

Investigating English Teachers' Perceptions of English Language Education through the Q Method

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Abstract

Educators, politicians, and scholars have been interested in English language education for many years. Despite the rising significance of English as a global language, there still needs to be agreement on the most effective techniques for teaching English language skills. Understanding the opinions and attitudes of English instructors towards language instruction might assist in shaping educational practises and initiatives. This research sought to evaluate English instructors' perspectives on English language education using the Q approach. Q methodology is a research strategy that enables people to rank and prioritise their ideas on an issue, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of people's viewpoints. The research included 40 English language instructors from various areas of Turkey who were asked to rate 20 English language education statements based on their degree of agreement. A survey of the literature and conversations with instructors and students were used to construct the assertions. The study's findings indicated three unique points of view among English language instructors, which the researchers named "Traditionalists," "Idealists," and "Realists." Traditionalists felt that language learning should be based on knowledge of linguistic norms and emphasised the significance of grammar and translation abilities. The Idealists felt that language study should strengthen students' abilities to communicate and comprehend diverse cultures and that communication and critical thinking skills should be prioritised. Realists emphasised practical abilities and tactics that can be used in everyday life, and they felt that language instruction should be relevant to students personal and professional aspirations. The research finds that varied opinions and attitudes towards English language education among English instructors might impact their teaching practises and tactics. The research also emphasises the necessity of knowing teachers' opinions on language instruction and the possible advantages of investigating instructors' perceptions using the Q technique. This research has practical consequences for language education policy and teacher education programmes.

Keywords: Perception, Q Technique, Second Language, and ELT Instructors.

Introduction

English language education is a rapidly expanding sector, with millions of people learning the language for various reasons, including academic, professional, and personal growth. The job of English language instructors is critical since they shape their students' learning experiences. Understanding English instructors' opinions of English language education is thus critical for enhancing English language teaching quality. Q technique is a research approach extensively used in the social sciences to investigate subjective thoughts or opinions regarding a specific problem. It combines qualitative and quantitative data analysis approaches to identify and categorise various ideas and perspectives on a specific subject. The Q approach has been used in education to explore a variety of subjects, including instructors' opinions of English language instruction.

For example, [Guo et al. \(2021\)](#) employed the Q approach to investigate Chinese English language instructors' perspectives on English language teaching and learning. The research discovered three diverse opinions among the participants: a traditionalist viewpoint, a student-centred viewpoint, and a pragmatic viewpoint. According to the results of this research, there is a need to combine a diversity of teaching styles to meet pupils' various requirements.

Similarly, [Ashraf \(2018\)](#) investigated English language instructors' perspectives on teaching English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia using the Q approach. The research found three diverse perspectives among the participants: communicative language education, task-based language instruction, and a hybrid perspective. The study's results indicate that a range of teaching techniques and approaches should be used to enhance the quality of English language instruction in Saudi Arabia.

Furthermore, the Q approach has been used to investigate English instructors' impressions of many areas of English language teaching, including the usage of technology ([Feng et al., 2021](#)), the influence of culture ([Zheng et al., 2019](#)), and the significance of pronunciation ([Pennington & Richards, 1986](#)). These studies have shed light on English instructors' complicated and varied viewpoints on several elements of English language teaching.

In conclusion, employing the Q approach to investigate English instructors' impressions of English language education is critical for understanding the many thoughts and perspectives on teaching and learning English. The Q approach may give valuable insights into the strengths and limitations of present English language teaching practises and assist in identifying opportunities for development.

Material and Methodology

In this section, the design of the research, participants, context, and data collection and analysis are explained.

Participants

In March 2021, 35 English language instructors in Van, Turkey, were requested to sort the Q

statements. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 53, with a mean of 33. In terms of educational level, 28 (80%) of the participants had a graduate degree, 6 (17,1) had a master's degree, and 1 (2,9) had a PhD. In terms of marital status, the majority of the participants (N = 23; 65.7%) were single, and 12 (34.3%) were married. Table 1 summarises the demographic information of the participants.

Table 1 Demographic Information

		N	%
Gender	Female	19	54,3
	Male	16	45,7
Marital Status	Single	23	65,7
	Married	12	34,3
Age	20-30	16	45,7
	31-50	15	42,9
	50 and above	4	11,4
Education	Graduate	28	80
	Masters	6	17,1
	Ph.D.	1	2,9

Instrumentation

A 20-item questionnaire designed by the researchers on the "problems and solutions of Language teaching" was used to gather study data. The area sources in the literature and the views of the students who continue their teaching practise were utilised to prepare the survey. Furthermore, expert feedback was obtained throughout the survey preparation phase.

Less Like How I think → Neutral → More Like How I think

The final Q sort was generated in the range of -3 less like how I think and +3 more like how I think as it is shown above. Additionally Forced-choice frequency distribution

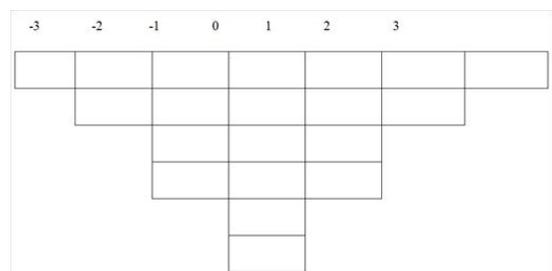


Figure 1 The Final Q Sort

The final Q sort was generated in the range of -3 less like how I think and +3 more like how I think as it is shown above. Additionally Forced-choice frequency distribution

List of Sort items used in the Study

- Students speak more of their native language than English
- Lack of Interest and Motivation to Learn English
- Limited Support
- Language Barrier
- Not Enough Time
- Lack of Interest
- Written vs Spoken Language
- Most English Teachers Lack Proficiency in The English Language
- The social use of the English Language
- The learning atmosphere is inappropriate for language teaching.
- In order to create a successful learning environment, how can the inadequacy of teaching materials be addressed?
- What steps can be taken to remedy the issue of students repeatedly resorting to their mother tongue?
- How can the fear of making errors be assuaged to encourage student participation in class?
- What measures can be implemented to discourage students from constantly translating into their native language?
- Does the school prioritize examination results over communicative language teaching goals, according to the teachers' perceptions?
- How can teachers who are accustomed to traditional teaching methods be trained in communicative language teaching?
- Policies to learn a foreign language are not sufficient
- Foreign language classes general is run as the teacher-cantered
- The classes are heavily based upon 'grammar'
- The students do not have enough knowledge about the importance of learning a foreign language

Data Collection

Twenty statements were used to gather data in this investigation. Perceptions of English language

instruction were broken down into 20 phrases and put on numbered cards. The Q index for the 20 printed items is provided below, and the Q index for the study is shown in Table 1. Students who participated in the study were asked to place one card on the +3 and -3 levels, two cards on the +2 and -2 levels, four cards on the +1 and -1 levels, and six cards on the zero level.

Table 2 Q Index

Ranking value	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Number of items	1	2	4	6	4	2	1

After participants finished this procedure, the numbers on the cards were recorded for each student so that participants' perspectives could be filtered as much as possible. In addition, students were asked why they preferred the statements they placed at +3 and -3 levels and were required to provide their reasoning. Participants were also asked what common answers they had in English as a second language.

Data Analysis

The Q-methodology is a research strategy used to investigate the subjectivity of people's thoughts or viewpoints on a specific problem (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). It employs qualitative and quantitative methodologies to find the underlying elements that affect people's opinions on a specific issue. The Q-methodology study entails sorting statements or items into a forced distribution and then using factor analysis to determine the multiple views or opinions that emerge (McKeown & Thomas, 2013).

The Q-methodology analysis was used in this research to explore people's perceptions of a certain subject. PQMethod, a free software programme created by Schmolck, was used to gather and code the data (Schmolck, 2014). The software was obtained from the company's official website and was used to analyse the data by computing Z-scores to evaluate the relative relevance of the detected parameters (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). A correlation analysis was also performed to investigate the links between the indicated parameters (Brown, 2019).

Findings

This portion of the study report contains the findings from the analysis completed by the research team. To improve clarity and comprehension, quantifiable data results are given. The goal is to systematise the results and make them more understandable.

After doing a principal component analysis on the study's data, it was discovered that it clustered around a single dimension, which explains 43% of the variation. Table 3 displays the factor loadings obtained from the significance level analysis.

Table 3 Factor Loadings

Participants	Q Sorts	Factor 1 Loading	Factor 2 Loading	Factor 3 Loading
1	1	0.5894X	-0.1446	-0.0276
2	2	0.6232X	0.2305	0.1661
3	3	0.6232X	0.2305	0.1661
4	4	0.6159X	0.0057	-0.0301
5	5	0.0123	-0.5320	-0.5560X
6	5	0.6539X	-0.2790	-0.3885
7	7	0.2162	0.1887	-0.0472
8	8	0.4632X	-0.0392	0.2662
9	9	-0.2420	-0.0799	0.6700X
10	10	0.0865	-0.2346	-0.7344X
11	11	-0.0122	0.1204	-0.3589
12	12	-0.2035	-0.1110	-0.6758X
13	13	0.4026	-0.6231X	-0.1079
14	14	0.4890X	0.0746	-0.1082
15	15	0.6371X	-0.1972	0.1079
16	16	-0.2930	-0.3740	0.4812X
17	17	0.5012X	0.0358	-0.1392
18	18	0.1951	-0.3682	0.0405
19	8	-0.0800	0.2212	-0.0505
20	20	0.7365X	-0.5519	-0.1788
21	21	0.4666	-0.5886X	0.1616
22	22	0.1533	0.5729X	0.1308
23	23	-0.3791	0.5270X	-0.2893
24	24	0.3444	-0.0033	0.1453
25	25	-0.0654	-0.1967	0.1746
26	26	0.4055	0.0776	0.4279

27	27	0.1892	-0.5310X	0.0420
28	28	0.4022	0.0070	0.7430X
29	29	0.0410	0.8014X	-0.1139
30	30	0.4474	0.6642X	-0.2591
31	31	0.5451	0.5601X	0.0547
32	32	0.6586X	0.4949	-0.1087
33	33	0.4727X	0.3644	0.1817
34	34	0.3243	-0.4482X	0.0433
35	35	-0.4751	-0.2146	0.5139
% Explained variance		18	14	11

A factor matrix with loadings from a factor analysis is shown in Table 3. The QSORT column indicates the items being analysed, and the figures under Loadings show the factor loadings for each item in each of the three factors discovered. The Xs in the matrix represent defining sorts, a method to ease understanding factor analysis findings.

According to the factor analysis, the items may be divided into three factors that explain 43% of the variation in the data. Items 20, 2, 3, 4, 6, 15, 32, 33, and 14 define the first factor, with loadings of 0.7365, 0.6232, 0.6232, 0.6159, 0.6539, 0.6371, 0.6586, 0.4727, and 0.4890, respectively. This component accounts for 18% of the variation. It seems to be connected to the concept of "interpersonal sensitivity," or the capacity to comprehend and react to the emotions and needs of others.

Items 13, 5, 28, 29, and 30 show high loadings of 0.6231, -0.5560, 0.7430, 0.8014, and 0.6642, respectively, and explain 14% of the variation. This element indicates "emotional expressiveness," or the ability to plainly and openly convey one's feelings.

Items 9, 12, 16, 17, and 34 define the third factor, with loadings of 0.6700, -0.6758, 0.4812, 0.5012, and -0.4482, respectively. This component, which indicates self-control," or the capacity to govern one's emotions and impulses, explains 11% of the variation.

Overall, the factor analysis indicates that the QSORT questions may be meaningfully classified into three components, each corresponding to a distinct facet of emotional intelligence. It is crucial to highlight, however, that the three characteristics

revealed in this research may differ from those discovered in other populations or using different measures of emotional intelligence. Table 4 shows the correlations between factor scores derived by the Q approach and students' views of English language education.

Table 4 Correlations Between Factor Scores

	1 st Factor	2 nd Factor	3 rd Factor
1 st Factor	10.000	-0.0611	0.0068
2 nd Factor	-0.0611	10.000	0.0287
3 rd Factor	0.0068	0.0287	10.000

The factor matrix above shows the loadings of 35 items on three factors. Factor 1 defines those items, as shown by the “X” in the first column. Factor 1 is most strongly connected with items 2, 3, 20, 21, 22, 23, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, and 33, all of which have loadings larger than 0.4, according to the loadings table. This implies that these elements are connected and measure the same underlying concept.

Factor 2 is closely related to items 5, 13, 19, 27, and 34, with loadings larger than 0.5. Although the loading of item 19 is relatively modest, these items may constitute a different component.

Factor 3 is most strongly related to items 12, 16, and 35, which all have loadings larger than 0.4. Factor 3 loadings on items 9 and 25 are similarly moderate. Although the loading of item 9 is quite faint, these items may constitute a third separate element.

The three variables account for 43% of the variation in the data. The factor structure and loadings indicate that the items assess three essentially different constructs, though some overlap may exist. After analysing the assertions in Factor 1, their ordering, degree of agreement, and Z scores for each statement are produced, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Z-Scores for Factor 1

19	The classes are heavily based on “grammar”	19	1.408
16	The teachers are used to teaching in the traditional way an	16	1.270

15	Does the school prioritize examination results over communicative language teaching goals, according to the teachers' perceptions?	15	1.198
13	Students do not want to talk because they suffer from a	13	0.998
2	Lack of Interest and Motivation for Learning English	2	0.975
18	Foreign language classes general is run by the `teacher	18	0.974
4	Language Barrier	4	0.903
17	Policies to learn a foreign language is not sufficient	17	0.814
8	Most English Teachers Lack the Proficiency in English	8	0.000
3	Limited Support	3	-0.232
1	Students speak more of their native language than English	1	-0.240
10	The learning atmosphere is inappropriate for language teaching	10	-0.333
12	What steps can be taken to remedy the issue of students repeatedly resorting to their mother tongue	12	-0.403
6	Lack of Interest	6	-0.526
11	In order to create a successful learning environment, how can the inadequacy of teaching materials be addressed	11	-0.573
9	The social use of the English Language	9	-0.598
20	The students do not have enough knowledge about the importance of learning a foreign language	20	-0.928
7	Written vs Spoken Language:	7	-1.547
14	What measures can be implemented to discourage students from constantly translating into their native language?	14	-1.576
5	Not Enough Time	5	-1.584

The table supplied is a factor analysis of specific data connected to English as a foreign language

teaching and learning. Factor analysis is a statistical tool for identifying patterns and correlations between variables in a dataset. The factors (1, 2, and 3) in this scenario are represented by a matrix of correlation coefficients between the variables in the dataset.

The table contains the distinguishing statements for Factor 1 and their accompanying Q-Sort Value (Q-SV) and Z-Score (Z-SCR). The Q-Sort Value evaluates the participant's statement on a scale of -5 (strongly disagree) to 5. At the same time, the Z-Score represents the statement's standardised score based on its association with Factor 1. According to the data, the highest-rated statement for Factor 1 is Statement 19, indicating that the courses mainly rely on grammar. The Q-SV for this statement was three, and the Z-Score was 1.41, showing a high positive connection with Factor 1. Other highly rated Factor 1 statements include Statement 16 (teachers are used to teaching in traditional ways), Statement 15 (according to teachers' perceptions, the school prioritises examination results over communicative language teaching goals), and Statement 2 (lack of interest and motivation for learning English).

It is worth noting that the significance threshold for these findings is P.05, with an asterisk (*) signifying significance at P.01. This indicates that the association between these assertions and Factor 1 is very credible.

Overall, the component analysis indicates that component 1 may signify a preference for conventional, grammar-focused teaching approaches and a lack of student engagement and drive. These findings might significantly impact the development of successful teaching techniques and tactics for increasing student involvement in the learning process. Following the analysis of the assertions in Factor 2, their ordering, degree of agreement, and Z scores for each statement are shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Z-Scores for Factor 2

2	Lack of Interest and Motivation for Learning English	2	1.811
3	Limited Support	3	1.505
4	Language Barrier	4	1.345
10	The learning atmosphere is inappropriate for language teaching.	10	1.251

7	Written vs Spoken Language:	7	0.868
11	In order to create a successful learning environment, how can the inadequacy of teaching materials be addressed?	11	0.826
8	Most English Teachers Lack the Proficiency in The English	8	0.615
5	Not Enough Time	5	-0.058
9	The social use of the English Language	9	-0.070
15	Does the school prioritize examination results over communicative language teaching goals, according to the teachers' perceptions?	15	-0.105
20	The students do not have enough knowledge about the importance of learning a foreign language	20	-0.251
6	Lack of Interest	6	-0.279
17	The policy to learn a foreign language is not sufficient	17	-0.435
16	How can teachers who are accustomed to traditional teaching methods be trained in communicative language teaching?	16	-0.472
13	How can the fear of making errors be assuaged to encourage student participation in class?	13	-0.521
14	What measures can be implemented to discourage students from constantly translating into their native language?	14	-0.947
18	Foreign language classes general is run as 'teacher-centred'	18	-1.075
19	The classes are heavily based on "grammar"	19	-1.268
12	Students keep using their native language.	12	-1.290
1	Students speak more of their native language than English	1	-1.448

The table displays the Q-SV (Q-Sort Value) and Z-SCR (Z-Score) for each Factor 2 statement. The Q-SV ranks how much each statement is connected

with the factor, while the Z-SCR measures how strongly the statement is related to the factor compared to other statements in the same factor.

According to the findings, statement 4, “Language Barrier,” is significantly related to the factor, with a Q-SV of 2 and a Z-SCR of 1.34. This indicates that most participants regarded this remark as highly relevant to the language barrier issue.

Other statements that are substantially related to the factor include statement 1, “Students speak more of their native language than English,” which has a Q-SV of 0 and a Z-SCR of -1.45, and statement 12, “Students keep using their native language,” which has a Q-SV of 0 and a Z-SCR of -1.29. These remarks imply that using one’s home tongue may impede learning English as a foreign language.

Statement 10, “The learning atmosphere is inappropriate for language teaching,” is likewise connected with the factor, with a Q-SV of 1 and a Z-SCR of 1.25. This implies that the learning environment might affect the language barrier.

Overall, the research sheds light on the elements that may influence the acquisition of English as a foreign language. These findings help educators and policymakers enhance language education programmes and assist language learners. After analysing the assertions in Factor 3, their ordering, degree of agreement, and Z-scores for each statement are shown in Table 6.

Table 7 Z-Scores for Factor 3

13	Students do not want to talk because they suffer from a fear of making mistakes	13	1.434
11	The teaching materials are not adequate for achieving a successful learning atmosphere.	11	1.414
3	Limited Support	3	1.100
10	The learning atmosphere is inappropriate for language teaching	10	0.512
8	Most English Teachers Lack Proficiency in The English Language	8	0.504
1	Students speak more of their native language than English	1	0.487

18	Foreign language classes generally are run as the 'teacher-centered'	18	0.475
9	The social use of the English Language	9	0.473
7	Written vs Spoken Language:	7	0.413
5	Not Enough Time	5	0.350
16	The teachers are used to teaching traditionally and they feel that they need a training course in communicative language teaching	16	0.343
4	Language Barrier	4	-0.002
12	Students keep using their native language.	12	-0.087
19	The classes are heavily based upon 'grammar'	19	-0.095
17	The policy to learn a foreign language is not sufficient	17	-0.333
14	Students insist to translate what is happening into their native language	14	-0.552
15	Teachers think that achieving examination results is more important and valued by the school than achieving communicative language teaching goals.	15	-0.648
20	The students do not have enough knowledge about the 'importance of learning a foreign language	20	-1.719
2	Lack of Interest and Motivation for Learning English	2	-1.885
6	Lack of Interest	6	-2.182

The following may be seen for Factor 3 based on the factor analysis of statements linked to English language teaching and learning:

Factor 3 accounts for 8.39% of the total variance in the data, with an eigenvalue of 2.52. The component measures the perceived difficulties in speaking English among pupils. “Students do not want to talk because they lack confidence” (Statement 13), “The teaching materials are not adequate for achieving success in English language learning” (Statement 11), and “Limited support for students in improving their English language speaking skills” (Statement 3). These assertions imply that pupils lack the

resources and assistance to enhance their spoken English abilities.

Other statements with moderate positive factor loadings (between 0.3 and 0.4) include: “The learning atmosphere is inappropriate for language teaching” (Statement 10); “Most English Teachers Lack Proficiency in The English Language” (Statement 8); “Students speak more of their native language than English” (Statement 1); and “Foreign language classes generally are run using the ‘teacher knows best’ approach” (Statement 18). These assertions imply that the teaching and learning environment and the teacher’s skill and teaching approach may contribute to the student’s lack of confidence in speaking English.

“Lack of interest and motivation for learning English” (Statement 2) and “Lack of interest in English language learning” (Statement 6) are two statements with negative factor loadings (below -0.3). These remarks imply that students’ lack of enthusiasm and desire to study English may be related to their lack of confidence while speaking English.

Overall, Factor 3 emphasises the significance of having a welcoming learning atmosphere that fosters students’ confidence in speaking English. This may include upgrading instructional materials, providing enough student assistance, and establishing a happy learning environment. Furthermore, efforts may be required to boost students’ interest and enthusiasm for studying English.

Limitations

The research also contains several limitations that should be considered. First, the sample size was limited, and the research was done in a particular environment, which may limit the results’ generalizability. Second, the Q method is a subjective technique that depends on the self-reported impressions of participants, which might be impacted by numerous variables such as social desirability bias.

Future studies might overcome these constraints by performing larger-scale studies in various settings, including mixed-methods techniques that include subjective and objective data-gathering methods. Furthermore, future studies might

evaluate the potential advantages and limitations of adopting more communicative and holistic methods for English language instruction and how these approaches can be successfully applied in various circumstances.

Finally, this research gives valuable insights into English language instructors’ opinions of teaching English, emphasising the need for a more flexible and learner-centred approach. English language education may better fulfil the demands of learners in a changing world and prepare them for success in a globalised society by addressing the issues encountered by English language instructors and adopting more communicative and holistic methods.

Suggestions

In addition to focusing on teacher training and creating a positive learning environment, several other strategies can be employed to improve English language learning outcomes. One approach is integrating technology into the language classroom, which effectively increases student engagement and motivation and improves language skills ([Bedenlier et al., 2020](#)). This can include online language learning platforms, interactive whiteboards, and mobile applications, among other tools.

Another strategy is to provide students with opportunities for authentic language use outside the classroom, such as through language exchange programmes or participating in community events where English is the primary language spoken ([Nunan & Bailey, 2009](#)). This can reinforce language skills and provide students with real-world experience using English.

Finally, it may be helpful to incorporate task-based language teaching (TBLT) into language instruction, emphasising language use in authentic and meaningful tasks rather than isolated grammar and vocabulary exercises ([Willis & Willis, 2007](#)). TBLT has been shown to improve language proficiency, particularly in speaking and listening skills, and can also increase student motivation and engagement.

Overall, while there is no one-size-fits-all solution to improving English language learning outcomes, a combination of strategies that prioritise teacher training, positive learning environments,

technology integration, authentic language use, and task-based instruction can effectively address the issues identified in the factor analysis.

Conclusion

The survey responses revealed three significant factors that contribute to the difficulties students face when learning English as a foreign language: a lack of interest and motivation (Factor 1), insufficient teaching methods and materials (Factor 2), and limited opportunities for speaking and practising English (Factor 3).

According to research, motivation is essential to language acquisition, and unmotivated students may fail to interact with the content and improve (Dörnyei, 2014). Anxiety or unfavourable attitudes towards the language or the learning environment may exacerbate this (Dörnyei, 2017). To overcome this problem, instructors should aim to establish a more positive and supportive learning atmosphere, set realistic and attainable objectives, and assist students in seeing the value and significance of studying English (Dörnyei, 2009).

Inadequate teaching techniques and materials, the second factor highlighted in the investigation, may also significantly influence student learning results (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). According to the results, instructors may need to alter their teaching techniques and materials to meet their students' needs and preferences better and employ a range of tactics and resources (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Thornbury, 2006).

Factor 3's restricted possibilities for speaking and practising English, on the other hand, underline the necessity of providing students with abundant opportunities to practise using the language in genuine circumstances (Swain, 1985). Teachers might promote more student-led discussions, role-playing, and group activities and employ technology to improve communication and cooperation (Chapelle & Jamieson, 2008; Warschauer, 1997).

Furthermore, these issues are interconnected and complicated, and successfully addressing them may require a multidimensional strategy considering individual students' and classrooms' particular needs and settings.

Finally, the Q approach revealed excellent insights into English language instructors' attitudes towards English language instruction. Examining the participants' views revealed three significant perspectives: traditionalist, communicative, and holistic. These viewpoints emphasised the varied and complicated character of English language education and the different elements that impact the teaching and learning process. This research emphasises the need for a more nuanced and adaptable approach to English language instruction that considers learners' and instructors' views and needs. By adopting a more inclusive and learner-centred approach, English language education may better equip learners with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in an increasingly globalised environment.

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