Sturgis & Casey, 2018). Moreover, CBE's student-centered philosophy aims to foster personal growth, accountability, and student agency. This approach encourages students to take an active role in their education, promoting skills such as self-directed learning and goal setting (UNESCO, 2016). By empowering students to make informed decisions about their learning paths, CBE supports the development of lifelong learning skills that are essential in a rapidly changing world. This learner-driven approach aligns with broader educational goals of preparing students not only academically but also as responsible, capable individuals who can contribute to society (Choi et al., 2018). In essence, CBE provides a theoretical framework that prioritizes measurable outcomes, mastery, flexible assessment, and personalized learning. This model not only enhances educational relevance by focusing on competencies but also promotes student-centered learning, equipping students with the skills needed to thrive in diverse professional and personal contexts. Based on the literature, several key elements have been identified.

Key elements of competency-based education

CBE is built on core principles that guide its structure and effectiveness. Key elements of CBE include mastery of competencies, personalized learning, real-world application, flexible assessment, and student-centered learning, each contributing uniquely to the educational approach.

Mastery of competencies

Mastery is a foundational concept in CBE, emphasizing that students progress only upon demonstrating a clear understanding of specific competencies. Guskey (Guskey, 2002) notes that mastery learning models, central to CBE, require students to achieve a high level of proficiency in each unit before moving forward, thus ensuring deep, lasting understanding (Guskey, 2007). This approach contrasts with traditional models, where progression is often time bound. By focusing on mastery, CBE provides students with the necessary time and resources to fully grasp each skill or concept, ensuring that they are well-prepared for future challenges (Jones & Voorhees, 2002). Students progress to the next level only when they demonstrate mastery of specific competencies, replacing the

traditional model of seat-time requirements. Mastery learning and individualized instruction put learners at the center of the teaching process (Wang & Maa, 2021).

Personalized Learning

CBE provides individualized support, including formative assessments, feedback, and abundant learning materials, often through technology, to help students learn at their own pace (Wang & Maa, 2021). CBE's emphasis on personalized learning allows students to engage with material at their own pace, based on their individual needs and goals. As Everwijn et al. (1993) highlights, this approach encourages flexibility in the curriculum, enabling learners to focus on areas where they need additional support or want to deepen their knowledge (Everwijn et al., 1993). Personalized learning ensures that education is tailored to the student's unique context, which fosters engagement and makes learning more relevant and impactful (Gilyazova, 2022). By adapting the learning process to each student, CBE creates a supportive environment that promotes success for diverse learners.

Real-world application

One of the defining characteristics of CBE is its alignment with real-world scenarios, which prepares students for practical applications of their learning. According to the European Union's (2010) report on new skills for modern jobs, CBE connects competencies directly to labor market needs, equipping students with skills that are immediately relevant in professional settings. CBE is aligned with real-world needs, engaging students in problem-solving that mirrors actual scenarios. Learning outcomes focus on practical knowledge, skills, and behaviors required in real-life contexts (Wang & Maa, 2021). This element encourages students to apply their competencies in simulated or real-life situations, enhancing their readiness for workforce demands. The focus on real-world application bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, ensuring that students are job-ready and capable of navigating complex professional environments (Gilyazova, 2022).

Flexible Assessment

In CBE, assessments are performance-based and designed to be meaningful learning experiences. They require students to demonstrate the competencies they have acquired, often using principles of backward design to ensure that the learning outcomes and

assessments are aligned (Wang & Maa, 2021). Flexible assessment in CBE allows for multiple, varied evaluation methods that accommodate individual learning styles and paces. Baartman et al. (2007) argue that a combination of assessment types, including formative and summative assessments, provides a comprehensive view of student progress and mastery. Black and Wiliam (1998) further emphasize that formative assessment is crucial in CBE, as it enables continuous feedback and allows students to identify and address learning gaps in real-time. This approach contrasts with traditional fixed-schedule testing, supporting students by offering assessments when they are most prepared to demonstrate their learning.

Student-centred learning

“Student-centered approach to learning is a foundational concept of CBE” (Clark, 1976; Le et al., 2014; Neumann, 1979 as cited in Gervais, 2016, p. 99). One of the core values of CBE is fostering student agency, which is the ability of students to take responsibility and actively participate in decision-making processes related to their learning and well-being. This principle supports the idea of "learning how to learn" and encourages students to shape their lives and the future of society (Choi et al., 2018). Student-centered learning is at the core of CBE, shifting the focus from teacher-led instruction to student-driven learning experiences. This approach encourages student agency, allowing learners to take an active role in their educational journey. According to Spady (1994), CBE’s focus on student-centered learning supports diverse pathways for achieving competencies, which helps students build confidence and autonomy. The student-centered model not only fosters a supportive and inclusive learning environment but also encourages students to develop lifelong learning skills essential for adapting to an ever evolving world.It could be said that CBE differs significantly from traditional educational practices. If we summarize the key elements of CBE and compare them with traditional educational approaches, the distinctions can be outlined as follows. Table 1 illustrates these differences between traditional educational practices in the classroom and CBE in the classroom.

Table 1. Differences between traditional educational practices in the classroom and CBE in the classroom

Traditonal educational practices in classroom	Competency-based education in classroom
Teacher-centred (Choi et al., 2018; Gervais, 2016)	Student-centered: Students actively participate in shaping their learning paths and outcomes, with an emphasis on individualized support and engagement (Gervais, 2016, p. 99)
Emphasis on content coverage: Curriculum is designed to cover specific content within a fixed timeframe (Jones et al., 2002).	Emphasis on outcomes: Focus on achieving clearly defined competencies that reflect practical skills and knowledge needed in real-world contexts (Gervais, 2016, p. 100)
Standardized progression: Students advance based on seat-time and age groups rather than mastery (Ford, 2014)	Mastery-based progression: Students advance upon demonstrating mastery of competencies, allowing for flexibility in pace (Guskey, 2007)
Assessment in the traditional training is primarily based on performance of written test and practical assignment (Boahin, 2018)	Flexible assessment: Assessments are conducted when students are ready, with multiple forms including performance-based tasks and formative evaluations (Baartman et al., 2007). Assessment of a student attainment of competencies (Gervais, 2016, p. 100)
Summative assessment focus: Primarily end-of-course exams to evaluate knowledge acquisition (Black & Wiliam, 1998)	Competency-based assessment: Emphasis on continuous, formative assessment that evaluates students' application of skills and knowledge in real-life contexts (Baartman et al., 2007; Gervais, 2016)
Time-based: Learning is restricted to set timeframes, with little flexibility for individual pacing (Boahin, 2018)	Self-paced: Learning is tailored to individual progress, allowing students to take the time needed to master each competency (Boahin, 2018)
Limited real-world relevance: Knowledge may not always connect to practical, real-life skills (Gilyazova, 2022)	Real-world application: Learning activities and assessments are designed to mimic real-world scenarios, preparing students for professional demands (EU, 2010)
Focus on knowledge acquisition: Emphasis is on learning theoretical concepts rather than practical application (Guskey, 1994)	Focus on skill application: Emphasis is on applying skills and knowledge in real-world settings, enhancing students' job readiness (EU, 2010; Gilyazova, 2022)

Note. Data compiled from various authors

Teacher's role in the classroom

In CBE, self-directed learning empowers students to take the initiative in both beginning and sustaining their learning journey independently. In this environment, students are given the autonomy to select subjects aligned with their interests and to progress at a pace that best suits their individual needs (Gervais, 2016). Alongside this self-directed approach, a teacher's ability to scaffold knowledge plays a crucial role. "By utilizing diverse teaching tools and techniques, educators can support students in achieving course competencies and developing practical skills, ensuring that learning is both structured and

flexible to meet each learner's goals (Clark, 1976 as cited in Gervais, 2016). An essential component of effective CBE course preparation includes encouraging students to act as mentors for their peers. This mentorship model fosters an open and collaborative learning environment where the teacher serves as a facilitator, while knowledge flows among students rather than being delivered solely by the instructor (Gervais, 2016). Such a collaborative setup enhances students' engagement and helps them develop both academic and interpersonal skills.

Teachers under a learner-centered approach, that is the CBA, are no more the detainers of knowledge, but facilitators and guides; they assist their learners all along the path toward competency acquisition. Still, they have to determine what and how well learners must perform; they give clear instructions and make sure that every learner understands the task (Bader & Hamada, 2015). Each competency must be identified. Each competency must be subdivided into the relevant skills. Modules must then be developed which allow students the opportunity to learn and practice those skills (Griffith & Lim, 2014). Teachers will have to spend large amounts of time developing activities related to the necessary skills to achieve the competencies (Saadi et al., 2016).

Effective planning involves considering the overall purpose of the class within the broader curriculum, designing instruction that aligns with the learning objectives, and determining the method of delivery, whether online or in-person (Gervais, 2016). Teaching with CBE requires understanding this learning structure as well as the knowledge and skill to flexibly adapt it to the needs of each learner. Lesson or experience planning in CBE is informed by well-written and well-organized course outcomes and objectives. It also requires a thorough understanding of the competence components to be developed, as well as the instructional activities, pedagogies, and assessments (Curry & Docherty, 2017). Through this approach, teachers in a CBE classroom play a pivotal role in guiding students toward mastery, providing structured yet flexible support, and fostering a collaborative, student-centered learning environment.

Student's role in the classroom

While the teacher offers a framework for what needs to be learned, students actively build their knowledge by exploring, creating, experimenting, and observing others. In contrast, the traditional education model follows a teacher-led schedule and pace (Gervais, 2016).

Students must learn how to use CBE to inform and organize studying, to complete activities, and to prepare for, and incorporate, assessments in the classroom, lab, and experiential settings (Curry & Docherty, 2017).

In CBE, the student's role in the classroom shifts from a passive recipient of information to an active participant in their learning journey. Unlike traditional education models where learning is often directed by the teacher, CBE emphasizes student agency, empowering learners to take charge of their educational path by setting goals, making decisions about their learning process, and progressing at their own pace (Gervais, 2016). Students in a CBE classroom are encouraged to engage in self-directed learning**,** where they take the initiative to start and continue their learning based on personal interests and career goals. This autonomy allows them to select subjects or competencies that resonate with their aspirations and advance only upon demonstrating mastery. Such an approach fosters accountability and encourages students to take responsibility for their progress, making them active stakeholders in their education (Choi et al., 2018). Moreover, students in CBE often assume the role of peer mentors, helping one another understand complex concepts and achieve shared competencies. This peer support not only builds a collaborative learning environment but also reinforces the students' understanding by requiring them to articulate and share their knowledge with others. Through peer mentoring, students gain confidence, communication skills, and a deeper understanding of the subject matter (Clark, 1976, as cited in Gervais, 2016).

In CBE, students are also actively involved in continuous assessment**.** Rather than waiting for fixed testing periods, students engage in formative assessments that allow them to receive immediate feedback and address learning gaps as they progress. This approach encourages a growth mindset, where students view challenges as opportunities for improvement rather than as obstacles (Guskey, 2007). By participating in their own assessments and reflecting on feedback, students gain insights into their strengths and areas for growth, which drives them to work towards mastery. Students are not supposed to rely only on the teacher. Students should contribute actively to their own learning and move toward an autonomous learner. Furthermore, They need to find ways to integrate information into their own lives and be willing to challenge themselves (Saadi et al., 2016). Successful classroom interaction depends on student participation. Students need to find ways to motivate themselves and find ways to apply information to their own lives and integrate it into the classroom (Griffith & Lim, 2014).

Overall, the student's role in a CBE classroom is characterized by self-direction, collaboration, and engagement in the assessment process. This active involvement not only empowers students to meet competency requirements but also prepares them with the skills necessary for lifelong learning and adaptability in various professional contexts. CBE is a comprehensive framework that branches into specific areas such as Competency-based language teaching, Competency-based curriculum, Competency-based learning, and Competency-based teaching. Each of these areas applies the core principles of CBE in unique ways tailored to their specific contexts. In the following sub-sections, we present a brief overview of each of them.

Competency-based language teaching (CBLT)

CBLT is the application of the principles of Competency-Based Education to language teaching (Gervais, 2016). On the other hand, according to Richards & Rodgers (2001), CBLT is based on a functional and interactional perspective on the nature of language. It seeks to teach language in relation to the social contexts in which it is used. CBLT demands that language be connected to a social context rather than being taught in isolation (Griffith & Lim, 2014). Language always occurs as a medium of interaction and communication between people for the achievement of specific goals and purposes. CBLT has for this reason most often been used as a framework for language teaching in situations where learners have specific needs and are in particular roles and where the language skills they need can be fairly accurately predicted or determined. It also shares with behaviorist views of learning the notion that language form can be inferred from language function; that is, certain life encounters call for certain kinds of language. Auerbach (1986) asserts eight key features involved in the implementation of CBLT. The factors are as follows:

1. A focus on successful functioning in society: The goal is to enable students to become autonomous individuals capable of coping with the demands of the world.
2. A focus on life skills: Rather than teaching language in isolation, CBLT teaches language as a function of communication about concrete tasks. Students are taught just those language forms/skills required by the situations in which they will function. These forms are determined by empirical assessment of the language required.

3. Task or performance-centered orientation: What counts is what students can do as a result of instruction. The emphasis is on overt behaviours rather than on knowledge or the ability to talk about language and skills.
4. Modularized instruction: Language learning is broken down into manageable and immediately meaningful chunks. Objectives are broken into narrowly focused sub-objectives so that both teachers and students can get a clear sense of progress.
5. Outcomes which are made explicit a priori: Outcomes are public knowledge, known and agreed upon by both learner and teacher. They are specified in terms of behavioral objectives so that students know exactly what behaviours are expected of them.
6. Continuous and ongoing assessment: Students are pretested to determine what skills they lack and post-tested after instruction in that skill. If they do not achieve the desired level of mastery, they continue to work on the objective and are retested. Program evaluation is based on test results and, as such, is considered objectively quantifiable.
7. Demonstrated mastery-of performance objectives: Rather than the traditional paper-and-pencil tests, assessment is based on the ability to demonstrate prespecified behaviours.
8. Individualized, student-centred instruction: In content, level, and pace, objectives are defined in terms of individual needs; prior learning and achievement are considered in developing curricula. Instruction is not time-based; students progress at their own rates and concentrate on just those areas in which they lack competence.

In CBLT, students learn to use the language in authentic situations likely to be encountered outside the classroom. Classes must be student-centered with a focus on what students can do. The ability to recite grammar rules or to identify errors in a written practice is not sufficient to measure competence. Students must demonstrate that they can accomplish specific tasks that are likely to be encountered in the real-world using the target-language (Griffith & Lim, 2014). CBLT applies the principles of CBE specifically to language instruction, emphasizing that language proficiency is demonstrated through the ability to perform real-world tasks in the target language. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), CBLT centers on the outcomes students must achieve, such as

communicating effectively in various situations, rather than merely acquiring linguistic knowledge. This approach emphasizes practical language skills that learners can use immediately in everyday life (Auerbach, 1986).

Competency-based curriculum (CBC)

CBC involves structuring the curriculum around specific competencies, which are the skills and knowledge required for successful performance in a particular area. Aubertine (1972) explains that a competency-based curriculum aligns educational objectives with real-world applications, ensuring that students develop skills relevant to their future roles in society. This curriculum design moves away from traditional content-based models and instead emphasizes demonstrable outcomes, allowing for personalized learning paths and flexible progression. CBE shifts curriculum development from being a content-driven model to a student-centered approach to learning which is a foundational concept of CBE (Gervais, 2016). CBE incorporates several design principles, such as coherence, alignment, and flexibility, to create a balance between quality and equity in the curriculum (Choi et al., 2018). Based on the findings of the research by Choi et al (2018, p. 309), six strategies are derived for implementing a competency-based curriculum as follows:

1. Clearly set out a vision for the future-oriented competency-based curriculum
2. Establish an instructional system that corresponds to the vision and education goal
3. Explore learning processes and increase accesses to educational resources
4. Explore and support for factors of developing teacher agency
5. Provide students with greater opportunities for engagement and self-directed activities
6. Encourage greater collaboration among parents and communities

It should be tailored to the specific context in the curriculum, aligning with the development of goals, outcomes, and objectives that are suited to the learners, the school environment, future placements, and the demands of the target job market (Curry & Docherty, 2017). CBE design focuses on identifying and organizing essential learning outcomes that link classroom, laboratory, and experiential learning with the requirements for the next level of training and real-world practice (Curry & Docherty, 2017).

Competency-based teaching and learning

Competency-based teaching and learning is an educational approach centered on achieving specific, measurable competencies essential for student success in real-world scenarios. Unlike traditional teaching models that are often time-bound and content-focused, Competency-based teaching and learning prioritizes mastery of clearly defined outcomes, allowing students to progress at their own pace as they demonstrate competency in required skills and knowledge (Gervais, 2016). This approach emphasizes student-centered learning, with teachers acting as facilitators who support and guide students through personalized learning paths. In Competency-based teaching and learning, teachers play a crucial role by adopting instructional strategies that are responsive to each learner's needs. Bataineh and Tasnimi (2014) explain that competency-based teaching requires educators to shift from being sole content providers to facilitators of learning, adapting their methods to foster student agency and independence. Teachers scaffold knowledge and use various tools to help students achieve course competencies, ensuring that each student receives the support needed to reach mastery. Additionally, formative assessments and continuous feedback are integral to competency-based teaching, providing students with opportunities to reflect on their learning and improve continuously (Al Bataineh & Tasnimi, 2014).

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), CBT emphasizes outcomes or competencies in contrast to traditional educational approaches that focus on content. This approach is designed to equip students with concrete abilities that are directly applicable to real-world tasks and professional settings. CBT is characterized by its student-centered, performance-based nature, where instruction is organized around measurable learning outcomes. In Competency-Based Teaching, assessment is an integral part of the learning process and is designed to be ongoing, formative, and aligned with competency objectives (Hodge & Harris, 2012). This continuous assessment approach allows instructors to provide targeted feedback and support, helping students identify and address gaps in their competency development. According to Spady (1977), competency-based teaching is a data-driven, adaptive, performance-oriented set of integrated processes that facilitate, measure, and certify the demonstration of competencies in the context of flexible time parameters. This approach is particularly effective for preparing students for professional environments where specific skills are essential, as it ensures that learners not only understand theoretical concepts but can also apply them effectively in practical situations

(Nodine, 2016). Overall, CBT aims to make learning outcomes relevant to real-life applications, equipping students with the competencies needed to navigate the complexities of modern work and life.

Competency-based learning is self-directed and student-centered, allowing learners to engage deeply with material relevant to their goals and interests. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning process, setting goals, selecting learning resources, and advancing only when they can demonstrate mastery. This self-directed approach aligns with the principles of lifelong learning, as it fosters independence, motivation, and adaptability (Choi et al., 2018). In competency-based learning, students often collaborate with peers, which enhances their understanding and reinforces their learning through shared experiences and perspectives (Clark, 1976, as cited in Gervais, 2016, Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In competency-based teaching and learning, the assessment focuses on practical application, requiring students to demonstrate their competencies in realistic contexts. This emphasis on performance-based assessment ensures that learning is relevant and applicable beyond the classroom, preparing students to navigate complex professional and personal challenges effectively. As Baartman et al. (2007) points out, competency-based assessment is often flexible and tailored to individual readiness, allowing for repeated practice and reassessment until students reach the required level of proficiency. Overall, Competency-Based Teaching and Learning combines structured teaching practices with self-directed, mastery-focused learning, creating an educational environment that prepares students for success in diverse contexts. By emphasizing both teacher support and student responsibility, CBTL offers a comprehensive, adaptive approach to education that equips learners with the competencies needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

According to Torres et al. (2015, p. 2), CBL allows students to advance upon demonstrating mastery, providing additional support and time as needed to achieve the required competencies. This learner-centered model prioritizes flexible pathways and personalized instruction to meet individual learning needs, thus shifting the educational focus from a one-size-fits-all approach to one that adapts to each student's pace. In CBL, assessments are designed to measure the application and transfer of knowledge, going beyond rote memorization to ensure that students can perform in real-world scenarios (Hess et al., 2020). Assessments in this framework often involve multiple measures that assess both cognitive and practical skills, allowing for a holistic evaluation of student

competence (Hess et al., 2020). Harden (1999) emphasizes that outcome-based frameworks, including CBL, clearly specify learning objectives and link curriculum and assessment directly to those outcomes, thereby enhancing accountability and ensuring educational relevance.CBL has been adopted widely as an effective strategy for developing critical competencies aligned with contemporary workforce demands, preparing students not only to succeed academically but to apply their learning practically.

Global Adoption of CBE

CBE has been increasingly adopted across various educational sectors worldwide, aiming to align educational outcomes with specific competencies required in professional and academic contexts. The healthcare sector has long recognized the importance of competency-based training in preparing professionals for real-world challenges (Frank et al., 2010). Medical education, in particular, has shifted towards competency-based curricula to ensure that graduates possess the necessary clinical skills and professional behaviors (Rege, 2020). Countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia have reformed their medical education frameworks by implementing competency-based training models (ten Cate, 2017). The shift from knowledge-based assessment to competency-based evaluation allows for a more accurate measurement of a healthcare professional's ability to perform in clinical settings (Holmboe et al., 2010). However, challenges in assessment standardization and faculty training remain key barriers to the full-scale adoption of CBE in medical education (Carraccio et al., 2002).

Higher education institutions worldwide are also increasingly integrating CBE into their programs to address skill gaps and enhance employability (Voorhees, 2001). Traditional degree programs often fail to ensure that graduates possess the practical competencies required in the job market (Kelchen, 2018). European higher education institutions have integrated CBE frameworks into the Bologna Process, ensuring alignment between academic qualifications and professional competencies (Tremblay, 2013). Along with higher education, vocational training systems worldwide have embraced CBE to better equip learners with job-specific skills (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2016). Unlike traditional educational approaches, which emphasize theoretical knowledge, CBE in vocational training focuses on practical skills directly applicable to industry needs (Biemans et al., 2004). Countries such as Germany, Finland, and

Switzerland have integrated CBE into their apprenticeship and vocational training programs (James, 2014). These nations have successfully linked educational curricula with labor market demands, ensuring that graduates transition seamlessly into employment.

2.3 Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory provides a framework for understanding the role of social interaction and culture in cognitive development, particularly emphasizing the ways in which individuals learn and internalize knowledge through collaborative engagement with others (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Developed in the early 20th century, this theory diverged from the predominant individualistic views of learning at the time, such as those posited by Piaget, by underscoring the interdependence of social and individual processes in the construction of knowledge (Daniels, 2002).

Vygotsky's early work focused on the notion that cognitive functions are a result of social interactions and are mediated by language and cultural artifacts (Wertsch, 1985). His theory emerged from his observations of children in natural learning environments, where he noticed that cognitive growth was heavily influenced by language and interaction with more knowledgeable others, such as adults or peers (Vygotsky & Kozulin, 1986). This led to his formulation of key concepts such as the ZPD, which describes the difference between what a learner can achieve independently and what they can achieve through guided interaction (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). The ZPD has since been foundational in educational theory and practice, especially in fields that emphasize scaffolded learning and collaborative pedagogy (Chaiklin, 2003).

Vygotsky's contributions to developmental psychology, though largely unrecognized during his lifetime outside the Soviet Union, gained traction internationally posthumously in the 1960s and 1970s. His works were translated and disseminated widely, influencing educational practices and theories that emphasize collaborative learning, dialogue, and cultural responsiveness in the classroom(Daniels, 2002; Wertsch, 2010). In modern educational research, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory continues to inform approaches that advocate for culturally responsive teaching and learner-centered practices, situating cognitive development within the context of social and cultural interactions (Wertsch, 1991). The sociocultural theory has thus evolved as a crucial framework for examining the dynamic interplay between individuals and their

sociocultural environments, shedding light on how shared activities, language, and culture shape cognitive processes (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Vygotsky's insights into the ways that social interaction fosters cognitive development have become central to understanding learning as a collaborative, culturally embedded process.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

A cornerstone of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the ZPD describes the range of tasks that a learner can perform with the guidance of a more knowledgeable other but cannot yet complete independently (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). This concept highlights the importance of social interaction in learning and development, suggesting that cognitive growth occurs most effectively when tasks are situated within the ZPD (Chaiklin, 2003). Vygotsky (1978) proposed that optimal learning happens not when tasks are too easy or too difficult but when they fall just beyond the learner's current capabilities, necessitating support from others. Through such support, or "scaffolding," learners gradually internalize new skills and knowledge, making them part of their independent competencies (Wood et al., 1976). The ZPD is often operationalized in educational contexts to design instruction that fosters incremental mastery. Educators leverage the ZPD by offering structured guidance or scaffolding, then gradually reducing assistance as the learner becomes more proficient (Van De Pol et al., 2010). In this way, the ZPD serves as both a diagnostic and instructional tool, helping educators identify the types of assistance learners need to progress to the next developmental stage (Chaiklin, 2003).

Research has shown that activities within the ZPD promote higher cognitive engagement and skill development because they align closely with the learner's developmental readiness (Shabani et al., 2010). When learning experiences are scaffolded appropriately, they not only build content knowledge but also enhance learners' confidence, motivation, and readiness for independent problem-solving (Wertsch, 1991). Thus, the ZPD underscores the essential role of social interaction in cognitive development, as learners internalize the guidance and feedback they receive from more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Since Vygotsky introduced the ZPD, the concept has been widely applied in educational psychology, particularly in approaches emphasizing collaborative and constructivist learning. Its relevance spans various educational practices, including peer tutoring, differentiated instruction, and collaborative learning environments, where learners of varying abilities can benefit from structured, supportive

interactions (Daniels, 2002). Overall, the ZPD remains central to understanding how tailored instructional strategies can bridge gaps in learners' current and potential capabilities, fostering both immediate skill acquisition and long-term cognitive development.

Social Interaction

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes social interaction as a fundamental mechanism of cognitive development. According to Vygotsky (1978), learning is inherently a social process, where knowledge is constructed through interactions with more knowledgeable others, such as teachers, peers, or caregivers. Unlike theories that prioritize individual cognitive development in isolation, Vygotsky argued that higher mental functions develop first on a social level before being internalized at the individual level, a concept he termed "interpsychological" and "intrapsychological" processes (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Through these interactions, individuals acquire language, cultural tools, and problem-solving strategies that shape their thinking and behavior (Wertsch, 2010).

Social interaction plays a key role in the development of what Vygotsky called "mediated action", the process by which cultural tools, such as language and symbols, transform cognitive processes (Wertsch, 1991). Language, in particular, is essential to Vygotsky's theory, as it serves both as a medium for interaction and as a cognitive tool that enables individuals to organize and regulate their thoughts (Vygotsky & Kozulin, 1986). Through guided discussions, feedback, and collaborative problem-solving, learners internalize the language and tools they need to approach increasingly complex tasks, thereby extending their cognitive capacities (Daniels, 2002).

Vygotsky's theory posits that the development of cognitive skills is deeply embedded in specific cultural contexts, where the values, practices, and tools of a society shape learning and understanding (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). For instance, in educational settings, social interaction facilitates the scaffolding process, where a teacher or a more capable peer provides temporary support to help the learner reach a higher level of understanding (Wood et al., 1976). This scaffolding gradually diminishes as the learner gains independence, reflecting Vygotsky's view that social interaction not only fosters learning but also drives the internalization of skills and knowledge (Van De Pol et al., 2010).

Research has shown that social interaction enhances both cognitive and emotional aspects of learning. Collaborative learning environments, peer tutoring, and dialogic teaching practices have all demonstrated positive impacts on academic achievement, motivation, and self-regulation (Shabani et al., 2010). These approaches are rooted in Vygotsky's belief that interaction with others is essential for developing the higher-order thinking skills that individuals eventually use independently (Daniels, 2002). Consequently, Vygotsky's emphasis on social interaction has profoundly influenced modern educational practices, highlighting the importance of creating learning environments that encourage dialogue, collaboration, and shared meaning-making.

Scaffolding

The concept of scaffolding, introduced by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976), builds on Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD by describing how learners receive support from more knowledgeable individuals to accomplish tasks beyond their independent abilities. Scaffolding refers to the temporary and adjustable assistance that an expert, such as a teacher or peer, provides to a learner to promote cognitive development (Wood et al., 1976). As the learner gains proficiency, this support is gradually withdrawn, allowing the learner to complete tasks independently, demonstrating mastery over previously challenging material (Stone, 1998). The goal of scaffolding is to facilitate a learner's movement through the ZPD by breaking down complex tasks into manageable components and providing targeted guidance. Effective scaffolding requires the instructor to diagnose the learner's current capabilities, provide the right level of support, and adjust that support based on the learner's progress (Van De Pol et al., 2010). This approach not only accelerates skill acquisition but also promotes self-efficacy and independent learning, as learners experience success through graduated challenges (Hogan & Pressley, 1997). Scaffolding encompasses a variety of instructional strategies, such as questioning, modeling, and providing feedback, all designed to help learners internalize skills and knowledge. For instance, teachers often use questioning to guide learners' thought processes, encouraging them to reflect on their responses and consider alternative approaches (Mercer & Fisher, 1992). Additionally, modeling can demonstrate problem-solving strategies that learners can adopt and adapt, further extending their cognitive capabilities (Rosenshine & Meister, 1992). The effectiveness of scaffolding is often measured by its ability to gradually reduce dependence on external assistance, ensuring

that the learner is prepared to handle similar tasks independently in the future (Shabani et al., 2010). Scaffolding has broad applications across educational settings and has been shown to significantly impact learning outcomes in areas ranging from literacy to mathematics (Puntambekar & Hubscher, 2005). The practice of scaffolding underscores Vygotsky's (1978) belief that social interaction plays a crucial role in cognitive development by situating learning within the context of collaborative and supportive activities. Modern educational practices frequently incorporate scaffolding as a method to facilitate differentiated instruction, allowing teachers to provide individualized support that meets students at their unique points of development (Daniels, 2002).

2.4 Jean Piaget's constructivist theory

Jean Piaget's constructivist theory has profoundly influenced educational psychology, particularly in understanding how individuals construct knowledge through interaction with their environment. Piaget, a Swiss psychologist, proposed that learning is an active process where learners build new knowledge upon the foundation of prior knowledge. His theory emphasizes that cognitive development proceeds in distinct stages, each marked by qualitative changes in thinking patterns (J. Piaget, 1954).

Constructivism, as posited by Piaget, centers on the idea that learners do not passively absorb information. Instead, they actively engage with, interpret, and transform information to make it meaningful. Piaget (1964) emphasized that knowledge construction is a process of equilibration, wherein learners continually strive for cognitive balance by adapting and organizing their experiences into coherent structures. This dynamic process is marked by assimilation, where new experiences are integrated into existing schemas, and accommodation, where schemas are modified to incorporate new information (J. Piaget et al., 1973). Piaget's work has had a lasting impact on educational practices, highlighting the importance of active learning environments where students are encouraged to explore, question, and experiment. Additionally, his insights on the social aspects of learning have informed collaborative approaches in education, as interactions with peers can promote disequilibrium, leading to cognitive growth (J. I. B. Piaget, 1932).

Active learning

Jean Piaget's constructivist theory underscores the critical role of active learning in cognitive development, proposing that knowledge construction occurs through active

engagement with one's environment. Piaget argued that learning is not simply the passive absorption of information but an active process where learners build understanding through exploration, experimentation, and interaction (J. Piaget, 1970). His view on active learning is foundational to constructivist pedagogy, which asserts that learners benefit most from environments that encourage them to question, explore, and manipulate their surroundings, ultimately fostering deeper cognitive engagement (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958). Piaget's (1952) notion of active learning is rooted in his theory of cognitive development, where he describes learning as occurring through assimilation and accommodation mechanisms by which learners integrate new experiences into their existing cognitive frameworks or adjust their frameworks to accommodate new information. This process of adaptation is essential to active learning, as it requires learners to engage with novel situations, recognize discrepancies in their current understanding, and restructure their thinking accordingly (J. Piaget, 1954). According to Piaget, these actions are intrinsic to the learner and enable them to take control of their own learning experiences, which is a cornerstone of meaningful education (J. Piaget, 1971). In educational settings, active learning fosters an environment where students are encouraged to be co-constructors of knowledge rather than passive recipients. Piaget (1970) argued that children's cognitive growth is significantly enhanced when they actively participate in learning activities, such as problem-solving tasks, collaborative discussions, and hands-on experiments. Such activities promote cognitive disequilibrium, a state of imbalance that arises when learners encounter new challenges that disrupt their existing knowledge, motivating them to resolve the discrepancy through deeper engagement (J. Piaget, 1978). This process of achieving cognitive equilibrium through active engagement is a key aspect of Piaget's educational theory, underscoring the need for interactive and discovery-based learning environments (Brainerd, 1978). In the modern educational landscape, Piaget's insights into active learning continue to influence pedagogical approaches that prioritize experiential, student-centered learning. Research has shown that students who engage in active learning demonstrate higher retention rates and a deeper understanding of content, validating Piaget's assertion that learning is most effective when it is self-directed and interactive (Siegler & Alibali, 2005). By promoting environments that encourage inquiry, exploration, and discovery, educators can create learning experiences that are consistent with Piagetian principles, fostering autonomy, critical thinking, and a sustained motivation to learn.

2.5 The relationship between the theories

This research employs the CBE framework, CBLT, Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, and Jean Piaget's constructivist theory to investigate the implementation of Mongolia's English curriculum in upper-secondary schools from a competency-based perspective. The primary theoretical framework driving the study is CBE and CBLT, with support from Vygotsky's and Piaget's theories to provide a robust foundation for examining both teacher and student experiences within this educational setting.

The decision to integrate these theories is based on their shared focus on learner-centered approaches, active engagement, and the development of competencies. CBE and CBLT, as core frameworks, emphasize structured learning outcomes and competencies tailored to students' skill levels (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). These competencies align with Piaget's notion of cognitive development, where students actively construct knowledge through meaningful engagement with curriculum content, progressing through stages of increasing complexity (Piaget, 1970). The connection between competency-based approaches and Piaget's concept of active learning supports the study's aim to explore how teachers integrate competency-based teaching in their classrooms and how students experience this method through various English language tasks.

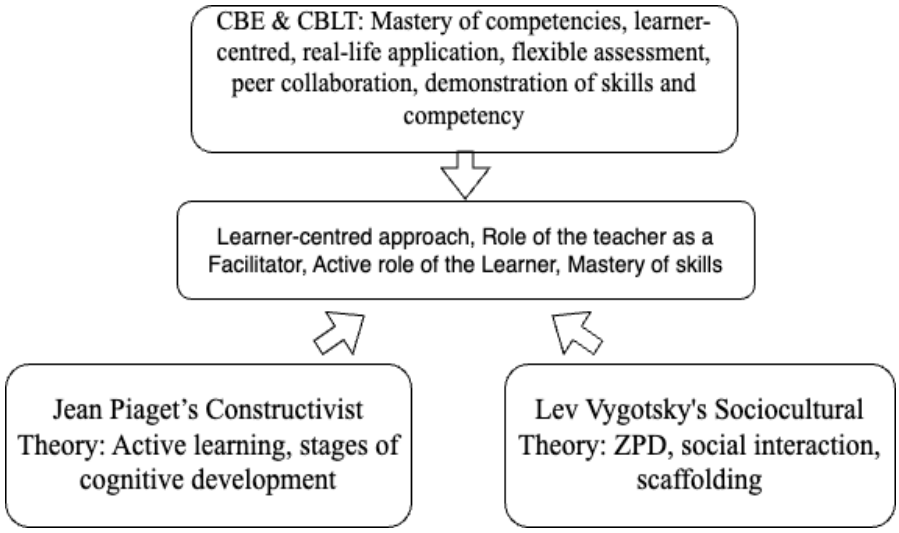
Vygotsky's sociocultural theory complements CBE and CBLT by addressing the importance of social interaction and scaffolding in learning. Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD is particularly relevant in this context, as it highlights the role of guided support in helping students reach higher levels of competency (Vygotsky, 1978). This aligns with the competency-based approach, where teachers are essential facilitators, providing support that gradually shifts to foster student independence in demonstrating skills and knowledge. Through scaffolding, students receive the necessary assistance to grasp complex language competencies, which reflects the study's goal to assess students' exposure to English skills and competencies.

Additionally, the theories of Vygotsky and Piaget both underscore the value of interactive, scaffolded learning environments that are integral to competency-based teaching. Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding, coupled with Piaget's emphasis on developmental readiness, suggests that both cognitive and social support are crucial for successful competency-based learning (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). This theoretical integration allows for a nuanced understanding of the challenges teachers face in

implementing a competency-based curriculum and students' experiences within this framework, supporting the study's aim to bridge gaps in research on the English curriculum's effectiveness in Mongolia.

By combining CBE, CBLT, Vygotsky's and Piaget's perspectives (See Figure 1), this study provides a holistic framework for understanding how competency-based approaches can be enhanced in English language education. The theories not only address measurable competencies but also incorporate essential cognitive and social dimensions, thereby offering a well-rounded foundation for potential curriculum improvements that respond more effectively to the needs of both teachers and students.

Figure 1. Relationship of the adapted theories



The CBE and CBLT frameworks, Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, and Jean Piaget's constructivist theory are connected through a shared focus on learner-centered education, teacher as a facilitator, active learning, and mastery of skills. CBE and CBLT emphasize the mastery of competencies, real-life application, flexible assessment, peer collaboration, and the demonstration of skills and competency. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory contributes concepts like the ZPD, social interaction, and scaffolding, which underscore the social context of learning and the role of guidance in developing competencies. Piaget's constructivist theory brings in the importance of active learning and stages of cognitive development, supporting the idea that learning should be developmentally appropriate and actively constructed. Together, these theories share a common theme: a learner-centered approach, the role of the teacher as a facilitator, the

active role of the learner, and the goal of mastering skills and competencies. This interconnected framework provides a robust foundation for exploring and enhancing the implementation of competency-based education in English language teaching.

2.6 Policy and implementation

Educational change is a complex process that requires effective policy formulation and implementation strategies. Fullan (2007) provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamics of educational change, emphasizing the role of multiple stakeholders, the interplay between policy and practice, and the necessity of capacity-building for sustainable reform. This section explores Fullan's theoretical perspectives on policy and implementation, highlighting key principles and their implications for educational change.

Fullan (2007) argues that policy development is a necessary but insufficient condition for meaningful change. Policies often set the agenda for reform by outlining objectives, strategies, and expected outcomes. However, their success depends on how well they are translated into practice. Fullan identifies several critical factors that influence policy effectiveness:

Clarity and Coherence: Effective policies must provide clear guidance while allowing flexibility for adaptation at the local level. Ambiguity in policy documents can lead to inconsistent implementation and resistance from educators.

Stakeholder Engagement: Policymakers must involve teachers, administrators, students, and the community in the formulation process to ensure that policies reflect real classroom needs and challenges.

Alignment with Systemic Goals: Policies should align with broader educational objectives, ensuring coherence across different levels of governance and practice.

Fullan (2007) emphasizes that implementation is the most challenging phase of policy enactment. He outlines three core dimensions that influence the success of educational reforms:

Capacity Building: Professional development and resource allocation are essential for equipping educators with the skills and tools needed to implement policy directives effectively. Without adequate support, teachers may struggle to adopt new pedagogical approaches or assessment strategies.

Change at Multiple Levels: Educational change requires coordinated efforts at the classroom, school, and system levels. Fullan highlights the need for strong leadership that fosters collaboration and continuous learning.

Sustainability and Adaptation: Successful implementation requires mechanisms for continuous feedback and adaptation. Policies should not be static but should evolve based on empirical evidence and stakeholder input.

Despite well-intended policies, several barriers hinder successful implementation. Fullan (2007) identifies key challenges, including resistance to change, lack of resources, and fragmentation of initiatives. Teachers and administrators may resist reforms if they perceive them as externally imposed or misaligned with their professional values. Additionally, financial, material, and human resource constraints can impede effective implementation. Another challenge is the fragmentation of initiatives, where multiple, overlapping policy directives create confusion and overwhelm educators, reducing the likelihood of sustained change. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts, adequate support systems, and a commitment to continuous improvement. Fullan's (2007) theoretical framework underscores the interplay between policy formulation and implementation in educational change. For policies to translate into meaningful reform, they must be clear, inclusive, and supported by capacity-building initiatives. Furthermore, successful implementation depends on systemic collaboration, leadership, and adaptability. Applying these principles ensures that educational reforms lead to improved teaching practices and student outcomes.

CHAPTER 3 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN MONGOLIA

Chapter 3 delves into the key elements shaping the teaching and learning of English in the country. The chapter begins with "the country context", providing an overview of Mongolia's geographic, and educational background, which helps contextualize the educational landscape. Following this, the historical overview of the curriculum in Mongolia is introduced, focusing on significant milestones from the early 20th century to the present. Finally, the chapter concludes with an overview of the English curriculum of upper-secondary education.

3.1 The country context

Mongolia is a landlocked country which was under the control of the Soviet Union. The population is 3.3 million (MIER, 2019a). The country is divided administratively into 21 provinces, including the capital city, Ulaanbaatar, which has independent administrative status. Further local subdivisions include soums (districts in the countryside), and bags (sub-districts in countryside) (Yembuu, 2010). The Education system consists12-years system of primary education (five years), lower secondary education (four years), and upper secondary education (three years) as shown in Figure 2. Primary education caters for children starting at age six. The curriculum for the 12-year system was developed that has consistency and continuity with the previous curriculum (MIER, 2019a).

Figure 2. Education system in Mongolia

<table>
<tr><td>Age</td><td colspan="5"></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="5">Doctor's degree</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="5">Master's degree</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">18</td><td rowspan="2">Bachelor degree (4-6 years)</td><td rowspan="2">Diploma (Institution and college)</td><td rowspan="2">Technical education (3 years)</td><td>Technical education (1.5 years)</td><td rowspan="2">Technical education (1.5 year)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Vocational education (1 year)</td></tr>
<tr><td>15</td><td colspan="4">Upper secondary education (3 years)</td><td>Vocational education</td></tr>
<tr><td>11</td><td colspan="5">Lower secondary education (4 years)</td></tr>
<tr><td>6</td><td colspan="5">Primary education (5 years)</td></tr>
<tr><td>2-5</td><td colspan="5">Preschool</td></tr>
</table>

(MIER, 2019a)

3.2 Historical overview of the curriculum in Mongolia

Mongolia has a long and rich history including the Mongol Empire, which was the largest contiguous land empire in history in the 13th and 14th centuries, the establishment of the Mongolian People's Republic, and the establishment of the current Mongolian country.

The Mongolian People's Republic was established in 1921 as a result of the victory of the People's Revolution, with the assistance of the young Soviet Republic (Baldayev, 1959). It covers an area of some 600,000 square miles, however, its population is under a million people (Krueger, 1961). In an effort to solidify independence from the Chinese, the Mongolian religious leader sought closer ties with its neighbor to the north, Russia (Postiglione & Tan, 2007). The literacy rate among the local population did not exceed 1% (Suprunova, 2007). Therefore, Mongolia paid great attention to its education system which was also a promising direction to preserve its values and culture. The establishment of education was strenuous after the revolution. Lamaism, which is one form of Buddhism was heavily rooted in educational activity. In order to break the chain of Lamaism in education, the state was determined to progress towards science-based education. Thereupon, the qualified Soviet teachers went to work in Mongolia in the very first years after the revolution of 1921, because there were scarcely a few teachers. The instructors and teachers lacked the necessary experience. The spread of education was further hindered by strong religious superstitions inculcated in the people (Baldayev, 1959). In 1924, the constitution was approved and provided for all Mongolian schools to be free of charge. Education was centralized and was transferred entirely into the hands of the government (Krueger, 1961). In addition, Lamaism was declared forbidden by law (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2004) and it was separated from educational activity (Spaulding, 1990). By the end of the 1920s, only about 1000 children were enrolled in state schools, as opposed to almost 19,000 attending monastic schools (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2004).

The Mongolian government started building a systematic education system by establishing schools not only in soums (Choijoo, 2013) and province centers but also building schools in the city center, Ulaanbaatar. After the revolution, in the schools, subjects such as material science, astronomy, Earth studies, mathematics, history, physical education, music, literature and languages such as Mongolian, Russian, English, French, German and Chinese were taught (Nookoo, 2016). In 1925, the second Mongolian teachers' conference was held and approved the first curriculum for three-

year primary schools. In 1926, the three-year primary school system was changed to a four-year system and the sample curriculum was approved by the Ministry of Education. This new curriculum was developed to provide instruction on an expanded version of the subject nature that had been taught in the three-year primary schools (Nookoo, 2016). In 1927, departments of National Education were created in all the provinces. The government gave genuine assistance to the nation's education, taking large sums for it out of a meagre budget. So, 423,000 tugriks were expended on public education, that is, almost 15 times as much as had been spent before the people's revolution in 1926 (Baldayev, 1959). By 1950, secondary schools were built in every province center. 40 seven-year schools were created in the country, in which some 6,000 children were taught. The school has been given a goal to develop in the growing generation rounded mental, polytechnic, ethical, aesthetic and physical training. The majority of schools were in regular school buildings. Starting in 1921, 455 schools were built, many of them with dormitories, dining rooms and baths (Baldayev, 1959). A great deal of attention was paid in regards of schools, education structure and curriculum which gradually led illiteracy to be eliminated by 1954. Additionally, the situation for training teacher cadres for elementary and secondary schools improves yearly. Mongolian teachers constantly make practical use of the experiences and achievements of Soviet schools and Soviet pedagogical science. The following subjects make up the teaching plan of the incomplete secondary and secondary schools: Mongolian language and literature, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, astronomy, chemistry, zoology, botany, history, the constitution of the Mongolian People's Republic, the history of the Soviet Union, geography, physics, the Russian language, a foreign language, work and practical lessons, physical preparedness, drawing, drafting and singing (Baldayev, 1959).

The educational system experienced a massive expansion in the 1970s. By the beginning of the 1970s, the Education system changed to the structure of 3+5+2. 3 is primary education, 3+5 is incomplete secondary school 3+5+2 is complete secondary school. Education should be primarily practical and of value to the community and, secondarily, to the individual (Pritchatt, 1974). Pritchatt (1974) claimed that when he visited Mongolia in 1971, the foreign language studied was Russian and only very rarely was there evidence of another language in the higher forms: French is rarely encountered and English almost never. When he visited, he also observed the lesson. One of the lessons was Russian. It was held in the 7th year. During the time, students started learning

Russian when they were 3rd or 4th year. Pritchatt (1974) further mentioned that the Russian lesson was conducted entirely in Russian. Lessons last for 45 minutes. Lessons involve a great deal of drill and repetition in question and answer form.

In the early 1990s, Mongolia's social and political situation had been changed from a centrally planned system to a free and market-oriented one. The economic transition from plan to market in Mongolia began in 1990 and also brought about a breaking up of old trade links with the former Soviet Union (Pastore, 2010). After the transition from the old communist regime to a political democracy with a free market system, the country's economy has experienced a crisis and it has had a negative impact on the education system. Since 1990, government spending on education has been decreased year by year. The situation was improving after 1996 (Bayangol, 2006). International donors such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, the Soros Foundation, and the Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA) have become the most significant contributors to education sector reform in Mongolia. The United Nations organizations, specifically UNESCO and UNICEF, have contributed less to the budget, but have been influential at the governmental level (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2004).

In 1992, a new Mongolian constitution, which aims to develop a humanitarian and democratic society in the country, was approved. In accordance with Article No.16.7 of the constitution specified that Mongolian citizen has a right to learn and general education is provided at no cost (Government of Mongolia, 1992) and citizens may establish and operate private schools in conformity with the Government's requirements (IBE, 2006). Moreover, the law on education in 1992 presented educational reforms that influenced all levels of education, restructuring, management, organization, policy, and the curriculum in terms of its content and teaching approaches. Along with the new education system, 7-year-old children were allowed to enroll in primary school (Galsan, 2008). New curricula have been developed, phasing out heavy Soviet influence and communist ideology and reviving Mongolian national heritage, national culture, customs science and technology (Galsan, 2008; Robinson, 1995; Spaulding, 1990). New approaches to teaching and learning are being sought, using more activity-based and participative learning, to replace the customary transmission-of-knowledge mode and formal class teaching most often found (Robinson, 1995). The law education on education was revised in 1995 introduced the policy of democracy and openness in educational administrative

structures, decentralized the administration and financing of all public schools, transferred the management of schools to local governments in the provinces, increased the autonomy of colleges and universities, and enabled the establishment of private educational institutions (Choijoo, 2013). Additionally, the education law of 1995 affirmed that the education system consists of 10 years; 4 years of primary education, 4 years of lower secondary education and 2 years of upper secondary education (Galsan, 2008).

In 1998, Mongolian general education schools followed a ten-year system, with the years being structured in a 4+4+2 arrangement and the educational standard (Galsan, 2008). The standard was applied to preschool, primary, lower, and upper secondary education levels (Nookoo, 2016). It was the first time that standard-based education was introduced. It determines the minimal content of education that must be mastered by students at certain education levels, its assessment, the teacher's professional level, and basic requirements for educational institutions. In order to develop educational standard, team members of the DANIDA project of Denmark cooperated according to the agreement between the government of Mongolia and Denmark (Galsan, 2008). The following year, the discussion by the Ministry of Education on the standard led to the implementation of the core curricula. Consequently, the concept of “How to learn” was discussed rather than “How to teach” and it aimed to make the content flexible and suggest alternative content in view of the particular interests of pupils and their needs (Nookoo, 2016). Above all, it has been demonstrated that several changes have been made in a decade after the democratic revolution. However, the changes in 1992 and 1998 appear to have an intense influence on the curriculum. In 1998, the curriculum shifted towards a more flexible structure that incorporated alternative content to reflect students' diverse interests and needs, and in 2002, the Parliament of Mongolia passed a new educational law, reinforcing recentralization by designating the Ministry of Education as the primary administrative body responsible for educational matters (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2004). The Mongolian Law on Education of 2002 mandates that every Mongolian regardless of ethnicity, language, race, gender, socioeconomic status, wealth, employment, position, religion and personal values has a right to receive education in his/her native language and must attend lower-secondary education provided by the state at free of charge required by the Constitution of Mongolia (Choijoo, 2013). Based on the law on education in 2002, the Mongolian Government was preparing to transit into the

new 11-year school system, which comprises 5+4+2, starting from the 2005-2006 academic year (UNESCO, 2020). Furthermore, MECSS approved, 'The concept of reforming the standards and curricula of primary and secondary education' in the framework of the state policy to create a new open educational system in a market society. Key decisions made within this concept were: i) educational standards defined the minimum learning outcomes expected at each stage of pre-school and general education, and curricula determined the necessary requirements for all domains and subjects in each class; ii) both standards and curricula should be based on competencies (UNESCO, 2020).

Table 2. The changes in the curricula in Mongolia

Year	Characteristics of the curriculum	Purpose of changes
1992	Curriculum has been developed, phasing out heavy Soviet influence and communist ideology and reviving Mongolian national heritage, national culture, customs science and technology (Galsan, 2008; Robinson, 1995; Spaulding, 1990).	The new constitution, which stated that Mongolian citizen has a right to learn and general education is provided at no cost, was approved (Government of Mongolia, 1992).
1998	The content was flexible and suggested alternative content in view of the particular interests of pupils and their needs (Nookoo, 2016).	The arrangement of education system was restructured to 4+4+2 and standard-based core curriculum was introduced (Galsan, 2008).
2005	11 year -content Framework was initiated in line with the educational standard for subjects in all grades and, it incorporated knowledge and skills defined in the educational standards (MIER, 2019b)	Education system shifted from 10 year to 11-year arrangement (MIER, 2019b).
2008	12- year curriculum that provides succession and incorporates correlation of 11 year -content Framework (MIER, 2019b).	Education system shifted to 12-year system from 2008-2009 academic year (MIER, 2019b).
2014 - 2018	Competency-based approach to teaching and learning (UNESCO, 2020, p. 65)	To meet international standards (Marav et al., 2022)
2019	Updated the curriculum (MECSS, 2019)	To improve the curriculum thus, the it was published as the revised 2nd edition (MECSS, 2019)

Note. Data compiled from various authors

The comprehensive revision of the national educational standards in 2004 is another significant action taken by the government. The standards of pre-primary and general education were approved. The main priority of the new standard is to develop pupils' competence in such a way as to promote life skills and help them to be able to apply their knowledge, skills, and abilities effectively in their lives (Bayangol, 2006). It

marked a shift from teacher-centered education and replaced it with a child-centered approach. However, it should be noted that this concept and the standards are still valid. Yet, the curricula changed three times between 2004-2009 (UNESCO, 2020). The learning and teaching process is based on developing pupils' competency and UNESCO's four pillars of core competencies: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together were selected as the basis for the review and reform of the national educational standards (Nookoo, 2016). Based on these four pillars of competencies, the educational standard for foreign language consists of four domains: listening, speaking, reading and writing, with expected knowledge, skills, and competencies. Based on 4 pillars of learning, the researchers have formulated the essential competencies for foreign language as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Competencies of foreign language in upper secondary education

Four pillars of learning	Codes	Competencies	Four domains
Learning to know	3FL1:C1	Recognise and distinguish discourse marker	Listening
	3FL2:C1	Use language knowledge correctly in speech	Speaking
	3FL3:C1	Find the logical sequence of information within the topic understand the meaning, sort, interpret, generalize	Reading
	3FL4:C1	Sort and plan your ideas in writing	Writing
Learning to do	3FL1:C2	Transform the information you hear into another format	Listening
	3FL2:C2	Express your ideas in an orderly manner	Speaking
	3FL3:C2	Identify the meaning of words and sentences within the context	Reading
	3FL4:C2	Organize your ideas in a logical order and edit what you write	Writing
Learning to be	3FL1:C3	Predict the meaning of what is being heard in an unfamiliar situation	Listening
	3FL2:C3	Be critical of any issue based on evidence	Speaking
	3FL3:C3	Use your knowledge creatively to explain the meaning of what you read	Reading
	3FL4:C3	Select the necessary facts and information from the materials, and write your idea	Writing
Learning to live together	3FL1:C4	Encourage others to listen and respond appropriately	Listening
	3FL2:C4	Communicate, convey what others said and able to present	Speaking
	3FL3:C4	Enhance knowledge of life, history, culture and traditions of your country and other countries within the context	Reading
	3FL4:C4	Use and choose the right form of writing with others	Writing

(MECSS, 2003)

Every composition of secondary education foreign language standard has been coded. For example, the code 3FL1:C1 means the first competence of the first domain of foreign language in upper secondary education standard. 3 means upper secondary education, FL means foreign language education, 1 means first domain of the contents, C means the competence and 1 first competence of the particular domain (MECSS, 2003).

In 2005, the education system transitioned from a 10-year to an 11-year structure, leading to the development of the curriculum based on the 2004 educational standards (MIER, 2019b). Galsan (2008) claimed that the 11-year content framework for primary, lower, and upper secondary education was developed as a sample and published in 2004, discussed by teachers and educators, piloted and evaluated in selected schools, and aligned with educational standards for all subjects, incorporating key requirements such as being based on the knowledge and skills defined in the standards, considering cross-curricular links, ensuring content progression from 1st grade onward, and conforming to the designated training hours. Above all, it can be seen that the educational system in Mongolia has undergone many reforms over the last three decades. There were improvements made in the educational standards, curriculum, and teaching methodology evolved in the past.

In 2006, the Government of Mongolia approved the Master Plan 2006-2015, which defined the overall goals and development indicators, implementation strategy, required resources and funding opportunities from multiple sources. Under this strategy, the state decided to switch from an 11-year education to a 12-year system (MIER, 2019). The plan is considered to be the first in Mongolia to be developed utilizing a sector-wide approach. The Master Plan places high priority on the expansion of the school system and seeks to bring it in line with global practices (Choijoo, 2013). It aspires to renew educational standards and curriculum at levels and renew standards, policy, strategies, and regulations systematically to be pursued to ensure demands and needs to reveal and develop talents, to learn continuously responsibility and ethics of living independently in society, to work, live a quality life and make choices (Government of Mongolia, 2006). The transition of schools to a 12-year education system began in the autumn of 2008 and was planned to be completed by the academic year 2014–2015 (Nookoo, 2016). The current curriculum in Mongolia follows a 12-year education system and the curriculum implementation started in 2014 (MIER, 2019b). The following subsection will provide a historical overview of the curriculum, with a primary focus on the English curriculum of

upper-secondary education, and will discuss the development of the upper-secondary English curriculum.

3.3 Overview of upper-secondary English curriculum

Before 1990, Mongolia, as a socialist state closely aligned with the Soviet Union, prioritized Russian as the dominant foreign language. With the Soviet Union's collapse in 1990, Mongolia transitioned to a democratic society and a free-market economy, embracing linguistic and cultural diversity. As a result, English and other foreign languages gradually replaced Russian as the primary foreign language. Today, English plays a significant role in both institutional and non-institutional contexts across the country (Dovchin, 2017). English became a crucial foreign language for Mongolians, contributing significantly to both personal growth and career advancement.

The Government of Mongolia decided to adopt and use the Cambridge International teaching methods and assessment standards in Mongolia, with the aim of training a globally competitive, skilled labor force. On 13 April 2011, the Government of Mongolia signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) for cooperation on the reform of standards and curricula for elementary and secondary education (Nookoo, 2016). The curriculum needed to be modernized, and the government wanted to introduce a new, more modern and interactive pedagogical approach. The aim was to develop a system in which high-quality education was available across the entire country, where every child could flourish and realize their individual talents. The Mongolia-Cambridge Education Initiative (MCEI) was formed. The goal of the MCEI was to undertake a joint collaborative programme to reform education in Mongolia using the combined skills and knowledge of the Mongolian government, Cambridge Assessment International Education, Cambridge Assessment English and the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge (CAIE, 2018). In order to introduce this programme, a pilot study was undertaken in Mongolia (Nookoo, 2016) from 2011 to 2016. The scope of the reform in the curriculum was English, Mathematics and Science for primary education, and English, Mathematics, Physics, Biology, and Chemistry for secondary education (CAIE, 2018) that will be adjusted to Cambridge International standards. It is considered to be one of the most reputable teaching and testing programmes globally. The main prerequisite for the successful achievement of the learning objectives is to have a detailed “Scheme of Work”, which

provides clear guidance to schools and teachers on how to implement the standards. This Scheme of Work includes detailed guidelines for teachers on the learning objectives and the methods to be used in the teaching process (Nookoo, 2016). Nookoo (2016) further suggested that heated public discussion and debates are still going on whether foreign curricula can be borrowed and adapted for national schools or whether such curricula should be developed purely based on national traditions.

The election happened and the new government took place in 2012. The government started "working towards the implementation of the Education Quality Reform policy and Educated Mongolian Citizens national programmes" (Nookoo, 2016). Within this framework, the curriculum was revised and decided to be expanded to all schools nationally. Based on decision No.A/155 by the Minister of MECSS, teams were created for all subjects to develop curricula accordingly. From 2012 to 2017, the team developed a core curriculum to develop cognitive, social, and behavioral attitudes, to develop viable Mongolian children, to bring the national education content, methodology and system up to international educational standards, and to teach a self-study approach. Learning guidelines for its implementation have been developed for each level of education and subjects (MIER, 2019b). The curriculum was reformed and implemented according to the following stages as illustrated in Table 4. Mongolian National Core Curriculum is divided into 3 phases – grades 1-5, 6-9, and 10-12. The grade 1-9 is a compulsory education (Cha, 2017).

Table 4. Timeline of implementation of English curriculum

Year	Education level
2014	Primary education
2015	Lower secondary education
2016	Upper secondary education – 10th grade
2017	Upper secondary education – 11^{h} grade
2018	Upper secondary education – 12th grade
2019	Revised and updated all curricula

(MIER, 2019b)

The English core curriculum in upper-secondary education in 2016 has been developed aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) learning objective-oriented for English education, therefore, the English textbook series follows the European standards as well. The aim of English language teaching is to provide learning conditions for students to achieve communicative competence in social

contexts including family, school, local community, country and global world, and environmental issues studied through curriculum content given in a spiral form from easiness to difficulty. The English course for each grade aims to fulfill learning objectives and develop students' English language skills such as listening and speaking, reading and writing with some relevant vocabulary and pronunciation patterns within the social contexts.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment, abbreviated as CEFR, is a guideline used to describe the achievements of learners of foreign languages across Europe. It emerged as an initiative of the Council of Europe as the main part of the project "Language Learning for European Citizenship" between 1989 and 1996. The main aim of the CEFR is to provide a method of assessing and teaching that applies to all languages in Europe. The CEFR has three broad bands – A, B, and C. Very loosely, you can see these as similar to Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced – though the CEFR levels are more precise than these terms (and calls them Basic, Independent, and Proficient). Each of those bands is divided into two, giving us six main levels (Cambridge University, 2013) as illustrated in Table 5 and Table 6.

Table 5. The levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

Level			General description	Cambridge English Exam
Proficient user	C2	Mastery	Highly proficient – can use English very fluently, precisely and sensitively in most contexts	Cambridge English: Proficiency
	C1	Effective Operational Proficiency	Able to use English fluently and flexibly in a wide range of contexts	Cambridge English: Advanced
Independent user	B2	Vantage	Can use English effectively, with some fluency, in a range of contexts	Cambridge English: First/First for Schools
	B1	Threshold	Can communicate essential points and ideas in familiar contexts	Cambridge English: Preliminary/ Preliminary for Schools
Basic user	A2	Waystage	Can communicate in English within a limited range of contexts	Cambridge English: Key/Key for Schools Cambridge English: Flyers
	A1	Breakthrough	Can communicate in basic English with help from the listener	Cambridge English: Movers Cambridge English: Starters

(Council of Europe, 2020)

Table 6. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages - Global scale

C2	• Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. • Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. • Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
C1	• Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. • Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. • Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. • Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
B2	• Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. • Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. • Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
B1	• Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. • Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. • Can produce simple connected text on topics, which are familiar, or of personal interest. • Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
A2	• Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). • Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. • Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
A1	• Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. • Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. • Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help

(Council of Europe, 2020)

In the Mongolian context, the language scale of upper-secondary education is determined from Mid A2 to Low B1. According to MIER (2019), the language levels of the Common European Framework, and learning outcomes by each grade are described as in Table 7.

Table 7. English language levels by each grade

Primary education	5th grade	working toward A1
Lower-secondary education	6th grade	Low A1
	7th grade	Mid A1
	8th grade	High A1
	9th grade	Low A2
Upper-secondary education	10th grade	Mid A2 (compulsory), MID A2+ (elective)
	11th grade	High A2 (compulsory), HIGH A2+ (elective)
	12th grade	Low B1 (compulsory), LOW B1+ (elective)

(Mira, Batchimeg, Dechmaa, & Ariunaa, 2019)

The curriculum is structured into compulsory and elective courses, ensuring progressive language proficiency from A1 level in primary education to B1 level in upper-secondary education. For compulsory courses, students are expected to reach Mid A2 in 10th grade, High A2 in 11th grade, and Low B1 in 12th grade, while elective courses offer an extended level, reaching Mid A2+, High A2+, and Low B1+ respectively. The curriculum also emphasizes methodological approaches, strategies for teaching, and evaluation criteria, aiming to enhance students' language proficiency through structured learning strategies.

The current curriculum ensures these components as can be seen from its design. The design is divided into Russian language and English language. The design of the foreign language curriculum is shown in Table 8. The subjects in the curricula of upper-secondary education were, simply, divided into compulsory subjects and elective subjects as a result of the revision in 2019 (MIER, 2019a). This table represents the current design of the foreign language curriculum in upper-secondary education, outlining its objectives, content structure, teaching methodologies, and evaluation criteria.

Table 8. The design of foreign language curriculum in upper-secondary education

1. Objective and aims
1.1 Objective
1.2 Aims
1.2.1 Knowledge, skills and attitude of English language and Russian language for compulsory hours
1.2.2 Knowledge, skills and attitude of English language and Russian language for elective hours
2. Content (10th - 12th grade)
2.1 Compulsory
- English language (10th, 11th and 12th grade)
- Russian language (10th, 11th and 12th grade)
2.2 Elective
- English language (10th, 11th and 12th grade)
- Russian language (10th, 11th and 12th grade)

3. Methodology, environment and materials 3.1 Strategies for teaching and learning 3.2 Methodology for teaching and learning foreign language 3.3 Methodological stages of developing language learning strategies 3.4 Environment and materials
4. Evaluation 4.1 Objective of evaluation 4.2 Criteria of evaluation 4.3 Evaluation weight

(MECSS, 2019)

The table outlines the design of the foreign language curriculum in upper-secondary education, specifically for English and Russian languages. It is structured into several key sections. The objective and aims segment establishes the curriculum's goals, while the content section details language instruction for grades 10 through 12, specifying mandatory and optional courses in both languages. The methodology, environment, and materials section addresses teaching strategies, methodologies for foreign language instruction, stages of language learning strategy development, and the learning environment and materials. Lastly, the evaluation section defines the purpose of the assessment, the evaluation criteria, and the weight of each assessment component. This comprehensive design aims to structure foreign language education effectively for upper-secondary students.

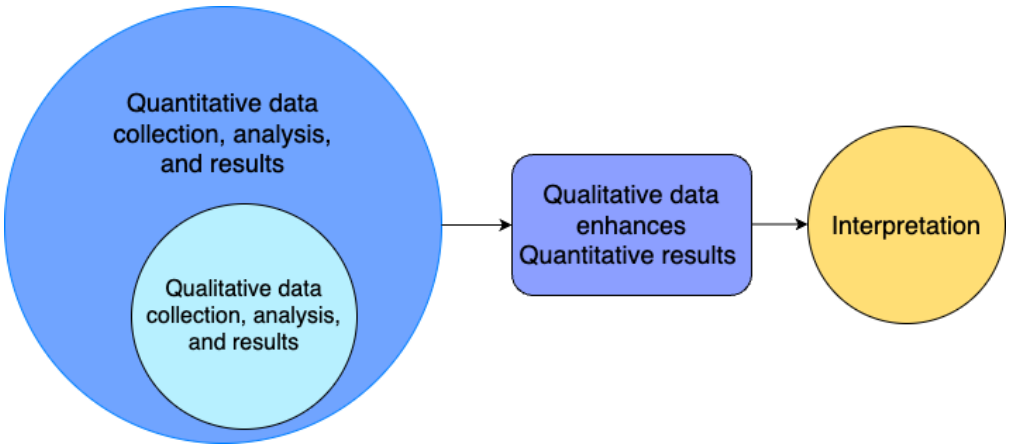
CHAPTER 4 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The chapter outlines the approach and methods used to investigate the aim of the research. It details the research design, including the mixed methods approach, data collection techniques such as questionnaires, focus group interviews, and document analysis, and the procedures for data analysis. This chapter also discusses the selection of research sites and participants, ensuring that the methodology aligns with the study's objectives and provides a robust framework for answering the research questions.

4.1 Research design

This study employs a concurrent embedded mixed methods design shown in Figure 3, which integrates qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis within the same phase of research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This design allows for a comprehensive exploration of the research problem by providing both broad quantitative insights and detailed qualitative perspectives simultaneously. In the concurrent embedded design, one type of data serves as the primary source, while the other provides a supportive, secondary perspective that enhances or explains the main findings (Creswell, 2014). This approach is particularly valuable when the researcher seeks to address different research questions that require complementary data, as it enables the integration of diverse insights without extending the research timeline (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016).

Figure 3. Concurrent embedded mixed-method design



The concurrent embedded mixed methods design was chosen for this study because it allows for an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the upper-secondary English curriculum from both student and teacher perspectives. The primary

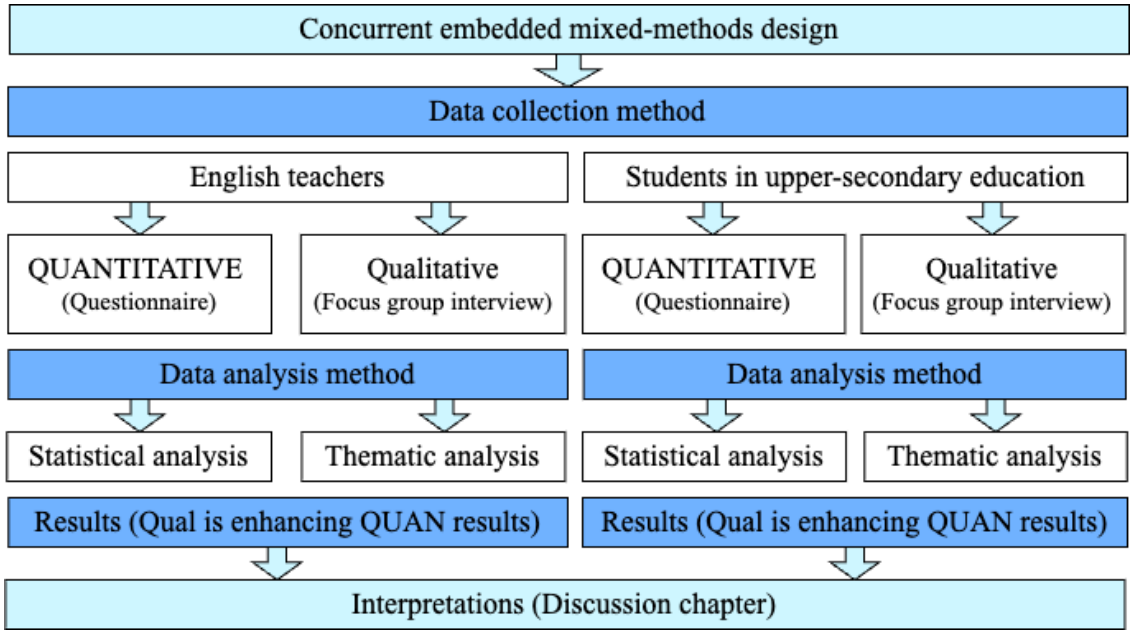
quantitative component provides a broader picture across a larger sample, which is essential for generalizability (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The embedded qualitative component, in contrast, captures richer, contextual insights into participants' personal experiences and perceptions, providing depth to the numerical findings (Creswell, 2014). By embedding qualitative data within a primarily quantitative study, this design allows for a nuanced understanding of how CBE principles are practiced and perceived, which would not be possible with a single-method approach.

Moreover, this design is well-suited to studies where one type of data is used to explain or elaborate on findings from another type (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In this study, the qualitative insights collected through interviews supplement and support the quantitative survey responses, offering a more holistic view. The concurrent embedded design is particularly effective in educational research for investigating complex processes like curriculum implementation, as it captures both measurable trends and individual perceptions, thus addressing the multifaceted nature of the research questions (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016).

The concurrent embedded mixed methods design aligns well with the goals of this research by allowing for the simultaneous collection of quantitative and qualitative data, thereby providing both breadth and depth in understanding the implementation of the English curriculum of upper-secondary education. This integration of perspectives strengthens the validity of the findings and enhances the overall richness of the analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

In summary, the study employed a concurrent mixed method design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, and followed the steps shown in Figure 4. Teachers' and students' questionnaires were collected and analyzed as the primary quantitative data, while teachers' and students' interviews were conducted and analyzed separately as qualitative data. Both quantitative and qualitative results were then interpreted together to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research questions. The qualitative data offered additional insights, enriching the quantitative findings by providing context and depth to the patterns observed in the survey responses.

Figure 4. Detailed research design



4.2 Data collection methods

Focus group interviews were utilized as a qualitative approach, while questionnaires were employed as a quantitative method. The following sections will detail the procedures and rationale behind the use of these methods in this study.

Focus group interview

The study employed focus group interview as a qualitative approach that means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2009), and its fundamental purpose is to capture the research subject's perspective and views of values, actions, processes and events endeavors to analyze and explain phenomena. To respond to the research questions, focus-group interviews for a qualitative approach.

The interview method is most appropriate for this qualitative research where "little is already known about the study phenomenon or where detailed insights are required from participants (Gill et al., 2008). Furthermore, it allows the researcher to "elicit information or expressions of opinion or belief from another person or persons" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), understand the meaning of what the Excerpts say (Kvale, 1996) and discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view (Cohen et al., 2007). In this research, the focus group interviews were conducted with English teachers and students in upper-

secondary schools. Focus groups were the most suitable method because it allows the researcher to have a common understanding of a particular issue and explore the issue (Morgan, 1997). Moreover, its purpose would "offer a different level of data collection or a perspective on the studied reality, different from those offered by interviews" (Dafinoiu & Lungu, 2003) "provide direct evidence about similarities and differences in the participants' opinions and experiences" (Morgan, 1997) in this study.

> As Morgan (1997) noted that focus group interview has several strengths and weaknesses. The main advantage of the focus groups can give access to reports on a wide range of topics that may not be observable. Furthermore, it provides the opportunity to observe a large amount of interaction on a topic in a limited period of time. The third strength for focus groups is their reliance on interaction in the group to produce the data. The comparisons that participants make among each other's experiences and opinions are a valuable source of insights into complex behaviours and motivations.

Furthermore, in this investigation, a semi-structured interview was conducted with English teachers and students in upper-secondary schools. The semi-structured interview was utilized and it will enable the researcher to focus on "conversation on issues that he or she deems important in relation to the research project" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018), it "does not need to ask the questions in a specific order or use the same wording in each interview" (Ennis & Chen, 2012) and is usually flexibly administered in order to capture the perspectives of participants as far as possible while ensuring that excerpts focus on issues relevant to the study (Williamson, 2018). Thus, the researcher believes semi-structured interview in this research was the most appropriate method that led to "acquire the excerpt's concrete descriptions rather than abstract reflections or theorizations" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Focus group consists of a small group of people, usually between six and nine in number, who are brought together by an interviewer to explore attitudes and perceptions, feelings and ideas about the topic (Denscombe, 2007). Thus, the focus groups allowed the interviewer (the researcher) to interact with a small number of students in a limited time to collect the evidence based on participants' opinions and experiences. Due to limited time, focus groups enabled efficient data collection with a select group, accommodating COVID-19 restrictions.

Questionnaire

The research employed four types of self-reported questionnaires: perceptions of English curriculum implementation, challenges in implementing the curriculum, exposure to

competency-based elements, and satisfaction with the English course. For reference, these tools are combined into two questionnaires for English teachers and students of the upper-secondary schools (See Appendix E and Appendix F).

Perceptions of English curriculum implementation (George, Hall, Stiegelbauer, 2008)

To explore teacher's perceptions of the implementation of the English curriculum, the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) was adapted and utilized. The SoCQ is a tool developed by Gene Hall and his colleagues in 1973. It is part of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) and is designed to assess individuals' concerns and attitudes during the adoption and implementation of new innovations or changes, especially in educational settings. The questionnaire helps identify different stages of concern, ranging from awareness of the change to its impact on those involved, providing insights into how individuals react to and integrate new practices (George et al., 2008). The SoCQ demonstrates solid reliability and validity across its stages. Internal consistency has been measured using Cronbach's alpha, with coefficients ranging from 0.64 to 0.83 for different stages, indicating acceptable reliability levels for educational research applications. Test-retest reliability further supports its stability, showing consistent correlations across administrations. Validity has been established through multiple approaches, including correlation matrices and factor analyses, which confirm that the stages are distinct yet developmentally related constructs. The questionnaire has been used in an extensive array of studies (Barucky, 1984; Berg & Vandenberghe, 1981; Hall et al., 1979, 1991; Jordan-Marsh, 1985; Kolb, 1983; Martin, 1989). The SoCQ is organized into seven stages that reflect how individuals' concerns evolve as they adapt to innovation. Initially, in the Unconcerned stage (Stage 0), individuals have little or no awareness of the innovation and therefore show minimal concern about it. As they become aware, they move to the Informational stage (Stage 1), where they seek to understand basic details about the innovation. Concerns then shift inward in the Personal stage (Stage 2), as individuals contemplate how the change might impact them personally, affecting their roles or routines. In the Management stage (Stage 3), concerns focus on the practicalities of implementation, like organizing resources, time, and schedules. With increasing familiarity, individuals progress to the Consequence stage (Stage 4), evaluating how the innovation affects others, such as students or colleagues, and considering ways to optimize these impacts. In the Collaboration stage (Stage 5), they

seek to work with others to enhance the innovation's effectiveness. Finally, in the Refocusing stage (Stage 6), individuals explore ways to adapt or modify the innovation for greater impact, potentially looking at alternative methods for even better outcomes. The SoCQ was used to explore teachers' perceptions of implementing the English curriculum. The analysis involved examining responses across all seven stages, using percentile scores to interpret levels of concern. This approach involved scoring raw data for each stage, locating these scores within a percentile table, and plotting them on a profile chart to visualize respondents' concerns comprehensively. Each stage's score offered insight into how teachers moved from initial awareness to more sophisticated engagement with curriculum implementation.

Challenges in implementing the upper-secondary English curriculum (MIER, 2019)

The teacher's challenges encountered to implement the upper-secondary English curriculum was investigated through the questionnaire that has been developed and used by the Mongolian National Institute for Educational Research which directly performs under the Ministry of Education and Science in Mongolia. It was used in 2019 for the national research "the implementation of the national curricula of general education and the factors influencing the implementation" (MIER, 2019b) . The questionnaire's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.727, which indicates acceptable internal consistency.

Exploring competency-based elements in the classroom (Ryan & Cox, 2017)

Competency-Based Learning Survey, developed by the Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands in collaboration with the Northeast College and Career Readiness Research Alliance. It provides high schools and districts with a tool to collect data on students' experiences with competency-based learning. The survey covers key CBL elements such as demonstration of mastery, personalization, flexible assessment, and skill development. This guide includes sections on the survey's purpose, administration, and analysis, as well as instructions for adaptation to local contexts. Additionally, it provides example figures, tables, and modules, with a focus on supporting schools in implementing and improving competency-based practices through informed, student-centered data (Barucky, 1984; Berg & Vandenberghe, 1981; Hall et al., 1979, 1991; Jordan-Marsh, 1985; Kolb, 1983; Martin, 1989). The questionnaire was adapted and incorporated into

both the teacher and student surveys to investigate students' exposure to and teachers' integration of competency-based elements. The questionnaire has demonstrated reliability and validity through confirmatory factor analysis and internal consistency measures. Reliability was assessed using Raykov's reliability coefficient (rho), with all constructs showing high internal consistency, ranging from 0.74 to 0.85. Validity was examined through convergent and divergent validity checks, with positive, moderate to strong correlations among related constructs supporting convergent validity. Divergent validity was confirmed by comparing these constructs with unrelated items representing traditional instruction, showing weak or negative correlations. The survey is a reliable tool for measuring student experiences in competency-based education settings (Ryan & Cox, 2017).

Contentment of the English course (Fieger, 2012, Sumner, 2008)

Student's contentment with the English course was assessed using a questionnaire adapted from previous studies by Fieger (2012) and Sumner (2008), focusing on aspects of English teaching and course content. To ensure reliability, both Fieger and Sumner conducted Cronbach's alpha tests on their respective items, with Fieger's items scoring 0.9151 and Sumner's items scoring 0.80, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

4.3 Data collection procedure

Based on the voluntary participation, the interview appointments were arranged with English teachers and students. Before the interviews, it was explained the data processing, anonymity and storage policies to the Excerpts to ensure transparency and build trust. Each focus-group interview lasted between 20 to 40 minutes and was conducted in a private setting where only the interviewer and the excerpts were present. This setup allowed excerpts to pause and reflect on the questions, ensuring thoughtful and comprehensive responses without feeling rushed. All interviews were recorded to maintain accuracy and to facilitate detailed analysis. One of the most challenging aspects of this research was recruiting participants who were initially hesitant or disinterested in participating, especially for the focus group interview. The questionnaires, which were administered to both students and teachers on a voluntary basis, took approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete. It is worth mentioning that the pandemic complicated the process, causing delays in the collection of questionnaires and the scheduling of focus

group interviews. Consequently, the entire data collection phase extended beyond the original timeline, requiring additional effort and time to ensure the completion of the study. To accommodate the varying levels of internet access and technological resources, questionnaire data was collected through both online and offline versions, ensuring inclusivity and comprehensive data collection. However, the focus group interviews were conducted in person, which allowed for more dynamic and interactive discussions, capturing nuanced perspectives and fostering a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences.

4.4 Research sites

For the research site of the dissertation, 16 public schools participated in the questionnaire locating in three provinces, Zavkhan, Govi-Altai, and Bayankhongor, and the capital city, Ulaanbaatar. This site selection process involved total 419 participants distributed across these regions including both students and teachers. During the Covid-19 pandemic, accessibility was a significant consideration. Many countryside areas were difficult to reach due to travel restrictions and safety concerns, which influenced my decision to focus on these three provinces and the capital. These regions are not only geographically contiguous, allowing for relatively easier travel and communication, but also provide a diverse cross-section of urban and rural educational settings.

The selected sample population is based on its alignment with Mongolia's demographic and educational landscape. According to the National Statistics Office (NSO, 2023), Mongolia has a total population of 3,396,788, with the largest proportion residing in Ulaanbaatar (1,640,782), followed by the Khangai region (600,281), the Central region (512,665), the Western region (413,704), and the Eastern region (229,357). For this study, data were collected from Zavkhan (Khangai region), Bayankhongor (Khangai region), Govi-Altai (Western region), and Ulaanbaatar (Central region) to ensure representation from different geographical areas. As nearly half of the country's population is concentrated in Ulaanbaatar, and given its role as Mongolia's primary educational location, a significant portion of the data collection was conducted in the capital. The primary target groups for this study were upper-secondary students and English teachers. The focus group interviews were conducted only in the capital city due to the pandemic. Conversely, questionnaire data collection was carried out in all four areas, including Ulaanbaatar and the three provinces. This approach ensured a

comprehensive understanding of the experiences and perspectives of both students and teachers across diverse geographic contexts.

The participant pool comprised 360 students who completed questionnaires. All students participated on a voluntary basis. 16 students voluntarily participated in focus group interviews to gain qualitative insights. Similarly, 59 English teachers participated in the questionnaires, with a subset of 7 teachers taking part in focus group interviews. The varied selection of research sites proved crucial during the pandemic, as it facilitated the exploration of diverse experiences and adaptations among students and teachers across different locales. This approach ensured the feasibility and safety of the research endeavors while offering a comprehensive understanding of educational realities in both urban and rural settings in Mongolia. By strategically selecting accessible and adjacent provinces, logistical challenges were effectively managed, enabling the collection of a robust dataset despite the unprecedented circumstances. From Table 9, the number of schools and respondents are illustrated.

Table 9. Number of schools for the questionnaire

Location	Questionnaire	
	No. of public schools for student's questionnaire	No. of public schools for teacher's questionnaire
Ulaanbaatar city	3	2
Zavkhan province	1	4
Govi-altai province	7	6
Bayankhongor province	1	2
Total	12	14

The focus-group interviews were conducted at two schools in the capital city, Ulaanbaatar. English teachers and students from upper-secondary education participated in the interviews. In total, 7 teachers and 18 students were involved. The names of the schools will not be disclosed to maintain data confidentiality; they will be referred to as school A and school B throughout this research. It is important to note that the characteristics of the two schools slightly differ to a certain extent. school A is located closer to the outskirts of the city, while school B is situated near the central area and is one of the renowned schools in the city. The teachers at school A are relatively young, with 0-6 years of experience, whereas the teachers at school B have between 15 and 19 years of experience.

Table 10. Number of respondents, teacher's years of teaching experience and school's location for focus-group interview

	No. of students	No. of teachers	Teacher's teaching experience	Location
School A	8	4	0-6 years	Closer to outskirts of the city
School B	8	3	15-19 years	Closer to central area
Total	16	7		

4.5 Research participants and their background

The research participants consisted of two different groups; namely, students in upper-secondary education and English teachers. In total, there were 360 student participants and 59 English teacher participants. Table 11 displays the background details of the research participants.

Table 11. Research participants and their background

Background details		Students in upper-secondary education		English teachers	
		n	%	n	%
Total number of participants		360	100.0	59	100.0
Gender	Male	149	41.4	1	1.7
	Female	211	58.6	58	98.3
Grade	10^{th} grade	142	39.4	-	-
	11^{th} grade	111	30.8	-	-
	12^{th} grade	107	29.7	-	-
Years of experience	1st year	-	-	3	5.1
	2-5 years	-	-	14	23.7
	6-10 years	-	-	12	20.3
	11-15 years	-	-	10	16.9
	16-20 years	-	-	13	22.0
	21-25 years	-	-	4	6.8
	Above 26 years	-	-	3	5.1
City/province	Ulaanbaatar city	173	48.1	11	18.6
	Zavkhan province	64	17.8	15	25.4
	Govi-Altai province	61	16.9	16	27.1
	Bayankhongor province	62	17.2	17	28.8
Education level	Diploma	-	-	1	1.7
	Bachelor's degree	-	-	30	50.8
	Master's degree	-	-	28	47.5

Among the student participants, 41.4% were male (n=149) and 58.6% were female (n=211). The students were distributed across grades, with 39.4% in 10th grade, 30.8% in 11th grade, and 29.7% in 12th grade. This distribution provided a balanced representation of students across the upper-secondary levels.

The English teachers had a range of years of teaching experience, reflecting a diverse level of expertise within the group. A small portion (5.1%) were in their first year of teaching, while 23.7% had 2-5 years of experience. Teachers with 6-10 years of experience accounted for 20.3%, and those with 11-15 years comprised 16.9% of the group. Furthermore, 22% had 16-20 years of experience, 6.8% had 21-25 years, and 5.1% had over 26 years in the profession. This range of experience levels enriched the study with insights from both newer and more seasoned educators.

The participants were also diverse in terms of their geographical backgrounds. Among the students, 48.1% were from Ulaanbaatar city, while the remainder were from Zavkhan (17.8%), Govi-Altai (16.9%), and Bayankhongor (17.2%) provinces. The English teachers similarly represented various locations, with 18.6% from Ulaanbaatar, 25.4% from Zavkhan, 27.1% from Govi-Altai, and 28.8% from Bayankhongor. This geographical diversity ensured a broader representation of educational experiences across urban and rural contexts.

In terms of education level, the majority of the teachers held a Bachelor's degree (50.8%), while 47.5% had attained a Master's degree, and a small percentage (1.7%) held a diploma. This variety in educational backgrounds provided a comprehensive perspective on teaching practices and curriculum implementation across different qualification levels. This diverse composition of participants, in terms of both demographic and professional backgrounds, adds depth to the study, offering a well-rounded view of the perceptions and experiences surrounding the implementation of the upper-secondary English curriculum.

4.6 Data analysis methods

The study employed thematic and statistical analysis methods to examine and interpret the collected data. The statistical analyses are presented in the next chapter, whereas this section focuses on detailing the document and thematic analysis used for the qualitative data. The next chapter presents the statistical analyses, while this section focuses on detailing the thematic analysis used for the qualitative data.

Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative research method that provides a robust and flexible approach to analyzing qualitative data. For this research, thematic analysis is

particularly suitable for several reasons. First, it offers flexibility and can be applied to a wide range of research questions and types of qualitative data, including focus-group interviews. This flexibility allows the researcher to adapt the method to the specific context of the study and the nuances of the data collected from both students and English teachers (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, thematic analysis enables the identification, analysis, and reporting of patterns (themes) within the data, going beyond merely counting phrases or words in a text. It focuses on identifying implicit and explicit ideas within the data, making it ideal for exploring the complexities of implementing an English curriculum (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Given that the research involves two focus-group interviews with teachers and two focus-group interviews with students, thematic analysis is efficient for managing and interpreting the diverse perspectives of different participants, even when the data set is relatively small (Guest et al., 2012). Furthermore, it facilitates an interpretative understanding of the data, which is crucial for exploring the experiences and perceptions of students and teachers regarding the English curriculum (Boyatzis, 1998). The method also offers a clear and straightforward process for coding and theme development, enhancing the transparency and rigor of the research. This systematic approach ensures that the findings are grounded in the data and can be reliably replicated (Nowell et al., 2017).

Thematic analysis typically involves a systematic process consisting of six main steps as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The first step is familiarization with the data, where the researcher immerses themselves in the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts of the focus-group interviews, noting initial impressions and observations. The second step involves generating initial codes by systematically coding interesting features of the data across the entire data set and collating data relevant to each code. In the third step, the researcher searches for themes by collating codes into potential themes and gathering all data relevant to each potential theme. The fourth step is reviewing themes, where the researcher checks if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic map of the analysis. The fifth step involves defining and naming themes by refining each theme to identify its essence and writing a detailed analysis of each theme. Finally, the sixth step is producing the report, where the researcher selects vivid, compelling extract examples to illustrate each theme, relates the analysis back to the research questions and literature, and writes a coherent and persuasive narrative that tells the story of the data in relation to the research questions.

4.7 Data analysis procedure

The data was collected through the qualitative (focus group interview) and quantitative (questionnaire) approaches. In this part, the data analysis procedure is presented.

Qualitative data analysis

The qualitative data employed thematic analysis. It typically involves a process consisting of six main steps as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). In the first phase, all four focus-group interviews were transcribed. In the second phase, initial codes were generated in Atlas.ti for each question, each interviewee, and each topic (e.g., perception of the implementation of the English curriculum, challenges, integration of competency-based teaching, exposure to competency-based learning, etc.). The coding process was both deductive and inductive. The initial codes were derived from the theoretical framework, ensuring that the analysis was grounded in established concepts (Nowell et al., 2017). Additionally, the new codes were created based on recurrent patterns observed in the interview transcripts, capturing themes that naturally emerged from participants' discussions (Clarke & Braun, 2013). This approach allowed me to systematically categorize and interpret qualitative data while maintaining flexibility to incorporate context-specific insights (Guest et al., 2012). Theoretical guidance and data-driven coding were combined to ensure that a rigorous and comprehensive thematic analysis was conducted, reflecting both predefined constructs and organically occurring themes in the research. An example is provided in Figure 5, illustrating the process of generating initial codes based on an extract from an interviewee.

Figure 5. Example of data extract with codes applied

Data extract	Coded for
The learning environment is not adequately equipped. There isn't sufficient internet access on each floor or in every classroom. In classrooms without audio equipment, even if I want to connect to the internet and show something prepared, there isn't access in every room. It would only work if I prepared something at home in my own time and brought it to class.	• Insufficient learning sesources • Limited technology access

In the third phase, patterns recurring across the qulaitative data were identified for each question or topic. For example, the patterns and trends were searched focusing on a

question what are the challenges that English teachers faces during the implementation of the English curriculum of upper-secondary education as illustrated in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Identifying themes centered on specific questions across the entire dataset

The challenges that English teachers faces during the implementation of the upper-secondary English curriculum	
Theme	Challenges
Complexity, density and clarity of the curriculum and inconsistency of the curriculum	Complexity of the curriculum
	Clarity of the curriculum
	Clarity in the assessment criteria of the curriculum
Lack of resources	Limited classroom availability
	The learning environment is not adequately resourced (e.g. internet, TV, projector, audio equipment)

Similarly, themes were explored for each question within each topic (perception of the implementation of the English curriculum, challenges, integration of competency-based teaching, exposure to competency-based learning, etc). In the fourth stage, initial patterns were reviewed and, where possible, grouped together as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Reviewed themes

The challenges that English teachers faces during the implementation of the upper-secondary English curriculum		
Themes as groups	Theme	Challenges
External challenges	Complexity, density and clarity of the curriculum and inconsistency of the curriculum	Complexity of the curriculum
		Clarity of the curriculum
		Clarity in the assessment criteria of the curriculum
	Lack of resources	Limited classroom availability
		The learning environment is not adequately resourced (e.g. internet, TV, projector, audio equipment)

In the fifth stage, the trends were finalized, and relevant extracts were added to support the finalized trends as demonstrated in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Finalized themes accompanied by relevant interview extracts

The challenges that English teachers faces during the implementation of the upper-secondary English curriculum			
Themes as groups	Theme	Challenges	Excerpts
External challenges	Complexity, density and clarity of the curriculum and inconsistency of the curriculum	Complexity of the curriculum	In general, it is presented clearly. However, we don't have enough practice applying it in regular lessons. For those who understand it, it can work, but it takes a lot of time. It's overly detailed, with learning objectives that seem repetitive for each grade level. These objectives are formulated with a lot of key terms, but we don't memorize them ourselves (Excerpt 2)
		Clarity of the curriculum	It [Curriculum] is very unclear, inconsistent with the exercises and tasks in the textbook, and lacks coherence. The terminology is vague and weak (Exceprt 1)
		Clarity in the assessment criteria of the curriculum	It's unclear. Generally, we do the assessment ourselves. We evaluate and assess students based on their general understanding and content knowledge rather than strictly following the specific objectives, as those can be difficult to grasp. The way it's set up is quite unusual, and the language used is complex and hard to understand at first glance. It's only upon reflection that it becomes clear, like 'oh, that's what it actually means (Exceprt 3)
	Lack of resources	Limited classroom availability	We teach in groups and don't have dedicated classrooms. Each class has 25-30 students.
		The learning environment is not adequately resourced	There is no technology available; no printer, TV, or projector. We don't even have audio equipment. We bring our own speakers to conduct listening lessons. There are a few TVs and projectors, but sometimes we have to compete for them.

Figure 8 illustrates the identified trends regarding the challenges English teachers encounter in implementing the curriculum. These trends were classified into two categories - external and internal - which emerged as the most frequently recurring patterns throughout the dataset. The external factors are displayed in Figure 8. Similarly, all trends were defined, reviewed, and finalized with relevant interview extracts for reporting purposes.

Quantitative data analysis

The quantitative data for this study was collected through a questionnaire and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were conducted to explore the data comprehensively. Given the nature of the dataset, descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions and crosstabulations, as well as inferential statistics, such as non-parametric tests including the Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney tests, were employed to examine relationships and differences within the data. The non-parametric tests were used because my dataset consists of ordinal variables, which do not meet the assumptions of normal distribution required for parametric tests (A. P. Field, 2018). Ordinal data represents categories with a meaningful order but unequal intervals, making non-parametric methods more appropriate for analyzing such data (Jamieson, 2004). Unlike parametric tests, which assume homogeneity of variance and interval-level measurement, non-parametric tests are robust to violations of these assumptions and are commonly applied in educational and social science research (Pallant, 2020). Given that my study involves Likert-scale responses, which are widely recognized as ordinal (Norman, 2010), non-parametric tests ensure valid and reliable statistical conclusions. Therefore, the use of non-parametric methods aligns with best practices in analyzing ordinal datasets, avoiding potential misinterpretations that could arise from treating ordinal data as interval (de Winter, 2013). Chapter 5 will present and discuss the results of all statistical tests conducted, providing a detailed overview of the quantitative findings.

4.8 Reliability and validity

In this study, reliability analysis was conducted to ensure the consistency of the questionnaire used for both teachers and students. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for each section of the questionnaire to assess internal consistency, with values generally considered acceptable above 0.7.

Table 12. The reliability of the questionnaire for teachers (n=59)

Title of the parts in the questionnaire	Aim of the parts	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Teachers' understanding of English language curriculum	Understanding of the curriculum	5	0.794
	Understanding of the rationale behind specific school policies	27	0.926

	or practices that reflect key elements of competency-based aspects		
Challenges of implementing English language curriculum	To explore what kind of challenges do the teachers face for the implementation of curriculum	16	0.727
Competency-based teaching and learning	Exposure to students'opportunities to develop skills and dispositions	16	0.786
	Attentiveness to the English language skills	49	0.963
Total		113	0.907

For the teachers' questionnaire (n=59), the sections covered areas such as teachers' understanding of the English language curriculum, their awareness of competency-based principles, the challenges in curriculum implementation, and their attentiveness to English language skills. Cronbach's Alpha values for these sections ranged from 0.727 to 0.963, indicating strong reliability across the questionnaire, with an overall Cronbach's Alpha of 0.907.

Table 13. The reliability of the questionnaire for students (n=360)

Parts of the questionnaire	**Aim of the parts**	**No. of items**	**Cronbach's Alpha**
Student's understanding of competency-based learning	Understanding of the rationale behind specific school policies or practices that reflect key elements of competency-based learning	13	0.702
Student's exposure to key elements of competency-based learning	Exposure to explanation of the competencies and how to demonstrate progress toward mastery of competencies	3	0.706
	Exposure to multiple options for earning course credit as well as personalized instruction and learning opportunities	8	0.736
	Exposure to flexible assessment	7	0.792
	Exposure to opportunities to develop skills and dispositions	4	0.867
	Development of skills	49	0.939
Student's contentment with the English language lesson and English language teaching	English course	7	0.793
	English language teaching	6	0.944
Total		97	0.933

Similarly, the students' questionnaire (n=360) was divided into sections that examined students' understanding and exposure to competency-based learning, flexible assessments, and skill development. The Cronbach's Alpha values for these sections

ranged from 0.702 to 0.944, yielding an overall reliability of 0.933 for the student questionnaire. These results demonstrate a high level of internal consistency, validating the reliability of the instruments used.

4.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical permission for the research was granted by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education and Psychology, Eötvös Loránd University on July 7, 2021 (Reference Number: 2021/318; See Appendix A) and by the Mongolian Institute for Educational Research on July 5, 2022 (Reference number: 2022/95; See Appendix B). The participation in this research was voluntary. The purpose and procedures of the research will be fully explained to the subjects. The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were informed to the participants.

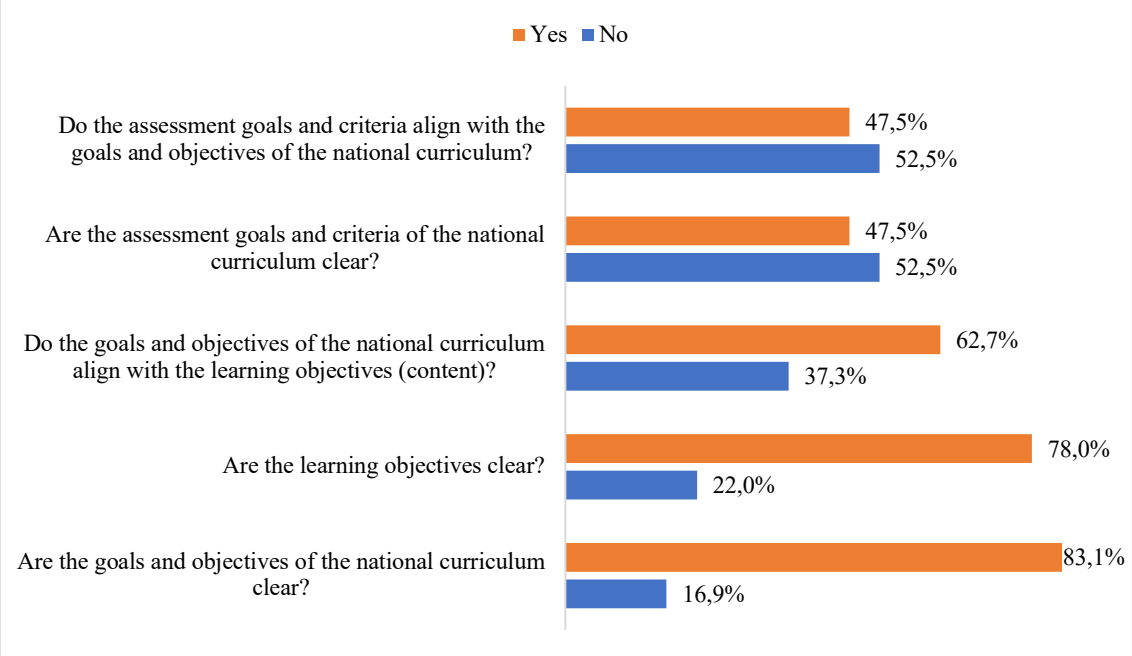
CHAPTER 5 – RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the study, organized by research questions and the mixed-methods approach. Each research question is addressed through both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive response. The section is divided into sub-chapters according to the research questions and outlines how the results are presented. Quantitative results are reported first, followed and enhanced by qualitative findings, ensuring a clear distinction between data types. The section concludes with a synthesis of the quantitative and qualitative results, highlighting key findings and patterns. This summary provides a transition to the discussion section.

5.1 Perception of English teachers on the implementation of the upper-secondary English curriculum

English teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the upper-secondary English curriculum were investigated through a quantitative approach. Figure 9 provides a detailed overview of the curriculum's coherence and transparency as perceived by English teachers in upper-secondary education.

Figure 9. English curriculum of upper-secondary education coherence and transparency (n=59)



The results obtained from English teachers in upper-secondary education provide valuable insights into their perceptions of the coherence and transparency of the English

curriculum. A significant majority (83.1%) of respondents agree that the goals and objectives of the national curriculum are clear, indicating a generally strong understanding among teachers of the curriculum's intended outcomes for upper-secondary students. Likewise, 78.0% find the learning objectives to be clear, though 22.0% express uncertainty, suggesting that there may be room for improvement in how these objectives are communicated or structured within the curriculum. However, only 62.7% of teachers perceive alignment between the curriculum goals and learning objectives, while 37.3% do not see this connection. This discrepancy could reflect its implementation at the upper-secondary level, where the alignment between general goals and specific content may not always be clearly articulated.

When it comes to assessment goals and criteria, teachers' responses are notably split. A slight majority (52.5%) feel that the assessment goals lack clarity, and an equal percentage believe that these goals do not align with the national curriculum's overall objectives. This lack of consensus suggests that assessment criteria may not be consistently understood or communicated across upper-secondary schools, which could contribute to varied interpretations of assessment expectations among educators. The contrast between the high agreement on the general curriculum goals and the divided views on assessment alignment and clarity indicates that while teachers generally perceive the curriculum's goals to be coherent, there are significant concerns about how assessment practices support these goals. These findings partially address the research question regarding English teachers' perceptions, highlighting that while foundational curriculum elements appear coherent to most, there are challenges in ensuring alignment and transparency, particularly in relation to assessments, within the upper-secondary English curriculum.

Table 38 in Appendix G summarizes results collected from English teachers regarding their concerns about the curriculum, measured through the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ). Each stage reflects the level and type of concern teachers have about curriculum implementation. The SoCQ is part of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), designed to gauge teachers' personal feelings and concerns regarding implementing new educational innovations. The SoCQ includes seven distinct stages: Unconcerned (Stage 0) refers to little to no concern about the innovation. Informational (Stage 1) signifies interest in learning more about the innovation without personal involvement. Personal (Stage 2) describes concerns about how the innovation affects the

individual, including their role and adequacy. Management (Stage 3) focuses on the logistics and efficiency of implementing the innovation. Consequence (Stage 4) emphasizes the innovation's impact on students and outcomes. Collaboration (Stage 5) reflects a desire to coordinate with others for more effective use of the innovation. Lastly, Refocusing (Stage 6) highlights interest in adapting or improving the innovation for greater benefits. According to Fieger (2012), the higher the score, the more intense the concerns are at that stage and the lower the score, the less intense the concerns at that stage. As we can see from the result, the analysis of the SoCQ data reveals significant insights into the perceptions of English teachers in Mongolia's upper-secondary education system regarding the English curriculum.

In Stage 0 (Unconcerned) in Table 38, teachers show little to no involvement with or concern about the curriculum change. This stage is marked by varied but generally high percentile scores, with many teachers scoring in the 90th percentile range. These elevated scores indicate that a significant portion of teachers are not prioritizing or engaging with the curriculum, despite some others being actively involved. This high level of 'unconcern' may reflect various factors, such as feeling overwhelmed by other responsibilities or perceiving the curriculum change as irrelevant to their immediate concerns. Addressing the reasons behind teachers' lack of engagement will be crucial to shift them toward more active stages of concern. Interventions could include understanding specific barriers to engagement.

Stage 1 (Informational) reflects a desire among teachers to learn more about the English curriculum. in Table 38, the data indicate consistently high percentile scores in this stage, often exceeding the 90th percentile. Such high scores reveal a strong demand for information, with teachers eager to understand the curriculum's goals, structure, and requirements. This stage signifies that teachers are actively concerned with gaining more knowledge about what the curriculum entails and its broader implications for teaching and learning. Supporting teachers in this stage with accessible and comprehensive resources could effectively reduce uncertainties and increase teachers' confidence, setting the foundation for deeper engagement in the implementation process.

In Stage 2 (Personal), teachers are focused on how the curriculum will affect them personally and professionally. in Table 38, this stage has lower percentiles compared to earlier stages, with common scores around 17, 21, and up to 31. The lower scores imply that, although there are personal concerns, they are not as intense as the desire for

information. Teachers in this stage might be questioning their role adequacy, workload, or alignment with the new curriculum. These concerns could range from a sense of adequacy in meeting curriculum demands to uncertainty about how the curriculum aligns with their professional skills and workload. Addressing these concerns is essential in building teacher confidence. Professional development and support that align with teachers' individual roles and strengths would help them feel more capable and personally aligned with the English curriculum. Reducing personal concerns can help teachers shift focus from self-oriented concerns to the practical aspects of curriculum implementation.

Stage 3 (Management), concerning logistical aspects of implementing the curriculum, shows moderate concern. in Table 38, percentile scores range widely, with some teachers reaching the 90th percentile but others scoring around 43 to 60. This spread indicates variability in how teachers perceive the logistical demands of the curriculum, with some teachers needing significant support in areas such as resource allocation, time management, and classroom organization. With moderate to high scores in this stage, some teachers score as high as the 90th percentile, indicating that logistical challenges are a significant concern.

Stage 4 (Consequence) focuses on the curriculum's perceived impact on student outcomes. in Table 38, scores in this stage are generally lower, often around 13, 19, and up to 38. Compared to earlier stages, the Consequence stage has relatively lower scores, suggesting that teachers are currently less concerned with the curriculum's direct impact on students.

Stage 5 (Collaboration) measures the extent to which teachers are interested in coordinating their efforts with colleagues for enhanced curriculum implementation. The results in Table 38 show a moderate level of interest in collaboration, with percentile scores ranging from 40 to 90. While some teachers express high concerns about collaboration, others see it as less of a priority.

Finally, Stage 6 (Refocusing) represents teachers' interest in adapting or enhancing the curriculum, exploring possibilities for curriculum improvement. The data in Table 38 shows varied scores in this stage, with some teachers displaying high percentiles. Teachers' percentile scores in this stage vary, with several in the 70th percentile range and some reaching up to 87 and 97. These teachers are considering potential modifications or alternative approaches to optimize curriculum effectiveness.

Overall, the Stages of Concern analysis provides a nuanced view of English teachers' engagement and concerns regarding the curriculum implementation in upper-secondary schools in Mongolia. This framework highlights the developmental nature of teachers' concerns, showing that many teachers are predominantly in the Informational Stage. The consistently high percentile scores in the Informational stage (often exceeding the 90th percentile) reflect that teachers are in a strong information-seeking phase. This indicates a readiness to engage with the curriculum and a strong demand for additional information. The high levels of concern in the Informational stage reflect there is a potential need for comprehensive, accessible resources to help teachers grasp the full scope and objectives of the curriculum. This suggests that curriculum developers and school leaders should prioritize transparent, well-organized informational sessions and materials. The Personal and Management stages reveal moderate concerns about individual roles, resources, and classroom organization. Teachers with scores around the 90th percentile in the Management stage, for example, indicate a need for logistical support in implementing the curriculum. The significance of these concerns suggests that teachers may require targeted support to build their self-confidence and ensure that they have the resources and time necessary to implement the curriculum smoothly. These findings suggest providing practical support and tailored professional development to help teachers feel equipped for the demands of the English curriculum.

The result of theCollaboration stage indicates that while some teachers are beginning to consider the benefits of working together, others may require further encouragement to view collaboration as an essential part of the curriculum implementation process. On the other hand, Refocusing stage concerns suggest that some teachers are forward-thinking, considering potential adaptations to optimize the curriculum's benefits. The moderate concern levels in the Collaboration and Refocusing stages suggest a mixed readiness among teachers to coordinate with peers and adapt the curriculum based on classroom experiences. This is a promising sign, as it indicates some openness to collective problem-solving and continuous improvement. Schools and educational leaders can capitalize on this by fostering collaborative environments where teachers can share experiences, strategies, and feedback.

The quantitative result was further explored through focus-group interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore English teachers' perceptions of

implementing the upper-secondary English curriculum. As a result, five key themes emerged from the analysis of the focus group interviews including the understanding of CBE in the classroom and use of CBE, overemphasis on the theoretical aspect, curriculum adaptation for student's age and local and cultural context, and complexity, density and clarity of the curriculum and inconsistency of the curriculum.

Understanding of CBE in the classroom and use of CBE

CBE emphasizes the mastery of specific skills and competencies over traditional time-based learning. The excerpts provided shed light on how CBE is understood and implemented in the classroom, particularly within the context of language education, focusing on the teaching of comprehensive language skills versus more grammar-focused instruction. The analysis reveals a significant gap between the understanding of CBE principles and their actual implementation in the classroom.

> *Comprehensive competence refers to the four language skills. According to the national [English] curriculum, there's not much development in this area. It does exist, though. There are attempts to develop conversational skills. However, conversations are rare. It's generally quite difficult.* (excerpt 1, school b)

This excerpt highlights a key issue in the understanding and implementation of CBE. While the national curriculum acknowledges the importance of developing comprehensive competence encompassing listening, speaking, reading, and writing, there is a notable lack of emphasis on this in practice. The infrequent opportunities for developing conversational skills suggest a disconnect between curriculum objectives and classroom realities, with potential implications for student proficiency in all language domains.

> *I don't teach it.* (excerpt 1, school b)
>
> *I try to teach it [speaking skill], but that is rare. The main reason is the lack of time.* (excerpt 2, school b)

These excerpts indicate a significant barrier to implementing CBE principles. Teachers either do not engage with the comprehensive language skills outlined in the curriculum or do so minimally due to constraints such as time. This suggests that while CBE is understood at a conceptual level, practical challenges hinder its full adoption, leading to a focus on more traditional and easily assessable skills, such as grammar.

The emphasis on grammar due to the structure of state examinations reveals a misalignment between the curriculum's comprehensive competence goals and the assessment system. Teachers prioritize grammar because it is what the examinations focus on, which directly influences how students are taught. This focus on grammar over other language skills (listening, speaking, writing, reading) further diminishes the likelihood of successfully implementing CBE in the classroom, where the aim is to develop a well-rounded set of competencies.

> *In my case, I mainly focus on grammar. This is because the State Examination does not assess students' listening, speaking. It only tests grammar.* (excerpt 1, school b)

> *Yes, that's right! Speaking is not evaluated. Vocabulary and grammar are given more emphasis [in the state examination]*. (excerpt 2, school b)

> *When a particular topic comes up, I quickly review the content, determine what it's about, how it applies to everyday use, and what vocabulary is involved. Then, I focus on which grammar rules the student will need to learn that is needed in the future.* (excerpt 3, school b)

The excerpts collectively suggest a significant misalignment between the principles of CBE and their practical implementation in the classroom. The excerpts reveal that teachers prioritize grammar due to its prominence in state examinations. This leads to a neglect of other critical language skills, such as listening, and speaking, which are essential for comprehensive competence in language learning. Even when teachers recognize the importance of comprehensive competence, time constraints make it difficult for them to address all aspects of language learning, leading to a focus on the skills that are most easily assessed or that are seen as most critical for student success in exams. It reveals that while the concept of CBE is understood within the educational framework, its implementation in the classroom is severely limited by structural issues such as the assessment priorities and time constraints.

Overemphasis on the theoretical aspect

Teachers frequently expressed concerns that the English curriculum is more focused on theoretical knowledge. This overemphasis on theory is seen as a barrier to effectively

implementing CBE, which prioritizes the development of competencies that students can apply in practical situations. The thematic analysis of the provided excerpts reveals a recurring concern among teachers regarding the excessive focus on theoretical content within the English curriculum, leading to several key challenges and concerns.

The excerpts highlight a recurring theme of disconnect between the curriculum's theoretical content and its practical application in the classroom. Teachers express concern that the curriculum is extensive and lacks a focus on real-world applications. This disconnect suggests that while the curriculum may aim to provide a strong theoretical foundation, it fails to bridge the gap between knowledge and practical use, making it difficult for students to see the relevance of what they are learning.

> *It is not focused on practical application. Some topics are disconnected from real life.* (excerpt 4, school a)

> *The learning objectives have become clearer, but incorporating each of them into the lessons is challenging. It's not well-grounded in practical application. Too academic [theoretical]. Lacks practical aspects. So, we need to simplify the curriculum content, shift the academic focus of the textbook towards practical application, and replace or update the textbook.* (excerpt 2, school b)

> *It needs to be applicable and understandable to everyone.* (excerpt 3, school b)

The implication of this disconnect is that students may find it difficult to engage with the material, as they are unable to relate it to their daily lives or future careers. Teachers may struggle to make the content meaningful and applicable to student's lives, which could hinder effective teaching and learning. If the curriculum continues to emphasize theory over practice, it could result in graduates who are academically knowledgeable but lack the ability to apply that knowledge in practical, real-world scenarios.

Moreover, despite the clarity of learning objectives within the curriculum, teachers find it challenging to integrate these objectives into their daily lessons. The curriculum's academic and theoretical orientation appears to make it difficult for teachers to design lessons that are both educationally rigorous and practically applicable. This situation indicates that while teachers understand what is expected of them, the resources and structure provided by the curriculum do not support the practical implementation of these objectives. As a result, there is a potential mismatch between the curriculum's intentions

and what is actually delivered in the classroom, which could impact the overall effectiveness of English language teaching.

Curriculum adaptation for students' age and local and cultural context

Teachers are concerned that the curriculum's current form may not effectively engage all students, particularly those whose cultural or developmental stages are not sufficiently considered in the curriculum design.

> *It's important to adapt the content to the characteristics of the children and the features of Mongolians* (excerpt 1, school b)

In the above excerpt, teachers highlight the importance of adapting the curriculum to the "characteristics of the children and the features of Mongolians". This suggests a need for localized curriculum content that reflects the cultural, historical, and social context of the students. Such content could foster a stronger connection between students and the material they are learning, making it more relevant and engaging. When students see their own experiences and culture reflected in their education, they are more likely to feel valued and understood, which can enhance their motivation and commitment to learning.

> *The content needs to be appropriate for the age characteristics of our students* (excerpt 1, school b)

In addition, the mention of age-appropriate content in excerpt 1 from school B points to the necessity of considering the developmental stages of learners. Educational content that aligns with students' cognitive and emotional development is crucial for fostering effective learning. If the curriculum content is either too advanced or too simplistic for the age group it targets, it can lead to disengagement, frustration, or a lack of challenge, all of which can impede learning. Teachers are advocating for a curriculum that recognizes and addresses the developmental needs of their students, ensuring that the content is neither too difficult nor too easy, but instead optimally challenging.

Complexity, density and clarity of the curriculum and inconsistency of the curriculum

Teachers often mentioned that the curriculum is overly complex and dense, making it difficult to cover all the necessary material within the time constraints of the school year. This complexity hinders the ability to focus on developing the competencies that are central to CBE. The complexity and density of the curriculum are seen as major obstacles to effective teaching and learning.

The curriculum's content is extensive, and teachers struggle to complete it within the allocated time. This suggests that the curriculum is overly dense, making it challenging for teachers to cover all the material effectively. The pressure to administer exams despite incomplete coverage could lead to superficial learning. Teachers feel that the curriculum's overwhelming content makes it difficult to prioritize the development of practical competencies, which is essential for aligning with CBE principles.

> *The content of the learning objectives is a lot and often not completed [in an academic year]. Even if you are supposed to cover 1 unit in 8 hours, it doesn't get completed in time. Without covering everything, we are required to take exams. Assignments are given. It's not possible to complete everything.* (excerpt 1, school a)

This excerpt also indicates that the curriculum is vast. This repetition from a different source within the same school reinforces the perception that the curriculum's density is a significant concern.

> *The content of the curriculum is a lot [to cover].* (excerpt 3, school a)

The curriculum is described as detailed, with overlapping learning objectives across grades. This complexity makes it difficult for students to grasp the material fully, as they are overwhelmed by the volume and intricacy of the content. The repetition of key terms without clear understanding contributes to cognitive overload, reducing the effectiveness of the understanding process.

> *Overall, it's presented in a generally understandable way. However, when it comes to practicing in our regular classes, it is quite lacking. For those who understand, it works, but it takes a lot of time [to understand]. It's overly detailed. Each grade seems to have overlapping learning objectives, which are formulated with a bunch of key terms. We don't memorize those ourselves.* (excerpt 2, school b)

> *The curriculum lacks of coherence, vague wording, and contradictions with the exercises and assignments. This lack of clarity creates confusion among teachers, leading to ineffective teaching experiences. Very unclear, contradictory to the exercises and assignments in the textbook, lacking coherence. The wording is vague and weak.* (excerpt 2, school a)

It needs to be practical and understandable to everyone (excerpt 3, school b)

The perception of curriculum overload is another issue raised by teachers. The content is described as overwhelming for students and teachers, leading to a situation where students may go through the motions of learning without truly understanding or engaging with the material. This concern ties back to the overemphasis on theoretical content, which may result in a curriculum that is too dense and complex for effective teaching and learning.

The curriculum content is extensive. (excerpt 4, school a)

It's [curriculum content] becoming too overwhelming, and the children are going through the motions but aren't really learning. We want to approach it more lightly, considering it as a foreign language. (excerpt 1, school b)

This overload can lead to student disengagement, as the sheer volume of theoretical material may discourage active participation and critical thinking. When students are unable to connect with the material on a practical level, they may struggle to retain information and develop the language skills they need to succeed.

The frequent changes to the curriculum are highlighted as a problem. The instability caused by these changes leads to confusion among educators and students, particularly regarding terminology. This instability undermines the effectiveness of the curriculum, as continuous updates prevent the curriculum from becoming familiar and well-integrated into the teaching process.

It needs to be stable. It shouldn't be changing every year, or every two years, or simply copying something from another country. Therefore, we need to develop textbooks and curricula that fit our country's characteristics. It needs to be stable so it can be used for many years. We keep updating so often. Even in terms of terminology, that's why we sometimes don't understand our own curriculum. (excerpt 2, school b)

The excerpt underscores the necessity for a stable and consistent curriculum. The frequent changes mentioned imply a sense of instability that can disrupt the learning process. Stability allows both educators and students to become familiar with the content, leading to better mastery of the material. Frequent updates mean that teachers have to constantly

adapt to new content and methodologies. This may result in inadequate preparation, thereby affecting the quality of education delivered.

The quantitative and qualitative findings reveal a mixed perception of the upper-secondary English curriculum among teachers. A majority of teachers (83.1%) found the goals and objectives of the curriculum clear, and 78.0% agreed that the learning objectives were also clear. While they recognize the curriculum's goals and objectives as clear, they struggle with its alignment, complexity, and practical applicability. Quantitative results underline the demand for informational and logistical support and demonstrate teachers' openness to collaboration and adaptation, as evidenced by their moderate-to-high interest in the Collaboration and Refocusing stages. This presents an opportunity to address these concerns, while qualitative insights highlight practical challenges. Practical implementation faces significant challenges. English teachers perceive several challenges related to the curriculum. They believe there is an overemphasis on theoretical aspects, which are not well-grounded in practical applications. Additionally, they find it difficult to adapt the curriculum to students' age, as well as to local and cultural contexts. Another major concern is the complexity, density, and clarity of the curriculum, along with its inconsistency. Teachers feel that the content is extensive, making it challenging to cover all the learning objectives within an academic year, and in many cases, these objectives remain incomplete. Tailored professional development could enhance the implementation process, bridging the gap between theory and practice while aligning with CBE principles.

5.2 Challenges of the implementation of the upper-secondary English curriculum

The study investigated the challenges of implementing the upper-secondary English curriculum for English teachers. Several challenges were explored through the questionnaire including support from organizations and schools, teacher preparedness, and pedagogical and logistical constraints. All these challenges will be presented in this section. Starting from Table 14, it shows the result of challenges related to support from organizations and schools, and teacher preparedness.

Table 14. Challenges related to support from organizations and schools, and teacher preparedness (n=59)

Dimensions	#	Statements	*M*	*SD*
Support from organizations and school	1	National professional organizations (MNIER, ITPD, EEC etc)	3.29	.720
	2	Provincial, district, or city education departments	3.19	.819
	3	Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field of education	2.53	.817
	4	Support from the school	3.29	.767
Teacher preparedness	5	Limited knowledge in implementing the curriculum	2.64	1.013
	6	Lack of professional skills	2.27	1.127
	7	Low confidence in being able to implement the curriculum	2.20	.996
	8	I believe my teaching methods are weak when it comes to implementing the English curriculum	2.39	.983
	9	Insufficient materials and resources for implementing the curriculum	3.08	1.179
	10	Limited time to teach the content of the curriculum	3.44	1.249

Note. Means for questions 1 to 4 are based on a 5-point scale: 1 = Very poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very good. Means for questions 5 to 10 are based on a 5-point scale:1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Average, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree

The teachers (n=59) highlighted various challenges related to support from organizations, schools, and their own preparedness in implementing the curriculum. Among sources of support, both national professional organizations (M = 3.29, SD = .720) and support from the school (M = 3.29, SD = .767) were rated highest, indicating that these entities are seen as relatively reliable resources. Support from provincial, district, or city education departments was rated moderately (M = 3.19, SD = .819), while non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in education received the lowest mean score (M = 2.53, SD = .817), suggesting that NGOs play a limited role in assisting teachers with curriculum implementation.

In terms of teacher preparedness, the data reveal several perceived barriers. Teachers reported disagreement on limited knowledge (M = 2.64, SD = 1.013) and a lack of professional skills (M = 2.27, SD = 1.127). They also disagreed that they have low confidence in implementation, with a mean score of 2.20 (SD = .996), and teachers somewhat disagreed that their teaching methods might be insufficient for curriculum requirements (M = 2.39, SD = .983). Overall, these results suggest that teachers feel prepared in terms of knowledge, professional skills, confidence, and teaching methods. The perceived barriers are relatively minor, indicating a generally positive perception of

their preparedness to implement the curriculum effectively. Notably, challenges related to insufficient materials and resources (M = 3.08, SD = 1.179) and limited time to cover curriculum content (M = 3.44, SD = 1.249) were rated higher, emphasizing these as prominent barriers. The relatively high standard deviations in these items suggest that teachers experience these issues with varying intensity, reflecting a diverse range of experiences among teachers.

Research shows that new teachers often struggle with limited support and professional development, making it harder for them to apply student-centered teaching methods (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). On the other hand, experienced teachers may face difficulties adapting to curriculum changes because they are used to traditional methods and may have fewer opportunities for training in new approaches (Avalos, 2011). By examining these challenges based on experience helps to understand how different levels of experience affect teachers' perceptions of support and preparedness. The findings in Table 15 examine the challenges related to support from organizations and schools, as well as teacher preparedness, based on teachers' years of experience in upper-secondary education.

Table 15. Challenges related to support from organizations and schools, and teacher preparedness by years of experience (n=59)

Dimension	Years of experience	n	Mean Rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	df	Asymp. Sig.
Support from organizations and school	1st year	3	28.00	9.982	6	.125
	2-5 years	14	36.79			
	6-10 years	12	34.79			
	11-15 years	10	30.30			
	16-20 years	13	26.23			
	21-25 years	4	9.88			
	Above 26 years	3	23.33			
Teacher preparedness	1st year	3	27.17	2.815	6	.832
	2-5 years	14	32.43			
	6-10 years	12	32.21			
	11-15 years	10	30.15			
	16-20 years	13	23.81			
	21-25 years	4	31.38			
	Above 26 years	3	37.17			

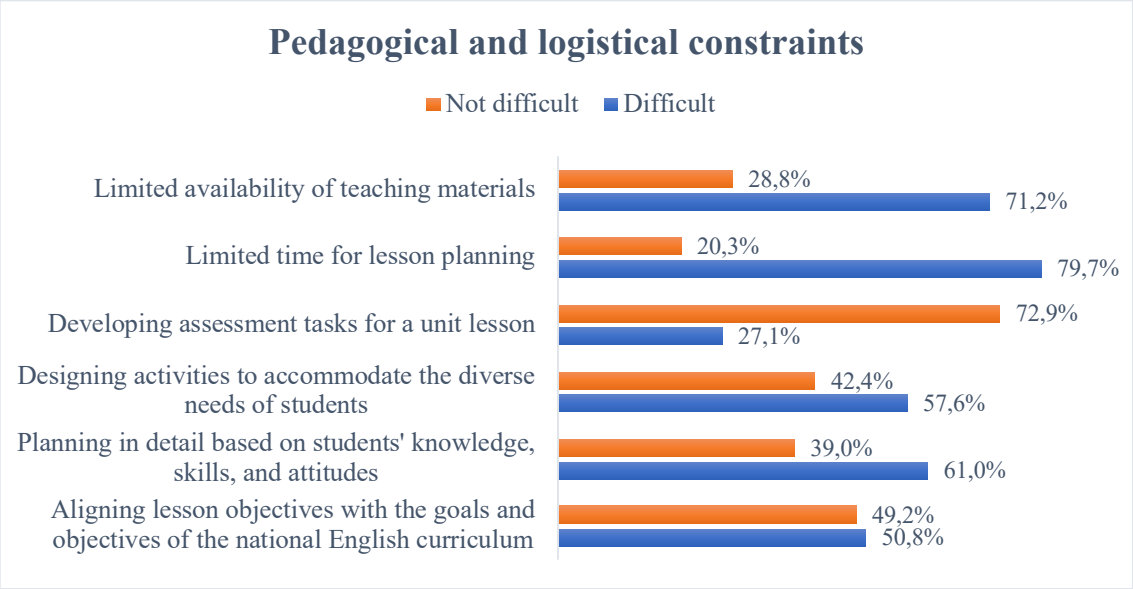
*Note. *p < 0.05*

The mean ranks provided by the Kruskal-Wallis test indicate differences in perceived challenges across experience levels, though none of these differences reach statistical significance (as indicated by the asymptotic significance values: .125 for support from organizations and school, and .832 for teacher preparedness).

For support from organizations and schools**,** teachers with 2-5 years of experience report the highest mean rank (36.79), suggesting they perceive relatively better support than other groups. In contrast, teachers with 21-25 years of experience report the lowest mean rank (9.88), indicating a perception of significantly lower support from organizations and schools. This variation in perceived support may reflect differences in expectations or experiences among newer versus more experienced teachers. Teachers early in their careers may have a fresher perspective or a more optimistic view of the support structures, while those with two decades or more in the field might feel that the support mechanisms have not evolved or kept pace with their needs. However, the lack of statistical significance ($p = .125$) suggests that while there are observable trends in mean ranks, these differences may not be strong or consistent enough to generalize across the entire population.

For teacher preparedness**,** the mean ranks show slightly less variation across experience levels, with teachers above 26 years of experience reporting the highest perceived preparedness (mean rank of 37.17). This could indicate that greater experience contributes to a stronger sense of readiness and confidence in implementing the English curriculum. Meanwhile, teachers with 16-20 years of experience report the lowest mean rank (23.81), suggesting they may feel somewhat less prepared compared to their more seasoned or novice counterparts. However, with a p-value of .832, these differences are not statistically significant, implying that teachers' sense of preparedness does not significantly vary by years of experience. Figure 10 shows the result of challenges related to pedagogical and logistical constraints among the English teachers of upper-secondary education.

Figure 10. Challenges related to pedagogical and logistical constraints (n=59)



As shown in the figure, a notable finding is logistical constraints, such as time and resource availability, emerge as significant barriers. An overwhelming majority of teachers (79.7%) report limited time for lesson planning as a major challenge, and 71.2% highlight the limited availability of teaching materials, suggesting that these practical limitations impede teachers' ability to deliver the curriculum effectively. These logistical issues may prevent teachers from fully engaging in more individualized and competency-based approaches to teaching.

The responses also reveal challenges related to competency-based teaching aspects, with 61.0% of teachers finding it difficult to plan in detail based on students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and 57.6% experiencing difficulty designing activities to accommodate diverse student needs. These tasks, which are essential to competency-based education, require teachers to adapt their instruction to the unique capabilities and needs of each student, emphasizing personalized and skills-focused teaching. The high percentages here indicate that teachers may lack the necessary support or resources to implement these competency-based approaches effectively, underscoring a gap between the curriculum's goals and the practicalities of classroom instruction. Interestingly, aligning lesson objectives with the national curriculum goals presents a more evenly split challenge, with 50.8% finding it difficult and 49.2% not finding it challenging. This division suggests variability in how teachers experience curriculum alignment, potentially pointing to inconsistencies in training or resources across different schools. In contrast, only 27.1% of teachers report challenges in developing assessment tasks for unit

lessons, indicating that assessment design may be a relatively well-supported or less complex area of the curriculum. Overall, these findings highlight that while logistical and competency-based challenges are prominent in the implementation of the English curriculum, certain areas, such as assessment task development, appear less challenging. Addressing these logistical constraints and providing additional support for competency-based instruction could facilitate more effective curriculum implementation across upper-secondary education.

Focus group interviews were used to enhance the initial findings of the survey. As a result, several themes emerged including a lack of resources and support, support for teacher's professional development, time constraints, and English textbook and its integration to the English curriculum.

Lack of resources and support

Following the above challenges, another challenge was identified by teachers which is the lack of adequate resources and support, which hampers their ability to deliver the curriculum effectively. Teachers at school A highlighted the scarcity of basic technological resources, such as printers, TVs, and projectors, which are essential for modern teaching methods. This lack of resources limits their ability to implement the curriculum, especially when it comes to incorporating interactive and competency-based activities.

> *There is no technology available. No printer, TV, or projector. No audio equipment. We have to bring our own speakers to conduct listening lessons. There are one or two projectors, but sometimes we have to compete for their use.* (excerpt 1, school a)

> *We teach in groups. There is no dedicated classroom (cabinet). Each class has 25-30 students.* (excerpt , school a)

> *Ours is relatively okay. However, in recent years, the equipment has become outdated and older, and we haven't been able to get additional supplies. We have screens, TVs, and projectors, which we are using. The learning environment is not adequately resourced. The internet is not available on every floor or in every*

classroom. In classrooms without audio equipment, even if we want to connect to the internet and show prepared materials, it's not accessible in every room. Unless we prepare at home in our own time and bring it to show, it's very difficult. (excerpt 2, school b)

The situation at school B highlights the significant negative impact that insufficient and outdated resources can have on both teaching and learning. The lack of resources at school B also has broader implications for student learning and development. The limitations in available tools and technology prevent students from fully engaging in the kinds of interactive and collaborative learning experiences. This not only hinders the development of specific competencies but also affects students' overall cognitive and social development.

Time constraints

The excerpts consistently highlight significant concerns regarding time constraints in the educational environment, particularly in the context of language teaching. This theme is evident across multiple excerpts, indicating that time is a critical factor affecting the quality and effectiveness of education. Due to time constraints, English teachers face significant challenges in delivering comprehensive language instruction. Speaking skills are often overlooked, as unrealistic expectations are placed to develop students' all four language skills simultaneously. Teachers express frustration at not being able to cover all the necessary content within the limited time available, leaving little opportunity to go beyond the textbook and incorporate more diverse or interactive teaching methods.

Table 16. Challenges stemming from time constraints

(1) Lack of time to cover necessary content and prepare for State exams	*We try to cover the topic, but we can't manage to fit everything in. There isn't enough time.* (excerpt 2, school a) *[She suggests to] increase the number of class hours. Especially for the graduating classes, there is insufficient time for State Examination preparation. The official class time is only 3 hours. Additional classes are offered as electives during the school's coordinated time. However, since there are many elective subjects and schedule conflicts, there is little time available* (excerpt 2, school b) *Teachers don't have any extra time to go beyond the basics. We barely manage to finish the school year with the textbook. We primarily focus on teaching the day's grammar and finish there. We conduct their lessons within the three hours available and don't delve into anything extra.* (excerpt 1, school b)

(2) Speaking skill is minimal	*It's unrealistic to expect that students will develop all four skills after learning English in school. Speaking, in particular, doesn't happen. There is very little time, only 3 hours per week, with each hour being 40 minutes.* (excerpt 3, school a) *Time is limited [developing all language skills]* (excerpt 1, school a) *I try to teach it [speaking skill], but that is rare. The main reason is the lack of time.* (excerpt 2, school b) *In my case, I mainly focus on grammar. This is because the State Examination does not assess students' listening, speaking. It only tests grammar.* (excerpt 1, school b)
(3) Difficulty to assess all English language skills	*With limited time, it's difficult to assess everything [English language skills].* (excerpt 2, school a) *We try to assess all of the student's skills. Speaking is very minimal. Speaking skills occupy a very small portion. Writing and reading skills are assessed more frequently.* (excerpt 2, school b) *Yes, that's right! Speaking is not evaluated. Vocabulary and grammar are given more emphasis [in the state examination]*. Thus, we focus on vocabulary and grammar. (excerpt 2, school b) *For example, when it comes to developing listening skills, some classes don't even have a CD.* (excerpt 1, school b) *Well, generally, I assess writing and reading skills.* (excerpt 1, school b)

The excerpts indicate that insufficient instructional time is a critical barrier to effective teaching and learning. Teachers struggle to cover the required content within the limited hours allocated, resulting in an inability to address all necessary topics comprehensively. For graduating classes, this issue is particularly pronounced, as there is insufficient time to adequately prepare students for State Examinations. While additional elective classes are offered to compensate, scheduling conflicts and competing subjects reduce their accessibility and impact. Consequently, teachers are forced to focus on completing the textbook and teaching essential grammar, with little to no opportunity to go beyond the basics or introduce interactive and enriching teaching methods. Teachers at school B are limited to covering only the basics, with little time to go beyond the textbook. The focus on basics due to time constraints can be seen as a limitation in fostering a well-rounded language proficiency.

The excerpts also highlight the significant challenges teachers face in developing students' comprehensive English language skills within the constraints of limited instructional time. Teachers note that it is unrealistic to expect students to master all four

language skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, under the current conditions. Speaking, in particular, is rarely taught due to the lack of time, with classes allocated only 3 hours per week, each lasting 40 minutes. This limited time forces teachers to prioritize specific skills, often at the expense of speaking and listening. Furthermore, the focus on grammar is largely driven by the requirements of the State Examination, which assesses students only on grammar knowledge and excludes other essential skills like speaking and listening. These constraints emphasize the systemic challenges of aligning curriculum goals with practical realities, highlighting the need for a more balanced and comprehensive approach to language instruction.

Finally, the excerpts indicate a strong emphasis on assessing writing, reading, vocabulary, and grammar skills in English instruction, with minimal focus on speaking and listening due to systemic and logistical challenges. Teachers highlight that limited instructional time makes it difficult to comprehensively assess all language skills, leading to speaking being largely neglected and assessed at a very minimal level. Writing and reading receive more frequent evaluations, reflecting the priorities of the curriculum and examination system. The state examination focuses heavily on vocabulary and grammar, which forces teachers to concentrate on these areas to align with assessment expectations. Additionally, resource constraints, such as the absence of audio equipment like CDs in some classes, further hinder the development and assessment of listening skills. Overall, the excerpts underscore how practical limitations and examination priorities shape teaching practices, often at the expense of a well-rounded approach to language skill development.

English textbook and its integration to the English curriculum

The excerpts from school A highlight several critical issues related to the integration and effectiveness of English textbooks within the curriculum. These concerns revolve around the mismatch between textbook content and student proficiency levels, inconsistencies in the material, and the resultant reliance on external resources. The following interpretation and analysis focus exclusively on school A's excerpts and explore the implications of the correlations between them.

> *We try to include all four skills equally. However, when we include listening skills and have students do listening exercises, they often don't match the students' level. They are either too long or too easy. When we search the internet, we can't find*

anything that fits the topic. So, when there's no other option, we use the listening exercises from the textbook. Some topics are easy, while others are unclear. The last topics in the 12th grade are completely incomprehensible. The students say, 'Teacher, we don't understand anything.' We end up just having them read the script. (excerpt 1, school a)

There are too many reading texts. They are not suited to the students' level. The reading texts are extremely long... The grammar rules are unclear. So, we look them up on the internet. We generally refer to the book for content. If we don't prepare ourselves beforehand, the textbook is difficult to use (excerpt 2, school a)

The textbook needs improvement. Do the people who write the textbooks even teach classes? Suddenly, there are words and grammar that are completely irrelevant to the students, and the content is often disjointed (excerpt 3, school a)

In the lesson plan, there's a section for reviewing new content. However, when teaching related lessons, completely different material often comes up. One tense is introduced, then another tense, and yet another tense all appear on the same page. (excerpt 4, school a)

The recurring issues of content mismatch, inconsistency, and the reliance on external resources imply that the current English textbooks are inadequately aligned with students' proficiency levels and the overall curriculum goals. These inadequacies frustrate teachers and hinder the effectiveness of language instruction, leading to fragmented learning experiences and potential gaps in student understanding.

Support for teacher's professional development

The excerpts reveal a complex picture where professional development initiatives are present but are often perceived as inadequate or poorly aligned with teachers' needs. The analysis highlights the gaps in support and the challenges faced by teachers in utilizing professional development opportunities effectively.

Generally, yes, there is interaction. The Institute for Teacher's Professional Development (ITPD) offers training programs for teachers' continuous professional development at 1, 5, 10, and 15-year intervals. We used to attend

> *them every year. Are they still happening now? However, the results were not effective. The accessibility was poor. It felt like they were repeating the same thing over and over. During the COVID period, the training was conducted online. The content was very poor.* (excerpt 1, school a)

This excerpt highlights the perceived ineffectiveness of professional development programs. Despite regular intervals of training provided by the ITPD, teachers feel that the content lacks variety and depth, often repeating the same information. The shift to online training during COVID-19 further diminished the quality, making it difficult for teachers to engage meaningfully with the material. Another excerpt emphasizes the disconnect between the theoretical nature of the training and the practical needs of teachers. The lack of practical methodologies in the professional development programs means that teachers are not gaining actionable strategies that can be implemented in their classrooms.

> *They don't teach good methodologies. It's all theoretical. There's nothing that would be useful or impactful in the workplace.* (excerpt 2, school a)

Access to professional development is limited, as highlighted in this excerpt. Only a small number of teachers can attend training sessions, often those with lighter teaching loads. This exclusionary practice means that not all teachers benefit from the training, leading to uneven professional growth across the faculty. It also places additional burdens on those who remain behind, potentially affecting the quality of instruction during the absence of their colleagues.

> *The school administration arranges for teachers to participate in training. However, out of 10 foreign language teachers, only 2 get to attend. They can't involve everyone. They send the two teachers with fewer classes, and the remaining teachers have to cover those classes, so it works out like that.* (excerpt 3, school a)

The excerpts from school B collectively highlight several significant implications regarding the state of professional development and its impact on teachers.

> *In general, if a teacher makes an effort, it can be applied. It varies, though. There are teachers who use what they have learned. It is helpful, helpful. I wouldn't say it's completely useless.* (excerpt 2, school b)

There is no involvement from the school administration. We don't receive any guidance or advice. We have to figure things out on our own. There is no instructional manager or knowledgeable leadership to give us guidance on how to implement the curriculum. The teachers have to do everything themselves (excerpt 1, school b)

When training is organized, they provide general information rather than detailed specifics. However, they do teach one or two engaging methods. Teachers are divided into groups, and often there are teachers who lack sufficient knowledge and can't grasp the material well. They talk among themselves, asking if others are doing it this way or that way. I think there should be more detailed training. It's not very practical. It would be better to have everything integrated: teacher's guidebook, learning objectives, textbooks, and conduct interactive lessons that are well connected and aligned. (excerpt 3, school b)

The Ministry of Education and the Education Department provide guides, references, and seminars. (excerpt 1 and 2, school b)

In school B, the correlation between the excerpts reveals a challenging environment where professional development opportunities exist but are often inadequately supported, lacking in practical application, and inconsistently accessed by teachers. Teachers report a lack of administrative support and guidance, leaving them to navigate the implementation of curriculum and training independently. The training content is often too general and lacks the practical detail needed for effective classroom application, which limits its utility. This disconnect between theory and practice, coupled with the absence of leadership support, hinders teachers' ability to fully benefit from professional development opportunities. The absence of administrative support compounds these issues, leaving teachers to apply what they have learned with little guidance.

In both school A and school B, teachers face significant challenges with professional development, though the issues manifest differently. In school A, the primary concerns revolve around the repetitive and theoretical nature of the training, limited access for all teachers, and the pressure to deliver results without adequate support. These factors contribute to a disconnect between the training provided and its practical application in the classroom. On the other hand, in school B, the challenges are

compounded by a lack of administrative support and guidance, leaving teachers to apply their training independently. The training content is often too general and lacks the practical relevance needed for effective classroom use. Both schools highlight the need for more accessible, practical, and supported professional development initiatives that are closely aligned with teachers' needs and classroom realities.

As a result of both quantitative and qualitative results, the challenges in implementing the upper-secondary English curriculum fall into three main categories: logistical, pedagogical, and professional as a result of both quantitative and qualitative findings. Teachers cited insufficient instructional hours as a major limitation. A significant proportion of teachers identified limited time for lesson planning (79.7%) and limited time to teach the content of the curriculum (M=3.44) as major challenges, underscoring the lack of time to effectively implement the curriculum. In the focus, limited instructional time was also consistently cited as a barrier, preventing teachers from covering all required skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). The focus was often restricted to grammar, reflecting a narrow implementation of the curriculum. Furthermore, tasks like planning based on students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes (61.0%) and designing activities for diverse needs (57.6%) were difficult for a majority of teachers, highlighting the practical challenges in adapting competency-based approaches to individual students. However, when it was further explored in the focus-group interviews, teachers mentioned their concerns about English textbooks being poorly aligned with students' proficiency levels, inconsistencies in the material, and the resultant reliance on external resources.

In quantitative data, teachers expressed that they potential disagreement that they have internal challenges including that they have limited knowledge in implementing the curriculum (M=2.64), they lack professional skills (M=2.27), they have low confidence in being able to implement the curriculum (M=2.20), and they believe their teaching methods are weak when it comes to implementing the English curriculum (M=2.39). Even they mentioned that they receive an average level of professional support from national organizations (M=3.29), schools (M=3.29), and provincial or district educational departments (M=3.19). However, in the qualitative data, teachers expressed dissatisfaction with professional development initiatives due to their repetitive, theoretical nature, and lack of practical relevance. Qualitative data further added that

training opportunities were limited to a small number of teachers, often those with fewer teaching responsibilities, leading to unequal professional growth. Other teachers had to cover for absent colleagues, creating additional workload burdens.

Finally, teachers feel moderately affected by insufficient materials and resources (M=3.08) in the quantitative findings. The result highlights that insufficient resources are a recognized barrier to curriculum implementation. It was further confirmed by focus-group interviews that they face a lack of resources such as printers, TVs, projectors, and audio equipment, forcing them to use personal equipment and compete for shared tools. Moreover, they reported the lack of consistent internet access in the school building and adequate and availability of classrooms. These resource limitations hinder interactive and collaborative learning, affecting teaching quality and student engagement.

5.3 Integration of the competency-based teaching practices

The questionnaire was collected from English teachers exploring the integration of competency-based teaching practices as illustrated in Table 17.

Table 17. Integration of the competency-based teaching practices

Dimension	#	Statements	n	*M*	*SD*
Demonstration of mastery of competencies	1	I provide examples and explanations to help students master each English skill and competency	59	4.19	.798
	2	I explain how each English skill and competency will be assessed	58	3.71	.899
Personalization	3	I encourage students to work in groups	58	3.74	.739
	4	I encourage students to work independently	59	3.78	.767
	5	I assist students who need additional help in mastering English skills and competencies	59	3.97	.765
Development of skills and dispositions	6	I provide advice to students when they encounter difficulties while learning something new	59	4.31	.623
	7	I recognize and understand when students need extra time during challenging tasks	59	4.14	.730
	8	If a student receives a poor grade, I offer help and support on how to improve	59	4.00	.670
	9	I explain and suggest different methods to help students acquire English skills and competencies	59	4.02	.799
Flexible assessment	10	I provide students with opportunities to speak in English during class	59	3.08	.836
	11	I assess students' skills and competencies through tests or exams	59	3.08	.624
	12	I evaluate students' written work (e.g., articles, essays, compositions, etc.)	59	2.97	.809
	13	I give students opportunities to present in English	58	2.53	.842
	14	I allow students to implement projects in English	58	2.16	.970

	15	I provide students with opportunities to practice listening exercises in English	59	3.20	.714
	16	I give students opportunities to practice reading exercises in English	58	3.57	.596

Note. Means for questions 1 to 9 are based on a 6-point scale: 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always, and 6 = Don't know (with the "Don't know" responses excluded from the calculation of the means). For questions 10 to 16, the means are based on a 5-point scale: 1 = Never, 2 = 1–2 times, 3 = 3–4 times, 4 = 5 or more times, and 5 = Don't know (with the "Don't know" responses excluded from the means).

The descriptive statistics on the integration of competency-based teaching practices reveal several notable trends in how English teachers in upper-secondary schools implement competency-based education. In the dimension of *demonstration of mastery of competencies*, teachers frequently provide examples and explanations to help students master English skills and competencies, with mean scores of 4.19 and 3.71, respectively. These relatively high mean values suggest that teachers are actively involved in demonstrating and explaining competencies, ensuring students understand how skills will be assessed. The moderate standard deviations indicate that these practices are fairly consistent across teachers, although there is slightly more variation in how assessments are explained.

The dimension of *personalization* also shows high engagement from teachers, as evidenced by mean scores of 3.74 for encouraging group work, 3.78 for promoting independent work, and 3.97 for providing additional support to students in need. These scores reflect a strong trend toward personalized instruction, with teachers actively supporting both collaborative and individualized learning approaches. The low standard deviations within this dimension suggest that these practices are uniformly applied, indicating a widespread commitment to addressing students' diverse needs.

In terms of the *development of skills and dispositions*, the data reveal that teachers place a strong emphasis on helping students develop resilience and persistence. This is demonstrated by high mean scores of 4.31 for offering advice during learning challenges, 4.14 for recognizing when students need extra time, and 4.00 for providing support after poor grades. These practices are consistently applied, as reflected by the low standard deviations, showing that most teachers prioritize creating a supportive learning environment that helps students build essential competencies.

The analysis of teacher responses regarding *flexible assessment* in English language learning within a CBE framework reveals a mix of strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers reported moderately high engagement in providing students with

opportunities to practice reading exercises in English (M = 3.57, SD = .596) and listening exercises (M = 3.20, SD = .714), suggesting a structured focus on these essential language skills. Similarly, the assessment of students' skills and competencies through tests or exams (M = 3.08, SD = .624) and opportunities to speak in English during class (M = 3.08, SD = .836) indicate that traditional evaluation methods remain prevalent. However, lower mean scores for opportunities to present in English (M = 2.53, SD = .842) and implement projects in English (M = 2.16, SD = .970) suggest that personalization and competency-based approaches are not consistently integrated into assessment practices. In a CBE system, diverse assessment strategies are crucial for allowing students to demonstrate mastery through various formats beyond conventional tests and written assignments (M = 2.97, SD = .809). The relatively lower emphasis on project-based learning and presentations implies that while teachers assess competencies, students may not always have flexible avenues to showcase their skills in ways that align with their learning preferences. These findings highlight an essential gap in CBE implementation: while teachers incorporate structured assessments, they may not fully leverage diverse, personalized assessment opportunities that align with competency-based principles. The variability in reported assessment practices suggests a need for professional development focused on expanding assessment literacy in CBE, emphasizing formative assessments, project-based learning, and oral communication skills. Ensuring that students have multiple ways to demonstrate their competencies is critical in fostering a more inclusive and effective CBE learning environment.

Table 18. “Don’t know” responses of English teachers

Dimension	#	Statements	n	%	Age	Years of experience
Demonstration of mastery of competencies	1	I explain how each English skill and competency will be assessed	1	1.7%	31-35	11-15
Personalization	2	I encourage students to work in groups	1	1.7%	26-30	6-10
Flexible assessment	3	I give students opportunities to present in English.	1	1.7%	Until 25	1st year
	4	I allow students to implement projects in English.	1	1.7%	31-35	2-5
	5	I give students opportunities to practice reading exercises in English.	1	1.7%	36-45	16-20

This table shows "Don't know" responses from English teachers regarding specific competency-based teaching practices, highlighting areas where a few teachers expressed

uncertainty. Although each statement received only 1.7% "Don't know" responses, these instances are noteworthy. In the demonstration of mastery of the competencies dimension, a teacher aged 31–35 with 11–15 years of experience was unsure about explaining assessment criteria, suggesting that even experienced teachers may lack confidence in communicating assessment processes effectively. In the personalization dimension, another teacher aged 26–30 with 6–10 years of experience reported uncertainty about encouraging group work, possibly indicating a gap in familiarity with collaborative learning methods or challenges in implementing such approaches.

In the flexible assessment dimension, three items received "Don't know" responses from teachers of varying ages and experience levels. These responses included a teacher under 25 with less than one year of experience who was unsure about providing presentation opportunities, a teacher aged 31–35 with 2–5 years of experience who expressed uncertainty about implementing projects, and a teacher aged 36–45 with 16–20 years of experience who was uncertain about providing reading practice. This variation across age and experience suggests that some teachers may lack clarity or confidence in using flexible assessment methods, which could stem from limited training or difficulty in adapting assessments to competency-based goals. These responses highlight a potential need for targeted professional development, especially in flexible assessment and group work strategies, to support teachers in consistently integrating competency-based practices across classrooms.

The analysis of Table 19 focuses on the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test for the integration of competency-based teaching practices across four locations: Ulaanbaatar, Zavkhan, Govi-Altai, and Bayankhongor. Geographic differences can shape teachers' and students' experiences due to variations in resources, infrastructure, and policy enforcement, making spatial analysis crucial for understanding systemic inequalities (Bryman, 2016). Thus, further analysis was conducted by location to explore the differences between urban and rural areas.

Table 19. Result of Kruskal-Wallis H for integration of the competency-based teaching practices by location

	Location	n	*M*	*SD*	Mean Rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	df	Asymp. Sig.
Demonstration of mastery of competencies	Ulaanbaatar	11	3.82	.717	26.45	5.211	3	.157
	Zavkhan	15	4.23	.678	36.63			
	Govi-Altai	15	3.73	.530	23.57			
	Bayankhongor	17	4.00	.637	30.41			
Personalization	Ulaanbaatar	11	3.82	.584	31.18	.938	3	.816
	Zavkhan	15	3.87	.639	30.47			
	Govi-Altai	15	3.87	.433	30.97			
	Bayankhongor	17	3.73	.377	26.26			
Development of skills and dispositions	Ulaanbaatar	11	3.89	.809	25.27	1.848	3	.605
	Zavkhan	15	4.22	.399	32.70			
	Govi-Altai	16	4.22	.375	32.69			
	Bayankhongor	17	4.07	.564	28.15			
Flexible assessment	Ulaanbaatar	10	2.90	.543	27.30	8.601	3	.035*
	Zavkhan	15	2.84	.461	24.27			
	Govi-Altai	14	3.29	.404	39.32			
	Bayankhongor	17	2.83	.496	24.03			

Note. $*p < 0.05$

For the demonstration of mastery of competencies, the mean scores range from 3.73 (Govi-Altai) to 4.23 (Zavkhan) with mean ranks from 23.57 (Govi-Altai) to 36.63 (Zavkhan), indicating generally positive perceptions across locations. The Kruskal-Wallis H test (H = 5.211, p = .157) shows no statistically significant differences, suggesting that this practice is applied consistently across all regions.

For personalization, the mean scores range from 3.73 (Bayankhongor) to 3.87 (Zavkhan and Govi-Altai) and mean ranks vary between 26.26 (Bayankhongor) and 31.18 (Ulaanbaatar). The Kruskal-Wallis H test (H = 0.938, p = .816) confirms no significant differences, reflecting a consistent implementation of personalized teaching practices across locations.

For the development of skills and dispositions, high mean scores are observed across all locations, ranging from 3.89 (Ulaanbaatar) to 4.22 (Zavkhan and Govi-Altai), with mean ranks spanning 25.27 (Ulaanbaatar) to 32.70 (Zavkhan). The Kruskal-Wallis H test (H = 1.848, p = .605) indicates no statistically significant differences, reflecting consistent integration of these practices across regions without significant variation.

However, flexible assessment demonstrates variability across locations, with mean scores ranging from 2.83 (Bayankhongor) to 3.29 (Govi-Altai). Govi-Altai shows

the highest mean rank (39.32), indicating more frequent implementation of flexible assessment practices in this region. In contrast, regions like Bayankhongor (mean rank = 24.03) and Zavkhan report lower usage. Govi-Altai had the highest mean rank (39.32), while Bayankhongor had one of the lowest (24.03), indicating that participants in Govi-Altai rated flexible assessment more favorably. The Kruskal-Wallis H test (H=8.601, p = .035) reveals a statistically significant difference. A pairwise post-hoc test, as shown in Table 20, was conducted to determine which specific province pairs had significant differences. The adjusted significance values using the Bonferroni correction are considered to control for multiple comparisons.

Table 20. Result of post-hoc test for flexible assessment dimension by location

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons by location	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Asymp. Sig.
Baynkhongor vs. Zavkhan	.237	5.745	.041	.967	1.000
Baynkhongor vs. Ulaanbaatar	3.271	6.463	.506	.613	1.000
Baynkhongor vs. Govi-Altai	15.292	5.853	2.613	.009*	.054*
Zavkhan vs. Ulaanbaatar	3.033	6.621	.458	.647	1.000
Zavkhan vs. Govi-Altai	-15.055	6.027	-2.498	.012	.075
Ulaanbaatar vs. Govi-Altai	-12.021	6.715	-1.790	.073	.440

Note. $*p < 0.05$

Post-hoc analysis does not reveal strong significant differences between specific province pairs after adjusting for multiple comparisons. However, Bayankhongor vs. Govi-Altai shows a marginal difference (p = 0.054), suggesting a possible meaningful but not statistically strong difference in flexible assessment perceptions between these two provinces.

Overall, the results indicate that while demonstration of mastery, personalization, and skill development are implemented consistently across locations, flexible assessment practices vary significantly. However, after Kruskal-Wallis H, post-hoc test was conducted for flexible assessment dimension and it did not reveal strong significant differences between specific province pairs except Bayankhongor vs. Govi-Altai province paris. According to mean rank, Govi-Altai exhibits favorably higher integration of flexible assessments, while other regions, such as Bayankhongor and Zavkhan, demonstrate weaker implementation. These findings highlight the need for targeted strategies to enhance the adoption of flexible assessment practices in certain regions to ensure a balanced approach to competency-based education.

Table 21 reflects the attention English teachers give to the development of various language skills among students, as perceived by English teachers, across five dimensions: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar use. Enhancing students' language skills is a fundamental goal in teaching English, making this analysis particularly important.

Table 21. Teacher's attentiveness for the development of language skills (n=59)

Dimension	*M*	*SD*
Listening skill	3.82	.3941
Speaking skill	3.69	.5577
Reading skill	3.78	.6336
Writing skill	3.66	.5423
Use of grammar	4.13	.5749

Note. Means are based on a 5-point scale: 1 = Very poorly attentive, 2=Poorly attentive, 3=Average, 4=Attentive, 5=Very attentive

Among the language skills, the use of grammar receives the highest attention from teachers, with a mean of 4.13 (SD = .5749). This suggests that teachers prioritize grammar in their instruction, possibly due to its foundational role in mastering English structure and accuracy. Listening skill also receives significant attention, with a mean of 3.82 (SD = .394), indicating that teachers place considerable emphasis on developing students' receptive abilities, which are essential for overall language comprehension. Reading skill (M = 3.78, SD = .6336) and speaking skill (M = 3.69, SD = .5577) follow closely, suggesting that teachers are also fairly attentive to helping students develop these skills, though perhaps slightly less than grammar and listening. Finally, Writing skill has the lowest mean score (M = 3.66, SD = .5423), although it is still within the "attentive" range. This lower score may reflect the inherent challenges of teaching writing or a slightly lesser focus compared to other skills. These findings indicate that English teachers tend to focus most on grammar and listening skills, possibly viewing them as foundational. However, speaking and writing, crucial productive skills for language use, receive slightly less attention, which may suggest an area for enhanced instructional focus to support balanced language development in students.

The analysis by location is essential to understanding contextual variations in instructional practices, as regional differences in resources, professional development opportunities, and policy implementation influence teaching effectiveness (Borg, 2017). Thus, Table 22 provides insights into English teachers' attentiveness to different language

skills across various locations, including Ulaanbaatar, Zavkhan, Govi-Altai, and Bayankhongor. Teachers' attentiveness was rated on a 5-point scale, with higher values indicating more focus on each skill.

Table 22. Teacher's attentiveness of the development of language skills by location

Language skills	Location	n	*M*	*SD*	Mean Rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	df	Asymp. Sig.
Listening skill	Ulaanbaatar	11	3.88	.5107	32.77	.512	3	.916
	Zavkhan	15	3.87	.4543	30.13			
	Govi-Altai	16	3.74	.3858	28.06			
	Bayankhongor	17	3.81	.2619	29.91			
Speaking skill	Ulaanbaatar	11	4.03	.6779	38.73	3.95	3	.267
	Zavkhan	15	3.69	.6029	29.73			
	Govi-Altai	16	3.53	.5153	25.91			
	Bayankhongor	17	3.63	.4037	28.44			
Reading skill	Ulaanbaatar	11	3.99	.4253	35.27	4.64	3	.200
	Zavkhan	15	3.93	.7384	35.47			
	Govi-Altai	16	3.55	.7042	25.34			
	Bayankhongor	17	3.70	.5402	26.15			
Writing skill	Ulaanbaatar	11	3.97	.5849	39.64	6.09	3	.107
	Zavkhan	15	3.68	.6623	30.80			
	Govi-Altai	16	3.60	.5070	29.56			
	Bayankhongor	17	3.49	.3575	23.47			
Use of grammar	Ulaanbaatar	11	4.39	.5103	36.05	4.63	3	.201
	Zavkhan	15	4.25	.5279	32.87			
	Govi-Altai	16	3.85	.5659	22.81			
	Bayankhongor	17	4.11	.5928	30.32			

Note. $*p < 0.05$

The means and standard deviations reveal that attentiveness is generally high across all regions, particularly for the use of grammar, which has the highest mean scores, ranging from 3.85 in Govi-Altai to 4.39 in Ulaanbaatar. This suggests a strong, consistent emphasis on grammar instruction across locations. Listening skills also receive substantial attention, with mean scores ranging from 3.74 in Govi-Altai to 3.88 in Ulaanbaatar, and low standard deviations indicating consistency among teachers. Speaking skills receive the highest attention in Ulaanbaatar (M = 4.03), whereas Govi-Altai shows slightly lower attentiveness (M = 3.53). Reading skill attentiveness is similarly high, especially in Ulaanbaatar (M = 3.99) and Zavkhan (M = 3.93), while Govi-Altai again shows a somewhat lower mean (M = 3.55). Writing skills are prioritized most in Ulaanbaatar (M = 3.97) and least in Bayankhongor (M = 3.49), with moderate standard deviations indicating some variability in focus across regions.

The Kruskal-Wallis H test results indicate no statistically significant differences across locations for any of the language skills, as all p-values exceed the .05 threshold. For instance, attentiveness to listening skills shows an H value of .512 with a p-value of .916, signifying no significant regional variation. Similarly, speaking skill (H = 3.95, p = .267), reading skill (H = 4.64, p = .200), and writing skill (H = 6.09, p = .107) do not exhibit significant differences across locations. Even for grammar, which has the highest overall mean attentiveness, there is no significant regional difference (H = 4.63, p = .201). These findings suggest that English teachers in Ulaanbaatar, Zavkhan, Govi-Altai, and Bayankhongor generally exhibit a consistent approach to developing language skills, with no notable disparities in focus among the regions. While minor differences exist, such as higher attentiveness to speaking and writing skills in Ulaanbaatar, the overall uniformity indicates a shared emphasis on foundational language skills, particularly grammar and listening, across the regions studied. This consistency could reflect a standardized approach to English instruction across these locations.

This section presents qualitative results. As a result of the focus-group data analysis, several themes emerged. The results are presented in the following sub-sections of teacher-centred vs student-centred, lack of real-life application, and assessment.

Teacher-centred vs Student-centred

It is noteworthy to mention that focus group interviews were collected from two schools. The school A consists of young teachers who are experienced 0-5 years. The school B consists of more experienced teachers who have 10-20 years of experiences. Depending on the experiences, the teachers' responses varied. The alternation between teacher-centered and student-centered approaches appears to be influenced by the teachers' experience levels and the specific goals of the lessons. The alternation between teacher-centered and student-centered approaches is influenced by the teachers' experience levels and the specific goals of the lessons. Less experienced teachers are more likely to experiment with and integrate student-centered methods, while more experienced teachers may prioritize teacher-centered approaches to ensure thorough content coverage and efficient use of time.

> *Generally, it alternates. It depends on what lesson is being taught and what the goal is. There are three hours of lessons per week. Because of the limited time, the lessons alternate. Naturally, there is a need to teach new material. When we*

constantly focus on being learner-centered, new content tends to get left out. (excerpt 1, school a)

The excerpt highlights the pragmatic approach teachers take in balancing teacher-centered and student-centered methods. The decision to alternate between approaches is driven by the lesson objectives and the need to cover new content efficiently. The limited instructional time necessitates a teacher-centered approach to ensure that essential material is taught, even if this means reducing the focus on student-centered activities that may promote deeper understanding but require more time.

Generally, lessons are conducted in groups. For example, when teaching three new grammar rules, the students are divided into three groups. The students discuss the grammar together and then come up to explain them to the rest of the class. This way, the grammar becomes more understandable. However, if the teacher doesn't provide additional guidance, letting the students do it on their own tends to be less effective. (excerpt 2, school a)

This excerpt illustrates an attempt to incorporate student-centered learning through group work. Students take an active role in discussing and teaching grammar to their peers, which can enhance understanding.

On the other hand, the excerpts from school B emphasize the constraints imposed by limited instructional time, which force teachers to adopt a predominantly teacher-centered approach. The pressure to complete the curriculum within the available time leaves little room for student-centered activities. Teachers focus on delivering the necessary grammar instruction efficiently, often at the expense of more interactive or exploratory learning methods.

Teachers don't have any extra time to go beyond the basics. We barely manage to finish the school year with the textbook. We primarily focus on teaching the day's grammar and finish there. We conduct their lessons within the three hours available and don't delve into anything extra. (excerpt 1, school b)

The second excerpt further added that

We barely manage to cover one or two units by the end. We rush from one grammar rule to the next and then finish. (excerpt 2, school b)

The interviewer clarified whether the teachers do not use a student-centred approach, in response:

Generally, the approach is teacher-centered, but in my case, I mostly explain the grammar and then let the students complete the rest on their own. So, which approach is centered here? (excerpt 1, school b)

This excerpt highlights how teacher experience plays a critical role in the selection of instructional methods. Less experienced teachers might feel more comfortable blending student-centered and teacher-centered approaches, using student activities to reinforce lessons after initial instruction. In contrast, more experienced teachers may rely more heavily on teacher-centered methods to ensure comprehensive content coverage, particularly when under time constraints or when dealing with complex material.

Lack of real-life application

Teachers noted that the skills being taught do not adequately prepare students for the practical use of the English language, which is a fundamental objective of CBE.

It's unrealistic to expect that students will develop all four language skills after learning English in school. Speaking, in particular, won't happen. (excerpt 4, school a)

It is too academic [theoretical]. There is very little practical aspect. (excerpt 2, school b)

These excerpts highlight the perceived failure of the curriculum to bridge the gap between academic learning and practical application. Teachers are concerned that students are not being equipped with the competencies necessary to use English effectively outside of the classroom, which is a key tenet of CBE.

They [aims and objectives of the English curriculum] are understandable to some extent. However, there are shortcomings. The goals do not equip students with the skills they will need in the future. (excerpt 2, school a)

This statement highlights that, while the goals of the English curriculum are understandable, they have significant shortcomings. Specifically, it points out that the goals fail to equip students with skills that are useful or applicable in their future lives. This directly reflects a lack of focus on real-life application, as the curriculum doesn't prepare students for practical usage of English in their personal or professional futures.

It [English curriculum] is weak in terms of being applicable to the students' future lives. (excerpt 4, school a)

This excerpt explicitly states that the curriculum is weak in terms of being applicable to the students' future lives. It underscores the deficiency in connecting what students learn with how they can use that knowledge in real-world scenarios, reinforcing the theme of the lack of real-life application.

Both excerpts emphasize that the English curriculum fails to prepare students for practical, real-life situations. The curriculum's goals do not align with the skills students will need in their future, particularly in terms of using English in real-world contexts. The lack of emphasis on real-life application suggests that while the curriculum might be academically sound, it is not sufficiently grounded in the practical needs of students, which is a significant concern for their future readiness.

This analysis reveals a critical gap in the curriculum, indicating that improvement may be necessary to make English education more relevant and useful for students' everyday lives and future careers.

Assessment

The thematic analysis reveals that there is a lack of clarity in the assessment criteria, leading to teachers relying on their own judgment rather than standardized goals and objectives. Teachers expressed this ambiguity and stated in the following.

> *It is unclear. Generally, we do the evaluation ourselves. We assess and evaluate the child based on what we perceive the child's understanding and the content to be, rather than strictly following the goals and objectives, which I think are difficult to grasp. However, it is also presented in a rather peculiar way. When you look at it, the wording is difficult to understand in terms of language. It's only later, after thinking about it, that you realize, 'Oh, that's what it meant.'.* (excerpt 3, school b)

This excerpt illustrates how the unclear and complex nature of the assessment criteria causes teachers to depend on personal perceptions, which may result in subjective and inconsistent evaluations. This variability is further reflected in excerpts 2 and 1 from school B, where there is a clear preference for assessing writing and reading skills over speaking, indicating a possible misalignment with comprehensive language learning goals.

I try to assess all of the student's skills. Speaking is very minimal. The speaking skill makes up a very small portion. Writing and reading skills are tested more extensively. (excerpt 2, school b)

Well, generally, I assess writing and reading skills. (excerpt 1, school b)

These excerpts indicate a predominant focus on assessing writing and reading skills, with minimal attention to speaking skills. This focus might suggest that oral competencies are undervalued in the assessment process.

Moreover, excerpt 1 from school A demonstrates a creative approach to assessment by incorporating presentations, aligning with CBL and CBE principles.

Some of the content is assessed through tests. If there is too much grammar, we test that part. If the topic is more interesting, for example, if it's about carnivores or herbivores, students can choose their favorite animal and give a presentation about it. We try to make the lessons interesting this way and then include that in the assessment. Right now, when we're asked to submit our assessment criteria and documents, we replace them with these activities. We substitute the paper-based test results with the grades from the presentations. Even though it may seem like we're using tests, we actually assess them based on the presentation scores, because we believe it's more beneficial for the students. (excerpt 1, school a)

It suggests that teachers are using creative and flexible approaches in their assessments, such as substituting traditional tests with presentations. This method allows for a more engaging and possibly more effective evaluation of student learning. However, this flexibility could also lead to inconsistencies in how student performance is measured, as the methods vary from the traditional testing approach.

Furthermore, teachers expressed that implementing the prescribed curriculum assessment criteria is challenging, primarily due to time constraints and resource limitations.

It's generally quite difficult. For example, when it comes to developing listening skills, some classes don't even have a CD. (excerpt 1, school b)

Very little. (excerpt 2, school b)

We try to cover the topic, but we can't manage to fit everything in. There isn't enough time. With limited time, it's difficult to assess everything. (excerpt 2, school a)

The excerpts suggest that while teachers are attempting to adapt assessments to better reflect student competencies, inconsistencies in criteria, an overemphasis on certain skills, and practical challenges limit the effectiveness of these assessments. This situation forces teachers to prioritize certain skills (like reading and writing) over others (like speaking and listening), which could result in an incomplete evaluation of students' overall language competencies.

As a result of both quantitative and qualitative results, the integration of competency-based teaching practices by English teachers varies across multiple dimensions, influenced by factors such as teacher experience, resource availability, and regional disparities. Quantitative findings reveal that teachers frequently employ practices that demonstrate mastery of competencies, such as providing examples and explanations to help students understand and master English skills (M = 4.19). Personalization is also a significant focus, with teachers encouraging group work (M = 3.74) and supporting students needing additional help (M = 3.97). However, flexible assessment methods, including presentations (M = 2.53) and project-based learning (M = 2.16), are less frequently implemented, reflecting a reliance on traditional assessment methods. Qualitative results provide additional context to these findings. Teachers alternate between teacher-centered and student-centered approaches depending on their experience levels and lesson objectives. Less experienced teachers are more inclined to experiment with student-centered methods, such as group work and discussions, while experienced teachers favor teacher-centered approaches for efficient content coverage, particularly under time constraints.

Both quantitative and qualitative findings highlight significant challenges in aligning the curriculum with real-life applications of English. While grammar and listening receive considerable attention (M = 4.13 and M = 3.82, respectively), speaking (M = 3.69) and writing (M = 3.66) are comparatively less emphasized. Teachers expressed concerns that the curriculum remains overly theoretical, failing to equip students with practical language skills needed for real-world contexts. This disconnect between academic objectives and practical competencies is a critical limitation. Assessment practices further illustrate inconsistencies. Quantitative data indicate a preference for traditional assessments, while qualitative insights reveal that ambiguous assessment criteria often lead teachers to rely on traditional evaluations. Some teachers

integrate creative approaches, such as presentations, but these efforts usually tend to be constrained by limited resources and instructional time.

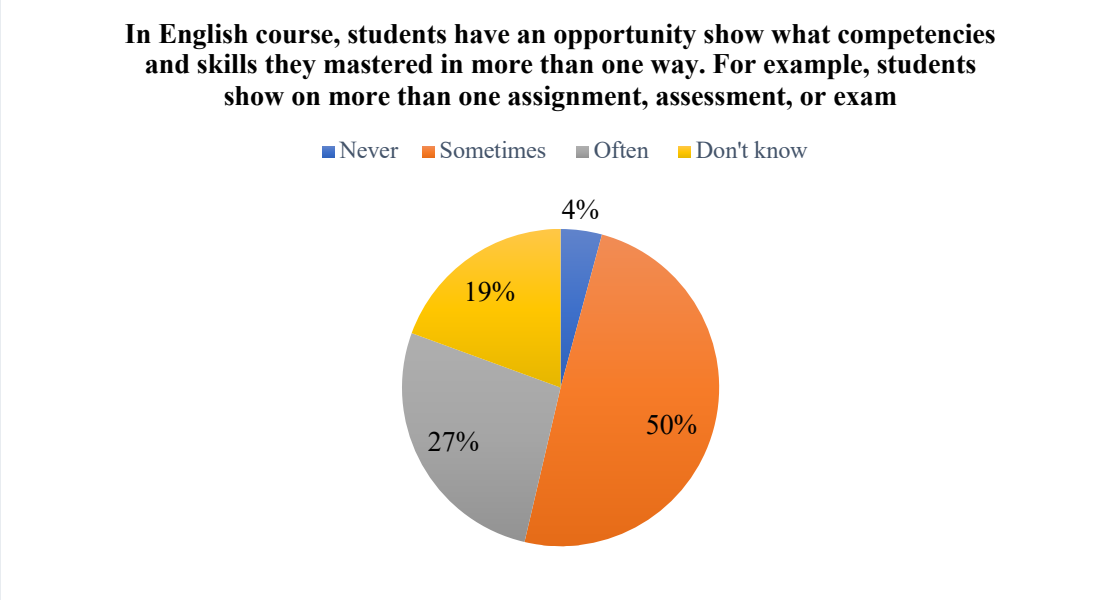
Regional disparities are evident, particularly in the use of flexible assessments. Quantitative findings show that teachers in Govi-Altai employ these methods more frequently than those in Bayankhongor and Zavkhan. Nevertheless, qualitative data confirm that teachers face challenges, such as inadequate instructional materials and insufficient time, which hinder the broader implementation of competency-based practices.

In conclusion, while English teachers demonstrate significant engagement in competency-based practices such as demonstrating competencies and personalizing instruction, their reliance on traditional assessments and limited focus on practical applications highlight areas for improvement.

5.4 Perception of the students on the rationale behind practices in English courses that reflect key elements of competency-based learning

In this sub-section, the study explored student's perception of competency-based learning. Figure 11 illustrates the result of quantitative data.

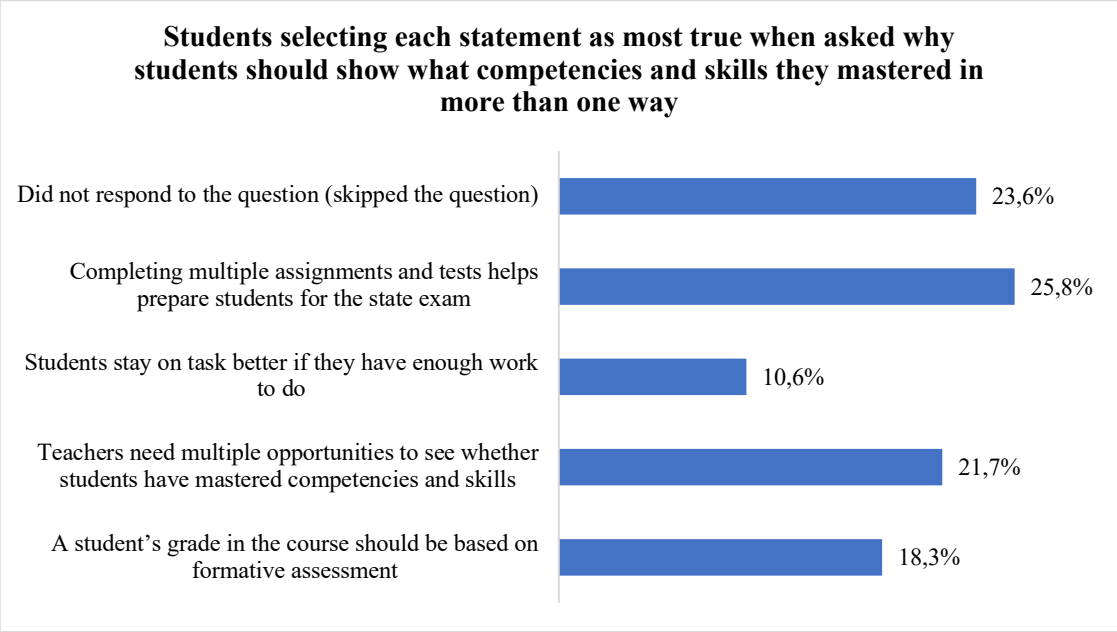
Figure 11. Demonstrating competency through multiple assignments (n=360)



A core tenet of competency-based learning is allowing students to demonstrate their mastery of competencies in multiple ways. When asked whether they had opportunities to show what they had learned through various assessments (such as assignments, exams,

and projects), nearly half of the students (50%) reported that they "sometimes" encountered this option, while 27% indicated they "often" had these opportunities. A smaller group (4%) noted they "never" experienced this, and a notable 19% were uncertain, responding with "don't know." This distribution suggests that while multiple methods for demonstrating competency exist, they may not be uniformly or consistently implemented across all English courses.

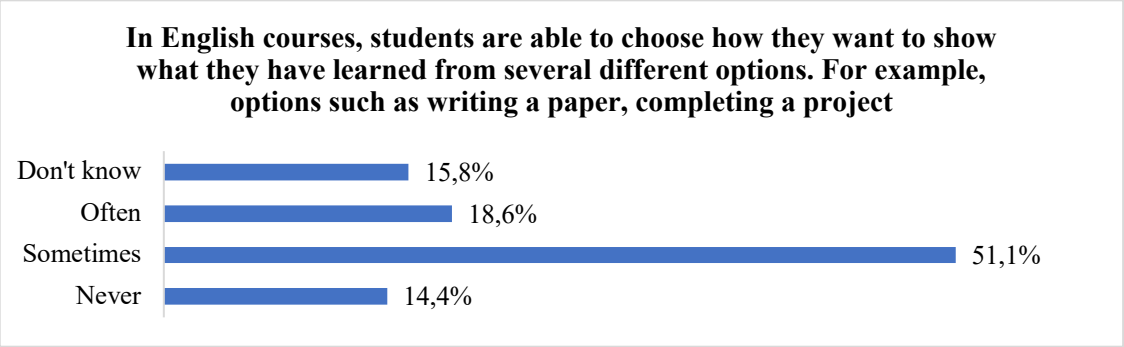
Figure 12. Demonstrating competency through multiple assignments (n=360)



Students were further asked to select the statement they felt best explained the purpose of demonstrating competencies in multiple ways. The most frequently selected reason was that completing multiple assignments and tests helps prepare students for state exams (25.8%), followed closely by the belief that teachers require multiple opportunities to accurately gauge students' competencies and skills (21.7%). Additionally, 18.3% of students indicated that multiple assessments are formative, providing a basis for course grades. However, 23.6% of students skipped the question, signaling that a significant portion of students might not fully grasp the rationale behind multiple assessment opportunities, possibly due to unclear communication on the purpose of competency-based assessments.

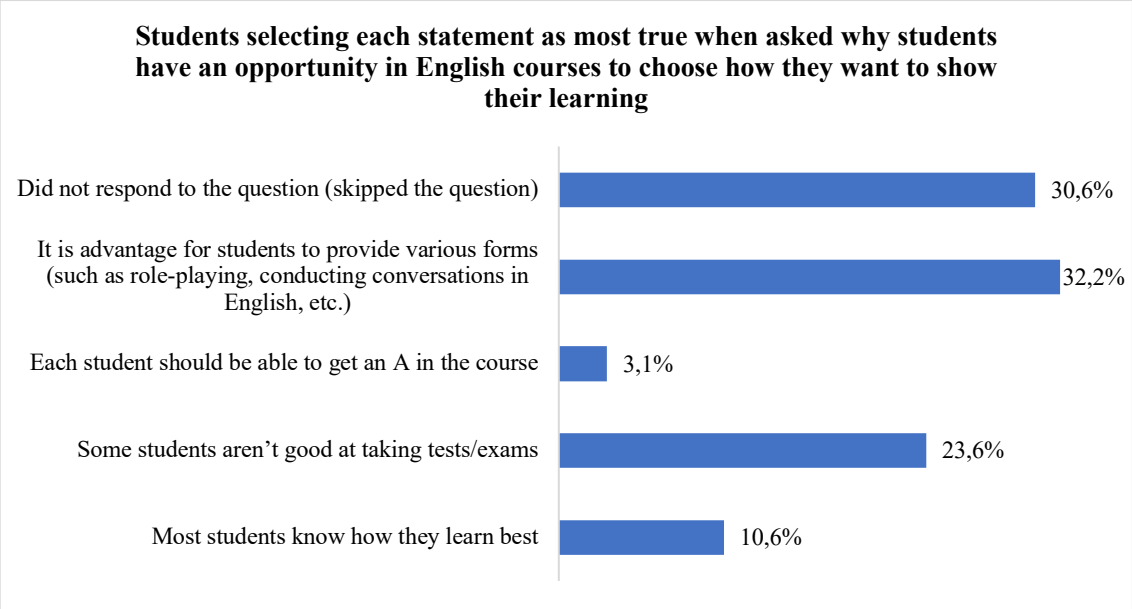
The research explored flexible assessment practices in English courses, examining students' opinions of the assessments. Figure 13 shows the findings of the flexible assessments.

Figure 13. Flexibility in assessment for students (n=360)



The competency-based model emphasizes allowing students to choose from multiple options to demonstrate their learning. In response to whether they were provided with choices such as completing a project, writing a paper, or taking a test, a majority (51.1%) of students stated they "sometimes" had these options, with 18.6% reporting "often," while 14.4% indicated "never." Another 15.8% of students responded "don't know," which suggests that although some flexibility exists, it may not be consistently offered or explicitly communicated to all students.

Figure 14. Flexibility in assessment for students (n=360)

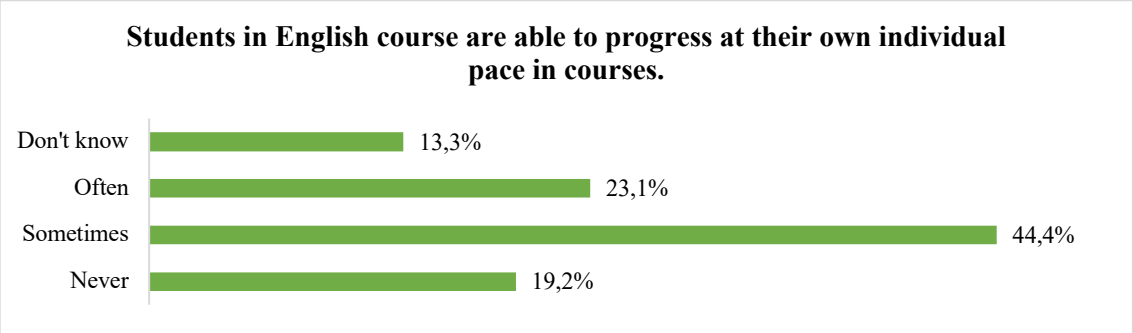


Further examination of students' beliefs about assessment choice showed that a plurality (32.2%) valued diverse assessment forms (e.g., role-playing, conducting conversations) as advantageous for learning English. Others believed that flexibility was helpful for students who struggle with traditional assessments, such as exams (23.6%). Nonetheless, a significant portion (30.6%) skipped this question, suggesting that not all students may

recognize or understand the benefits of having varied assessment options. This lack of awareness highlights an opportunity for educators to enhance communication regarding the purpose and advantages of flexible assessment.

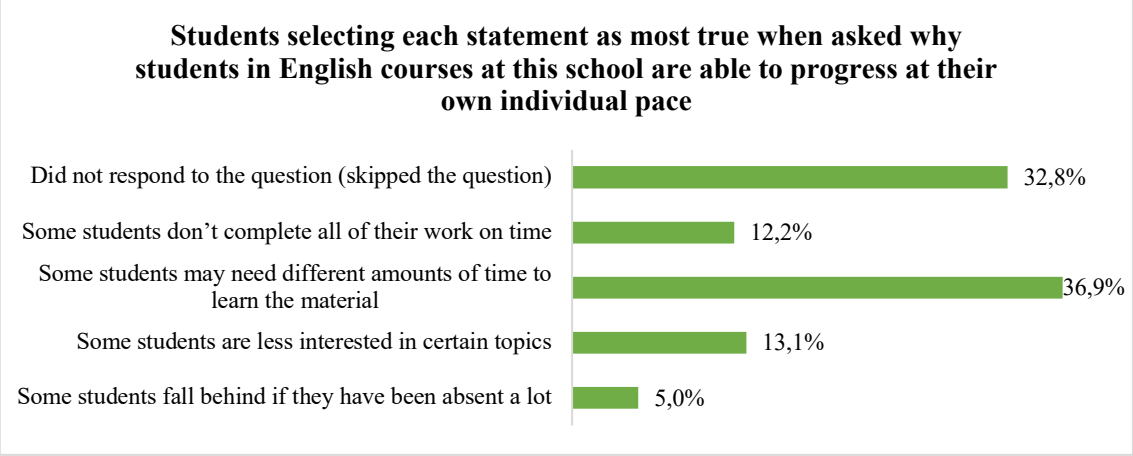
Competency-based learning often includes self-paced learning, allowing students to progress individually as they master each competency. Figure 15 presents the findings on self-paced learning practices among students, highlighting their perceptions of independent progress in English courses.

Figure 15. Self-paced learning (n=360)



In English courses, 44.4% of students reported they "sometimes" had the option to progress at their own pace, while 23.1% indicated "often" and 19.2% noted "never." Additionally, 13.3% of students responded "don't know," pointing to a partial application of self-paced learning within the English course.

Figure 16. Self-paced learning (n=360)

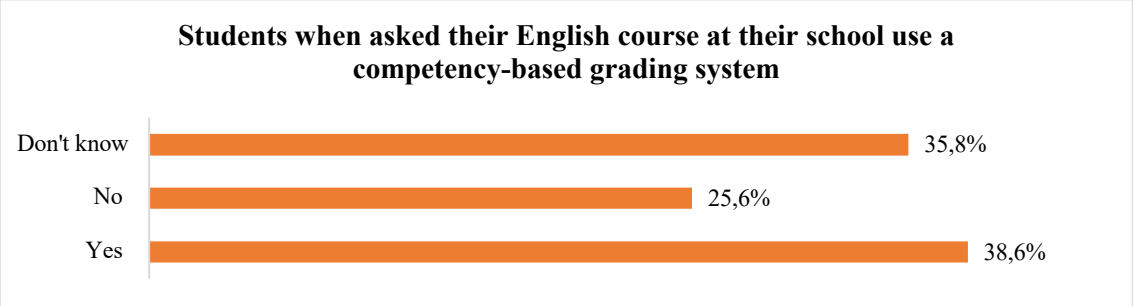


When students were asked why self-paced learning might be offered, the most common response (36.9%) was that different students require varying amounts of time to master

material. However, 32.8% of students skipped the question, implying a gap in understanding of self-paced learning's purpose. These findings suggest that, while individualized pacing is partially integrated, further clarification and communication around self-paced learning may improve students' understanding and utilization of this approach.

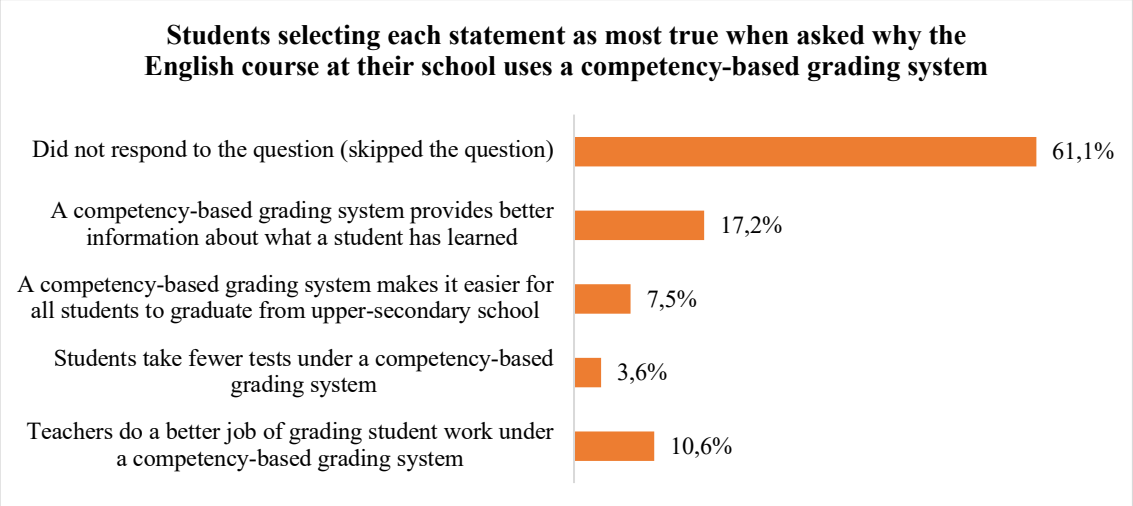
Competency-based grading, a key component of the competency-based model, is intended to provide students with a clear and accurate assessment of their learning progress based on mastery rather than time spent. Figure 17 presents the findings on competency-based grading, highlighting students' experiences and perceptions of assessment practices in their English courses.

Figure 17. Competency-based grading (n=360)



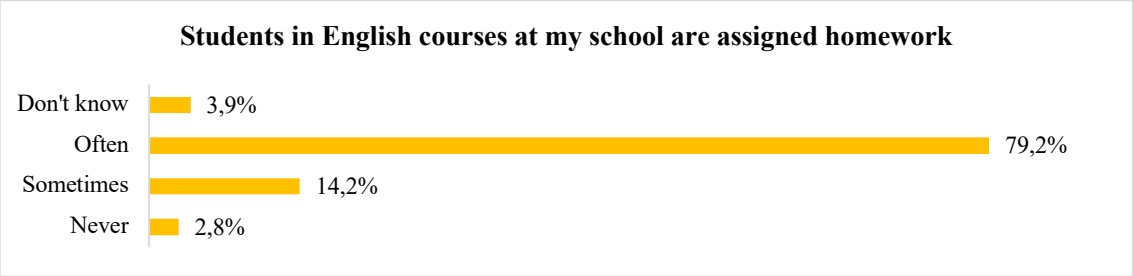
When students were asked if their English courses used a competency-based grading system, 38.6% of students responded "yes," while 35.8% were uncertain. This uncertainty may reflect a lack of clear communication regarding grading policies or an inconsistent application of the grading system across classes.

Figure 18. Competency-based grading (n=360)



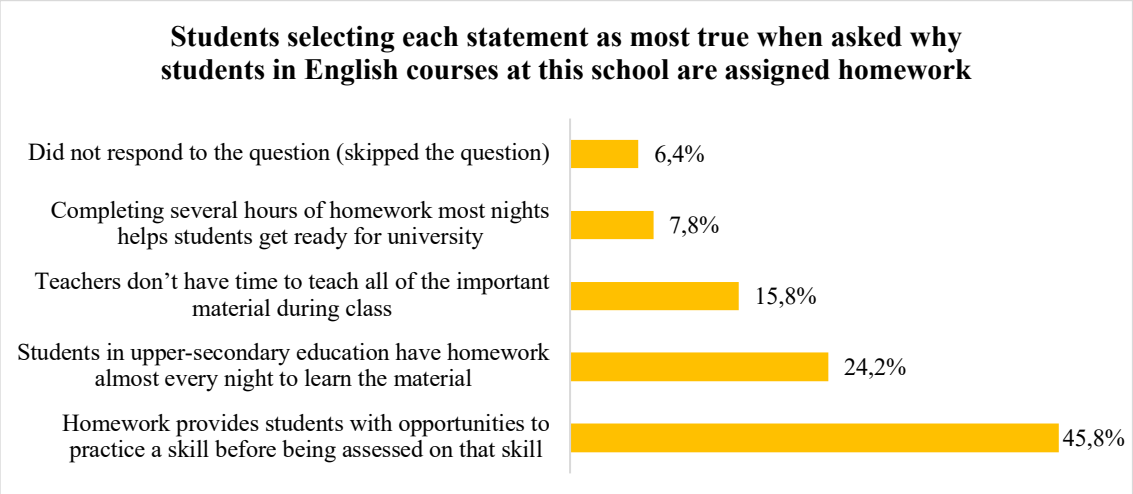
Students were further asked to identify the purpose of competency-based grading. Among those who responded, 17.2% believed it provided better information about what a student has learned, while smaller portions viewed it as helping teachers grade more effectively (10.6%) or reducing the number of tests (3.6%). A substantial 61.1% of students skipped this question, suggesting that the rationale for competency-based grading may not be widely understood among students, thereby limiting its intended impact. This points to a need for educators to more explicitly communicate the goals and benefits of competency-based grading to ensure students understand how it supports their learning.

Figure 19. Role of homework in learning (n=360)



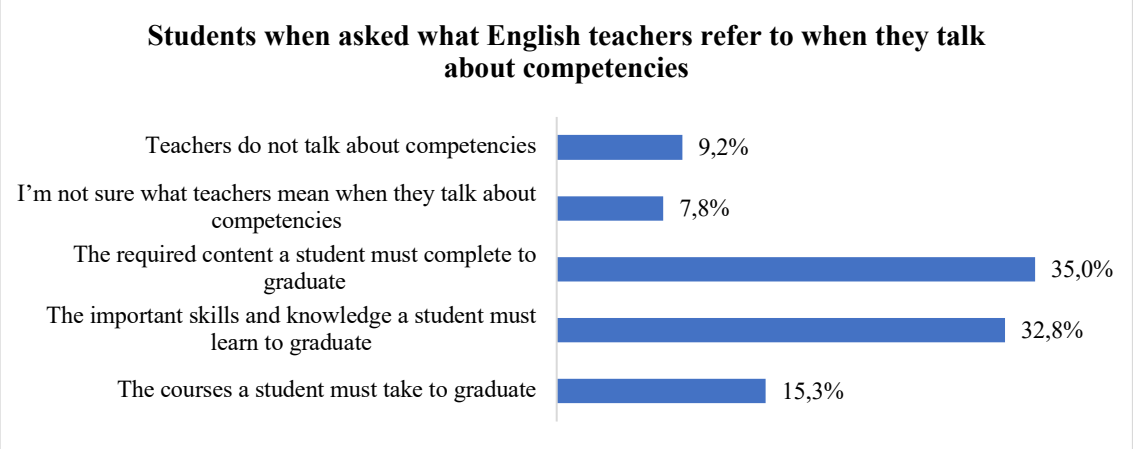
Homework was reported as a consistent element of English courses, with 79.2% of students indicating that homework was "often" assigned, and 14.2% noting "sometimes." Only a small proportion (2.8%) reported that homework was "never" assigned. These results suggest that homework remains a central part of the English course, potentially reflecting a more traditional approach within the competency-based framework.

Figure 20. Role of homework in learning (n=360)



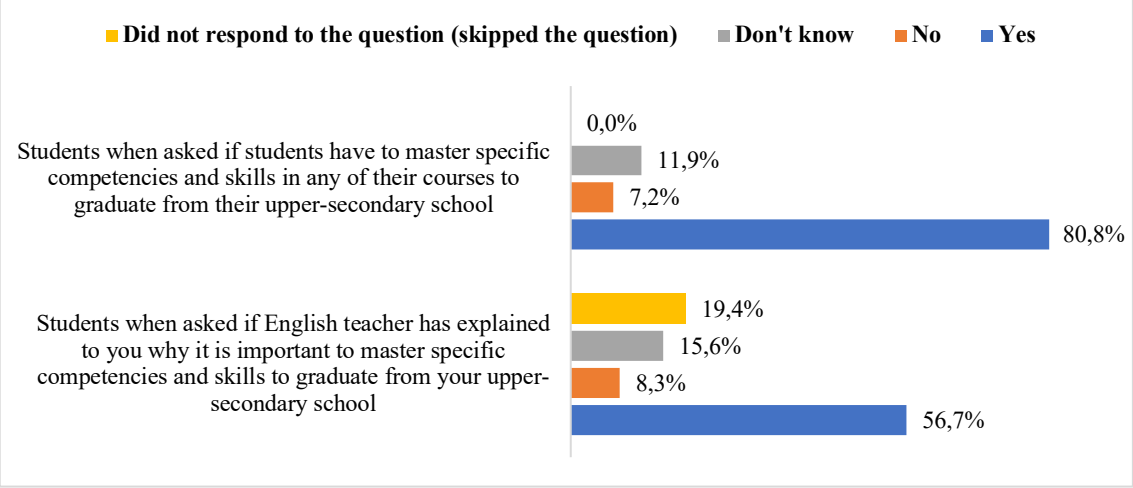
When students were further asked why they believed homework was assigned, 45.8% of students viewed it as an opportunity to practice skills before assessment, aligning with competency-based goals. Additionally, 24.2% noted that regular homework is necessary for content mastery. These responses indicate that students generally view homework as a reinforcement tool, although their understanding primarily aligns with traditional instructional methods rather than exclusively competency-based principles.

Figure 21. Explanation of competency mastery (n=360)



To assess students' understanding of competencies, students were asked what *competencies* refer to in their English courses. Responses were mixed. 35.0% associated competencies with required content, and 32.8% with essential skills and knowledge necessary for graduation. A smaller group (7.8%) was uncertain, while 9.2% reported that teachers do not discuss competencies.

Figure 22. Explanation of competency mastery (n=360)



Despite these mixed interpretations, 80.8% of students recognized the importance of mastering competencies to graduate, although 11.9% were uncertain. These results

suggest that, while students have a general awareness of competency requirements, their understanding of the term *competencies* and its specific applications remains varied. A lack of consistency in terminology across English courses may contribute to this confusion, underscoring the need for a more standardized approach to discussing and defining competencies within the curriculum. Finally, over half of the students (56.7%) reported that their English teachers had explained the importance of mastering competencies to graduate. However, 15.6% were unsure, and 19.4% skipped this question, indicating that a portion of the student body may not fully understand the role of competencies in their academic progression. These findings point to the importance of teacher-student dialogue in reinforcing the relevance of competency-based learning.

To complement and enhance the quantitative findings, focus group interviews were conducted, providing deeper insights into students' interpretations of competency-based learning concepts. The qualitative data explored students' perceptions of competency-based learning, revealing a lack of understanding of CBL.

Lack of understanding of competency-based learning

In examining the responses of students regarding their understanding of competency-based learning, a recurring pattern emerges across different schools. Many students demonstrate a partial or incomplete understanding of the concept, often equating competencies with basic language skills or general abilities required for communication.

> *I understand [competency] as speaking skill and reading skill. I understand it as the four language skills.* (excerpt 1, school a)
>
> *Reading and writing skills* (excerpt 5, school b)

The simplistic interpretation suggests that students may not have been exposed to a more holistic view of competency, which aligns with CBE and CBLT frameworks. Both frameworks emphasize not only mastering discrete skills but also being able to apply those skills in authentic settings. The responses suggest a gap between curriculum goals and students' understanding of the intended learning outcomes. Further highlighting this gap, students in school A expressed that they have "no understanding of [curriculum]." This lack of awareness regarding curriculum goals, which should outline the competencies students are expected to develop, may contribute to their limited understanding of competency-based education.

In school B, while some students expand their definition of competency beyond language skills, their interpretations remain limited. For instance, students refer to competencies as:

Skills needed for going abroad (excerpt 2, school b)

The ability to communicate with others (excerpt 3, school b)

Basic skills (excerpt 6, school b)

Essential skills to master (excerpt 1, school b)

Skills that should be mastered (excerpt 4, school b)

Although these definitions touch on more functional aspects of language use, they still reflect a narrow understanding of what competency-based education aims to achieve.

A student from school B also connects competencies with societal interaction, stating that:

The ability to communicate with people in society (excerpt 8, school b)

While this response aligns more closely with the goals of competency-based learning, it still lacks depth. CBE and CBLT emphasize not just communication but also the ability to engage in meaningful, context-appropriate exchanges that require higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills.

The synthesis examines how qualitative findings enhance the understanding of quantitative data regarding students' perceptions of CBL practices in English courses. It highlights key areas where the curriculum's intended goals and students' experiences align or diverge, offering insights into the implementation and communication of CBL principles.

The quantitative results highlight significant variability in the implementation and understanding of CBL elements. For instance, while 49.4% of students indicated they "sometimes" had opportunities to demonstrate their competencies through multiple assessments, only 26.9% reported such opportunities "often." Furthermore, 19.4% expressed uncertainty, reflecting inconsistent application and communication of this principle across classes. Similarly, flexibility in assessment was reported by 51.1% as being offered "sometimes," but only 18.6% experienced this "often." This is supported by the qualitative findings, which reveal that many students equate competencies with basic language skills, such as reading, writing, and speaking, rather than a more holistic and applied understanding of competencies emphasized by CBL frameworks. While

some students recognized the importance of societal interaction and practical application, their definitions often lacked depth, indicating a gap between curriculum goals and students' understanding.

Self-paced learning, another key component of CBL, was reported as being available "sometimes" by 44.4% of students, with 23.1% indicating "often." However, 13.3% were unsure, mirroring the qualitative observation that students lack clarity regarding CBL objectives and practices. The qualitative data suggest that this confusion may stem from limited teacher communication about curriculum goals, with students in some schools admitting they had "no understanding" of the curriculum's purpose. Moreover, while 56.7% of students reported their teachers had explained the importance of mastering competencies, a significant minority either did not recall such discussions or were unsure.

Competency-based grading also revealed gaps in understanding. While 38.6% of students recognized its use, 35.8% were uncertain, reflecting inconsistent communication. The qualitative results further illustrate this challenge, as students reported that assessment criteria often appeared vague, leaving them reliant on teachers' subjective judgment rather than standardized measures. Nonetheless, some students appreciated diverse assessment formats, such as presentations, aligning with competency-based principles. However, both data sets suggest that such practices are inconsistently applied and not always recognized by students as integral to CBL.

Homework emerged as a traditional yet central component of English courses, with 79.2% of students reporting its frequent assignments. Quantitative findings suggest that students view homework as an opportunity to practice skills before assessment, a perspective aligning with CBL principles. However, the qualitative insights reveal that students often fail to connect these tasks with broader competency objectives, instead perceiving them as routine exercises for content mastery.

In conclusion, the synthesis underscores a critical gap between the theoretical objectives of competency-based learning and students’ perceptions and experiences. While certain CBL principles, such as multiple assessments and self-paced learning, are partially implemented, their inconsistent application and limited communication hinder students' understanding.

5.5 Exposure of students to the key elements of competency-based learning

In this section, the study explored students' exposure to the key elements of competency-based learning through quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative result is shown below. Following that qualitative result is provided.

In the quantitative data, Table 23 provides insights into students' exposure to four key elements of competency-based learning in English courses: demonstration of mastery, development of skills and dispositions, personalization, and flexible assessment. Each element reflects varying degrees of student engagement and instructional practices, highlighting areas where CBL principles are either effectively implemented or may require improvement.

Table 23. Exposure to the key elements of the competency-based learning (n=360)

Dimension	#	Statements	n	*M*	*SD*	Don't know	
						n	%
Exposure to demonstration of mastery of competencies	1	I understand how the competencies and skills of my English courses will help me in the future	351	4.13	1.084	9	2.5%
	2	My English teacher explains each competency and skill by sharing excellent examples	348	3.58	1.201	12	3.3%
	3	My English teacher let me know how each competency and skill will be assessed or graded	342	3.29	1.217	18	5%
Exposure to development of skills and dispositions	4	When I have trouble learning something new, my English teacher gives me advice	352	3.26	1.260	8	2.2%
	5	When I face difficulties in learning, the teacher notices and recognizes that I need extra time.	347	2.80	1.225	13	3.6%
	6	If I get a low score on an assessment, my English teacher helps and supports me on how to improve.	354	3.19	1.290	6	1.7%
	7	The teacher explains and suggests strategies to help me acquire English skills and competencies.	348	3.23	1.301	12	3.3%
Exposure to personalization	8	All students work on the same assignment at the same time	357	3.81	1.219	3	0.8%
	9	My English teacher spends most of class time giving a lecture to the whole class	351	2.60	1.001	9	2.5%
	10	My English teacher works with students in small groups or individually	348	2.70	1.138	12	3.3%
	11	My English teacher notices if I need extra help	346	2.98	1.257	14	3.9%
	12	My English teacher teaches the same content in several different ways in order to help students learn	344	3.21	1.281	16	4.4%
	13	My English teacher supports and advises how I am making progress in each competency and skill	320	2.42	.989	40	11.1%
	14	My English teacher gives me written feedback on my assignment	329	2.60	1.029	31	8.6%

	15	I have had opportunities to choose how to show my English teacher what I have learned (For example, writing essays and compositions)	322	2.48	1.024	38	10.6%
Exposure to flexible assessment	16	I get the opportunity to speak in English to demonstrate what I have learned in English class.	334	2.50	1.016	26	7.2%
	17	I take tests or exams to show what I have learned	350	3.09	.893	10	2.8%
	18	I get the opportunity to show my written work to the teacher to demonstrate what I have learned in English (e.g., articles, essays, compositions, etc.).	337	2.79	1.053	23	6.4%
	19	I give presentations to show what I have learned	332	1.85	.930	28	7.8%
	20	I have implement a project in English course to show what I have learned	329	1.71	.941	31	8.6%
	21	I get the opportunity to do listening exercises in English and have them assessed to demonstrate what I have learned.	335	2.48	1.043	25	6.9%
	22	I get the opportunity to do reading exercises in English and have them assessed to demonstrate what I have learned.	342	2.82	1.027	18	5%

Note. Means for questions 1 to 12 are based on a 6-point scale: 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always, and 6 = Don't know (with the "Don't know" responses excluded from the calculation of the means). For statements 13 to 22, the means are based on a 5-point scale: 1 = Never, 2 = 1–2 times, 3 = 3–4 times, 4 = 5 or more times, and 5 = Don't know (with the "Don't know" responses excluded from the means).

Exposure to demonstration of mastery of competencies: This dimension explores students' exposure to an explanation of the competencies and how to demonstrate progress toward mastery of competencies. A high mean score of 4.13 indicates that most students understand how competencies in English related to their future, with only 2.5% "don't know". This suggests effective communication on the long-term value of these competencies. Teachers share exemplary work to illustrate competencies (M=3.58), though 3.3% of students reported they "don't know," indicating that while examples are generally provided, some students may benefit from more explicit demonstrations. With a mean of 3.29, students reported that teachers inform them of the assessment criteria for each competency. However, 5% of students expressed uncertainty, suggesting a need for clearer communication on how competencies are evaluated. Students reported understanding the relevance of competencies, with most recognizing how their skills apply to future goals. However, clarity on assessment criteria for competencies varies, suggesting that clearer guidelines on evaluation methods could enhance understanding and engagement with competency-based learning.

Exposure to development of skills and dispositions: This dimension explores student's exposure to opportunities to develop skills and dispositions and exposure to CBE teaching and learning. The mean score of 3.26 indicates that teachers generally provide advice when students struggle, although some students (2.2%) remain unsure about receiving this support. English teachers' recognition of students needing extra time scored lower (M=2.80), with 3.6% indicating "don't know." This suggests that while some support is provided, consistent recognition of individual learning needs may be lacking. English teachers appear to offer guidance on improving after poor performance (M=3.19), yet 1.7% of students are uncertain. This points to an opportunity for teachers to more actively support students in skill development after setbacks. These results indicate moderate exposure to skill development support, though additional personalized attention to students struggling with course content could enhance the learning experience. Students generally receive guidance when facing challenges, but the recognition of individual learning needs and consistent support after low scores are limited. Addressing these gaps with more individualized attention could help students build confidence and resilience in their learning journey.

Exposure to personalization: This dimension explores student's exposure to personalized instruction and learning opportunities. The high mean (3.81) for all students working on the same assignment indicates limited personalization in assignment types, with only 0.8% reporting uncertainty. Additionally, a relatively low score (M=2.60) for time spent in small groups or individual sessions suggests that whole-class lectures remain a predominant teaching method, with 2.5% reporting "don't know". Furthermore, the students expressed that small group or individualized work is seldomly applied (M=2.70). When asked whether their English teacher notices when they need extra help, students reported an average score of 2.98 (SD = 1.257), indicating a neutral to slightly positive perception. However, the relatively high standard deviation suggests that students' experiences vary significantly, some feel supported, while others do not. Regarding whether English teachers teach the same content in different ways to support learning, students provided a slightly higher mean score of 3.21 (SD = 1.281). This suggests that some level of differentiated instruction is present, but not consistently applied across all classrooms. The lowest-rated aspect of personalization was whether teachers support and advise students on their progress in each competency and skill, which received a mean score of 2.42 (SD = 0.989). This result indicates that students feel

there is insufficient individualized guidance in tracking and developing their competencies. Additionally, 11.1% of students were uncertain, which suggests that teachers' feedback on progress is either unclear or inconsistent. Similarly, written feedback on assignments received a moderate mean score of 2.60 (SD = 1.029), indicating that while some students receive feedback, it may not be frequent or detailed enough to support personalized learning effectively. Notably, 8.6% of students expressed uncertainty, suggesting that written feedback is not consistently provided or recognized as useful. Finally, when asked whether they had opportunities to choose how to demonstrate their learning, students reported a mean score of 2.48 (SD = 1.024). This suggests that student agency in assessment is limited, with only a moderate level of choice in expressing their learning, such as through writing essays or other methods. A relatively high 10.6% of students were unsure, possibly indicating that options for assessment are not explicitly applied in the classroom. The findings here indicate that while some personalization efforts are present, traditional whole-class instruction and a lack of frequent, individualized feedback limit the extent of personalization experienced by students. The predominance of uniform assignments and whole-class lectures indicates limited personalization. Additionally, lower scores for personalized feedback and choice suggest that students could benefit from more varied and individualized learning opportunities to meet diverse needs.

Exposure to flexible assessment: This dimension encompasses various ways for students to demonstrate learning beyond traditional exams. Opportunities for speaking and writing exercises scored moderately (M=2.50 and M=2.79, respectively), with a small portion (7.2% and 6.4%) uncertain, suggesting that while these assessments are used, their frequency could be increased to provide diverse assessment experiences. The mean scores for giving presentations (M=1.85) and implementing projects (M=1.71) were notably low, indicating limited exposure to these forms of assessment. Additionally, 7.8% and 8.6% of students were unsure, respectively, indicating that these practices may not be widely or clearly incorporated into the curriculum. The exposure to listening (M=2.48) and reading exercises (M=2.82) was moderate, suggesting that while these exercises are present, they may not be consistently emphasized. The results for flexible assessment indicate that students have limited opportunities to engage in alternative forms of assessment, with traditional written and oral exercises being more common. Expanding

assessment types to include more project-based and presentation opportunities could encourage diverse expressions of competency.

An additional investigation was conducted to examine the competency-based learning dimensions across different provinces. Variations in school infrastructure, digital access, and socio-economic conditions can create disparities in how students experience competency-based approaches, impacting their learning outcomes and perceptions (Vincent-Lancrin et al., 2019). Therefore, the province-by-province analysis aimed to provide a more nuanced understanding of regional variations within the CBL framework. These findings are illustrated in Table 24, which presents a detailed comparison of students' exposure to key elements of CBE in upper-secondary English courses across four distinct locations in Mongolia: Ulaanbaatar, Zavkhan, Govi-Altai, and Bayankhongor.

Table 24. Exposure to the key elements of the competency-based learning by location (n=360)

The key elements of CBE	Statements	Location				Chi-square Test			Phi		Cramer's V	
		Ulaanbaatar, n=173, (%)	Zavkhan, n=64, (%)	Govi-altai, n=61, (%)	Bayankhongor, n=62, (%)	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Value	Approximate Significance	Value	Approximate Significance
Exposure to demonstration of mastery of competencies	Never	6.9	0.0	3.3	0.0	44.2	15	<.001*	.351	<.001	.202	<.001
	Seldom	19.1	0.0	9.8	12.9							
	Sometimes	34.1	26.6	32.8	37.1							
	Often	28.9	42.2	42.6	37.1							
	Always	11.0	29.7	9.8	12.9							
	Don't know	0.0	1.6	1.6	0.0							
Exposure to development of skills and dispositions	Never	22.0	0.0	3.3	16.1	55.8	15	<.001*	.394	<.001	.227	<.001
	Seldom	30.6	7.8	23.0	22.6							
	Sometimes	28.9	42.2	34.4	30.6							
	Often	12.7	32.8	26.2	22.6							
	Always	5.2	17.2	13.1	8.1							
	Don't know	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0							
Exposure to personalization	Never	16.4	5.0	6.5	12.9	48.6	12	<.001*	.368	<.001	.212	<.001
	Seldom	24.9	12.8	20.9	23.8							
	Sometimes	25.0	27.5	29.5	27.4							
	Often	19.1	25.6	22.6	16.4							
	Always	12.2	25.9	16.3	14.8							
	Don't know	2.0	3.1	3.9	4.5							

	Never	20.8	1.6	11.5	17.7	46.3	12	<.001*	.359	<.001	.207	<.001
	1-2 times	45.7	21.9	39.3	22.6							
	3-4 times	26.6	59.4	37.7	43.5							
	5 or more times	5.8	17.2	9.8	14.5							
	Don't know	1.2	0.0	1.6	1.6							
Exposure to flexible assessment	Never	22.5	1.6	11.5	17.7	29.6	12	.003*	.287	.003	.166	.003
	1-2 times	50.9	57.8	49.2	56.5							
	3-4 times	18.5	35.9	36.1	21.0							
	5 or more times	5.2	4.7	3.3	4.8							
	Don't know	2.9	0.0	0.0	0.0							

*Note.*p < 0.05*

Exposure to demonstration of mastery: Students in the Ulaanbaatar capital show moderate exposure to demonstrating mastery, with 34.1% experiencing it "sometimes" and 28.9% "often". However, only 11.0% report "always" encountering these opportunities. Notably, 6.9% reported "never," indicating some inconsistency within the capital itself. Students in Zavkhan have higher exposure, with 42.2% experiencing demonstration of mastery "often" and 29.7% "always", showing a strong emphasis on this aspect of CBE. On the other hand, students in Govi-Altai and Bayankhongor provinces report similar trends, with 42.6% and 37.1% experiencing it "often", and fewer reporting "always" (9.8% in Govi-Altai and 12.9% in Bayankhongor). The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 44.2$, $p < .001$) indicates a significant difference across locations, with provincial students, particularly in Zavkhan, experiencing more consistent opportunities for mastery demonstration than those in Ulaanbaatar. These findings suggest that students outside of Ulaanbaatar, particularly in Zavkhan, may have more consistent opportunities to demonstrate mastery in alignment with CBE principles, whereas those in Ulaanbaatar experience less frequent engagement. The effect measure test was conducted after the Chi-square test to measure the strength of the association between location and students' exposure to the demonstration of mastery. The effect size results, Phi ($\Phi = .351$, $p < .001$) and Cramér's V ($V = .202$, $p < .001$), indicate a moderate relationship between students' exposure to the demonstration of mastery of competencies and their location. This suggests that regional differences have a noticeable impact on how often students experience competency-based learning. However, while the association is statistically significant, it is not particularly strong. This means that although location influences students' learning experiences, other factors are also likely to play an important role in shaping these outcomes.

Exposure to development of skills and dispositions: The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 55.8$, $p < .001$) reveals there are significant regional differences. A large percentage of students in Ulaanbaatar (22%) reported "never" receiving support in developing skills and dispositions, with an additional 30.6% experiencing it "seldom". Only 5.2% reported "always" receiving this support. This highlights a limited exposure to the development of skills beyond content knowledge in Ulaanbaatar. Students in Zavkhan reported the highest levels of skill development support, with 42.2% experiencing it "sometimes" and 17.2% "always". This suggests a more robust approach to developing students' skills and dispositions in Zavkhan. Govi-Altai and Bayankhongor regions had moderate exposure, with 34.4% of Govi-Altai students and 30.6% of Bayankhongor students reporting "sometimes" receiving support, while a smaller percentage in each region (13.1% in Govi-Altai and 8.1% in Bayankhongor) reported "always". The findings indicate a stronger emphasis on skill development in Zavkhan compared to Ulaanbaatar, where students experience less frequent support, potentially impacting their readiness to develop essential competencies. The effect size results indicate a moderate relationship between students' exposure to skill development and their region. The Phi coefficient ($\Phi = .394$, $p < .001$) suggests that location has a meaningful influence on how often students engage in competency-based learning. Similarly, Cramer's V ($V = .227$, $p < .001$) confirms a moderate effect, showing that regional differences play an important role in shaping students' learning experiences. While the chi-square test confirms that these differences are statistically significant, the effect size values suggest that they are not only due to the sample size but also reflect real variations in educational experiences. This implies that factors such as teaching practices, resource availability, and local policies may contribute to differences in how students develop skills across regions.

Exposure to personalization: Significant differences were found across regions ($\chi^2 = 48.6$, $p < .001$). Personalization appears limited in Ulaanbaatar, with 16.4% reporting "never" experiencing it and 24.9% reporting "seldom". Only 12.2% reported "always" having personalized support, indicating restricted access to individualized learning. Zavkhan had the highest percentage of students (25.9%) who reported "always" experiencing personalization, with an additional 25.6% reporting it "often". This indicates a strong commitment to personalized learning in this region. Students in Govi-Altai and Bayankhongor had mixed experiences, with 16.3% and 14.8%, respectively, reporting "always" experiencing personalized instruction. These results demonstrate that

Zavkhan is more aligned with CBE principles in offering personalized learning experiences, while Ulaanbaatar shows limited application of this practice. The effect size measures, Phi (φ) and Cramer's V, were conducted to determine the strength of the relationship between location and students' exposure to personalization in CBE, beyond statistical significance. In the first analysis on general exposure, Phi (φ) = .368, $p < .001$, and Cramer's V = .212, $p < .001$, suggesting that while there is a statistically significant difference across locations, the strength of this relationship is moderate. Similarly, in the second analysis on the frequency of exposure, Phi (φ) = .359, $p < .001$, and Cramer's V = .207, $p < .001$, confirming that location has a noticeable but moderate influence on how often students experience personalization. These findings indicate that while location plays a role in shaping students' experiences with personalized learning, other factors may also contribute to these differences.

Exposure to flexible assessment: Flexible assessment, which offers diverse methods for students to demonstrate learning, showed significant differences by location ($\chi^2 = 29.6$, $p = .003$). Students in Ulaanbaatar had the lowest exposure to flexible assessment methods, with 22.5% reporting "never" experiencing it and 50.9% reporting it only 1-2 times. Only 5.2% experienced it 5 or more times, suggesting limited access to varied assessment opportunities. Students in Zavkhan and Govi-Altai reported more frequent flexible assessment, with 35.9% in Zavkhan and 36.1% in Govi-Altai experiencing it 3-4 times. This indicates more frequent use of alternative assessment methods in these regions. Bayankhongor displayed moderate results, with 56.5% experiencing flexible assessments 1-2 times and 21.0% experiencing them 3-4 times, suggesting a middle ground between Ulaanbaatar's limited exposure and Zavkhan's more frequent use. These findings reveal that students in Zavkhan and Govi-Altai are more likely to encounter diverse assessment types, while those in Ulaanbaatar have fewer opportunities, which may limit their ability to demonstrate competencies in varied ways. The effect size measures show a moderate relationship between location and how often students experience flexible assessment. The effect size test was conducted to determine the strength of the association between these variables beyond statistical significance. The Phi coefficient (φ) = 0.287, $p = .003$ indicates that while the difference between regions is statistically significant, the strength of this relationship is not very strong. Similarly, Cramer's V = 0.166, $p = .003$ suggests that location has an influence on students' exposure to flexible assessment, but other factors may also play a role. These results imply that

while regional differences matter, aspects such as teacher training, resource availability, and curriculum implementation may also contribute to the variation in students' experiences.

Additionally, the study investigates the exposure to the key elements of CBL across different grade levels. This analysis aims to reveal any grade-specific variations in students' engagement with essential CBL components, providing insights into how CBL principles are implemented and experienced at each educational stage. Disparities between grades might indicate inconsistencies in instructional practices, resource allocation, or teacher preparedness, signaling areas for targeted intervention (Bailey & Jakicic, 2017). These insights could inform future professional development for teachers and guide curriculum refinements to ensure equitable exposure to CBL across all grade levels. The findings are illustrated in Table 25.

Table 25. Exposure to the key elements of the competency-based learning by grade (n=360)

Dimensions	Statements	Grade			Chi-square Test			Phi		Cramer's V	
		10th grade (n=142)	11th grade (n=111)	12th grade (n=107)	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Value	Approximate Significance	Value	Approximate Significance
Exposure to demonstration of mastery of competencies	Never	7.0%	0.9%	2.8%	21.2	10	.019*	.243	.019	.172	.019
	Seldom	17.6%	14.4%	5.6%							
	Sometimes	33.1%	33.3%	32.7%							
	Often	28.2%	33.3%	45.8%							
	Always	14.1%	17.1%	12.1%							
	Don't know	0.0%	0.9%	0.9%							
Exposure to development of skills and dispositions	Never	21.1%	11.7%	6.5%	47.6	10	<.001*	.364	<.001	.257	<.001
	Seldom	31.7%	29.7%	7.5%							
	Sometimes	23.2%	32.4%	44.9%							
	Often	14.1%	17.1%	31.8%							
	Always	9.2%	9.0%	9.3%							
	Don't know	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%							
Exposure to personalization	Never	18.3%	11.4%	4.7%	27.6	8	<.001*	.277	<.001	.196	<.001
	Seldom	23.9%	23.1%	18.1%							
	Sometimes	24.6%	27.6%	28.4%							
	Often	16.3%	16.0%	30.5%							
	Always	13.4%	18.6%	16.3%							
	Don't know	3.4%	3.4%	2.1%							

	Never	20.4%	11.7%	12.1%	13.1	8	.106	.191	.106	.135	.106
	1-2 times	38.0%	42.3%	28.0%							
	3-4 times	32.4%	33.3%	47.7%							
	5 or more times	7.7%	11.7%	11.2%							
	Don't know	1.4%	0.9%	0.9%							
Exposure to flexible assessment	Never	21.8%	13.5%	11.2%	10.5	8	.228	.171	.228	.121	.228
	1-2 times	53.5%	52.3%	52.3%							
	3-4 times	19.0%	27.0%	30.8%							
	5 or more times	3.5%	6.3%	4.7%							
	Don't know	2.1%	0.9%	0.9%							

*Note.*p < 0.05*

Exposure to demonstration of mastery of competencies: The analysis reveals significant differences in exposure to demonstrating mastery of competencies across grades ($\chi^2 = 21.2$, $p = .019$). In the 10th grade, students report less frequent exposure to opportunities for demonstrating mastery. About 7.0% indicated they "never" had these opportunities, and 17.6% reported "seldom". However, a smaller percentage (14.1%) indicated "always", suggesting that exposure to mastery demonstrations may be limited for younger students. Exposure increases slightly in the 11th grade, with 33.3% of students experiencing mastery opportunities "often", and 17.1% reporting "always". This indicates a progression in exposure as students advance, with more consistent integration of CBL principles in the English course. Students in the 12th grade report the highest frequency of mastery demonstrations, with 45.8% indicating "often" and a lower proportion (12.1%) reporting "always". This trend suggests that the curriculum may increasingly emphasize demonstration of mastery as students approach graduation, reinforcing CBL principles in the final year of upper-secondary education, where students in higher grades experience more frequent opportunities to demonstrate competency mastery, likely in preparation for graduation requirements. The effect size test was conducted to determine the strength of the relationship between grade level and students' exposure to the demonstration of competency mastery, beyond just statistical significance. The Phi coefficient is 0.243, and Cramer's V is 0.172, both with a significance level of 0.019, indicating a small to moderate relationship. This means that while there is a statistically significant difference in exposure across grades, the strength of this relationship is not very strong. Other factors, such as teaching methods, school resources, or curriculum implementation, may also influence students' experiences with competency-based learning.

Exposure to development of skills and dispositions: A significant variation in exposure to the development of skills and dispositions is observed across grades ($\chi^2 =$

47.6, $p < .001$). Students in 10th grade report limited exposure to skill development support, with 21.1% indicating they “never” received such support and 31.7% reporting “seldom”. Only 9.2% of 10th grade students reported “always” receiving support, suggesting that skill development may not be a major focus in the early years of upper-secondary English education. Exposure improves in the 11th grade, with 32.4% indicating they receive skill development support “sometimes” and 17.1% “often”. This progression suggests an incremental increase in focus on skills as students advance. In the 12th grade, students report the highest levels of skill development exposure, with 44.9% experiencing it “sometimes” and 31.8% “often”. The findings imply that skill development support intensifies in the later grades, reflecting a curriculum structure that progressively aligns with CBL principles as students near completion of their upper-secondary education. The chi-square test for independence revealed a statistically significant association between grade level and students' exposure to the development of skills and dispositions in competency-based learning, $\chi^2(10) = 47.6$, $p < .001$. The effect size, measured using Cramer's V ($V = .257$, $p < .001$), indicates a moderate relationship between grade level and exposure to the development of skills and dispositions. Additionally, the Phi coefficient ($\varphi = .364$, $p < .001$) further supports the presence of a meaningful, though not overly strong, effect. These results suggest that as students advance through grades, their exposure to skill development within a competency-based framework increases. However, the moderate effect size implies that while grade level plays a role, other factors such as teaching methods, or available resources may also contribute to students' varying levels of exposure to the development of skills and dispositions.

Exposure to personalization: Significant differences in personalization exposure across grades are evident ($\chi^2 = 27.6$, $p < .001$), highlighting how individual learning support varies by grade. Personalization is less common in 10th grade, with 18.3% of students reporting "never" experiencing it and 23.9% “seldom”. Only 13.4% of 10th-grade students reported "always" receiving personalized learning support, suggesting that individualized instruction may be limited in the initial year of upper-secondary education. Exposure to personalization increases slightly in the 11th grade, with 27.6% of students experiencing it “sometimes” and 18.6% “always”. This indicates a gradual increase in personalized learning opportunities as students progress. Students in 12th grade report the highest levels of exposure, with 30.5% indicating they “often” receive personalized

instruction. These results suggest that personalization in English instruction becomes more prominent in the later grades, possibly due to the growing academic needs and expectations of students as they approach graduation. The effect size measures provide insight into the strength of the relationships observed in the chi-square analyses. For exposure to personalization, the Phi coefficient is 0.277 ($p < .001$), and Cramer's V is 0.196 ($p < .001$), both indicating a moderate association between grade level and the extent to which students experience personalized learning. These values suggest that as students progress through grades, their exposure to personalization tends to increase, though the effect is not overwhelmingly strong. Conversely, for the second analysis regarding the frequency of a certain experience related to personalization, the Phi coefficient is 0.191 ($p = .106$), and Cramer's V is 0.135 ($p = .106$). These values are lower and do not reach statistical significance, indicating that the variation in frequency of this experience across grade levels is weak and not meaningful. This suggests that, while personalization exposure changes significantly between grades, other instructional experiences remain relatively stable across grade levels.

Exposure to flexible assessment: The frequency of exposure to flexible assessment methods varies across grades, though these differences were not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 10.5$, $p = .228$). This lack of significant variation suggests a more uniform approach to assessment flexibility across all grades. A majority of 10th graders (53.5%) report experiencing flexible assessment methods only 1-2 times, while 21.8% reported "never" experiencing them. This indicates limited integration of flexible assessment in the early years. Exposure remains relatively consistent in the 11th and 12th grades, with 52.3% of students in each grade experiencing flexible assessments 1-2 times and around 30% experiencing them 3-4 times. The minor increase in frequency for higher grades aligns with a gradual shift toward diverse assessment methods as students prepare for the end of secondary education. These results suggest that flexible assessment practices are consistently applied across grades, though overall exposure remains moderate, indicating a potential area for further integration of CBL principles. The effect size of the chi-square test was assessed using Phi (ϕ) and Cramér's V, which measure the strength of the relationship between grade level and exposure to flexible assessment. The Phi value was 0.171, and Cramér's V was 0.121, both indicating a small effect size. This suggests that while there are some differences in how often students experience flexible assessment across grade levels, the overall connection is weak. In other words, the variation in

exposure is not strong enough to show a clear or meaningful pattern.These findings illustrate a structured progression, with increased exposure to mastery, skill development, and personalized support as students move through the grades. However, the moderate level of flexible assessment across all grades indicates a potential area for further enhancement to fully realize CBL's benefits. These patterns suggest that a more integrated and consistent approach across all grades may provide students with a more cohesive and supportive learning experience.

In this sub-section, the study further investigates students' perceptions of their acquisition of English language skills across listening, speaking, reading, writing, and the use of grammar. The analysis is elaborated in Table 26.

Table 26. Students' perception of the acquisition of the English language skills (n=360)

Dimensions	#	Statements	No	Yes
Listening skill	1	Understanding spoken information within a specific topic	20.6%	79.4%
	2	Understanding specific information within the topic covered in English class	14.7%	85.3%
	3	Understanding the main idea within the topic covered in class	16.4%	83.6%
	4	Understanding the implied meaning in indirect speech	53.9%	46.1%
	5	Understanding the speaker's thoughts and opinions	32.8%	67.2%
	6	Deriving and understanding the meaning from what is being heard	29.2%	70.8%
	7	Understanding a narrative-style story within the topic covered in class	34.2%	65.8%
	8	Distinguishing and understanding the characteristics of words, sentences, and texts in spoken content	39.4%	60.6%
Speaking skill	9	Using formal and informal expressions	49.2%	50.8%
	10	Asking questions and clarifying meaning	35.3%	64.7%
	11	Expressing my thoughts and ideas	38.1%	61.9%
	12	Responding at the sentence or speech level	25.0%	75.0%
	13	Summarizing what others have said	52.5%	47.5%
	14	Sharing my opinions when others speak	40.6%	59.4%
	15	Planning and collaborating with others to discuss, debate, agree, or complete tasks	47.5%	52.5%
	16	Using appropriate vocabulary within a specific topic	32.5%	67.5%
Reading skill	17	Reading and understanding the main idea of a text	16.9%	83.1%
	18	Reading and understanding specific information in a text	17.2%	82.8%
	19	Reading and understanding both literary and factual texts	39.7%	60.3%
	20	Reading and understanding implied meanings in a text	51.4%	48.6%
	21	Identifying the characteristics and features of words, sentences, and texts	32.8%	67.2%
	22	Extracting and understanding meaning from a text	21.9%	78.1%
	23	Reading and recognizing the ideas expressed in a text	27.5%	72.5%
	24	Using both digital and non-digital resources to verify and understand meanings	24.7%	75.3%
	25	Understanding detailed nuances in a text	41.1%	58.9%
	26	Recognizing the meaning of things not frequently mentioned in a text	41.1%	58.9%
Writing skill	27	Planning and revising my writing	30%	70%
	28	Writing about past events or using my imagination	32.5%	67.5%
	29	Writing about my feelings and thoughts	30%	70%

	30	Writing reflections using examples and supporting evidence	49.2%	50.8%
	31	Using an appropriate writing style and format within a specific topic	36.1%	63.9%
	32	Writing commonly used words without spelling errors	26.9%	73.1%
	33	Using punctuation marks correctly in my writing	34.7%	65.3%
Use of grammar	34	Using abstract and compound nouns	46.4%	53.6%
	35	Using countable and uncountable nouns	30%	70%
	36	Using comparative forms in English	25.3%	74.7%
	37	Using quantifiers (e.g., all, half, both...)	24.4%	75.6%
	38	Forming questions in past, present, and future tenses	18.9%	81.1%
	39	Using various pronouns (him, himself, herself...)	30.6%	69.4%
	40	Using present and past perfect tenses	28.9%	71.1%
	41	Using future and future perfect tenses	33.6%	66.4%
	42	Using active and passive voice in present, past, and future tenses	34.4%	65.6%
	43	Using the present continuous tense	19.4%	80.6%
	44	Using prepositions before nouns and adjectives (to, for...)	28.6%	71.4%
	45	Using modal verbs (must, need...)	26.7%	73.3%
	46	Using adverbs of frequency (always, usually)	19.7%	80.3%
	47	Using the base form of verbs and verbs with "ing"	18.6%	81.4%
	48	Using conjunctions (but, although, even though)	31.1%	68.9%
	49	Using conditional sentences	41.7%	58.3%

Listening skill: Students demonstrated relatively high confidence in basic listening comprehension but reported lower proficiency in understanding nuanced or implied meanings. Students felt confident in comprehending spoken information on specific topics, with 79.4% reporting they could understand spoken information within a specific context, and 85.3% confident in understanding specific information covered in class. Additionally, 83.6% could grasp the main ideas within class topics. In contrast, only 46.1% felt they could understand implied meanings in indirect speech, and 60.6% could distinguish linguistic features in spoken content. Understanding a speaker's thoughts and opinions was also challenging, with only 67.2% reporting confidence. The results indicate that while students are relatively confident in basic listening comprehension, more advanced listening skills require further development to align with competency-based learning goals.

Speaking skill: Students exhibited moderate confidence in speaking, particularly in structured communication contexts, though certain aspects of expressive and collaborative speaking remain underdeveloped. Confidence was relatively high for responding at the sentence or speech level (75.0%) and asking questions for clarification (64.7%). This suggests that students feel prepared to participate in more controlled, structured speaking scenarios. Skills related to expressing complex ideas and engaging in collaborative communication were less developed. For instance, only 47.5% reported confidence in summarizing others' ideas, and 50.8% were comfortable using formal and

informal expressions. Additionally, only 52.5% felt confident in planning and collaborating in discussions. These findings suggest that students might benefit from more practice in spontaneous and interactive speaking exercises, which align with CBE's emphasis on real-world language use.

Reading skill: Students reported relatively high confidence in basic reading comprehension but displayed lower confidence with more complex reading tasks, such as interpreting implied meanings. Students felt confident in identifying main ideas (83.1%) and understanding specific information (82.8%) in texts, indicating a solid foundation in essential reading comprehension. However, only 48.6% reported confidence in interpreting implied meanings, and 58.9% could understand nuanced details in texts. Additionally, 60.3% were comfortable reading both literary and factual texts, suggesting limited exposure or confidence in handling diverse genres. These results indicate a need for more emphasis on analytical reading skills, which would enable students to engage more deeply with complex texts and interpret subtle information effectively. Overall, while students possess a strong foundation in reading comprehension, instructional focus on higher-order reading skills would better equip them to meet the demands of competency-based learning in English.

Writing skill: Students reported moderate proficiency in writing, with strengths in basic tasks but challenges in more complex writing. Students demonstrated confidence in tasks such as planning and revising (70.0%) and expressing personal thoughts (70.0%), suggesting that foundational writing processes are relatively well-developed. More complex skills, such as writing reflections with examples and supporting evidence, were less commonly reported as strengths, with only 50.8% feeling confident. Additionally, using appropriate style and format within specific topics was a challenge for many students (63.9%). These findings suggest that students may benefit from more practice with analytical and reflective writing, which are crucial for academic success and align with CBE goals in developing critical thinking. The data suggest that while students are confident with basic writing tasks, more emphasis on reflective and structured academic writing would enhance their overall writing competence.

Use of grammar: Students reported a solid understanding of basic grammatical structures but exhibited less confidence in more complex grammar. Students showed confidence in using quantifiers (75.6%), forming questions in various tenses (81.1%), and using the present continuous tense (80.6%). This suggests that foundational grammatical

structures are well-taught and understood. More complex grammatical aspects, such as using abstract and compound nouns (53.6%) and conditional sentences (58.3%), showed lower confidence levels. Additionally, using active and passive voice and various verb forms posed challenges for a significant portion of students. These results indicate that while students grasp basic grammar, further instruction on advanced structures would support their fluency and accuracy in complex language contexts.

Further analysis was conducted to examine students' perceptions of their acquired language skills across different locations. Socioeconomic factors, availability of qualified teachers, and access to learning resources vary across different areas, affecting students' perceptions and experiences of English acquisition (Coleman, 2011). Therefore, this investigation aimed to identify potential regional differences in students' perception of acquisition of English language skills, offering insights into how geographical factors may influence language skill acquisition. These findings are illustrated in Table 27, which provides a detailed comparison of students' perceptions of their acquired language skills by location.

Table 27. Students' perception of acquisition of the English language skills by location (n=360)

Language skills	Location	n	Mean Rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	df	Asymp. Sig.
Listening skill	Ulaanbaatar	173	169.64	7.8	3	.050*
	Zavkhan	64	190.08			
	Govi-Altai	61	209.57			
	Bayankhongor	62	172.31			
Speaking skill	Ulaanbaatar	173	179.51	4.9	3	.178
	Zavkhan	64	168.34			
	Govi-Altai	61	205.32			
	Bayankhongor	62	171.38			
Reading skill	Ulaanbaatar	173	176.09	4.02	3	.259
	Zavkhan	64	183.17			
	Govi-Altai	61	202.52			
	Bayankhongor	62	168.37			
Writing skill	Ulaanbaatar	173	174.10	4.80	3	.187
	Zavkhan	64	173.60			
	Govi-Altai	61	206.18			
	Bayankhongor	62	180.21			
Use of grammar	Ulaanbaatar	173	173.21	1.82	3	.610
	Zavkhan	64	185.74			
	Govi-Altai	61	191.55			
	Bayankhongor	62	184.55			

*Note. * $p > 0.05$*

Listening skill: Listening skill displayed the most significant regional variation, with a Kruskal-Wallis H value of 7.8 and a p-value of .050, indicating a marginally significant difference across locations. Students from Govi-Altai reported the highest mean rank for listening skills (209.57), suggesting that students in this region perceive themselves as having the strongest listening abilities compared to other regions. Students in Zavkhan also reported a relatively high mean rank (190.08), followed by Bayankhongor (172.31), suggesting moderate to high proficiency in listening. Students in Ulaanbaatar reported the lowest mean rank for listening skills (169.64), indicating a lower perception of listening proficiency relative to students in other regions. These results suggest that students in rural areas like Govi-Altai may benefit from teaching methods or resources that enhance listening skills more effectively than those in urban areas like Ulaanbaatar. The post-hoc pairwise comparisons, as shown in Table 28, were conducted following a Kruskal-Wallis test, which initially indicated a significant difference in students' perception of acquiring listening skills across locations.

Table 28. Result of post-hoc test for listening skill dimension by location

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons by provinces	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Asymp. Sig.
Ulaanbaatar-Bayankhongor	-2.676	15.167	-.176	.860	1.000
Ulaanbaatar-Zavkhan	-20.439	14.991	-1.363	.173	1.000
Ulaanbaatar-Govi-altai	-39.935	15.258	-2.617	.009*	.053*
Bayankhongor-Zavkhan	17.764	18.259	.973	.331	1.000
Bayankhongor-Govi-altai	37.259	18.479	2.016	.044	.263
Zavkhan-Govi-altai	-19.496	18.335	-1.063	.288	1.000

*Note. *p < 0.05*

The post-hoc analysis was conducted after the Kruskal-Wallis test showed a significant difference in students' perceptions of acquiring listening skills across different locations. To ensure accurate comparisons, the Bonferroni correction was applied to adjust for multiple tests. The results indicated that the only notable difference was between Ulaanbaatar and Govi-Altai, with an initial p-value of .009. However, after the adjustment, the corrected p-value increased to .053, making it statistically non-significant at the 0.05 level. A similar trend was observed between Bayankhongor and Govi-Altai, where the original p-value of .044 was adjusted to .263, meaning the difference was not statistically meaningful. Comparisons between other provinces, including Ulaanbaatar-Bayankhongor, Ulaanbaatar-Zavkhan, Bayankhongor-Zavkhan, and Zavkhan-Govi-Altai, also did not show significant differences, as all adjusted p-values were above .05.

Although the Kruskal-Wallis test suggested an overall difference, the post-hoc results indicate that no specific location pair had a statistically significant gap in students' perceptions after considering multiple comparisons. This suggests that while some variation exists, it is not strong enough to be considered meaningful in a statistical sense.

Speaking skill: Perceptions of speaking skills did not vary significantly across regions, with a Kruskal-Wallis H value of 4.9 and a p-value of .178, indicating no statistically significant differences. Students in Govi-Altai had the highest mean rank for speaking skills (205.32), suggesting slightly higher confidence in speaking skills relative to other regions. Conversely, Zavkhan had the lowest mean rank (168.34), although this difference was not statistically significant.

Reading skill: Perceptions of reading skills were also relatively consistent across regions, with a Kruskal-Wallis H value of 4.02 and a p-value of .259, indicating no significant regional differences. Students in Govi-Altai reported the highest mean rank (202.52) for reading skills, followed by Zavkhan (183.17), Ulaanbaatar (176.09), and Bayankhongor (168.37). Although Govi-Altai students reported slightly higher confidence in reading, these differences were not statistically significant.

Writing skill: Writing skill also showed no statistically significant differences across locations, with a Kruskal-Wallis H value of 4.80 and a p-value of .187. Students in Govi-Altai reported the highest mean rank for writing skills (206.18), suggesting a slight regional advantage in perceived writing skills. The mean ranks for other regions were close, with Ulaanbaatar at 174.10, Zavkhan at 173.60, and Bayankhongor at 180.21. This close clustering indicates that students across all regions perceive their writing skills similarly.

Use of grammar: Use of grammar skills showed the least regional variation, with a Kruskal-Wallis H value of 1.82 and a p-value of .610, indicating no significant differences across locations. Students from Govi-Altai had the highest mean rank in grammar (191.55), followed closely by Zavkhan (185.74), Bayankhongor (184.55), and Ulaanbaatar (173.21).

The results suggest that Mongolia’s upper-secondary English curriculum is implemented consistently across regions, though minor regional differences in listening skills indicate areas for further enhancement. Ensuring that all students, regardless of location, have access to robust listening instruction and adequate resources will support a more equitable competency-based English education across Mongolia.

Furthermore, the study examines students' perceptions of their acquired language skills, with a focus on variations across different grade levels. This analysis aims to identify potential differences in self-assessed language proficiency, offering insights into how students' perceived skill development may be influenced by the educational stage. By analyzing these differences, the study contributes to understanding how curricular implementation and instructional strategies impact students at various stages of upper-secondary education (VanPatten et al., 2020). According to Mira et al. (2019), Students' listening and speaking skills are focused on in the 11th grade, while reading and writing skills are emphasized in the 12th grade at the upper secondary education level in Mongolia. Thus, it is essential to examine across different grade levels.

Table 29. Students' perception of the acquisition of English language skills by grade (n=360)

Language skills	Grade	n	Mean Rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	df	Asymp. Sig.
Listening skill	10th grade	142	171.30	2.7	2	.256
	11th grade	111	180.28			
	12th grade	107	192.94			
Speaking skill	10th grade	142	173.06	1.43	2	.489
	11th grade	111	188.51			
	12th grade	107	182.06			
Reading skill	10th grade	142	173.02	2.17	2	.338
	11th grade	111	178.77			
	12th grade	107	192.21			
Writing skill	10th grade	142	176.70	.418	2	.812
	11th grade	111	185.07			
	12th grade	107	180.79			
Use of grammar	10th grade	142	171.20	3.0	2	.222
	11th grade	111	179.36			
	12th grade	107	194.02			

*Note. * $p > 0.05$*

The Kruskal-Wallis H test indicates no statistically significant differences across 10th, 11th, and 12th grades in perceived language skills. The analysis of students' perceptions of their English language skills across 10th, 11th, and 12th grades reveals a consistent experience in Mongolia's upper-secondary English curriculum. No statistically significant differences were found across grades for listening, speaking, reading, writing, or grammar skills, indicating a uniform approach to language skill development throughout the upper-secondary years. Minor trends show slightly higher mean ranks in

listening, reading, and grammar for 12th-grade students, suggesting that cumulative learning over the years may contribute to greater confidence in these skills as students advance. This uniformity implies that the curriculum effectively distributes emphasis across all language skills, promoting balanced language competency development without heavily prioritizing any one grade. By reinforcing certain competencies, particularly listening and grammar, in the lower grades, the curriculum could ensure that students build confidence and mastery earlier to prepare students thoroughly for real-world language use by graduation.

The qualitative results emphasize the predominance of teacher-centered methods in English classrooms, with limited exposure to CBL practices. Students report minimal opportunities for interactive activities, collaboration, or real-world application of skills, highlighting a reliance on textbook exercises and rote learning. While some teachers attempt participatory approaches, these efforts are inconsistent, leaving gaps in active learning, skill integration, and individualized support.

Low exposure to CBL practices and teacher-centered methods prevail

The excerpts from students' experiences reveal a classroom environment predominantly driven by teacher-centered teaching approaches. CBL practices, which emphasize active participation, collaboration, and real-world skills, seem to be rare or inconsistent.

> *Our English teacher is a new teacher who just graduated. She interacts with us just like university teachers who lecture and their students who take notes. She talks and writes quickly. We try to follow along and take notes, but we fall behind. When we're still writing down grammar rules, she erases the board before we finish* (excerpt 2, school a)

> *Not that too good. But sometimes she teaches too fast and finishes quickly. If you don't pay close attention, the board gets filled up before you know it. And before you realize it, she's done explaining. She gives a lot of exercises very quickly, like 'Do this, do that,' so we get a lot of tasks* (excerpt 5, school b)

When the students were questioned about whether they have activities like debates, role-playing, or competitions, In response, they said:

No, we don't." (excerpts 7, 5, 3, school a)

These descriptions align with the characteristics of a teacher-centered classroom, where the teacher is the primary source of knowledge, and students are expected to follow along, often struggling to keep up.

Furthermore, several excerpts point to a lack of interactive or collaborative activities, which are core elements of CBL and CBLT. In one exchange, when asked about the types of teaching methods used in the classroom, students from school B responded:

None (excerpt 3, school b)

She gives examples. She provides examples for grammar (excerpt 5, school b)

This suggests that the teaching methods are more focused on grammar-based instruction, with little room for communicative activities or student-centered learning, which are vital components of CBLT. Similarly, another student notes:

She teaches what she needs to teach and then finishes. I wish she would interact with the students more. (excerpt 3, school a)

This lack of interaction diminishes students' opportunities to engage in tasks that require critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative learning, which are central to competency-based approaches.

Multiple students across different schools report a reliance on textbook exercises and homework assignments. For example, students share:

The lesson process usually involves reading and translating the topic, doing exercises, giving the rest as homework, assigning tasks from the workbook, and then it's over. (excerpt 6, school b)

Following this statement, another student adds '*Yes'* (excerpt 2, school a) when she was asked if lessons are mainly based on exercises from the textbook.

We spend the time doing activities, mostly exercises (excerpt 7, school a)

It's not effective. The students just look at it, fill it in, and copy it to finish quickly. (excerpt 3, school b)

This overreliance on textbooks and repetitive exercises suggests a rigid, traditional approach to teaching that limits the development of competencies such as creativity, communication, and independent problem-solving

Although some students mention occasional exposure to more interactive methods, these are infrequent and inconsistent. A student recalls:

> *We had to create and present our own dialogues. But it only happened once, in the past month* (excerpt 8, school b)

This single instance of a communicative activity indicates that while some teachers may attempt to incorporate competency-based practices, they are not a regular part of the curriculum.

A standout example of more interactive teaching comes from a student who describes one teacher's more participatory approach:

> *She tries to engage the students as much as possible, making them write on the board and letting them explain things to each other. She often divides us into groups, giving us tasks like 'Do this' or 'Do that,' allowing the students to participate and teach each other for better understanding.* (excerpt 1, school b)

This example aligns more closely with Vygotsky's theory of social interaction and the zone of proximal development, where learning is scaffolded through peer collaboration and teacher guidance. However, the fact that this approach is not widespread highlights the inconsistency in the application of CBL practices across different teachers. The excerpts suggest that the predominance of teacher-centered methods and the limited exposure to competency-based learning practices in the classrooms described by the students underscore significant challenges. While some teachers attempt to incorporate interactive and student-centered approaches, these practices remain rare. The frequent use of textbook exercises and grammar instruction fails to provide students with the opportunities needed to develop the competencies emphasized by CBL and CBE frameworks.

Lack of real-life application

A significant theme emerging from the students' feedback is the absence of opportunities to apply what they have learned in English. This lack of practical application presents a major challenge to the goal of CBE, which emphasizes the use of skills in real-world contexts. The most prominent point made by students is that they seldom get to use English in practical or communicative contexts. When asked how often they get the chance to use what they've learned in English, students respond consistently:

> *Not at all* (excerpt 1, 2, 3, 8, school a)

This repeated response highlights a critical issue in the teaching practices at these schools. Without opportunities to practice English in realistic settings, whether through conversation, projects, or experiential learning, students are unlikely to develop the communicative competencies central to CBLT.

When students were asked about opportunities to use English, students mentioned that their use of English is confined to exercises and homework. One student explains:

> *We only get to use it through exercises and homework* (excerpt 3, school a)

This overreliance on written assignments creates an artificial learning environment. The absence of practical, real-life tasks in this environment limits students' chances to engage in meaningful social interactions that could help them build stronger language competencies.

Another key issue raised by the students is the lack of consistent in-class activities that encourage the practical use of English. When asked about competitions or contests in the classroom, the students note:

> *I think we would learn more if the school focused more on reinforcing what we've learned - competitions and contests* (excerpt 3, school a)

> *Once per semester, the teacher divides us into groups and has us compete.* (excerpt 2, school a)

Another few students added that their schools offer some structured events, such as "Month for English" or occasional competitions. However, these events appear to be rare and occur only once or twice per year. For instance, one student states:

> *Our school has a "Month for English", but that's the only organized event*. (excerpt 4, school a)

Another student mentions that during "Month for English", the school organizes competitions:

> *Each subject has its own month, and one of them is the "Month for English" During that time, they organize competitions.* (excerpt 5, school a)

This indicates that while some efforts are made to create opportunities for real-life application, they are infrequent and not embedded in the daily classroom experience.

However, such events happen only once per semester, which means students are not regularly engaging in meaningful language practice. Competitions or contests, while helpful, are not sufficient if they are isolated activities rather than integrated components of the learning process.

Uneven development of the four English language skills

In the statements provided by students, it becomes clear that the emphasis placed on different language skills in the classroom is uneven. While some skills, primarily writing, are practiced more regularly, others, such as speaking and listening, receive significantly less attention. This uneven focus on the four key language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) has implications for students' overall language proficiency and competency development.

A recurring issue highlighted by students is the lack of opportunities to practice speaking in English. When asked how often they speak English in class, students responded:

We don't [speak in English in class] (excerpt 8, school a)

We don't [speak in English in class] (excerpt 7, school a)

No [we do not have speaking exercises] (excerpt 2, school b)

Not very often. (excerpt 1, school b)

This suggests that speaking exercises, which are crucial for developing communicative competence, are either absent or occur infrequently. Even when speaking is incorporated into lessons, the approach appears to be limited to reading aloud from a text. As one student mentions:

The teacher has the students read in English, bit by bit. (excerpt 5**,** school a)

While reading aloud can support pronunciation and fluency, it does not provide the kind of spontaneous speaking practice that is necessary for developing conversational skills. Without sufficient speaking activities, students miss out on the opportunity to develop fluency, pronunciation, and the ability to use English in real-world conversations.

Furthermore, when the students were asked which skills are practiced most often, students consistently mentioned writing:

Writing and listening. (excerpt 8, school a)

Writing. (excerpt 4, school a)

Writing. (excerpt 5, school a)

When the interviewer clarified about writing if it is about doing exercises or writing essays or articles, in response:

Yes. [writing is doing exercise] (excerpt 4, school a)

We copy essays from the textbook. (excerpt 6, school a)

We don't write them [essays or stories]. We mostly do exercises. We complete exercises from the textbook. (excerpts, school a)

We copy them down. (excerpt 8, school a)

The heavy focus on writing, particularly in the form of exercises and copying from textbooks, suggests a traditional, grammar-focused approach to language teaching. While writing is a valuable skill, the type of writing practiced in these classes appears to be mechanical and focused on copying rather than original composition.

Listening exercises, another crucial component of language learning, also appear to be underutilized. Students report:

Rarely. (excerpt 2, school a)

Sometimes. (excerpt 5, school a)

Rarely. (excerpt 6, school a)

Not much. (excerpt 2, school b)

If there's a speaker. (excerpt 3, school b)

The teacher usually says it themselves. (excerpt 4, school b)

This lack of focus on listening practice suggests that it needs great attention as listening comprehension is foundational for communication and listening activities are designed to expose students to authentic language use and help them develop the ability to understand spoken English in various contexts.

Among these skills, reading, while practiced more often than listening or speaking, seems to be consistent. Some students mention:

Sometimes (excerpt 2, school a)

Often (excerpt 4, school b)

However, it is unclear whether the reading activities involve critical engagement with texts or if they are more focused on surface-level comprehension.

The feedback provided by students highlights a significant imbalance in the development of the four key English language skills. Writing, particularly in the form of exercises, receives the most attention, while speaking and listening are largely neglected.

This uneven distribution of focus hinders students' ability to develop the full range of competencies needed for communicative proficiency in English. This approach contradicts the principles of CBLT and CBE, which emphasize the integration of all four language skills to develop students' overall communicative competence. In this case, the overemphasis on writing and the underutilization of speaking, listening, and reading exercises prevent students from achieving a well-rounded mastery of English.

Lack of active learning

This theme captures the overall low levels of active participation and engagement in English classes as described by the students. While some students express a desire to learn English and make personal efforts outside the classroom, the environment in class seems to lack the characteristics of active, student-centered learning, which are critical for fostering deep learning and competency development.

The responses from students regarding their level of participation in the classroom vary. When asked about their level of activity in class, students from school A provided a range of answers:

Inactive (excerpt 1, 3, school a)

Moderate (excerpt 2, 6, 7, school a)

Actively participate (excerpt 4, 5, school a)

These responses indicate a lack of consistency in student engagement, with some students feeling more involved than others. However, several students described themselves as inactive or only moderately involved, suggesting that active learning is not a regular feature of the classroom.

When asked about their participation and involvement when they do not understand the lesson, students' responses highlighted the narrow scope of their engagement.

I ask about grammar (excerpt 6, school a)

I ask if I don't understand the lesson being taught. If it's something outside the lesson, I don't ask (excerpt 8, school a)

These responses indicate that students are only participating in a limited way, such as seeking help primarily on grammar-related issues or clarification of the lesson, rather than engaging with broader aspects of learning or asking more complex questions. Students also report limited support from their teachers when they face difficulties. For example, students noted:

No (excerpt 4, school b)

I don't get help. They don't provide it (excerpt 5, school b)

I used to. When I ask the new teacher something, they give me unpleasant looks. On top of that, the teacher dislikes me (excerpt 6, school b)

I do get help (excerpt 2, school b)

The mixed responses reflect inconsistent teacher support, with some students feeling neglected and others receiving help. This lack of consistent support can contribute to students' reluctance to engage actively in class or ask questions. The interviewer further clarified the reasons for their inactivity or reluctance to engage, asking whether it was due to the teacher explaining the lessons in an unclear manner or because the students themselves were unwilling to understand the lesson. The students responded:

Both (excerpt 1, school b)

It is fifty-fifty percent (excerpt 5, school b)

Sometimes there are tired, sluggish days, and on those days, even if the teacher explains well, we don't understand (excerpt 4, school b)

I forget quickly (excerpt 6, school b)

The teacher explains somewhat clearly (excerpt 8, school b)

When I want to understand, and someone is talking rudely to me, I don't even feel like responding (excerpt 7, school b)

There are days when I'm not fully engaged, so I might be underestimating the teacher (excerpt 3, school b)

The teacher doesn't know the students well; it would be different if the teacher got to know us. Our teacher just arrived this past winter (excerpt 4, school b)

Several students further noted that their teacher takes on a dominant role in the classroom, leaving little room for student-centered learning. As some students described:

Yes [the teacher takes a more dominant role] (excerpt 2, school a)

Another student adding

Correct (excerpt 3, school a)

The responses from the students highlight that their level of engagement in lessons fluctuates based on multiple factors such as mood, energy, and interactions with both the teacher and their peers. A lack of strong teacher-student relationships and minimal peer interaction contributes to passive learning and reduced participation.

Furthermore, the feedback from students points to a teacher-centered learning environment where the teacher takes a dominant role in the classroom, limiting opportunities for student-centered learning. This teacher-centered approach is typical of traditional teaching methods where the teacher controls the flow of the lesson, and students passively receive information. Despite their intrinsic motivation to learn the language, students find themselves constrained by a teacher-centered approach that leaves little room for participation, communication, and inquiry. Additionally, inconsistent support from teachers and weak teacher-student relationships further hinder students' ability to actively participate in their learning process.

Despite the lack of active engagement in class, students express a clear desire to learn English. When they were asked, students all responded affirmatively:

Yes (excerpt 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, school a)

I want to [to learn English] (excerpt 2, 5, school b)

Many students report making independent efforts to improve their English skills outside of school. Students from schools A and B described their personal strategies:

I memorize new words (excerpt 3, school a)

I attend courses (excerpt 4, school a)

I watch movies and listen to music (excerpt 8, school a)

I improve by attending clubs based on my own ability. I also improve to some extent in the classroom. (excerpt 5, school b)

This indicates that the lack of active participation in class is not due to a lack of interest but rather reflects the constraints of the classroom environment. Students are motivated to learn but are not provided with sufficient opportunities to engage actively in the process. These individual efforts to learn English outside the classroom suggest that students are compensating for the lack of active learning within the classroom itself. However, without a supportive classroom environment that promotes active learning, students are left to pursue learning in isolation, relying on external resources to improve their skills.

Limited assessment for competency mastery

This theme highlights students' opinions of the current evaluation practices in their English classes. The feedback suggests that assessments are narrowly focused, often lacking depth in evaluating key competencies such as speaking, listening, and critical

thinking. Additionally, there is little to no peer or self-assessment, which are essential components of CBE aimed at fostering mastery of skills. The majority of students reported that evaluation is solely conducted by the teacher. When asked if they evaluate each other, students responded:

No (excerpt 2, school a)

Another student added

The teacher is the only one who evaluates us (excerpt 3, school a)

No (excerpt 4, 6, school b)

This reliance on teacher-centered assessment limits opportunities for students to reflect on their own progress or receive constructive feedback from peers. CBE encourages peer and self-assessment as valuable tools for students to develop self-regulation and a deeper understanding of their competencies. Without these components, students miss the chance to engage in meaningful evaluation processes that promote mastery.

Students express the limited aspects of their learning that are evaluated. For example, students mentioned that they are primarily assessed through:

Homework (excerpt 2, school b)

Tests (excerpt 8, school b)

[Writing is] through exercises (excerpt 5, school b)

No [writing and speaking are not evaluated] (excerpt 4, school b)

A teacher has us read and then give feedback, but it happens rarely, maybe once or twice a semester. (excerpt 1, school b)

This narrow focus on traditional forms of assessment such as homework and tests fails to evaluate students' competencies in more practical areas like speaking and listening. Writing is primarily evaluated through exercises, and reading is assessed only occasionally. This infrequency in assessing key competencies limits students' ability to track their progress in a holistic way, leaving gaps in their overall language development.

Several students expressed dissatisfaction with the way their teachers evaluate them. For example, students said:

I don't think it's fully satisfying. (excerpt 2, school a)

Another girl added *No, we are not fully evaluated* (excerpt 1, school a)

This sense of being inadequately evaluated stems from the fact that evaluations often focus on superficial aspects of learning, such as completing tasks correctly, rather than

assessing students' deeper understanding or skill development. Moreover, a student shared:

> *The first three students who do the task correctly will receive extra points. It's obvious that the students who don't understand won't be able to do it, and the ones who understand well will get their 3 points easily. Those who can't do it will just sit there.* (excerpt 2, school b)

This suggests that the teacher favors students who are already proficient, while those who struggle are left behind. Such an approach discourages students who need extra help and fosters a competitive atmosphere that may not be conducive to learning for all students. CBE values assessments that are fair, individualized, and focused on personal growth rather than competition.

Students offered suggestions for how they believe assessments could be improved. A student mentioned:

> *I think the teacher should work more closely with the students.* (excerpt 2, school a)

This suggestion aligns with CBE principles, which advocate for ongoing feedback and closer teacher-student interaction to support skill mastery. By working more closely with students, teachers can better assess individual progress and provide more targeted support.

Additionally, students expressed the desire for more equitable and engaging evaluation practices:

> *I think it should be more competitive and interesting.* (excerpt 4, school a)
> *I wish everyone were treated equally and given the same attention.* (excerpt 8, school a)

These comments reflect a need for more engaging and varied assessment methods that promote equal opportunities for all students to demonstrate their competencies.

Minimal collaboration and interaction

Students reported participating in group work, but the frequency and consistency of these activities are limited. While some students acknowledged that group work occurs, it is not a regular feature of their English classes, leading to missed opportunities for peer interaction and collaboration. Students indicated that group work happens but not frequently enough.

Yes, we do (excerpt 1, 2, 5, school a)

We work in groups, but not often (excerpt 3, school a)

Sometimes. We work in groups 2-3 times [per one term] (excerpt 4, school a)

Although group activities are part of the classroom structure, they occur only 2-3 times per term, which limits opportunities for students to engage in collaborative learning. Group work, when integrated consistently, allows students to develop communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills, which are key components of CBE. The infrequency of group work suggests that students are missing out on these important peer-to-peer learning opportunities. On the other hand, other students indicated that their classes sometimes involve a mix of individual and group work:

Individually (excerpt 3, school b)

It's both in groups and individually (excerpt 4, school b)

However, the predominance of individual work over group activities suggests that collaboration is not a central feature of the learning process. While individual work is important for fostering independence and personal accountability, group activities encourage students to practice speaking, listening, and interacting in authentic contexts, which are essential for developing language proficiency. When the interviewer asked whether they talk to each other in English for further clarification, the students responded:

We don't (excerpt 4, 6, school a)

This lack of peer interaction suggests that there is limited use of communicative language teaching practices. Without regular opportunities to speak English with their peers, students are missing a critical component of language learning communicative practice. Although students work in groups occasionally, the infrequency of these activities and the absence of peer interaction in the target language limit their ability to develop essential competencies.

Lack of personal and individualized needs

The excerpts reveal that students often feel their learning needs are not adequately addressed, and they receive minimal personalized support from their teachers. This lack of individualized attention hinders students' progress and leads to dissatisfaction with the learning process.

No (excerpt 4, school b)

A little bit (excerpt 1, school b)

To a certain extent (excerpt 7, school b)

No (excerpt 1, 6 school a)

Students' responses indicate that while there may be some aspects of the class that meet their needs, the overall structure of the lessons does not fully align with their individual learning preferences or challenges. This highlights a desire for more engaging, student-centered teaching methods that cater to diverse learning styles. Students were asked to rate how well their needs were being met on a scale from 1 to 5, in response:

3 (excerpt 1, 2, 8, school a)

2 (excerpt 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, school a)

These low ratings indicate that students feel their learning needs are not being fully met. Furthermore, one student suggested:

I think every child should be approached and treated inclusively (excerpt 4, school a).

This sentiment underscores the need for a more inclusive, student-centered approach that recognizes the unique challenges each student faces. The current classroom environment, however, seems to lack this personalized approach, leaving many students feeling unsupported.

Another factor contributing to the lack of individualized support is the inconsistency of teacher support, particularly when students are struggling with the material. In school B, students compared their current teacher to previous teachers, indicating a decline in the level of support:

Our previous teacher was pretty good. At least she would answer when we asked questions. We've had seven or eight different teachers. (excerpt 8, school b)

She would at least come to sit next to us and explain things. (excerpt 4, school b)

This comparison reflects the students' frustration with the current level of individualized attention. When students are struggling, they expect their teacher to provide more hands-on support, whether through one-on-one explanations or personalized feedback. The lack of such support leaves students feeling overlooked and neglected, which can contribute to disengagement from the learning process.

Lack of facilitator role in the classroom

While some students report receiving answers when they ask questions, the overall approach seems reactive rather than proactive. The teacher's focus is often on students who actively participate, leaving quieter or less confident students behind. This teacher-centered approach limits the potential for a more inclusive, supportive learning environment where all students can engage and receive guidance. The excerpts reveal that students generally have to seek help from the teacher themselves, rather than the teacher proactively offering assistance.

> *When I ask about something I don't understand, she answers my questions.* (excerpt 2, school a)

This indicates that while the teacher is willing to answer questions, the support provided is reactive. The teacher waits for students to approach her rather than regularly checking in on students who may be struggling. When students were asked if the teacher ever comes over to help without being asked, students reported:

> *There are a few occasions.* (excerpt 5, school a)
>
> *Yes, there are [occassions to help us]* (excerpt 7, 8, school a)
>
> *We go to her ourselves.* (excerpt 4, school a)

While the teacher does occasionally come to assist students on her own, these instances appear to be rare. A notable observation from the excerpts is that the teacher primarily interacts with the more active and responsive students.

> *The teacher interacts with the children who respond. The kids sitting at the back don't participate.* (excerpt 1, school a)

Another student added:

> *The students who are sitting in the front are actively involved. Then it ends up being just the active ones she communicates with.* (excerpt 5, school a)

This suggests that the teacher focuses her attention on students who are already engaged, neglecting those who may be quieter or less confident. This selective engagement leads to an imbalance in the classroom, where only certain students benefit from direct interaction with the teacher. While the teacher does provide answers to questions when asked, a more proactive approach to facilitation is needed. Teachers should actively engage with all students, not just the ones who are most responsive. This means regularly checking in on students who may not ask questions on their own, offering clarification

without waiting for students to approach, and creating an environment where every student feels comfortable participating.

The synthesis explores the extent to which students are exposed to key elements of CBL in their English courses, combining insights from quantitative and qualitative results. It highlights significant discrepancies between intended CBL principles and classroom practices, emphasizing the challenges of teacher-centered approaches in fostering active and comprehensive learning. Quantitative findings show moderate exposure to CBL principles such as demonstration of mastery, development of skills, personalization, and flexible assessment. Students generally understand the relevance of competencies, with many recognizing how these relate to their future goals (M=4.13). However, clarity on how competencies are assessed remains inconsistent (M=3.29), with a notable portion of students (5%) expressing uncertainty. Similarly, while students report receiving some guidance on skill improvement (M=3.26), support in recognizing individual learning needs is limited (M=2.80). Personalization efforts are constrained by whole-class lectures (M=3.81) and minimal opportunities for individualized feedback (M=2.42). Flexible assessments, such as project-based learning or presentations, are infrequent (M=1.85–2.50), with traditional exams dominating the evaluation landscape. Regional disparities also emerge, with Zavkhan province exhibiting stronger implementation of CBL practices compared to Ulaanbaatar, where traditional methods are more prevalent.

Qualitative findings reveal that teacher-centered approaches dominate classrooms, limiting students' exposure to CBL practices. Students describe classrooms focused on lectures, grammar-driven, and exercise-based leaving little room for active engagement or collaborative learning. Interactive methods, such as debates or group activities, are rare, with occasional efforts like presentations or "Month for English" competitions occurring sporadically. This reliance on textbook-based exercises and minimal opportunities for real-world application undermines the development of essential competencies. Speaking and listening skills, critical for communicative competence, are particularly neglected, with students reporting infrequent practice or reliance on reading aloud. Writing activities, while frequent, are predominantly mechanical, involving exercises or copying text rather than original composition.

The qualitative data also underscore a lack of active learning and personalized support. Students express frustration with inconsistent teacher support, with quieter or less confident students often overlooked. While some teachers attempt participatory methods, such as peer teaching or group work, these practices are inconsistent and not widely implemented. Assessment practices are similarly narrow, focusing primarily on homework and tests, with little emphasis on evaluating practical skills like speaking or listening. Students highlight the absence of peer or self-assessment opportunities, which limits their ability to reflect on and engage deeply with their learning progress.

In conclusion, the synthesis reveals a significant gap between the theoretical goals of CBL and its practical implementation in English courses. While some elements of CBL are present, traditional methods and limited application of interactive, flexible, and personalized practices hinder comprehensive competency development.

5.6 Contentment of the students with the English course

This subsection examines students' contentment with their English courses through quantitative findings, revealing moderate dissatisfaction with real-life applications and greater satisfaction with teaching quality. Qualitative insights further highlight the need for more engaging, interactive teaching methods and better preparation for exams, as well as challenges related to resource availability and teacher communication, which significantly impact students' learning experiences.

In this quantitative result, the research examines students' contentment with their English course and the overall English language teaching they received. Table 30 provides a detailed illustration of these findings, highlighting students' contentment levels and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of their English education.

Table 30. Students' contentment with the English course and English language teaching (n=360)

Dimension	#	Statements	*M*	*SD*
English course	1	The English course identifies and addresses real-life issues encountered when using English	2.74	1.265
	2	The English course focuses too heavily on a theoretical aspect and lacks practical application	2.78	1.202
	3	Weekly assignments are reasonable to do	3.14	1.258
	4	Assignments and tasks in the English class help in applying English at the practical application level	3.10	1.193
	5	The content of the English course is unclear	2.56	1.195
	6	The English class has greatly contributed to improving my English skills and competencies	3.20	1.267

	7	Overall the English course is appropriate for advancing and mastering my English skills and competencies	3.30	1.269
English language teaching	8	My English teacher has a thorough knowledge of the subject content	3.69	1.307
	9	My English teacher provides opportunities to ask questions	3.61	1.326
	10	My English teacher treats me with respect	3.62	1.365
	11	My English teacher understands my learning needs	3.56	1.334
	12	My English teacher conveys the subject content effectively	3.51	1.299
	13	My English teacher makes the subject as interesting as possible	3.42	1.437

Note. Means are based on a 5-point scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3=Average, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree

Students expressed moderate dissatisfaction with the English course's focus on real-life applications, with low mean scores for statements related to addressing real-world issues (M = 2.74) and balancing theory with practical use (M = 2.78). This suggests that the English course could benefit from integrating more practical, skill-based content that aligns with competency-based educational principles. Students rated their teachers favorably in areas such as subject knowledge (M = 3.69), respect (M = 3.62), and support for questions (M=3.61). These results indicate that teachers in Mongolia's upper-secondary schools create a supportive and engaging learning environment, which contributes positively to students' learning experiences. Generally, Students reported higher satisfaction with teaching quality than with the English course. This suggests a need for greater emphasis on skill development and practical applications in English education. Enhancing the focus on real-world language skills would significantly improve the relevance and effectiveness of upper-secondary English education in Mongolia.

Furthermore, the study investigates the levels of contentment among students in rural and urban areas, aiming to identify any differences in satisfaction with their English language education based on geographical location. Analyzing students' contentment by location is essential as educational experiences are influenced by regional disparities in resources, teacher quality, and institutional support (OECD, 2018a). Table 31 provides a comparative analysis of students' contentment with English course content and English language teaching across four locations in Mongolia: Ulaanbaatar, Zavkhan, Govi-Altai, and Bayankhongor.

Table 31. Students' contentment with the English course and English language teaching by location (n=360)

Dimension	Location	n	*M*	*SD*	Mean Rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	df	Asymp. Sig.
English course	Ulaanbaatar	173	2.73	.824	150.25	41.3	3	<.001*
	Zavkhan	64	3.45	.741	244.13			
	Govi-Altai	61	2.98	.869	177.85			
	Bayankhongor	62	3.16	.569	201.84			
English language teaching	Ulaanbaatar	173	3.12	1.19	141.95	62.07	3	<.001*
	Zavkhan	64	4.39	.889	257.63			
	Govi-Altai	61	3.68	1.14	189.15			
	Bayankhongor	62	3.84	.918	199.95			

*Note. *p < 0.05*

The mean scores for contentment with the English course vary notably by location, with significant differences detected among the regions (H = 41.3, p < .001). Students in Ulaanbaatar reported the lowest contentment with the English course content, with a mean score of 2.73 (SD = .824) and a mean rank of 150.25. This suggests that students in the capital are less satisfied with the English course. Zavkhan students reported the highest contentment with a mean score of 3.45 (SD = .741) and a mean rank of 244.13. This relatively high score implies that the English course may better meet the needs or expectations of students in Zavkhan. Govi-Altai (M = 2.98, SD = .869) and Bayankhongor (M = 3.16, SD = .569) reported intermediate levels of contentment, with mean ranks of 177.85 and 201.84, respectively. These moderate scores suggest that while students in these regions have a somewhat favorable view of the English course, there may still be areas for improvement to fully meet students' needs.

Table 32. Result of post-hoc test for student's contentment with English course

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig.[a]
Ulaanbaatar-Govi-altai	-27.607	15.470	-1.785	.074	.446
Ulaanbaatar-Bayankhongor	-51.593	15.378	-3.355	<.001*	.005*
Ulaanbaatar-Zavkhan	-93.887	15.200	-6.177	<.001*	.000*
Govi-altai-Bayankhongor	-23.986	18.736	-1.280	.200	1.000
Govi-altai-Zavkhan	66.280	18.590	3.565	<.001*	.002*
Bayankhongor-Zavkhan	42.294	18.513	2.285	.022	.134

*Note. *p < 0.05*

The post-hoc pairwise comparisons following the Kruskal-Wallis test for students' contentment with the English course reveal significant differences between provinces. After applying the Bonferroni correction, the results show that students in Ulaanbaatar

report significantly higher contentment compared to those in Bayankhongor (p = .005) and Zavkhan (p = .000), suggesting a notable regional disparity in satisfaction levels. Additionally, students in Govi-Altai also report significantly greater contentment than those in Zavkhan (p = .002). However, no significant differences are observed between Ulaanbaatar and Govi-Altai, Govi-Altai and Bayankhongor, or Bayankhongor and Zavkhan, indicating that contentment levels among these groups do not differ substantially. Overall, the findings suggest that students in Zavkhan consistently report lower contentment with their English course, whereas those in Ulaanbaatar tend to be the most satisfied. These results may highlight disparities in educational resources, teaching methodologies, or overall learning experiences across different regions.

Students' contentment with English language teaching also shows notable variation across locations, with statistically significant differences observed (H = 62.07, p < .001). With a mean score of 3.12 (SD = 1.19) and a mean rank of 141.95, students in Ulaanbaatar reported the lowest level of satisfaction with English language teaching. This score, while moderate, indicates a lower level of satisfaction with teaching practices in the capital compared to other regions. The significant Kruskal-Wallis H value suggests that students in Zavkhan, Govi-Altai, and Bayankhongor have a more favorable view of their teachers' instructional practices. The post-hoc test following the Kruskal-Wallis analysis was conducted to identify which specific pairs of provinces had significant differences in students' contentment with English language teaching. The result is shown in Table.33.

Table 33. Result of post-hoc test for student's contentment with English language teaching

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons by location	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig.
Ulaanbaatar-Govi-altai	-47.202	15.423	-3.060	.002*	.013*
Ulaanbaatar-Bayankhongor	-58.007	15.331	-3.784	<.001*	.001*
Ulaanbaatar-Zavkhan	-115.688	15.154	-7.634	<.001*	.000*
Govi-altai-Bayankhongor	-10.804	18.679	-.578	.563	1.000
Govi-altai-Zavkhan	68.485	18.533	3.695	<.001*	.001*
Bayankhongor-Zavkhan	57.681	18.457	3.125	.002*	.011*

*Note. *p < 0.05*

The results revealed that students in Ulaanbaatar reported significantly lower satisfaction levels compared to those in Govi-Altai (p = .013), Bayankhongor (p = .001), and Zavkhan (p < .001), with the largest gap observed between Ulaanbaatar and Zavkhan. Meanwhile, no significant difference was found between Govi-Altai and Bayankhongor (p = 1.000),

suggesting similar levels of contentment in these regions. However, Zavkhan students expressed significantly higher satisfaction compared to both Govi-Altai (p = .001) and Bayankhongor (p = .011). These findings indicate that students in Ulaanbaatar are the least content with English language teaching, whereas those in Zavkhan report the highest levels of satisfaction. The results suggest potential disparities in educational experiences, resources, or expectations across provinces, warranting further investigation into the factors influencing these perceptions.

Additionally, the study explores students' contentment with their English course and English language teaching, analyzed by grade level. This analysis aims to uncover any grade-specific variations in satisfaction, providing insights into how students at different educational stages perceive their English learning experience. Analyzing by grade provides insights into how satisfaction with English language learning evolves across different educational stages, reflecting variations in instructional approaches, curriculum complexity, and students' cognitive development (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Table 34 provides an analysis of students' contentment with the English course content and English language teaching across 10th, 11th, and 12th grade levels in Mongolia's upper-secondary education system.

Table 34. Students' contentment with the English course and English language teaching by grade (n=360)

Dimension	Grade	n	Mean Rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	df	Asymp. Sig.
English course	10th grade	142	159.50	13.48	2	.001*
	11th grade	111	180.54			
	12th grade	107	208.33			
English language teaching	10th grade	142	156.12	20.97	2	<.001*
	11th grade	111	176.92			
	12th grade	107	216.57			

*Note. *p < 0.05*

The Kruskal-Wallis H test reveals a statistically significant difference in students' contentment with the English course across grades (H = 13.48, p = .001). Students in 10th grade reported the lowest contentment, with a mean rank of 159.50. 11th-grade students reported intermediate satisfaction, with a mean rank of 180.54. This moderate score suggests a gradual improvement in contentment as students progress through the English curriculum. 12th-grade students reported the highest contentment, with a mean rank of 208.33, suggesting that students find the English course most relevant and beneficial in

their final year of upper-secondary education. The upward trend in contentment from 10th to 12th grade implies that the curriculum may become more relevant and engaging as students advance. The post-hoc test was conducted following a Kruskal-Wallis test to analyze differences in students' contentment with English courses across three different grade levels. The results of pairwise comparisons are shown in Table 35.

Table 35. Result of post-hoc test for student's contentment with English course by grade

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons by grade	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig.
10-11 grade	-21.044	13.162	-1.599	.110	.330
10-12 grade	-48.835	13.300	-3.672	<.001*	.001*
11-12 grade	-27.791	14.075	-1.974	.048	.145

*Note. *p < 0.05*

The results show that there is no significant difference between Grade 10 and Grade 11 (adjusted p = .330) or between Grade 11 and Grade 12 (adjusted p = .145) after correcting for multiple comparisons. However, a significant difference was found between Grade 10 and Grade 12 (adjusted p = .001), indicating that students in these two grades have different levels of satisfaction with English course content. This suggests that while students in Grades 10 and 11 report similar experiences, those in Grade 12 perceive their English course content differently.

With a mean rank of 156.12, 10th grade students reported the lowest satisfaction with English language teaching. The lower satisfaction levels among 10th grade students for both English course content and teaching quality highlight the need for targeted support at the beginning of upper-secondary education. 11th grade students reported a mean rank of 176.92, indicating a moderate level of contentment that suggests some improvement in their perception of teaching quality. 12th-grade students had the highest mean rank of 216.57, indicating the greatest satisfaction with English language teaching. The increase in satisfaction from 10th to 12th grade suggests that students may appreciate teaching methods more as they progress through the grades. The post-hoc pairwise comparison following the Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to determine which specific grade levels differed in students' contentment with English language teaching, as the Kruskal-Wallis test had indicated a significant overall difference. The result is shown in Table 36.

Table 36. Result of post-hoc test for student's contentment with English language teaching by grade

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons by grade	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig.
10-11 grade	-20.796	13.122	-1.585	.113	.339
10-12 grade	-60.442	13.259	-4.559	<.001*	.000*
11-12 grade	-39.647	14.032	-2.825	.005*	.014*

*Note. *p < 0.05*

The results revealed that there was no significant difference between Grade 10 and Grade 11 (p = .339), meaning that students in these grades had similar levels of satisfaction with their English classes. However, there were significant differences between Grade 10 and Grade 12 (p < .001) and between Grade 11 and Grade 12 (p = .014), indicating that students in Grade 12 had noticeably different levels of contentment compared to the younger grades. This suggests that as students progress through secondary school, particularly in their final year, their satisfaction with English language teaching changes.

Further analysis was conducted to examine students' contentment with their English course and English language teaching, segmented by gender. This investigation aims to identify potential gender-based differences in satisfaction, offering insights into how male and female students perceive their English learning experience. Analyzing by gender is essential because research suggests that gender differences influence language learning attitudes, motivation, and classroom experiences (Dörnyei, 2014). Moreover, gender-based variations in instructional preferences and teacher-student interactions can affect perceived learning experiences, making it critical to explore contentment levels to ensure equitable educational practices (Sunderland, 2000). Table 37 compares male and female students' contentment with the English course content and English language teaching in Mongolia's upper-secondary education. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to examine differences in contentment levels between genders.

Table 37. Students' contentment with the English course and English language teaching by gender (n=360)

Dimension	Gender	n	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
English course	Male	149	178.53	15426.5	.763
	Female	211	181.89		
English language teaching	Male	149	173.68	14704.0	.294
	Female	211	185.31		

*Note. *p < 0.05*

The analysis reveals no statistically significant difference in contentment with English courses between male and female students (Mann-Whitney U = 15426.5, p = .763). The mean rank for male students is 178.53, indicating a moderate level of satisfaction with the English course content. The mean rank for female students is 181.89, which is slightly higher than that for males but not significantly different. These findings suggest that both male and female students have similar levels of contentment with the English course content, indicating that gender does not play a significant role in shaping students' perceptions of the English course content.

The analysis also shows no significant difference in contentment with English language teaching between male and female students (Mann-Whitney U = 14704.0, p = .294). The mean rank for male students is 173.68, indicating a generally moderate level of satisfaction with English language teaching practices. The mean rank for female students is 185.31, slightly higher than that for males, though not to a statistically significant degree. The results imply that both male and female students are similarly satisfied with English teaching practices, suggesting that teachers' instructional approaches and engagement efforts are perceived equally across genders.

The qualitative findings highlight mixed satisfaction among students, with some improvements noted in grammar and writing but dissatisfaction regarding preparedness for exams and limited interactive learning opportunities. Key challenges include overwhelming homework, resource limitations, and a rigid focus on completing textbooks, which hinder effective engagement and skill development.

Mixed levels of satisfaction

The feedback reflects a range of perspectives, from those who feel underprepared and in need of significant improvement, to those who find certain aspects of the lessons helpful, particularly in areas like grammar. However, there is a general consensus on the need for more engaging and interactive learning methods to foster improvement in language skills. Many students expressed that they do not feel adequately prepared for their state exams. When they were asked if they were ready, students responded:

No [we are not prepared enough for state exam] (excerpts 5, 4, school a) This lack of confidence suggests that the current lessons are not meeting the students'

expectations in terms of preparing them for critical assessments. When they were asked how much improvement they needed, students replied:

Quite a lot (excerpt 6, school a)

A lot (excerpt 4, school a)

Enough to need extra tutoring or courses. (excerpt 1, school a)

This indicates that students feel the need for additional support beyond the regular classroom instruction to succeed in their exams. Their responses reflect dissatisfaction with the current level of preparedness, suggesting that the curriculum may not be sufficiently rigorous or comprehensive in helping students achieve exam success.

Students also indicated that their current level of English proficiency is lower than expected, even after several years of study. One student mentioned:

I've barely moved past the beginner level. I've been studying English since 5th grade (excerpt 1, school a)

[English proficiency level needs to be improved] to the extent that we need to be taught from the beginner level. (excerpt 2, school a)

We need to remedy learning gaps (excerpts 5, 6, 7, 8, school a)

The interviewer further asked if they could introduce themselves in English, in response:

I can say my name and age (excerpt 5, school a)

I can say my name (excerpt 6, School a)

Beyond that, I can talk about things I like (excerpt 7, school a)

I can talk about my future goals. (excerpt 8, school a)

The fact that students struggle with basic self-introduction after years of study suggests that their exposure to practical, communicative English is limited. While they may have some foundational knowledge, their ability to apply it in real-world contexts, especially in speaking, remains underdeveloped. This points to the need for a more communicative approach in the classroom to help students progress beyond the basics and develop fluency.

Furthermore, several students expressed a desire for more engaging, interactive, and communicative methods to improve their language skills.

If we work in groups or do different presentations, independent tasks, and are given more opportunities to develop our speaking skills... (excerpt 2, school b)

In an interesting way such as through games (excerpt 7, school b)

These comments highlight the students' preference for learning activities that promote interaction, collaboration, and active engagement. In addition to the dissatisfaction with lesson structure, students pointed out the overwhelming amount of homework across subjects.

> *We are given a lot of homework. There's a lot of homework in other subjects too* (excerpt 6, school b)

This could contribute to students feeling overwhelmed and unable to dedicate enough time to practicing their English skills. While homework is essential for reinforcing learning, an excessive load can reduce students' motivation and engagement, particularly if it is not balanced with interactive and engaging classroom activities.

Despite the overall dissatisfaction with interactive methods and language proficiency, some students noted positive aspects of the lessons, particularly in grammar.

> *[My knowledge and skills improved from the English lessons] to a certain extent* (excerpt 7, school b)
>
> *[My English knowledge and skills improved] a little* (excerpt 6, school b)
>
> *Since the teacher explains well, it becomes useful later, especially for grammar* (excerpt 5, school b)

This feedback indicates that their English proficiency level improved to a certain extent, particularly, the grammar area where students feel they are benefiting. Another student mentioned:

> *Writing letters skill* (excerpt 8, school b)

These responses suggest that while certain aspects of the curriculum, like grammar and writing, are well-received, other critical skills such as speaking and listening may not be receiving enough attention or practice in the classroom.

While some students are dissatisfied with their level of preparedness for exams and feel that their language skills have not advanced as expected, others find value in certain aspects of instruction, particularly in grammar and writing. However, there is a clear demand for more engaging, communicative teaching methods that allow students to actively practice and develop their language skills, particularly in speaking. To increase satisfaction and improve learning outcomes, the excerpts suggest to consider incorporating more interactive activities and reducing the reliance on heavy homework loads.

Challenges that students face in the classroom

In analyzing the challenges faced by students in the classroom during English courses, several key areas emerged, including vocabulary difficulties, the learning environment, time management, class focus and overwhelming homework load.

These challenges directly impact students' engagement and progression in their English learning journey. A significant challenge reported by multiple students is related to vocabulary acquisition. Several students repeatedly highlighted the difficulty they face with vocabulary:

Vocabulary (excerpt 1, 5, 6, 4, school a)

This repetition across several responses underscores the fact that vocabulary is a persistent issue. However, the students' struggles indicate that their current learning environment might not be adequately supporting vocabulary development, which could inhibit their overall language proficiency. Without a strong vocabulary foundation, students may find it difficult to engage with other language skills, such as reading, writing, and speaking.

Another major challenge that emerged was the inadequacy of the learning environment, which students felt was not conducive to effective learning. Several students pointed out specific issues:

The desks are cramped. (excerpt 2, school a)

There's no projector. There's only one projector screen, and it's used by the teachers. (excerpt 7, school a)

There is a lack of resources in the learning environment. (excerpt 5, school a)

Sometimes the speaker isn't available. (excerpt 6, school b)

Sometimes the speaker they use isn't audible to the students at the back. (excerpt 3, school b)

There is a TV available (excerpt 8, school b)

While some resources, such as a TV, are available, the overall lack of access to functioning equipment (like audible speakers) disrupts the learning process. These excerpts reflect that the students feel limited by the lack of basic resources such as projectors or sufficient space. Additionally, the issue of resource accessibility is compounded by logistical challenges in the classroom setup.

During elective classes, we spend time searching for a classroom, and half of the 40 minutes is lost. That's why I wish the classrooms were more accessible. The

regular English class is always held in the same room, but for electives, we have to go to a different room. Sometimes, if a room can't be found, we combine with another class. (excerpt 6, school a)

Students lose valuable class time when switching classrooms for elective lessons, which diminishes the already short 40-minute period. In such environments, students are hindered from fully participating and gaining the necessary skills.

Several students also expressed frustration that class time was often consumed by discussions about classroom issues rather than the actual lessons. This further detracted from their learning experience:

There's a lot of class discussions. Instead of lessons, we end up spending a lot of time on class discussions. They talk about what needs to be done in the class, what changes to make. They discuss class issues, not lessons.

(excerpt 1, school b)

Other students added on

That's right (excerpt 5, 6, school b)

This highlights a misallocation of classroom time, where the focus is shifted away from instructional content. Instead of engaging in learning activities that promote competency development, students are sidetracked by discussions unrelated to the English course itself. This detracts from their learning and impacts their ability to engage with the material. Several students expressed frustration about the time constraints in their lessons, which often prevent them from covering the entire lesson.

No, we can't manage [to cover the lesson in 40 mins] (excerpts 4, 5, school a)

This acknowledgment suggests that the 40-minute class period is insufficient for effective lesson coverage. As a result, it is potentially leading to workload for students, particularly regarding homework. The interviewer asked to clarify what they do with the remaining lesson, the students responded:

It's given as homework. (excerpt 2, 5, school a)

Furthermore, several students reported that the amount of homework assigned is overwhelming, leading them to resort to copying from peers rather than completing the work themselves.

We are given a lot of homework. It's hard to keep up with assignments from other subjects. We don't even understand the homework we are given. We copy from

other students, and we don't have a proper understanding in English. (excerpt 6, school b)

At least 4 pages of the notebook. It has to be submitted within one day. It usually takes 2, 3, or 4 days. (excerpt 8, school b)

This highlights that the workload might be excessive, and students are not receiving the support they need to understand their homework, resulting in surface-level learning. The heavy homework load, coupled with tight deadlines, places an undue burden on students, leaving little room for them to internalize and master the material.

These challenges include difficulties with vocabulary acquisition, a poorly resourced classroom environment, time constraints, an overwhelming homework load, and a misallocation of class time. These factors all negatively impact students' ability to engage with and benefit from their English courses, making it essential to address these challenges to create a more supportive, competency-driven learning environment.

More emphasis on textbook

The students' feedback highlights how the teaching approach is heavily focused on completing the textbook, sometimes at the expense of student understanding and engagement. The overemphasis on textbooks limits opportunities for more dynamic, interactive learning experiences, and leaves students struggling to keep up with the pace of the lessons. Students indicated that their lessons are predominantly based on the textbook. When they were asked what materials are used in class, students responded:

From our textbook (excerpt 1, 6, school b)

It's just different from the general education school textbooks. There's a book called "Prime Time." (excerpt 8, school b)

There are sample exams for state exams. We work from those. We definitely use them once in each lesson. After we complete them, the teacher gives us the answers. Some of them correct the answers on the spot. (excerpt 5, school b)

Even though the students are exposed to other materials than textbook, and sample exam for state exam, these excerpts highlight that the primary, if not sole, resource used in the classroom is the textbook.

One of the most significant concerns expressed by the students is the teacher's insistence on completing the textbook, even when students are confused or struggling to understand the material. A student shared:

> *The teacher says the book has to be completed. A girl in our class once asked, "Could you explain the previous lesson again? I didn't understand anything," to which the teacher responded, "Then what do you expect me to do about this book? It won't be finished otherwise. We are supposed to cover this today." The teacher insisted on finishing the book, so when we don't understand, we just move on to the next lesson without addressing the confusion.*
>
> (except 4, school b)

This excerpt reflects the rigid, fast-paced approach that prioritizes completing the textbook over ensuring that students fully understand the content. The pressure to finish the textbook results in lessons being rushed, with little room for revisiting or reinforcing difficult concepts. This method leaves many students feeling confused and left behind, as their individual learning needs are not adequately addressed. This suggests that a wider variety of materials and activities are encouraged to be incorporated to ensure that lessons are flexible enough to address student needs and encourage deeper learning, and to foster better comprehension and engagement.

Impact of teacher-student communication on student's learning

The excerpts reflect how the teacher's mood, communication style, and interactions with students can either enhance or hinder student learning. Negative communication patterns, such as harshness and impatience, create a classroom atmosphere where students feel afraid or embarrassed, leading to decreased participation and independent learning without guidance.

Students observed that the clarity of lessons often depends on the teacher's mood. One student noted:

> *If the teacher is stressed during the previous lesson, that lesson tends to be unclear. If the teacher is happy and smiling, it's clearer.* (excerpt 6, school b)

Another student added:

> *The homeroom teacher gets angry if there are problems in the class, and then the lesson becomes a bit difficult.* (excerpt 5, school b)

This feedback suggests that the emotional state of the teacher directly impacts the effectiveness of their teaching. When teachers are calm and positive, students perceive the lessons as clearer and more understandable. However, when the teacher is angry or stressed, it becomes harder for students to follow the material. This highlights the importance of maintaining a positive, supportive classroom atmosphere, as it directly affects students' ability to learn and engage with the content.

A major concern expressed by the students is the fear they feel toward their teacher.

> *There are four kids from the other group who are afraid of the teacher.* (excerpt 2, school b)
>
> *The whole class is afraid.* (excerpt 4, school b)
>
> *Both groups are generally afraid of her.* (excerpt 8, school b)

This fear appears to stem from the teacher's harsh communication style. For example, when students do not understand something and ask questions, they are met with negative responses:

> *Our old teacher used to explain things to us. But for our new teacher, when we say we don't understand, she replies, "What exactly were you learning?"* (excerpt 2, school b)
>
> She says, *"This is knowledge from seventh-grade material or from fifth grade!"* (excerpt 8, school b)

Such harsh responses discourage students from asking questions or seeking clarification, as they fear embarrassment or being belittled in front of their peers. One student added:

> *The new teacher belittles us in front of classmates. When you ask a question, she speaks harshly to us.* (excerpt 7, school b)

This creates an environment where students feel reluctant to engage, ask questions, or participate in discussions, leading to a breakdown in communication and learning.

The fear of being embarrassed or ridiculed for not understanding the material has pushed some students to avoid asking questions. One student shared:

> *To avoid feeling embarrassed in front of others, we learn on our own.* (excerpt 3, school b)

Another student echoed this sentiment:

> *I feel embarrassed to ask about something I didn't understand.* (excerpt 4, school b)

This avoidance of asking questions means that students are missing out on crucial opportunities to clarify their understanding and receive support from their teacher. Independent learning is important, but when it is driven by fear rather than curiosity or autonomy, it leads to gaps in understanding and skill development. Negative communication, such as harsh responses and impatience, fosters fear and embarrassment among students, leading to disengagement and independent learning driven by necessity rather than curiosity.

The synthesis explores students' contentment with English courses and English language teaching by integrating quantitative findings with qualitative insights to provide a comprehensive view of their experiences. The analysis highlights disparities in satisfaction across locations, grades, and specific aspects of the English course content and teaching practices, with qualitative data offering deeper context to the trends observed.

Quantitative findings reveal moderate satisfaction with English courses (M = 3.69 for teacher subject knowledge) and greater dissatisfaction with the course content, particularly its lack of real-world applications (M = 2.74). Regional disparities emerge, with Zavkhan students reporting the highest satisfaction levels (M = 3.45 for course content), while Ulaanbaatar students consistently report lower satisfaction. Similarly, 12th-grade students express higher contentment compared to 10th graders, indicating an upward trend in satisfaction as students progress through their education.

Qualitative findings further illustrate challenges contributing to these disparities, including inadequate preparation for state exams, a rigid focus on textbook completion, and insufficient opportunities for interactive, communicative learning. Students emphasized the overwhelming homework load and a lack of resources, such as projectors and accessible classrooms, which hinder engagement. Positive aspects, such as improvements in grammar and writing, were noted, but limited attention to speaking and listening skills left students feeling underprepared for real-world English use. Teacher communication styles also emerged as a critical factor, with some students highlighting supportive environments while others reported harsh or dismissive behavior that discouraged participation. This synthesis underscores the need for more practical, interactive learning and consistent teacher-student communication to enhance student satisfaction and learning outcomes. Addressing these issues can bridge the gap between

curriculum objectives and students' needs, particularly in fostering critical language competencies.

5.7 Summary of the results

Quantitative results

- The majority of teachers (83.1%) agree that the national curriculum's goals and objectives are clear, with 78.0% finding the learning objectives understandable, though 22.0% express uncertainty. Only 62.7% perceive alignment between curriculum goals and learning objectives, while 37.3% do not. Assessment goals and criteria are a significant concern, with 52.5% finding them unclear and feeling they do not align with the curriculum's objectives.
- Teachers exhibit varying levels of concern regarding the curriculum change, with a strong demand for information (Stage 1) as many scores above the 90th percentile, indicating eagerness to understand the curriculum's goals and structure. Despite high levels of unconcern (Stage 0), likely due to feeling overwhelmed or perceiving the curriculum as irrelevant, personal concerns (Stage 2) are moderate, reflecting some anxiety about roles and adequacy. Logistical challenges (Stage 3) show wide variability, with some teachers requiring significant support in resource allocation and time management. Concerns about the curriculum's direct impact on students (Stage 4) are low, while interest in collaboration (Stage 5) is moderate, with mixed levels of priority among teachers. Notably, many teachers are considering improvements or adaptations to the curriculum (Stage 6), reflected in high refocusing scores, highlighting a proactive interest in optimizing its effectiveness.
- Teachers report moderate support from national organizations (M = 3.19–3.29) and schools, with those having 2–5 years of experience perceiving the highest support, while those with 21–25 years report the lowest. Teachers generally feel confident and well-prepared in terms of knowledge, professional skills, and teaching methods, disagreeing with statements about limited knowledge or weak methods. However, they face significant pedagogical and logistical challenges, including aligning lessons with curriculum goals (50.8% find it difficult), addressing students' diverse needs (57.6%), and planning lessons based on competency-based education (61.0%). Limited time for lesson planning (79.7%)

and availability of teaching materials (71.2%) also pose major obstacles. Despite being prepared personally, external factors like time and resources hinder effective teaching.

- Teachers demonstrate strong practices in helping students master English skills, with high mean scores for providing examples (M=4.19) and explanations (M=3.71). Personalization is also emphasized, with high engagement in group work (M=3.74), independent learning (M=3.78), and additional support for students in need (M=3.97), reflecting consistent and uniformly applied personalized instruction. Similarly, teachers focus on developing resilience and persistence through consistent practices, such as offering advice during challenges (M=4.31), recognizing when extra time is needed (M=4.14), and providing support after poor grades (M=4.00). However, flexible assessments are less commonly used, with lower mean scores for presentations (M=2.53) and project-based learning (M=2.16), and considerable variability among teachers.
- The Kruskal-Wallis H test reveals no significant differences across Ulaanbaatar, Zavkhan, Govi-Altai, and Bayankhongor in the use of competency-based practices like mastery of competencies, personalization, and skill development. However, flexible assessment varies significantly by location ($H = 8.601$, $p = .035$), with Govi-Altai demonstrating the highest implementation (mean rank = 39.32), while Bayankhongor (mean rank = 24.03) and Zavkhan show lower usage.
- Teachers prioritize grammar (M = 4.13) and show attentiveness to speaking (M = 3.69) and listening (M = 3.82) skills. Across locations, grammar receives the highest focus, with mean scores ranging from 3.85 in Govi-Altai to 4.39 in Ulaanbaatar. While Ulaanbaatar shows slightly higher attentiveness to speaking and writing skills, the overall emphasis on foundational language skills, particularly grammar and listening, is consistent across regions, reflecting a standardized approach to English instruction.
- In English courses, nearly half of the students (49.4%) reported "sometimes" having opportunities to demonstrate competencies in multiple ways, while 26.9% indicated they "often" did. However, 19.4% were uncertain, and a substantial 61.1% skipped the question, indicating a lack of understanding about competency-based grading. This highlights the need for educators to better

communicate the goals and benefits of competency-based grading to enhance its impact on student learning.

- The findings show mixed levels of student exposure to competency-based learning. While competency relevance is well-communicated, assessment criteria lack clarity. Support for skill development and disposition is moderate, but individual needs are often overlooked. Personalization opportunities are limited, and flexible assessments are underused, favoring traditional exams over diverse methods like projects or presentations.
- Based on the Chi-square test results, there are significant differences across provinces in students' exposure to competency-based learning practices. Zavkhan province demonstrates stronger exposure to CBL, providing more consistent opportunities for mastery, skill development, and personalized learning compared to Ulaanbaatar, where engagement and support are less frequent. Zavkhan and Govi-Altai also offer more diverse assessment types, while students in Ulaanbaatar have fewer opportunities to showcase competencies through varied methods.
- In terms of grade, 12th grade students report significantly greater exposure to demonstrating mastery, skill development, and personalization compared to 10th-grade students, where these practices are less frequent. Exposure improves steadily through 11th grade, highlighting a progressive increase in support and opportunities. Flexible assessment practices show no significant differences across grades and are moderately implemented, with most students across all grades.
- Students demonstrate confidence in basic listening, reading, writing, and grammar skills but require further development in advanced competencies to align with CBE goals. Listening and speaking skills need more focus on interactive and real-world applications, while reading and writing skills would benefit from more work on complex texts and structured academic tasks. Advanced grammar instruction is also needed to improve fluency and accuracy in complex contexts.
- Listening skills showed the highest regional variation, with Govi-Altai students reporting the strongest proficiency (mean rank = 209.57), followed by Zavkhan (190.08) and Bayankhongor (172.31), while Ulaanbaatar students had the lowest (169.64). Speaking, reading, writing, and grammar skills showed no significant

differences across regions. However, Govi-Altai consistently ranked highest in all these skills, indicating slightly higher confidence levels, while Ulaanbaatar generally reported lower mean ranks across all categories.

- The analysis found no significant grade-wise differences in perceived English language skills, with students across 10th, 11th, and 12th grades showing consistent experiences in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar. However, slightly higher mean ranks for listening, reading, and grammar in 12th grade suggest that cumulative learning over time may boost student confidence. Similarly, the gender-wise analysis revealed no significant differences in self-perceived language skills between male and female students. Mean ranks for all skills, including listening, speaking, and reading, were closely aligned, indicating that gender does not influence students' perceptions of their English proficiency.
- Students expressed moderate dissatisfaction with the English course's lack of real-life applications, with low scores for addressing real-world issues (M = 2.74) and balancing theory with practice (M = 2.78). While teachers were rated highly for subject knowledge (M = 3.69), respect (M = 3.62), and support (M = 3.61), suggesting a supportive learning environment, students were less satisfied with English course than teaching quality.
- Students were moderately dissatisfied with the English course's lack of real-life applications, with low scores for addressing practical issues (M = 2.74) and balancing theory with practice (M = 2.78). While teachers were rated highly for knowledge (M = 3.69), respect (M = 3.62), and support (M = 3.61), satisfaction with the English course was lower than teaching quality. Regionally, Zavkhan students reported the highest satisfaction, Ulaanbaatar the lowest, and Govi-Altai and Bayankhongor showed moderate levels, indicating room for improvement. Grade-wise, satisfaction was lowest in 10th grade, improved in 11th grade, and peaked in 12th grade, reflecting the increasing relevance of the curriculum. Gender differences in satisfaction were not significant, with both male and female students reporting moderate satisfaction.

Qualitative results

- The English curriculum faces several challenges, including insufficient opportunities for speaking skills due to time constraints and a heavy focus on grammar and vocabulary, driven by the state exam's lack of assessment for

listening and speaking. Teachers criticize the curriculum for being overly theoretical, lacking real-world applications, and frequently changing. Additionally, the curriculum is described as either too advanced or too simplistic for its target age group, leading to disengagement and frustration. Its extensive content also makes it difficult for teachers to complete within the allocated time, further hindering effective learning.

- Teachers face significant challenges due to a lack of resources, including insufficient technology (e.g., no printers, TVs, projectors, or audio equipment) and inconsistent internet access in classrooms. Time constraints further hinder teaching, leading to an emphasis on grammar and vocabulary while overlooking speaking and listening skills and leaving little opportunity to address content beyond the textbook. A mismatch between textbook content and student proficiency levels adds to the frustration. Professional development initiatives, while present, are often inadequate, usually theoretical, and not practical, with limited access for teachers due to workload disparities, as only a small number can attend training sessions.
- Teaching approaches vary by experience, with less experienced teachers blending student-centered and teacher-centered methods, while more experienced teachers rely on teacher-centered strategies for content coverage, especially under time constraints. The English curriculum is criticized for lacking real-life applications, failing to align with students' future needs in using English practically. Assessment criteria are perceived as unclear and complex, leading to subjective and inconsistent evaluations, with a predominant focus on writing and reading skills, while speaking skills remain undervalued.
- The qualitative analysis highlights students' limited exposure to CBL practices, with teacher-centered methods prevailing in classrooms. Textbook exercises and grammar-focused instruction dominate, leaving little room for interactive, student-centered approaches or real-life applications of English. Practical use of English is rare, as students report minimal in-class activities encouraging communicative contexts while speaking and listening skills are mostly neglected compared to the emphasis on writing. Active learning is limited, with students primarily seeking clarification on grammar rather than engaging with broader learning activities, and teachers often taking a reactive rather than proactive role,

focusing on active students while overlooking quieter ones. Assessment methods rely on tests and homework, lacking fair and individualized evaluations that align with CBE principles. Peer collaboration is minimal, with group work occurring only a few times per term, and students express dissatisfaction due to the lack of personalized support and inconsistent teacher engagement.

- Students expressed mixed satisfaction with English lessons, appreciating strengths in grammar and writing instruction but feeling underprepared for exams and lacking practical language skills, particularly in speaking. They highlighted challenges such as vocabulary difficulties, inadequate learning environments, overwhelming homework, and misallocated class time, all of which hinder engagement and learning. An overemphasis on textbook completion at the expense of flexibility and understanding further exacerbates these issues, leaving students feeling rushed and unsupported. Additionally, negative teacher-student communication, characterized by impatience and harshness, creates fear and discourages students from seeking help, leading to disengagement and gaps in understanding.

CHAPTER 6 – DISCUSSION

The discussion section serves as a platform to explore findings that emerged from English teachers and students in upper-secondary education by comparing or contrasting with each other, emphasizing the added value of the mixed-methods approach in providing a comprehensive understanding of the research questions. The section also interprets the findings of the study in relation to the theoretical frameworks by connecting them to key theoretical foundations, including CBE, Vygotsky's theory, Piaget's theory, and existing literature. The section also acknowledges the limitations of the study, ensuring a transparent narrative that considers the scope and boundaries of the research. The findings are multifaceted. Therefore, the structure of the discussion is presented under the key elements of CBE practices.

6.1 Teacher-centred vs student-centered approach in the classroom

The findings from both quantitative and qualitative research demonstrate that the teacher-centered approach remains dominant in English language classrooms in upper-secondary education in Mongolia. This aligns with traditional teacher-centered pedagogy, which is defined as an instructional approach where the teacher, regarded as the primary authority on the subject matter, takes full responsibility for structuring and delivering knowledge, with lectures serving as the predominant mode of communication (Mascolo, 2009). While teachers perceive themselves as facilitators of learning, students' responses reveal a discrepancy between instructional intent and experience. Teachers believe they provide sufficient examples. However, students rate these aspects lower, recognizing teachers' efforts but not perceiving them as fully sufficient. Although teachers report explaining how individual competencies and skills will be assessed, students' responses indicate a lack of clarity, suggesting a gap between what teachers believe they communicate and what students comprehend. This discrepancy echoes previous findings that teachers often assume they are acting as facilitators while still maintaining control over classroom activities (Mascolo, 2009). Generational differences in teaching approaches were also evident. Younger teachers tend to implement more student-centered methods, incorporating interactive and competency-based learning strategies, whereas experienced predominantly rely on direct explanations and textbook exercises. This aligns with the constructivist perspective, which emphasizes the idea that individuals construct their understanding of the world as a product of their interactions with it (Mascolo, 2009).

Student-centered learning aims to cultivate active, self-directed learners, fostering environments that grant students greater autonomy in the learning process (Mascolo, 2009). However, in Mongolian classrooms, cultural expectations play a significant role, as students traditionally view teachers as the sole sources of knowledge and follow a hierarchical interaction model. This cultural perspective may contribute to students' limited autonomy in learning.

Despite recognizing the benefits of student-centered approaches, many teachers express difficulties in fully integrating them due to various constraints, including time limitations, curriculum challenges, lack of resources, and limited access to professional development opportunities. The upper-secondary English curriculum encourages teachers to use *active participation methodology* [идэвхитэй оролцооны арга], which aims to engage students through real-life needs, experiences, and interests while developing all core language skills (MECSS, 2019, p. 230). However, practical implementation is hindered by structural challenges. Teachers report that the English curriculum of upper-secondary education presents significant barriers, with overlapping learning objectives across grades, frequent changes, vague wording, and overly dense content making comprehensive coverage difficult. This reflects the concerns raised by the Mongolian Institute for Educational Research[3] and UNESCO, which highlights inconsistencies in learning goals and formative assessments, resulting in ambiguities and complications in teaching practices as in the following.

> Across the formal education sector, there are big differences and gaps in learning goals, objectives and their formative and stage level assessments. This gives rise to ambiguities, difficulties and complications observed in teaching and learning practices because interrelated features of competencies, content knowledge, pedagogical approaches and so on for each education level have not been determined comprehensively and in detail (MIER, 2019a; UNESCO, 2020).

Resource limitations, such as the lack of printers, TVs, projectors, audio equipment, and inconsistent internet access, as well as limited classroom availability for elective courses, further hinder effective teaching. Additionally, professional development opportunities are not available for all teachers, with only a small proportion selected for training. One teacher highlighted the difficulty of attending training, stating that

[3] Currently, it is known as Mongolian National Institute for Educational Research (MNIER)

> *The school administration arranges for teachers to participate in training. However, out of 10 foreign language teachers, only 2 get to attend. They can't involve everyone. They send the two teachers with fewer classes, and the remaining teachers have to cover those classes, so it works out like that* (excerpt 3, school a)

The limited number of training slots means that not all teachers receive equal access to capacity-building opportunities. When some teachers attend training, their colleagues must cover their classes, leading to additional burdens on those remaining. In Mongolia, professional development opportunities for teachers are often centralized, requiring them to travel to urban centers for training. This process can be both costly and time-consuming, particularly for educators working in rural areas. To address these challenges, a more sustainable approach would be to bring training to schools rather than requiring teachers to travel. Expert trainers could conduct on-site professional development sessions, ensuring equal access to learning opportunities. Additionally, considering the harsh weather in winter, online platforms and recorded sessions should be leveraged more to provide flexible training options that allow teachers to participate without disrupting their school schedules. At the school level, incentive-based strategies could help mitigate the burden on teachers covering additional classes while their colleagues attend training. Schools could offer stipends or other incentives to recognize their extra workload and implement adjusted scheduling during training periods to ensure a fair distribution of responsibilities. These measures would promote a more inclusive and practical approach to professional development, making it more accessible for all teachers across Mongolia.

On the other hand, students generally perceive that lecture-based instruction is not the dominant mode of teaching**.** While quantitative findings suggest that students do not perceive lecture-based instruction as the dominant method, qualitative insights reveal that lessons are primarily lecture-based, requiring students to quickly copy notes from the board, often struggling to keep up. Interactive activities such as debates, role-playing, and collaborative discussions are largely absent, and lessons remain focused on grammar explanations, textbook exercises, and homework rather than communicative or student-driven learning. Students express frustration over the lack of engagement and limited opportunities. This discrepancy may indicate that students experience some variation in teaching methods. Although some teachers attempt to engage students through student-centered approaches, these efforts are inconsistent. Further research is needed to explore

how students interpret teaching styles in quantitative surveys versus qualitative descriptions of classroom realities.

Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development suggests that learning is enhanced when students interact with more knowledgeable individuals, highlighting the potential benefits of peer collaboration. However, the current classroom environment in Mongolia does not fully support such practices. Ultimately, while there is a theoretical shift towards more student-centered approaches in policy, the reality of classroom implementation remains to embed inconsistent student-centered methods. Addressing the constraints of time, curriculum challenges, resource limitations, and professional development accessibility is crucial to bridging the gap between instructional goals and student experiences. Moving towards a more constructivist and interactive approach will require structural changes that align educational policies with practical classroom realities.

6.2 Real-life application

By the time students complete 12th grade, they would be able to function as independent language users who "can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst traveling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans" (Mira, Batchimeg, Dechmaa, & Ariunaa, 2019, p. 7). In order to achieve it, the upper-secondary English curriculum encourages the task-based methodology and communicative methodology as in the following.

> The task-based methodology [Бодит даалгаварт суурилсан арга зүй] in language teaching focuses on engaging students in real-world tasks related to the topic being studied. Instead of passive learning, students actively participate in activities such as listing and categorizing vocabulary based on meaning, making comparisons, and sharing personal opinions and experiences. Through these creative exercises, assignments, and project-based tasks, students develop their language skills in a meaningful and interactive way. When implementing this approach, lessons are designed to enhance the core language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) while ensuring effective time management for task completion. Additionally, the methodology considers individual differences by assigning appropriate tasks tailored to each student's needs. To support learning, necessary resources and materials are carefully developed, enabling students to complete their assignments and projects. Communicative Methodology for Language Learning [Хэл сурах, сургах коммуникатив арга зүй] aims to develop and enhance

> learners' comprehensive language competence. Instead of making students memorize isolated vocabulary, grammar rules, and structures, it focuses on and selects exercises and tasks that align with communication goals and practical needs. During the learning process, the teacher plays a key role as a facilitator, guide, monitor, organizer, and evaluator to support students' progress effectively (MECSS, 2019, p. 230).

However, these elements are absent in the classroom, as evidenced by the findings derived from English students' data. A recurring theme in their responses is the absence of opportunities to use English in practical contexts, which contradicts the fundamental goals of CBE. CBE is aligned with real-world needs, engaging students in problem-solving that mirrors actual scenarios. Learning outcomes focus on practical knowledge, skills, and behaviors required in real-life contexts (Wang & Maa, 2021). CBE connects competencies directly to labor market needs, equipping students with skills that are immediately relevant in professional settings (EU, 2010). Nevertheless, students report that they seldom apply what they learn, as their English usage is primarily restricted to exercises and homework rather than meaningful communication or interactive tasks.

Furthermore, students express a strong desire for more engaging classroom activities, such as competitions and contests, which they believe would reinforce their learning and enhance their motivation. While some schools organize initiatives like the "Month for English," these events are infrequent, typically held only once or twice per year, and fail to provide consistent opportunities for real-world language practice. Integrating real-life application into language learning is essential, as it encourages students to apply their competencies in simulated or authentic situations, thereby enhancing their readiness for workforce demands. Emphasizing real-world application helps bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, ensuring that students are adequately prepared for professional challenges and capable of navigating complex work environments (Gilyazova, 2022). However, the findings suggest that while some efforts are made to incorporate real-life applications, they are not systematically embedded into daily instruction. As a result, students receive limited exposure to communicative and experiential learning, which restricts their ability to develop practical language proficiency.

The findings derived from English teacher data reinforce students' responses and concerns about the lack of real-life application in English language education. English teachers express that they face challenges including that the upper-secondary English curriculum remains academic and lacks practical relevance, failing to equip students with

essential skills for real-world use. Furthermore, they find that while the curriculum goals are understandable, they do not adequately prepare students for future needs, particularly in developing all four language skills, with speaking being the most neglected.

Furthermore, teachers highlighted that another challenge is the misalignment between the curriculum and students' cultural and developmental needs, which hinders the real-life application of knowledge. Educators emphasize the importance of integrating the curriculum with Mongolia's cultural and social contexts while ensuring that the content is age-appropriate. Without these adaptations, students may struggle to engage with the material, leading to decreased motivation and a sense of disconnection from their learning experience. This concern aligns with UNESCO and MIER's stance, which underscores the need for greater attention to be paid to education on culture and cultural heritage, intangible heritage, arts education and issues, and embedding all these into the curriculum, in order to ensure that local knowledge, values and heritages, including nomadic culture, and local creative industries are validated (MIER, 2019a; UNESCO, 2020).

To enhance the effectiveness of language education, it is essential to integrate real-life applications into the learning process. As Mascolo (2009, p. 11) emphasizes, "All learning occurs by doing; all doing is a form of acting". This perspective underscores the necessity of providing students with opportunities to actively engage in meaningful tasks that mirror real-world experiences. Moreover, if students construct knowledge through action, then it becomes important to provide students with an opportunity to engage in the types of action that will allow them to construct for themselves the knowledge at hand (Mascolo, 2009). By incorporating practical, hands-on activities into the curriculum, educators can foster deeper understanding, improve student motivation, and bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, ultimately preparing learners for real-world communication and professional success.

6.3 Collaborative learning

Vygotsky's theory posits that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the learning process, asserting that knowledge construction occurs through meaningful engagement with peers and adults (Blake & Pope, 2008). Research has consistently highlighted the advantages of collaborative learning over traditional pedagogical approaches, demonstrating its positive impact on student achievement, engagement, and persistence.

As summarized by Barkley et al. (2005, as cited in Mascolo, 2009, p. 15), collaborative learning fosters improved educational outcomes across multiple dimensions.

> (a) students in collaborative learning classrooms exhibited higher levels of achievement and persistence than students in traditional classrooms; (b) improved performance was stronger when students were assessed with instructor-generated examinations than with standardized tests; (c) students described collaborative learning more positively than traditional learning experiences; (d) meetings among students that occurred outside of class produced greater achievement than in class collaborations (Mascolo, 2009, p. 15).

However, findings indicate that these opportunities in the classroom are not fully utilized, as observed in the gap between instructional strategies and actual student experiences. A notable contrast emerges between teachers' engagement and students' experiences with collaborative learning. Teachers reported a strong commitment to fostering both group-based and independent learning. These responses indicate that teachers perceive themselves as actively facilitating various instructional approaches that align with CBE principles. However, students' responses in both quantitative and qualitative paint a different picture. The data suggests that small-group learning is infrequent and inconsistent, limiting opportunities for meaningful peer collaboration. While some students acknowledged participating in group work, they noted that such activities occur only a few times per term. The predominance of individual tasks over collaborative ones indicates that student-centered, interactive learning is not a central feature of classroom instruction. This discrepancy suggests a gap between teachers' instructional intentions and students' actual learning experiences. The limited use of group work may stem from structural constraints such as time limitations,the English curriculum's tendency to be academic and theoretical, or a lack of professional development on effective collaborative learning techniques.

One of the core principles of CBE is collaborative learning**,** which should foster meaningful peer interactions, problem-solving, and co-construction of knowledge (Sturgis & Casey, 2018). However, despite teachers' stated intentions, students in the study reported infrequent engagement in small-group learning, highlighting a gap between pedagogical strategies and classroom realities. One potential explanation is the tendency to employ teacher-centered methodologies in the classroom, where direct instruction and individual tasks overshadow interactive, student-driven approaches (Gervais, 2016). In this sense, teachers may prioritize content delivery over fostering the demonstration of mastery through social interaction, which is a core principle of CBE.

In competency-based classrooms, collaborative learning should be intentionally structured to provide students with meaningful opportunities to engage in peer interactions that support the development of essential competencies (Sturgis & Casey, 2018). The reported infrequency of group work suggests that student-centered learning is not being fully realized, thereby limiting students' ability to develop key collaborative skills. To align collaborative learning with CBE principles, it is essential to define collaboration as an explicit competency with measurable objectives. This would ensure that students are systematically assessed on their ability to engage in teamwork, communicate effectively, and solve problems collaboratively (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Additionally, the integration of structured, ongoing group activities within a flexible, student-centered pedagogical approach is necessary to ensure that collaboration becomes a consistent and meaningful part of the learning experience (Hess et al., 2020). Providing teachers with professional development in designing and assessing competency-based collaborative activities is also crucial, as it would equip educators with the tools needed to facilitate student-driven learning environments effectively (Hess et al., 2020). Finally, the implementation of performance-based assessments that require students to demonstrate collaborative skills in authentic contexts can help reinforce the role of peer interactions in competency development (Sturgis & Casey, 2018).

6.4 Personalized learning

Personalization in CBE for English language learning is a crucial element in ensuring that students engage with meaningful, relevant, and effective learning experiences. Personalization tailors instruction to individual student needs, strengths, and interests while maintaining a structured competency-based framework. Within CBE, students are expected to advance based on their demonstrated mastery rather than progressing through a traditional time-based system (Sturgis & Casey, 2018). The analysis of personalization in English language learning presents both teacher and student perspectives, highlighting the effectiveness and challenges of this approach in a competency-based framework. Teachers report strong engagement in personalization, consistently providing additional support to students in need. The low variability in teacher responses suggests that these practices are widely applied, demonstrating a commitment to addressing diverse student needs. This aligns with CBE principles, which emphasize that learning should be student-

centered, with instruction and assessment designed to support individual progression (Wang & Maa, 2021). In competency-based English language education, educators act as instructional designers who identify language demands, craft relevant lesson plans, and integrate cross-disciplinary content to ensure that students achieve mastery. However, research highlights that many teachers are not adequately prepared for this evolving role, as traditional teacher education programs often fail to align with the pedagogical shifts required for personalized, competency-based instruction (Wang & Maa, 2021).

From a student perspective, personalization in CBE is designed to ensure that learners have control over their educational pathways, offering them choice in how they learn, voice in shaping their learning experiences, and multiple pathways for demonstrating mastery (Sturgis & Casey, 2018). However, despite teachers' efforts, student experiences with personalized support vary. While some students feel their teachers are responsive when they need extra help, others perceive inconsistencies in support and differentiated instruction across classrooms. This discrepancy raises concerns about the effectiveness of implementation, as true personalization in CBE requires consistency in instructional strategies, assessment feedback, and opportunities for students to actively engage in their learning process. Certain aspects, such as guidance on competency progress and written feedback, are viewed as insufficient, which suggests that while teachers are making efforts to personalize learning, structural challenges, such as large class sizes, lack of professional development, or unclear competency frameworks, may hinder full implementation (Wang & Maa, 2021).

Furthermore, some students noted a difference in support levels compared to previous teachers, with concerns about limited hands-on guidance and one-on-one feedback. This highlights a critical issue in CBE implementation: while the model is designed to support individual learning progress, achieving equity in personalization depends on adequate training, resources, and systemic support for teachers. Without intentional design, personalization can exacerbate inequities rather than address them. Schools must implement systematic supports such as competency-based performance assessments, ongoing formative feedback, and flexible pacing mechanisms (Sturgis & Casey, 2018). Additionally, pre-service and in-service teacher training must emphasize competency-based instructional design, assessment literacy, and adaptive teaching strategies to better equip educators for this instructional model (Wang & Maa, 2021). In conclusion, while personalization in CBE offers a promising approach to English language learning, its

success depends on the effective preparation of teachers, structured implementation, and the provision of necessary supports for students to thrive. Addressing these factors ensures that competency-based education fulfills its goal of fostering independent, engaged, and competent learners.

6.5 Assessment

The learning guideline for upper-secondary education outlines various types and forms of assessment tasks. These include traditional tests as well as performance-based assessment tasks, which encompass debates, essays, discussions, presentations or speeches, project work, portfolios, reportage such as interviews or field reports, dramatic performances such as role-playing, instructional guidelines, reports, and micro-research or case studies. The latter involves developing and testing simple research methods and tools based on specific issues or cases, analyzing results, summarizing conclusions, and conducting statistical processing. Additionally, design and innovation tasks, including model creation and design development, are also included as part of the assessment framework (Mira, Batchimeg, Dechmaa, & Ariunaa, 2019). These approaches, in theory, align with CBE, which emphasizes diverse and practical assessment methods to evaluate students' skills more holistically. However, despite the inclusion of such varied assessment strategies in official guidelines, findings from both teachers and students suggest that actual classroom practices remain largely dependent on traditional assessments, particularly written tests and exams. The findings from both teachers and students suggest a reliance on traditional assessment methods, such as tests and exams, with fewer opportunities for student-centered evaluations like presentations and project-based learning. While both groups acknowledge the limited implementation of alternative assessment approaches, their perspectives highlight different challenges. Teachers emphasize structural barriers, such as unclear assessment criteria, time constraints, and resource limitations, which make it difficult to implement diverse evaluation methods consistently. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is the structural and policy-related challenges teachers face when implementing diverse assessment methods. For instance, UNESCO (2020, p. 170) notes that changes in education policy have influenced assessment frameworks, particularly with the removal of explicit education content and assessment standards. As stated, “In April and December of 2016, the following principal changes were made to Chapter 2 of the law, education content standards were replaced

by curriculum, removing education content and assessment standards (Article 10.2, 11.1, 11.4, 11.5)". While this shift was intended to provide more curricular flexibility, it has potentially resulted in a lack of clear guidelines for teachers, leading them to rely on their own judgment rather than standardized objectives. This aligns with teachers' concerns about ambiguous assessment criteria and the subsequent subjectivity in evaluation.

Furthermore, the learning guideline encourages the application of Bloom's taxonomy to structure assessments based on cognitive levels, with the aim of ensuring that students' learned knowledge and skills are evaluated in accordance with learning objectives and criteria defined in the curriculum (Mira, Batchimeg, Dechmaa, Ariunaa, et al., 2019, p. 62). Bloom's framework is widely recognized for its ability to classify cognitive processes in a hierarchical manner, ranging from lower-order thinking skills, such as remembering and understanding, to higher-order skills, such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating.

> According to Mira et al (2019, p. 8), Benjamin Bloom created taxonomy of measurable verbs to help us to describe and classify observable knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors and abilities. The theory is based upon the idea that there are levels of observable actions that indicate something is happening in the brain (cognitive activity). By creating learning objectives using measurable verbs, you indicate explicitly what the student must do in order to demonstrate learning. Learning objectives are formulated in accordance to the cognitive levels of Bloom's taxonomy to assess and evaluate the student's knowledge and abilities.

By using measurable verbs, educators are expected to define learning outcomes that explicitly indicate what students should demonstrate in their assessments. However, despite its theoretical applicability, UNESCO (2020, p. 171) raises a critical issue, stating that "the critically important content requirements/standards have been replaced by general articles of education laws, in which learning objectives are not amenable to measurement based on Bloom's taxonomy levels included in the core curricula". This reflects a fundamental challenge, while Bloom's taxonomy provides a structured approach to assessment, its implementation is hindered by the lack of concrete learning objectives within the existing curriculum.

In practice, this ambiguity results in a strong emphasis on assessing writing and reading skills over speaking and listening, as reported by teachers and students. Teachers note that due to time constraints and resource limitations such as the lack of listening materials, they tend to prioritize written assessments, which are easier to administer and grade. Consequently, students perceive that assessment primarily evaluates task

completion rather than deeper skill development. Additionally, while CBE encourages active engagement through peer and self-assessment, students report that these forms of evaluation are rarely incorporated into their learning experience. As a result, assessment practices do not fully capture students' progress across all language competencies. Despite some teachers attempting to implement more flexible assessment methods, such as presentations and project-based tasks, these efforts appear inconsistent and largely dependent on individual teachers' initiative rather than systemic implementation. Addressing these issues requires not only clearer assessment guidelines but also enhancing their capacity to conduct competency-based assessments. Moreover, greater access to resources, such as audio materials for listening assessments, could help balance the focus on different language skills.

6.6 English language skills of students

Use of grammar

Both data sets consistently indicate that grammar receives the most instructional attention. Due to the time constraint, teachers feel compelled to dedicate significant instructional time to grammar, often at the expense of communicative skill development. Students confirm this emphasis, describing their learning experience as highly grammar-focused. However, from their perspective, this hinders their ability to develop practical language skills, such as speaking fluency and conversational competence. While teachers recognize the need for a balanced approach, lack of time limits their ability to implement communicative teaching methods. This misalignment between instructional intent and student experience suggests that a more competency-based approach is needed to support functional language use. It is challenging to shift from traditional, grammar-centered pedagogy to a more communicative and competency-oriented approach (Rogers, 2021). Richard and Rogers (2014) critique traditional grammar-based methods, such as the grammar-translation method, for their overemphasis on form over function. The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach emerged as a response, advocating that learners should develop both fluency and accuracy in natural communication. However, some scholars argue that CLT can lead to the fossilization of errors when grammar is not sufficiently addressed (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). From the students' perspectives, the approach in the classroom creates a learning experience that prioritizes grammatical accuracy over practical language use. This is consistent with previous

studies indicating that students in traditionally structured classrooms often struggle with speaking fluency and real-world conversational competence due to the lack of meaningful communicative opportunities in the curriculum (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). A competency-based framework, which emphasizes skill-based progression and authentic language use, has been advocated as a means to address this gap, ensuring that students are not only grammatically proficient but also able to apply their language skills effectively in real-world contexts (Sturgis & Casey, 2018).

Speaking and listening skills

Teachers believe that listening receives more instructional focus than speaking, while reading and writing are given even greater priority. However, they recognize that limited time makes it challenging to fully incorporate speaking into classroom activities. At the same time, due to a lack of resources, listening is often deprioritized. As a result, they need to prioritize certain skills at the expense of others, leading to reduced opportunities for meaningful oral communication. Students' perspectives reinforce this concern, indicating that speaking practice is largely absent from classroom instruction. Their responses suggest that spoken communication is limited to reading aloud from texts, with little opportunity for interactive discussion or conversation practice. Similarly, students describe listening practice as inconsistent, often relying on teacher dictation rather than exposure to authentic spoken English. This indicates that while teachers may believe they are incorporating listening activities, these activities may not be as effective as intended. These findings emerged from teacher perception and student experience suggest that listening and speaking activities are not sufficiently emphasized in a way that promotes communicative competence. While teachers attribute this to practical limitations, students experience it as a fundamental gap in their language education.

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory emphasizes the fundamental role of social interaction in learning. Piaget's (1952) constructivist theory posits that learning occurs through active engagement and discovery rather than passive reception. CBE principles emphasize learner autonomy and competency development through active participation (Spady, 1994). CBLT emphasizes communicative competence, requiring learners to actively engage in speaking and listening tasks that simulate authentic interactions (Gervais, 2016). The overarching remarks from these frameworks are that learning is an active, learner-driven process that involves interaction, discovery, and skill development.

However, the findings contradict and indicate that oral communication is confined to reading aloud from texts, with limited interactive discussion. This suggests that students are not receiving adequate scaffolding opportunities to develop speaking proficiency through social interaction, with students passively receiving information rather than engaging in meaningful communicative exchanges (Auerbach, 1986; Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). The absence of interactive discussion in Mongolian classrooms limits students' ability to negotiate meaning, an essential process for developing fluency.

Teachers' attribution of limited speaking and listening activities to practical constraints such as inadequate time and resources aligns with broader discussions in the literature on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in under-resourced settings (Nguyen & Gu, 2013). The absence of appropriate technological tools such as audio equipment, projectors, and internet access further exacerbates the challenge of integrating listening activities effectively. Without exposure to diverse accents, speech rates, and interactive dialogues, students miss crucial opportunities to develop listening comprehension skills essential for real-world communication (J. Field, 2009).

Reading and writing skills

Both teachers and students agree that reading is the most consistently provided skill, though writing is also frequently practiced. Teachers see reading as fundamental to language acquisition and easier to integrate into structured lesson plans. However, qualitative findings reveal that reading instruction does not necessarily foster deeper engagement. Students confirm that reading is practiced more consistently than other skills, but they note that they read the texts out loud. Similarly, while teachers report that writing assessments are more common than speaking and listening assessments, students describe writing as primarily consisting of repetitive exercises and copying from textbooks rather than original composition. Both teachers and students recognize reading and writing as integral to instruction, but their depth of engagement is limited. This reflects broader concerns in applied linguistics regarding skill-based approaches that prioritize coverage over depth (Spada & Lightbown, 2008).

Grabe and Stoller (2013) argue that reading is a gateway skill that enhances vocabulary acquisition, comprehension strategies, and overall language proficiency. However, the qualitative findings in this study indicate that reading instruction does not

necessarily foster deep engagement. Students report that reading is primarily conducted aloud, a practice that is common in many traditional classrooms but has been critiqued for its limited role in comprehension development (Gibbons, 2015). While oral reading can improve pronunciation and fluency, it does not necessarily develop critical reading skills or the ability to synthesize and evaluate information (Koda, 2005). This limited engagement aligns with research findings from studies on secondary education in Asian contexts, where English instruction often emphasizes rote learning and reading for comprehension over analytical and inferential skills (Hu & McKay, 2012). Similarly, the findings highlight that writing assessments are more frequently used than those for speaking and listening. However, students describe writing exercises as primarily consisting of copying from textbooks rather than producing original compositions. This instructional approach reflects broader pedagogical tendencies in EFL contexts, where writing is often treated as a means to reinforce grammatical accuracy rather than a communicative skill (Hyland, 2019). Process-oriented approaches to writing, which emphasize planning, drafting, and revision, are largely absent in many traditional classrooms, leading to limited development of students' expressive and analytical writing abilities (Leki et al., 2010).

6.7 Barriers to effective English language teaching and learning

Several challenges emerged from the findings, including common issues such as time constraints and resource limitations, as well as distinct challenges faced by students and teachers.

Time constraints

Both teachers and students highlighted time constraints and resource-related barriers that significantly hinder the learning process. Teachers and students expressed frustration with insufficient instructional time. Teachers noted that the period of English courses restrict their ability to address the curriculum comprehensively, often resulting in a focus on grammar to the detriment of listening and speaking. Students echoed this sentiment, reporting incomplete lesson coverage, which is frequently relegated to homework. Empirical studies have underscored the impact of time constraints on language acquisition. For instance, research indicates that the amount of time allocated to reading tasks substantially affects comprehension outcomes. A study examining the effects of

time constraints on second language reading comprehension found that limited time adversely impacted learners' performance, particularly on higher-order inferential questions (Alshammari, 2013). Similarly, investigations into writing tasks reveal that extended time allowances can enhance the quality of students' written outputs, suggesting that time pressure may compromise writing performance (Fitria et al., 2014).

In addressing these challenges, Competency-Based Education (CBE) frameworks offer a potential solution by emphasizing mastery of specific skills at an individualized pace (Boahin, 2018). CBE shifts the focus from time-bound instructional models to learner-centered approaches, where progression is determined by demonstrated competence rather than time spent in class (Gervais, 2016). This paradigm allows learners to allocate time according to their unique needs, potentially mitigating the adverse effects of time constraints (Gervais, 2016). However, the implementation of CBE in English language education is not without criticism. One concern is that the flexibility inherent in CBE may lead to inconsistencies in learning outcomes, as learners progress at varying rates. Additionally, the development of appropriate assessment tools that accurately measure competencies without being influenced by time constraints remains a complex task. A study exploring the practical application of CBE in language teaching highlighted the necessity for clear guidelines and robust assessment frameworks to ensure that competency-based approaches effectively address time-related challenges in language learning (Boukhentache, 2020). Moreover, the integration of technology-mediated platforms has been proposed to alleviate time and space constraints in language learning. Utilizing web-mobile applications such as Edmodo and Telegram can provide learners with flexible access to learning materials and interactive opportunities beyond traditional classroom settings. Research involving open distance learners demonstrated that these platforms effectively bridge the gap caused by physical and temporal limitations, fostering a more conducive environment for language acquisition (Mohd Idris et al., 2021).

Lack of resources

Both groups cited inadequate resources such as projectors, functional speakers, and consistent internet access available for all and every floor. Teachers reported needing to rely on personal equipment and competing for limited shared tools, while students described cramped classrooms and the lack of basic learning equipment. The challenges

faced in Mongolia are not unique and resonate with issues observed in other under-resourced educational settings. Empirical studies have highlighted the adverse effects of resource limitations on language education. For instance, research conducted in rural Nepal identified that English language teachers face significant challenges due to limited teaching resources and overcrowded classrooms. To overcome these obstacles, teachers have employed alternative teaching methods and materials, emphasizing vocabulary development and interactive teaching strategies to motivate students (Singh, 2024). Similarly, a study examining instructional practices in Pakistani elementary schools revealed that teachers grapple with a lack of professional training, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient technological resources. These constraints necessitate reliance on traditional teaching methods, which may not effectively address the diverse needs of English language learners (Imran et al., 2024).

In Mongolia, the integration of English as a compulsory subject has been a strategic response to globalization. However, this initiative faces significant hurdles due to resource constraints. Marav and Choi (2023) conducted a study involving 43 English teachers from private and public schools in Mongolia, revealing that despite positive attitudes toward the emphasis on English education, teachers encounter challenges such as heavy workloads, insufficient professional development, lack of supportive leadership, and inadequate teaching resources. The findings of this study align with existing literature, reinforcing the conclusions of prior research. Further, the National Program for English Language Education in Mongolia aimed to revamp curriculum standards and provide adequate teacher training and resources. Despite these efforts, the program has struggled with effective implementation, primarily due to persistent resource shortages and insufficient support systems for teachers (Marav & Choi, 2023).

English textbook

Both teachers and students recognize challenges associated with the use of English textbooks in upper-secondary classrooms, though their concerns highlight different aspects of the issue. Both teachers and students highlight significant challenges in the use of English textbooks. Teachers report a mismatch between textbook content and students' proficiency levels, with listening and reading exercises being either too difficult, too easy, or excessively lengthy, making engagement difficult. They also point to inconsistencies in textbook structure, such as abrupt shifts between grammatical topics, which complicate

instruction. Meanwhile, students emphasize that lessons are primarily centered on textbook completion, with few supplementary materials used. They also express concerns about the large amount of homework assigned. While teachers struggle with adapting unclear content, students experience a lack of variety in learning resources.

The concerns raised by Mongolian teachers regarding the mismatch between textbook content and student proficiency levels are echoed in the literature. Nunan (2000) points out that when instructional materials are not appropriately leveled, students may experience frustration or boredom, both of which hinder effective learning. This misalignment necessitates teachers to adapt or supplement materials, which can be a daunting task, especially in resource-constrained environments. Moreover, Ferris (2013) highlights that learners often struggle with literacy demands due to limited extensive reading experience in English, suggesting that textbooks may not adequately bridge the gap between learners' current abilities and the desired proficiency outcomes. Furthermore, the heavy reliance on textbooks with minimal supplementary materials, as reported by Mongolian students, can lead to a monotonous learning experience. Marav and Choi (2023) emphasize the importance of providing interactive and diverse learning environments to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. The lack of variety in instructional materials may not only diminish student motivation but also limit exposure to different contexts and applications of the English language, which are essential for developing comprehensive language skills. To address these issues, it is imperative to critically evaluate and adapt English textbooks to better align with students' proficiency levels and the specific objectives of the English curriculum of upper-secondary education.

The assignment of substantial homework in English language teaching at the upper-secondary level in Mongolia presents a multifaceted challenge, as highlighted by students' concerns over the extensive nature of their assignments. Homework has traditionally been employed as a tool to reinforce classroom learning, providing students with opportunities to practice language skills. However, the effectiveness of homework is contingent upon its design and the amount assigned. Research indicates that while homework can enhance learning outcomes, excessive amounts may lead to cognitive overload and diminished motivation. Specifically, an overabundance of homework can increase students' cognitive load and mental fatigue, leading to decreased motivation and performance (Guo et al., 2024). The issue may stem from time constraints within the

classroom, prompting educators to assign content not covered during class as homework (MIER, 2019a). While this approach aims to ensure comprehensive material coverage, it may inadvertently contribute to student stress and disengagement. Studies suggest that effective homework should be designed with consideration for students' workload and should focus on reinforcing key concepts rather than introducing entirely new material (Trautwein, 2003). To address these challenges, it is essential to consider both the quantity and quality of homework assigned. Educators are encouraged to design homework that is purposeful, appropriately challenging, and tailored to reinforce specific learning objectives. Additionally, incorporating a variety of supplementary materials and interactive activities can enhance engagement and provide a more balanced approach to language learning.

Limited access to inclusive professional development

According to findings, many teachers perceive themselves as lacking sufficient knowledge, professional skills, confidence, and effective teaching methods for implementing the curriculum. Professionally, while teachers receive some institutional support, qualitative findings reveal dissatisfaction with professional development programs, which are often theoretical, repetitive, and impractical. Training opportunities are also limited to a select few, leaving other teachers to cover for absent colleagues. These challenges collectively hinder the effective implementation of the English curriculum, limiting both teaching quality and student engagement. UNESCO (2020) highlights that the ITPD was reintroduced in 2012 to strengthen teachers' professional development with trainings. Despite its gradual improvements, stakeholders have identified gaps in its capacity to provide high-quality training. The training programs are limited to a select few educators, leaving many teachers without access to capacity-building initiatives (UNESCO, 2020). A major concern is that existing professional development programs focus heavily on theoretical content with little emphasis on practical application, a challenge echoed in national literature on effective teacher training. The quality and relevance of professional development programs remain a concern in Mongolia. Many training programs focus on theoretical knowledge without practical application (MIER, 2019a). To ensure quality and inclusive training programs, UNESCO (2020) highlights the need for stronger policy coherence and financial commitment to ensure professional development is accessible to all teachers, particularly

in disadvantaged regions. To address this gap international research by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasizes that professional development should be continuous, collaborative, and directly connected to teachers' classroom experiences.

Teacher-student communication on student learning

Students report that a teacher's mood directly affects lesson clarity, with stress or anger making it harder to follow the material. Fear of the teacher is a common concern, with students feeling intimidated by harsh responses when asking questions. Negative communication, including belittling remarks, discourages students from seeking clarification, pushing them toward reluctant, fear-driven independent learning. This results in disengagement, reduced participation, and missed opportunities for deeper understanding. Maintaining a supportive and respectful classroom environment is essential for fostering student engagement and effective learning. Effective teacher-student communication is pivotal in shaping the learning experiences and outcomes of students, particularly in the context of English language teaching. Research indicates that a teacher's mood directly impacts lesson clarity. When educators exhibit a calm and supportive demeanor fosters an environment conducive to learning, where students feel comfortable and are more likely to participate actively. This aligns with findings that positive teacher interpersonal communication behaviors, such as care and clarity, facilitate a range of desirable academic outcomes, including enhanced motivation and learning (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). However, when teacher emotions, stress, or authoritarian behavior negatively influence classroom communication, students struggle to develop essential competencies. Research indicates that when teachers exhibit frustration or disengagement, students experience decreased motivation and a reduced sense of agency over their learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Mongolian public school teachers often face challenges that impede effective communication, such as frequent curriculum and textbook changes, large class sizes, and limited resources. These factors can hinder the development of meaningful teacher-student interactions, which are essential for language acquisition. A study highlighted that these systemic issues contribute to a communication gap between teachers and students, adversely affecting the learning process (Marav et al., 2022). The nature of teacher-student relationships significantly influences the English teaching-learning process. Research indicates that positive relationships, characterized by mutual respect and understanding, enhance

students' motivation and engagement. Conversely, negative relationships can lead to increased anxiety and reluctance to participate in communicative activities. Therefore, fostering positive relationships is crucial for effective language learning (Syahabuddin et al., 2020).

6.8 Teachers' perceptions of the English curriculum

The effectiveness of curriculum implementation heavily depends on teachers' perceptions, as their understanding, attitudes, and willingness to adapt to curricular changes influence pedagogical practices (Fullan, 2007; Kennedy, 2016). In the case of upper-secondary English education, teachers' perceptions of the curriculum can significantly affect instructional quality, student engagement, and overall learning outcomes. The findings in this study reveal a mixed perception among teachers, with most recognizing the clarity of curricular goals but struggling with its alignment, complexity, and applicability. These findings align with existing literature, which emphasizes the tension between curriculum design and its real-world implementation (Borg, 2003; Richards, 2017). The quantitative results in this study show that a majority of teachers perceive the curriculum's goals as clear, agreeing that learning objectives are well-defined. These findings align with Richards and Rodgers' (2014) argument that clearly articulated learning outcomes contribute to a structured language curriculum, providing a roadmap for teachers. However, clarity in objectives does not always translate to practical effectiveness, as teachers in this study expressed concerns regarding alignment with real classroom conditions. This reflects Kennedy's (2016) observation that while policy documents may offer explicit objectives, their applicability often lacks coherence with instructional realities, leading to discrepancies in teachers' perceptions and practices. Despite recognizing clarity in objectives, teachers face significant barriers in implementing the curriculum effectively. Many express concerns about its complexity, density, and lack of practical grounding, echoing findings in curriculum studies that highlight the persistent gap between policy and practice (Ball, 2003; Fullan, 2007). Particularly in EFL contexts, such as Mongolia, teachers must navigate additional challenges, including adapting materials to local cultural and linguistic needs (Nunan, 2004). This study's qualitative insights highlight that teachers struggle with balancing theoretical knowledge and practical application, reinforcing Borg's (2003) argument that teachers require pedagogical autonomy to adapt curricular content meaningfully.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) argue that many teachers receive formal training in educational theories but lack opportunities for practice-oriented professional development. This leads to a mismatch between curriculum expectations and instructional delivery, as teachers may default to traditional methods rather than fostering student-centered learning. To address this issue, scholars advocate for embedded professional learning experiences, collaborative teaching models, and real-world engagement with competency-based teaching practices (Borko, 2004; Desimone & Garet, 2015; Sturgis, 2015). These approaches ensure that theoretical training is accompanied by practical application opportunities, allowing teachers to refine their instructional methods.

6.9 Student's contentment of the English course and English language teaching

Several studies emphasize that student satisfaction in language courses is shaped by teacher subject knowledge, course content, and instructional methodologies (Brown, 2008; Harmer, 2015). Quantitative findings from the present study reveal moderate satisfaction with teachers' subject knowledge, aligning with previous research that underscores teacher expertise as a fundamental component of effective language instruction (Garton & Graves, 2014). However, dissatisfaction with course content, particularly its lack of real-world applications, is consistent with concerns raised in applied linguistics research, which advocates for curricula that integrate communicative and task-based approaches (Tomlinson, 2023). Regional variations in student satisfaction suggest that contextual factors significantly impact learning experiences. For instance, the observation that students in Zavkhan report higher satisfaction than those in Ulaanbaatar is intriguing, especially considering that capital cities typically offer greater access to educational resources. Perhaps, the higher satisfaction may stem from rural schools, which often foster close-knit communities, leading to stronger relationships between students, teachers, and parents. This supportive environment can enhance student satisfaction (Hopkins, 2022). Additionally, satisfaction increases with grade level, with 12th graders expressing greater contentment than 10th graders. It was an intriguing result that emerged from quantitative data. These results could be explored further in future research to better understand the underlying causes and implications for education policy.

Despite some positive aspects, qualitative findings highlight persistent challenges, including rigid textbook-focused instruction, and limited interactive learning. Scholars

such as Macalister and Nation (2019) argue that a reliance on textbooks without supplementary communicative activities stifles student engagement. This supports the current study's findings, where students cite excessive homework and a lack of essential resources, such as projectors and accessible classrooms, as barriers to meaningful learning. Furthermore, while improvements in grammar and writing were noted, speaking and listening skills remain underdeveloped. This mirrors broader critiques of English language education in non-native contexts, where exam-driven instruction often prioritizes rote memorization over functional language use (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Research by Thornbury (2007) highlights that communicative competence requires active student participation, yet many traditional classrooms emphasize teacher-centered instruction, a pattern evident in this study's findings.

6.10 Limitations of the research

This study faced several limitations. Firstly, there was a significant limitation regarding the availability of sources. The government agency and its affiliated educational organizations had not systematically accumulated a database related to curriculum reform and processes (MECSS & JICA, 2018, p.7). Additionally, the conditions for developing a research and evidence-based curriculum had been inadequate. There was a lack of modern curriculum research results and reports, and no comprehensive compilation of research information on the implementation and processes of previously implemented educational standards and curricula (MECSS & JICA, 2018, p.16). Second of all, the global pandemic significantly impacted the research process. During the pandemic, schools and provinces in Mongolia were closed due to COVID-19, which postponed and challenged the data collection and data analysis processes. The closure of upper-secondary schools slowed down the process of collecting questionnaires and conducting focus-group interviews with English teachers and students.

CHAPTER 8 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This dissertation set out to explore the implementation of the English curriculum in upper-secondary schools in Mongolia through the lens of CBE, addressing a gap in research on competency-based frameworks in English language teaching. The study aimed to investigate how both teachers and students perceive and experience the English curriculum, particularly focusing on aspects such as competency-based practices. To achieve this, the research addressed six main objectives, split between teachers and students. For teachers, the study examined their understanding of the English curriculum, identified the challenges they face in implementing the curriculum, and assessed the extent to which they integrate competency-based practices in their teaching. For students, the study investigated their comprehension of competency-based practices, their exposure to English language skills and competencies, and their level of satisfaction with the curriculum.

The theoretical foundation of this study was built on CBE and CBLT, with complementary insights from Jean Piaget's constructivist theory and Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. CBE and CBLT focus on mastery of competencies, skill demonstration, and progression through individualized learning outcomes. These frameworks emphasize practical, real-world skills that prepare learners for future academic or professional pursuits. Piaget's constructivist theory contributed to this study by emphasizing active learning and cognitive development, which support the notion that students construct knowledge through engagement and exploration. According to Piaget, learners progress through stages of cognitive development, which provides a rationale for the developmental alignment of competencies within the curriculum. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory added depth to this framework by emphasizing the importance of social interaction, scaffolding, and the ZPD, where learners achieve higher levels of understanding with guided support. The combination of these theories allowed for a holistic understanding of competency-based education, accounting for both individual and social dimensions of learning.

To address the research questions comprehensively, a concurrent embedded mixed-methods research design was utilized, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires

administered to both teachers and students, allowing for an analysis of general trends, perceptions, and levels of satisfaction with the competency-based approach. The quantitative results revealed notable patterns, such as varying levels of teacher preparedness and a need for more resources and collaborative support. Teachers reported a general understanding of competency-based aspects but highlighted challenges related to time constraints, limited resources, and inconsistent collaboration with educational organizations. Students, on the other hand, reported diverse levels of exposure to competency-based elements and varied in their satisfaction with how these competencies were integrated into classroom activities, assignments, and assessments. Students expressed a range of experiences regarding their exposure to language competencies, with some appreciating the emphasis on practical skills and others feeling that the curriculum could more effectively support their learning goals. The findings also indicated that while students are aware of the skills they are expected to develop, the rationale behind competency-based learning practices could be better clarified. Some students expressed that certain aspects of the curriculum felt disconnected from real-life applications or lacked sufficient depth, suggesting a need for curriculum adjustments to more fully engage learners and foster meaningful skill acquisition. Together, the quantitative and qualitative results provide a comprehensive picture of the current English curriculum implementation through the lens of competency-based education within Mongolia's upper-secondary education.

By bridging the gap in research on the implementation of the English curriculum in Mongolia exploring it through the lens of competency-based practices, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on curriculum implementation in diverse educational contexts. The study underscores the value of aligning curriculum design with both developmental and social learning needs, as emphasized by Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories, to ensure that competency-based education fosters not only skill acquisition but also cognitive growth and social collaboration. This research highlights the importance of a learner-centered approach that views teachers as facilitators of knowledge and students as active participants in their learning journey, creating a more dynamic, relevant, and effective language learning experience.

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that the successful implementation of an English curriculum in Mongolia requires both structural support and alignment with student needs and support to English teachers. By providing insights into English

teachers' and students' experiences, this research offers a valuable foundation for understanding how the implementation of the English curriculum of upper-secondary education and English language teaching and learning can be enhanced to create more meaningful and supportive educational environments that better equip students with essential English language skills and competencies.

Recommendation for practical implication

The findings of this study have several practical implications for policymakers, curriculum developers, teacher training institutions, and educators aiming to improve the implementation of the English curriculum in upper-secondary schools in Mongolia.

1. *Enhancing teacher training and professional development:* The study highlights that while teachers perceive themselves as facilitators, students report a gap between instructional intent and classroom experience. This suggests a need for more structured and practical professional development programs that focus on modern pedagogical strategies, particularly student-centered learning. It is suggested that training emphasizes student-centred, active learning methods, and differentiated instruction, ensuring teachers can effectively apply these approaches in real classroom settings. Additionally, continuous professional development should be more inclusive and systematically designed to involve all teachers, not just a select few. Training opportunities should be well-integrated into teachers' schedules rather than becoming an additional burden. Schools and policymakers should reduce administrative overload and ensure that professional development sessions are conducted during designated working hours to prevent excessive strain on teachers.
2. *Refining curriculum content:* The study found that the current curriculum has overlapping objectives in upper-secondary education, frequent changes, vague wording, and dense content, leading to confusion for both teachers and students. Future curriculum reform is suggested to prioritize clarity. This includes streamlining objectives, ensuring coherence across different levels, and providing explicit guidelines on how competencies should be developed and assessed in the classroom.
3. *Addressing resource limitations in schools:* One major challenge identified is the lack of necessary resources, including printers, TVs, projectors, audio equipment,

and stable internet access available for all English teachers. To support effective curriculum implementation, schools need better-equipped classrooms with appropriate teaching materials and digital tools. Government bodies and educational institutions should explore cost-effective solutions such as shared resource hubs, digital libraries, and low-cost technological interventions to improve access to learning materials.

4. *Encouraging student-centered teaching approaches*: Despite efforts by younger teachers to incorporate more student-centered methods, teacher-centered approaches still tend to dominate in the classrooms. Schools should create policies and incentives that encourage teachers to experiment with interactive, participatory, and active learning strategies. Administrators could support this shift by facilitating collaborative lesson planning, peer observations, and mentoring programs where teachers can share best practices.
5. *Increasing student engagement and critical thinking opportunities:* Students report that English lessons are primarily lecture-based, with limited interactive activities and engagement opportunities. To foster critical thinking and active participation, schools are suggested to incorporate problem-solving activities, peer discussions, project-based learning, and real-world applications. Encouraging teachers to integrate technology, multimedia resources, and culturally relevant content can also enhance student motivation and language acquisition.
6. *Addressing time constraints and developing English language skills equally:* Time constraints significantly hinder the implementation of student-centered teaching methods and the equal development of all English language skills often leading to an overemphasis on textbook-based reading and writing exercises while neglecting interactive speaking and listening activities. To address this, curriculum planners and school administrators should allocate sufficient instructional time for balanced skill development by exploring alternative scheduling models. Providing structured lesson plans, flexible pacing guides, and targeted professional development programs can help teachers manage their time effectively while fostering an engaging and interactive classroom environment that enhances students' overall English proficiency.

Recommendation for future research

The findings of this study highlight several areas where further research is necessary to deepen the understanding of the implementation of the English curriculum in Mongolian upper-secondary classrooms. Future research can build upon this study by exploring the following areas: 1) This study found that teacher training is not systematically inclusive and often burdensome. Future research could evaluate the effectiveness of different teacher training models, focusing on how integrated, structured, and inclusive training programs impact teaching practices and student learning. 2) Future research could explore how Mongolian cultural heritage integrated into English language education enhances student engagement and learning outcomes. Given teacher concerns about the curriculum's lack of cultural relevance, studies could examine effective strategies for embedding local knowledge, values, and nomadic traditions into English instruction. As UNESCO (2016) highlights "greater attention needs to be paid to education on culture and cultural heritage, intangible heritage, arts education and issues, and embedding all these into the curriculum, in order to ensure that local knowledge, values and heritages, including nomadic culture, and local creative industries are validated". Such studies would provide practical recommendations for curriculum development, ensuring that English language education validates and reflects Mongolia's rich cultural identity. 3) This study sheds light on upper-secondary English curriculum implementation by investigating through the lens of a competency-based approach. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, classroom observations could not be conducted, and data could not be collected from soum (remote village) areas, limiting insights into student-centered learning practices in these regions. Observations are crucial for understanding how teachers implement the curriculum in real classroom settings, including their teaching methods, student engagement, and adaptation to curriculum challenges. Without direct observations, the study lacked firsthand evidence of teacher-student interactions, making it difficult to assess how effectively student-centered approaches were applied in the classrooms. Future research should explore how remote area schools implement the English curriculum, focusing on student-centered approaches, local adaptation of the curriculum, and resource constraints. Such studies would help identify effective pedagogical strategies that ensure equitable and culturally responsive English language education.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Ethical approval from Doctoral School of Education, ELTE, Hungary

EÖTVÖS LORÁND TUDOMÁNYEGYETEM
PEDAGÓGIAI ÉS
PSZICHOLÓGIAI KAR
KUTATÁSETIKAI BIZOTTSÁG

E·L·T·E

EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
AND PSYCHOLOGY
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Reference number: 2021/318

Research Ethics Application Approval

Name of the Principal Investigator (PI)	**Dr. Horváth H. Attila**
Academic degree of the PI	habil. CSc
Place of work of the PI (Faculty/Institute/Department)	Faculty of Education
Job title of the PI:	Professor
E-mail address of the PI	horvath.h.attila@ppk.elte.hu
Title of the research:	The implementation of competency-based English curriculum in upper-secondary schools in Mongolia
Research fields related to the topic of the present research (e.g. cognitive psychology, etc)	Curriculum studies
Other researchers involved (e.g. students, etc.)	Byambasuren Nyamkhuu
Expected dates of the beginning and the end of the research	1st Aug. 2021 (beginning date) 1st June 2022 (end of the research)

The Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology (ELTE) grants permission to carry out the above study.
This decision is based on the evaluation of the referenced Application submitted to the Research Ethics Committee.

IMPORTANT: this ethical permission is sent only to the Principal Investigator (person requesting the ethical permission).

Budapest, 07. 07. 2021.

Eötvös Loránd University
Faculty of Education and Psychology
Research Ethics Committee
H-1064 Budapest, Izabella u. 46.

.....

Research Ethics Committee, Chair or Acting Member

H-1064 Budapest, Izabella u. 46. • telephone: (36-1) 209-0619
e-mail: keb@ppk.elte.hu • www.ppk-keb.elte.hu

Appendix B: Ethical approval from Mongolian National Institute for Educational Research

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
AND SCIENCE
MONGOLIAN NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
14191 Ulaanbaatar, Sukhbaatar district,
Peace Avenue 10, Teacher Development Palace
Telephone/Fax: (976) 7012-5286. E-mail: info@mier.mn

Date: 2022.07.05
Ref: 95

BYAMBASUREN NYAMKHUU,
THE THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL PEDAGOGY PROGRAMME, DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY, EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY, HUNGARY

Research Ethics Approval Letter

I am writing to you on behalf of the Scientific Committee of Mongolian Institute for Educational research, in response to your submission of an application for ethical approval for the study "The Implementation of competency-based English curriculum in upper-secondary schools in Mongolia".

The committee reviewed the following documents that you had provided:

- Brief and basic information about the research project (research aims, objectives, participants, sites etc)
- Research consent and permission sheets for different research participants (English language teachers and students)
- Interview questions that to be responded by English language teachers and students in upper-secondary schools.
- Questionnaires that to be answered by English language teachers and students in upper-secondary schools.

Having considering the above documents, I would like to inform that this study has been approved by the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

DR. M.ITGEL /DIRECTOR/

9022020670 ⁂ 9080686

Appendix C: Focus-group interview questions for English teachers

1. How many years have you been working?
2. Are the goals and objectives of the national English curriculum clear?
3. Are the learning objectives of the national English curriculum clear?
4. Do you think the teacher's guide align with the English curriculum?
5. What do you think the advantages of implementing this curriculum?
6. What is your concern regarding the curriculum?
7. Do national organization or the school support you in regards the professional development?
8. What challenges do you face to implement the curriculum?
9. When you develop student’s competencies and skills, what do you focus on?
10. What teachings methods do you employ?

Appendix D: Focus-group interview questions for students of upper-seconday education

1. Does your English teacher talk about skills and competencies? If so, what do you understand by them?
2. What kind of activities are employed in the classroom?
3. Do you work in peers?
4. Do you ask your English teacher questions if you don't understand something?
5. Does the English course meet your needs in learning English?
6. How does your teacher support you in speaking, listening, writing, and reading in English?
7. How clear are the goals and objectives of the lessons? Do you understand what you are going to learn today?
8. How is the evaluation process in the classroom?
9. What challenges do you face in learning English?
10. What areas could be improved for the English course and in teaching?

Appendix E: Questionnaire for English teachers

Teachers' survey

This study aims to investigate the implementation of the national English curriculum and identify the factors affecting its implementation. Please note that only teachers who teach English in upper-secondary schools are requested to complete this survey!

This research is conducted by a PhD student studying in Hungary from Mongolia. Your name and personal information will not be included, and your responses will be recorded using a coding system. No one other than the researcher will have access to the information from this survey, and the data will only be used for academic purposes to support the implementation of the English curriculum.

We kindly ask for your honest and thorough responses to this survey. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Please note that in this survey, the terms "national curriculum" and "curriculum" are used interchangeably.

Consent to participate in the study:

I am an adult and have been informed about the research. I agree to complete the survey.

□ Yes □ No

Part 1: Demographic information

Please tick (√) to your answer

1. Province/city: ……..
2. School No: ……..
3. The grade that you teach 1) 10th grade 2) 11th grade 3) 12th grade
4. Age

Until 25	26-30	31-35	36-45	46-50	51-55	More than 56

5. Gender 1) male 2) female
6. How many years have you worked as a teacher?

First-year	From 2-5 years	From 6-10 years	From 11-15 years	From 16-20 years	From 21-25 years	More than 26 years

7. Educational degree

Diploma	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Doctoral degree

Part 2: The teachers' understanding of the English language curriculum.

1. Please answer to the following questions

Subitems		Yes	No
1	Are the goals and objectives of the national curriculum clear?		
2	Are the learning objectives clear?		
3	Do the goals and objectives of the national curriculum align with the learning objectives (content)?		
4	Are the assessment goals and criteria of the national curriculum clear?		
5	Do the assessment goals and criteria align with the goals and objectives of the national curriculum?		

2. Please circle on the scale

When answering the questions below, please circle the number that best reflects how true the statement is for you. For example, if "3, 4, 5" are the available choices, selecting one of these numbers means the statement is somewhat true for you. However, each of the three numbers represents the following scale:

3 – slightly less true

4 – moderately true

5 – slightly more true

This is how the measurement will be interpreted.

0	1 2	3 4 5	6 7
Irrelevant	Not true of me now	Somewhat true of me now	Very true of me now

1	I am concerned about students' attitudes toward the English curriculum	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2	I now know of some other approaches that implement the English curriculum effectively	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3	I am more concerned about if there will be further changes and updates to the English curriculum.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4	I am concerned about not having enough time to organize lesson each day.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5	I would like to help other teachers to implement the English curriculum	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6	I have a very limited knowledge of the English curriculum	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7	I would like to know the effect of reorganization on my professional status.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8	I am concerned about conflict between my interests and my responsibilities.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9	I am concerned about revising my use of the English curriculum	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10	I would like to develop working relationships with both our school and outside school using this English curriculum	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
11	I am concerned about how the English curriculum affects students	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
12	I am not concerned about the issues related to the English curriculum content	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
13	I would like to know who will make the decisions in the new system.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14	I would like to discuss the implementation of English curriculum with others	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
15	I would like to know what resources are available when we are implementing the English curriculum	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
16	I am concerned about my ability to meet the requirements for implementing the English curriculum.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
17	I would like to know how English curriculum has had a positive impact on my teaching methods and lesson organization.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18	I would like to learn from others' experiences in implementing the English curriculum.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
19	I am concerned about evaluating student's procedures and think about how to improve them.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
20	I would like to revise the English curriculum	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
21	I am preoccupied with things other than the English curriculum	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
22	I would like to modify the English curriculum based on the experiences and feedback of our students.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
23	I spend little time thinking about the English curriculum	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

24	I would like to excite my students about their part in this approach.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
25	I am concerned about time spent working with nonacademic problems related to the English curriculum	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
26	I would like to know what the significance of implementing the English curriculum.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
27	I would like to coordinate my efforts with others to maximize the English curriculum effects.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
28	I would like to have more information on time and energy commitments required by the English curriculum	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
29	I would like to know what other faculty are doing in the implementation of English curriculum	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
30	Currently, other priorities prevent me from focusing my attention on the English curriculum	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
31	I would like to determine areas to add and improve in the English curriculum	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
32	I would like to use feedback from students to change the English curriculum	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
33	I would like to know how my role will change when I am using the English curriculum	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
34	Coordination of tasks and people is taking too much of my time.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
35	I would like to know how the English curriculum is better than the previous one	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Part 3: Challenges of implementing English language curriculum

3. Please evaluate the support and collaboration provided to you in implementing the English curriculum

	Stakeholders	Very good	Good	Aver age	Poor	Very poor
1	National professional organizations (MNIER, ITPD, EEC etc)					
2	Provincial, district, or city education departments					
3	Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field of education					
4	Support from the school					

4. Do you find the following aspects challenging when planning lessons?

	Challenges	Difficult	Not difficult
1	Aligning lesson objectives with the goals and objectives of the national English curriculum		

2	Planning in detail based on students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes		
3	Designing activities to accommodate the diverse needs of students		
4	Developing assessment tasks for a unit lesson		
5	Limited time for lesson planning		
6	Limited availability of teaching materials		

5. Please select the answer that best applies to you.
   1=Strongly disagree
   2=Disagree
   3= Neither agree nor disagree
   4= Agree
   5= Strongly agree

	Other challenges	1	2	3	4	5
1	Limited knowledge in implementing the curriculum					
2	Lack of professional skills					
3	Low confidence in being able to implement the curriculum					
4	I believe my teaching methods are weak when it comes to implementing the English curriculum					
5	Insufficient materials and resources for implementing the curriculum					
6	Limited time to teach the content of the curriculum					

Part IV: Acquiring English language skills and competencies, assesment

6. Please tell me how frequently the following activities occur in English course - competency-based education survey for students

1=Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Always, 6=Don't know

	1	2	3	4	5	6
I provide examples and explanations to help students master each English skill and competency						
I explain how each English skill and competency will be assessed						
I encourage students to work in groups						
I encourage students to work independently						
I assist students who need additional help in mastering English skills and competencies						

8. Please tell me how frequently the following occur in one semester.

1=Never, 2=1-2 times, 3=3-4 times, 4=5 or more times, 5=don't know

	1	2	3	4	5
I provide students with opportunities to speak in English during class.					
I assess students' skills and competencies through tests or exams.					
I evaluate students' written work (e.g., articles, essays, compositions, etc.).					
I give students opportunities to present in English.					
I allow students to implement projects in English.					
I provide students with opportunities to practice listening exercises in English.					
I give students opportunities to practice reading exercises in English.					

9. Please tell me how frequently the following activities occur in English class

1=Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Always, 6=Don't know

	1	2	3	4	5	6
I provide advice to students when they encounter difficulties while learning something new.						
I recognize and understand when students need extra time during challenging tasks						
If a student receives a poor grade, I offer help and support on how to improve.						
I explain and suggest different methods to help students acquire English skills and competencies.						

10. Which skill do you focus on the most to improve in your students? Please select the answer that best applies to you.

1=Very attentive, 2=Attentve, 3=Average, 4=Poorly attentive, 5 Very poorly attentive

English language skills	1	2	3	4	5
Listening skills					
Understanding spoken information within a specific topic					
Understanding specific information within the topic covered in English class					
Understanding the main idea within the topic covered in class					
Understanding the implied meaning in indirect speech					
Understanding the speaker's thoughts and opinions					

Deriving and understanding the meaning from what is being heard					
Understanding a narrative-style story within the topic covered in class					
Distinguishing and understanding the characteristics of words, sentences, and texts in spoken content					
Speaking skills					
Using formal and informal expressions					
Asking questions and clarifying meaning					
Expressing my thoughts and ideas					
Responding at the sentence or speech level					
Summarizing what others have said					
Sharing my opinions when others speak					
Planning and collaborating with others to discuss, debate, agree, or complete tasks					
Using appropriate vocabulary within a specific topic					
Reading skills					
Reading and understanding the main idea of a text					
Reading and understanding specific information in a text					
Reading and understanding both literary and factual texts					
Reading and understanding implied meanings in a text					
Identifying the characteristics and features of words, sentences, and texts					
Extracting and understanding meaning from a text					
Reading and recognizing the ideas expressed in a text					
Using both digital and non-digital resources to verify and understand meanings					
Understanding detailed nuances in a text					
Recognizing the meaning of things not frequently mentioned in a text					
Writing skills					
Planning and revising my writing					

Writing about past events or using my imagination					
Writing about my feelings and thoughts					
Writing reflections using examples and supporting evidence					
Using an appropriate writing style and format within a specific topic					
Writing commonly used words without spelling errors					
Using punctuation marks correctly in my writing					
Use of grammar					
Using abstract and compound nouns					
Using countable and uncountable nouns					
Using comparative forms in English					
Using quantifiers (e.g., all, half, both...)					
Forming questions in past, present, and future tenses					
Using various pronouns (him, himself, herself...)					
Using present and past perfect tenses					
Using future and future perfect tenses					
Using active and passive voice in present, past, and future tenses					
Using the present continuous tense					
Using prepositions before nouns and adjectives (to, for...)					
Using modal verbs (must, need...)					
Using adverbs of frequency (always, usually)					
Using the base form of verbs and verbs with "ing"					
Using conjunctions (but, although, even though)					
Using conditional sentences					

Thank you!

Appendix F: Questionnaire for students of upper-seconday education

Students' survey

This survey is not intended to assess or evaluate, so please support us by answering the following questions truthfully. Thus, your name and information will not be mentioned in this study and will be recorded in code. Please be noted that the students of upper-secondary education are only eligible for this questionnaire! Mark your answer with (✓) in the corresponding box.

Part 1: Demographic information

1. City/Province:
2. School No.:
3. Grade 1) 10th grade 2) 11th grade 3) 12th grade
4. Gender 1) Male 2) Female
5. Age:

Part 2: The student's understanding of the competency-based learning

Please choose the answer that corresponds to you

1. In English course, students have an opportunity show what competencies and skills they mastered in more than one way. For example, students show on more than one assignment, assessment, or exam. [Skip logic will be Used.]
    - Never (Skip to item B3)
    - Sometimes
    - Often
    - Don’t know (Skip to item B3)
2. Why do you think students should show what competencies and skills they mastered in more than one way? Choose the response that seems MOST TRUE about this school.
    - A student’s grade in the course should be based on formative assessment
    - Teachers need multiple opportunities to see whether students have mastered competencies and skills
    - Students stay on task better if they have enough work to do
    - Completing multiple assignments and tests helps prepare students for the state exam

3. In English courses, students are able to choose how they want to show what they have learned from several different options. For example, options such as writing a paper, completing a project, etc. [Skip logic will be used.]
    - Never (Skip to item B5)
    - Sometimes
    - Often
    - Don't know (Skip to item B5)
4. Why do you think students have an opportunity in English courses to choose how they want to show their learning? Choose the response that seems MOST TRUE about this school.
    - Most students know how they learn best
    - Some students aren't good at taking tests/exams
    - Each student should be able to get an A in the course
    - It is advantage for students to provide various forms (such as role-playing, conducting conversations in English, etc.)
5. Students in English course are able to progress at their own individual pace in courses. [Skip logic will be used.]
    - Never (Skip to item B7)
    - Sometimes
    - Often
    - Don't know (Skip to item B7)
6. Why do you think students in English courses at this school are able to progress at their own individual pace? Choose the response that seems MOST TRUE about this school.
    - Some students fall behind if they have been absent a lot
    - Some students are less interested in certain topics
    - Some students may need different amounts of time to learn the material
    - Some students don't complete all of their work on time
7. Does the English course at your school use a competency-based grading system? [Skip logic will be used.]
    - Yes
    - No (Skip to item B9)

- Don’t know (Skip to item B9)

8. Why do you think the English course at your school uses a competency-based grading system? Choose the response that is MOST TRUE at your school.
    - Teachers do a better job of grading student work under a competency-based grading system
    - Students take fewer tests under a competency-based grading system
    - A competency-based grading system makes it easier for all students to graduate from upper-secondary achool
    - A competency-based grading system provides better information about what a student has learned
9. Students in English courses at my school are assigned homework. [Skip logic will be used.]
    - Never (Skip to item B11)
    - Sometimes
    - Often
    - Don’t know (Skip to item B11)
10. Why do you think students in English courses at this school are assigned homework? Choose the response that seems MOST TRUE at this school.
    - Homework provides students with opportunities to practice a skill before being assessed on that skill
    - Students in upper-secondary education have homework almost every night to learn the material
    - Teachers don’t have time to teach all of the important material during class
    - Completing several hours of homework most nights helps students get ready for university
11. In English courses, when teachers talk about competencies they are referring to:
    - The courses a student must take to graduate
    - The important skills and knowledge a student must learn to graduate
    - The required content a student must complete to graduate
    - I’m not sure what teachers mean when they talk about competencies
    - Teachers do not talk about competencies

12. Do you have to master specific competencies and skills in any of your courses to graduate from your upper-secondary school? [Skip logic will be used.]

- Yes
- No (Skip to next part)
- Don't know (Skip to next part)

13. Has a English teacher explained to you why it is important to master specific competencies and skills to graduate from your upper-secondary school?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Part 3: Acquiring English language skills and competencies, and assessment

14. Please tell me how frequently the following activities occur in English course

1= Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Always, 6=Don't know

Subitem	1	2	3	4	5	6
I understand how the competencies and skills of my English courses will help me in the future						
My English teacher explains each competency and skill by sharing excellent examples						
My English teacher let me know how each competency and skill will be assessed or graded						

15. Please tell me how frequently the following activities occur in English class.

1= Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Always, 6=Don't know

Subitem	1	2	3	4	5	6
All students work on the same assignment at the same time						
My English teacher spends most of class time giving a lecture to the whole class						
My English teacher works with students in small groups or individually						
My English teacher notices if I need extra help						
My English teacher teaches the same content in several different ways in order to help students learn						

16. Please tell me how frequently the following occur in one semester.

1=Never, 2=1-2 times, 3=3-4 times, 4=5 or more times, 5=don't know

Subitem	1	2	3	4	5
My English teacher supports and advises how I am making progress in each competency and skill					
My English teacher gives me written feedback on my assignment					
I have had opportunities to choose how to show my English teacher what I have learned (For example, writing essays and compositions)					

17. Please tell me how frequently the following occur in one semester. (Assessment)

1=Never, 2=1-2 times, 3=3-4 times, 4=5 or more times, 5=don't know

Subitem	1	2	3	4	5
I get the opportunity to speak in English to demonstrate what I have learned in English class.					
I take tests or exams to show what I have learned					
I get the opportunity to show my written work to the teacher to demonstrate what I have learned in English (e.g., articles, essays, compositions, etc.).					
I give presentations to show what I have learned					
I have implement a project in English course to show what I have learned					
I get the opportunity to do listening exercises in English and have them assessed to demonstrate what I have learned.					
I get the opportunity to do reading exercises in English and have them assessed to demonstrate what I have learned.					

18. Please tell me how frequently the following activities occur in English class.

1= Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Always, 6=Don't know

Subitem	1	2	3	4	5	6
When I have trouble learning something new, my English teacher gives me advice						

When I face difficulties in learning, the teacher notices and recognizes that I need extra time.						
If I get a low score on an assessment, my English teacher helps and supports me on how to improve.						
The teacher explains and suggests strategies to help me acquire English skills and competencies.						

19. Which skill have you successfully mastered in your English class? Please select the answer that best applies to you.

English language skills	Yes	No
Listening skill		
Understanding spoken information within a specific topic		
Understanding specific information within the topic covered in English class		
Understanding the main idea within the topic covered in class		
Understanding the implied meaning in indirect speech		
Understanding the speaker's thoughts and opinions		
Deriving and understanding the meaning from what is being heard		
Understanding a narrative-style story within the topic covered in class		
Distinguishing and understanding the characteristics of words, sentences, and texts in spoken content		
Speaking skill		
Using formal and informal expressions		
Asking questions and clarifying meaning		
Expressing my thoughts and ideas		
Responding at the sentence or speech level		
Summarizing what others have said		
Sharing my opinions when others speak		
Planning and collaborating with others to discuss, debate, agree, or complete tasks		
Using appropriate vocabulary within a specific topic		

Reading skill		
Reading and understanding the main idea of a text		
Reading and understanding specific information in a text		
Reading and understanding both literary and factual texts		
Reading and understanding implied meanings in a text		
Identifying the characteristics and features of words, sentences, and texts		
Extracting and understanding meaning from a text		
Reading and recognizing the ideas expressed in a text		
Using both digital and non-digital resources to verify and understand meanings		
Understanding detailed nuances in a text		
Recognizing the meaning of things not frequently mentioned in a text		
Writing skill		
Planning and revising my writing		
Writing about past events or using my imagination		
Writing about my feelings and thoughts		
Writing reflections using examples and supporting evidence		
Using an appropriate writing style and format within a specific topic		
Writing commonly used words without spelling errors		
Using punctuation marks correctly in my writing		
Use of English (grammar)		
Using abstract and compound nouns		
Using countable and uncountable nouns		
Using comparative forms in English		
Using quantifiers (e.g., all, half, both...)		
Forming questions in past, present, and future tenses		
Using various pronouns (him, himself, herself...)		
Using present and past perfect tenses		

Using future and future perfect tenses		
Using active and passive voice in present, past, and future tenses		
Using the present continuous tense		
Using prepositions before nouns and adjectives (to, for...)		
Using modal verbs (must, need...)		
Using adverbs of frequency (always, usually)		
Using the base form of verbs and verbs with "ing"		
Using conjunctions (but, although, even though)		
Using conditional sentences		

Part 4: Students' contentment with the English course

1=Strongly disagree
2=Disagree
3= Neither agree nor disagree
4= Agree
5= Strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5
The content of the English course					
The English course identifies and addresses real-life issues encountered when using English					
The English course focuses too heavily on a theoretical aspect and lacks practical application					
Weekly assignments are reasonable to do					
Assignments and tasks in the English class help in applying English at the practical application level					
The content of the English class is unclear					
The English class has greatly contributed to improving my English skills and competencies					
Overall the English course is appropriate for advancing and mastering my English skills and competencies					
English language teaching					

My English teacher has a thorough knowledge of the subject content					
My English teacher provides opportunities to ask questions					
My English teacher treats me with respect					
My English teacher understands my learning needs					
My English teacher conveys the subject content effectively					
My English teacher makes the subject as interesting as possible					

Thank you for your participation in the survey!

Appendix G

Table 38. Percentile of English teacher's perception of the English curriculum of upper-secondary education (n=59)

#	Stage 0 Unconcerned	Stage 1 Informational	Stage 2 Personal	Stage 3 Management	Stage 4 Consequence	Stage 5 Collaboration	Stage 6 Refocusing
1	94	66	21	39	13	55	47
2	48	91	28	47	33	76	73
3	55	54	14	23	9	31	34
4	98	72	21	43	19	48	47
5	99	84	28	30	19	72	52
6	81	99	31	69	66	98	87
7	75	45	14	27	8	14	20
8	81	63	21	39	21	44	52
9	99	80	31	65	27	68	47
10	91	60	17	47	11	44	34
11	61	69	14	39	33	64	87
12	99	75	21	43	24	52	52
13	81	63	25	34	48	64	87
14	98	93	21	56	38	84	77
15	98	88	21	52	21	68	60
16	98	75	21	43	19	48	52
17	75	75	25	39	24	72	52
18	61	96	12	56	66	98	84
19	96	72	17	34	16	36	30
20	75	57	25	43	21	52	47
21	61	63	21	56	13	55	42
22	48	84	21	56	43	59	57
23	97	72	17	47	21	55	60
24	81	91	21	43	43	88	77
25	94	88	25	90	27	91	77
26	94	63	14	47	11	25	47
27	99	98	31	56	43	88	42
28	87	84	21	52	11	76	73
29	99	95	17	43	33	59	69
30	94	98	25	43	33	59	52
31	99	91	28	65	38	76	77
32	96	60	17	30	11	28	42
33	99	91	17	43	24	64	65
34	91	95	31	73	59	72	81
35	22	48	17	11	5	19	34
36	99	90	28	56	43	88	69
37	99	90	28	39	16	55	52
38	91	90	21	52	24	76	77
39	48	57	21	30	5	44	26
40	94	96	21	65	59	84	73
41	94	84	25	47	27	80	60
42	91	98	21	60	63	91	81
43	98	72	25	47	21	55	60
44	98	84	21	52	33	52	34

45	75	95	31	77	54	97	81
46	99	95	31	77	59	88	81
47	81	95	21	43	38	72	77
48	75	66	21	60	43	76	69
49	98	75	28	60	30	76	52
50	96	91	17	52	54	88	73
51	99	90	14	56	33	64	60
52	69	95	28	34	13	76	38
53	99	90	25	65	21	44	57
54	69	75	25	43	38	55	73
55	99	90	28	52	30	80	69
56	99	93	28	65	66	88	73
57	99	63	25	30	16	40	42
58	99	97	25	65	30	84	73
59	94	75	21	43	16	55	47