Volume 17 Number 2 (2025)
July-December 2025
Page: 925-940

E-ISSN: 2656-9779
P-ISSN: 1907-6355
DOI: 10.37680/qalamuna.v17i2.7459

QALAMUNA
JURNAL PENDIDIKAN, SOSIAL, DAN AGAMA

From Movement to Expression: Integrating Performing Arts and German Language Instruction to Enhance University Students' Speaking Proficiency

Rahma [1], Syarifah Fatimah [2], Irwan [3]

[1] Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia; rahma.m@unm.ac.id
[2] Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia; syarifah.fatimah@unm.ac.id
[3] Universitas Sawerigading, Indonesia; irwanunsa212@gmail.com

Received: 10/06/2025 Revised: 22/08/2025 Accepted: 08/09/2025

Abstract

This study examines the integration of movement-based arts into German language instruction to enhance students' speaking skills. The "From Movement to Words" approach treats bodily movement as an expressive and cognitively enriching medium rather than a simple visual aid. The method fosters linguistic, emotional, and symbolic engagement by incorporating gestures, embodiment, improvisation, and dance. A qualitative design was employed through classroom observation, in-depth interviews, and reflective documentation to capture pedagogical effects and experiential dimensions of learning. Findings show that movement integration improves pronunciation, vocabulary retention, and fluency while strengthening confidence, emotional involvement, and creative expression. Students described the process as more dynamic, immersive, and meaningful than conventional instruction. The study demonstrates that movement-based teaching provides a holistic, engaging, and learner-centered approach that supports cognitive and affective development. This approach affirms the potential of embodied instruction to align language learning with the evolving demands of 21st-century education.

Keywords Creative Pedagogy; German Language; Language Learning; Movement-Based Arts; Speaking Skills

Corresponding Author
Rahma
Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia; rahma.m@unm.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Movement is one of the most intrinsic forms of human expression, serving as a vehicle for conveying emotions and a central mechanism in cognitive and linguistic development. Within foreign language education, bodily movement has been shown to enhance long-term memory, deepen conceptual understanding, and strengthen oral communication skills (Mathias et al., 2022). The enactment or self-performed task effect demonstrates that learners who accompany verbal input with gestures or physical actions recall vocabulary more effectively than those who rely solely on auditory or visual channels (Engelkamp, J., & Zimmer, 1989). Recent studies confirm that gesture-enriched vocabulary learning significantly improves retention among adolescents (Mayer et al., 2021), while kinesthetic learning strategies contribute to measurable gains in speaking fluency and confidence (Usuluddin, U., Fikni, Z., Husnu, M., & Nadia, 2024b). Despite this evidence, systematic integration of

movement into higher education—particularly in German language instruction—remains limited, suggesting an urgent need to position embodied pedagogy as a central rather than supplementary strategy for enhancing speaking proficiency.

Conventional foreign language pedagogy has traditionally treated the body as peripheral to learning, emphasizing cognitive processing over embodied engagement. However, an emerging body of empirical evidence demonstrates that integrating physical movement—through gestures, dramatization, or kinesthetic simulations—can substantially improve fluency, pronunciation, and learner confidence (Mathias et al., 2022); Macedonia & von (Macedonia, M., & von Kriegstein, 2012). Recent studies confirm that gesture-enriched training enhances vocabulary retention and supports the internalization of syntactic structures (Mayer, K., Macedonia, M., & von Kriegstein, 2021), while embodied strategies reduce anxiety and foster greater self-expression in language classrooms (García-Monge, A., Guijarro-Romero, S., Santamaría-Vázquez, E., Martínez-Álvarez, L., & Bores-Calle, 2023). In technology-mediated contexts, movement-based learning within augmented reality and digital platforms has also been shown to improve memory retention and classroom engagement (Tarasenko et al., 2022); (Changlong, 2023). These findings challenge the conventional view of the body as ancillary, highlighting its essential role in second language acquisition as a cognitive and affective resource.

Despite the increasing evidence supporting embodied learning, much of the existing research remains narrowly focused on vocabulary instruction or technology-driven interventions, leaving the pedagogical application of natural body movements—such as facial expressions, mime, and dance—underexplored in higher education. While (Böttger & Höppner, 2024) highlight the role of muscle memory in pronunciation development, their work remains primarily theoretical and lacks validation in real classroom contexts. Similarly, Papitto et al. affirm the engagement of motor systems in language processing from a neurolinguistic perspective, but provide limited pedagogical implications for instructors. Recent studies suggest that integrating natural gestures and expressive movement not only aids pronunciation but also fosters learner confidence and reduces speaking anxiety, pointing to the need for more empirical classroom-based investigations (García-Gámez, A. B., & Macizo, 2023); (Usuluddin, U., Fikni, Z., Husnu, M., & Nadia, 2024b). This indicates a pressing research gap: embodied strategies using natural body movements must be systematically tested and contextualized within authentic learning environments to advance theory and practice in foreign language education.

Several creative pedagogical approaches have emerged in recent years, particularly for young learners, where movement and play are integrated to support early language development. For instance, (Guerrettaz, A. M., Jusslin, K., & Korpinen, 2024) Demonstrated that creative movement activities significantly facilitate phonological acquisition and foster a more enjoyable learning atmosphere for children. Similar evidence from early childhood education confirms that embodied and arts-based practices promote vocabulary retention, pronunciation accuracy, and classroom engagement (Stavridi, 2023); (Guerrettaz, A. M., Jusslin, K., & Korpinen, 2024). However, such research has remained largely confined to early childhood or primary school contexts. It does not adequately address the pedagogical needs of adult learners in higher education, particularly in teaching German as a foreign language. Studies involving university students indicate that while kinesthetic learning strategies can reduce speaking anxiety and increase learner motivation, the application of natural body movements—such as gestures, mime, and dramatization—has not been sufficiently examined as a core instructional method (Nguyen, T. M., Vo, L. H., & Pham, 2022); (García-Monge, A., Guijarro-Romero, S., Santamaría-Vázquez, E., Martínez-Álvarez, L., & Bores-Calle, 2023). This highlights a critical research gap: the systematic use of natural body movement as a primary instructional strategy to enhance speaking proficiency among adult university learners remains underexplored and requires further empirical validation.

The present study introduces the From Movement to Words framework to address this gap, an interdisciplinary model integrating embodied movement into German language instruction. Within this framework, physical movement is conceptualized not as a supplementary visual aid but as a core

cognitive and linguistic tool that facilitates meaning-making and verbal expression. This aligns with embodied cognition theory, which emphasizes the interdependence of motor activity and higher-order cognitive functions. Classroom practices such as gesture enactment, expressive performance, role-play, and simplified dance sequences are designed to create embodied experiences that reinforce vocabulary, syntax, and fluency. Recent research demonstrates that these multimodal activities not only enhance retention and pronunciation but also reduce speaking anxiety and foster learner confidence (García-Monge, A., Guijarro-Romero, S., Santamaría-Vázquez, E., Martínez-Álvarez, L., & Bores-Calle, 2023). Thus, the *From Movement to Words* framework positions the body as an active mediator of linguistic competence, offering a theoretically grounded and pedagogically innovative strategy for foreign language acquisition in higher education.

Employing a quasi-experimental design combined with qualitative inquiry, this study evaluates the effectiveness of movement-based instruction in improving students' oral proficiency and investigates their learning experiences and reflections. The mixed-methods design was chosen to capture both measurable outcomes and the nuanced, experiential dimensions of embodied learning, thereby strengthening the validity of findings. Quantitative measures allow for the assessment of improvements in fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary, while qualitative approaches—such as interviews and classroom observations—provide insight into learners' affective engagement and self-perceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By integrating these complementary perspectives, the study seeks to reconceptualize the role of the body in language pedagogy and establish a context-sensitive methodology that addresses the challenges of contemporary higher education, particularly in foreign language instruction.

Ultimately, this research positions movement-based learning as a theoretically grounded and pedagogically relevant approach to foreign language instruction. By linking embodied cognition theory with practical classroom application, the study advances a holistic model of language learning that integrates cognitive, affective, and kinesthetic dimensions (Wilson, 2002); (Macedonia, M., & von Kriegstein, 2012). Such an approach not only enhances linguistic performance but also fosters motivation, self-confidence, and learner autonomy, qualities that are essential in higher education contexts (Nguyen, T. M., Vo, L. H., & Pham, 2022); (Mir, Z., Rehman, R., & Mahmood, 2025). In doing so, the study contributes to a more experience-driven and learner-centered pedagogy, offering empirical support for integrating creative physical expression as a central component of contemporary language teaching practices (Agawrin, Y., Baills, F., & Prieto, 2023); (García-Monge, A., Guijarro-Romero, S., Santamaría-Vázquez, E., Martínez-Álvarez, L., & Bores-Calle, 2023).

2. METHODS

This study adopted a quasi-experimental design within a mixed-methods framework to investigate the effectiveness of a movement-based instructional approach in improving university students' speaking proficiency in German. The design involved two groups: an experimental group that received instruction incorporating embodied activities such as gestures, facial expressions, role-playing, and simplified dance routines, and a control group that followed a conventional, movement-free teaching method. The quasi-experimental approach was selected because it allows for meaningful comparisons between treatment and control groups in authentic educational settings where random assignment is often impractical. Integrating quantitative and qualitative data enabled the study to measure linguistic outcomes, such as fluency and pronunciation, and affective and experiential dimensions of learning. This methodological strategy ensures a more comprehensive evaluation of embodied pedagogy and its potential for enhancing foreign language instruction in higher education.

This study involved 60 students enrolled in a German language program at a public university in Indonesia. Participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group, with both groups demonstrating comparable baseline speaking skills as determined by a pre-test. To capture the

complexity of the learning process, multiple instruments were employed: (1) speaking tests (pre and post intervention) to assess changes in oral proficiency; (2) participatory classroom observations to record the frequency of movement-based activities and overall classroom engagement; (3) in-depth interviews to gain insights into students' reflections on the learning experience; and (4) perception questionnaires to assess students' attitudes toward the instructional approach. This multidimensional approach aligns with the findings of (Tang et al., 2024); (Xue, S., Xue, X., Son, Y. J., Jiang, Y., Zhou, H., & Chen, 2013), who demonstrated that assessment using multiple instruments provides a comprehensive picture of students' speaking abilities in higher education contexts.

The implementation of the study consisted of three key phases: (1) administration of a pre-test, (2) a six-week instructional intervention, and (3) post-test assessment accompanied by qualitative data collection. Quantitative data were analyzed using independent samples t-tests to examine whether differences between the experimental and control groups were statistically significant. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures outlined by (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Ethical considerations were rigorously maintained throughout the study, including obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and guaranteeing voluntary participation.

This methodological design was selected based on the premise that mixed-methods research offers a more comprehensive understanding of both learning outcomes and learning experiences, which is particularly relevant when investigating embodied language learning (MacIntyre, P. D., & Mercer, 2014) ; (Mathias, B., Andrä, C., Schwager, A., Macedonia, M., & von Kriegstein, 2022). The study sought to understand how movement-based instruction affects students' spoken German proficiency by integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

Speaking Test Result (Pre-test vs Post-test)

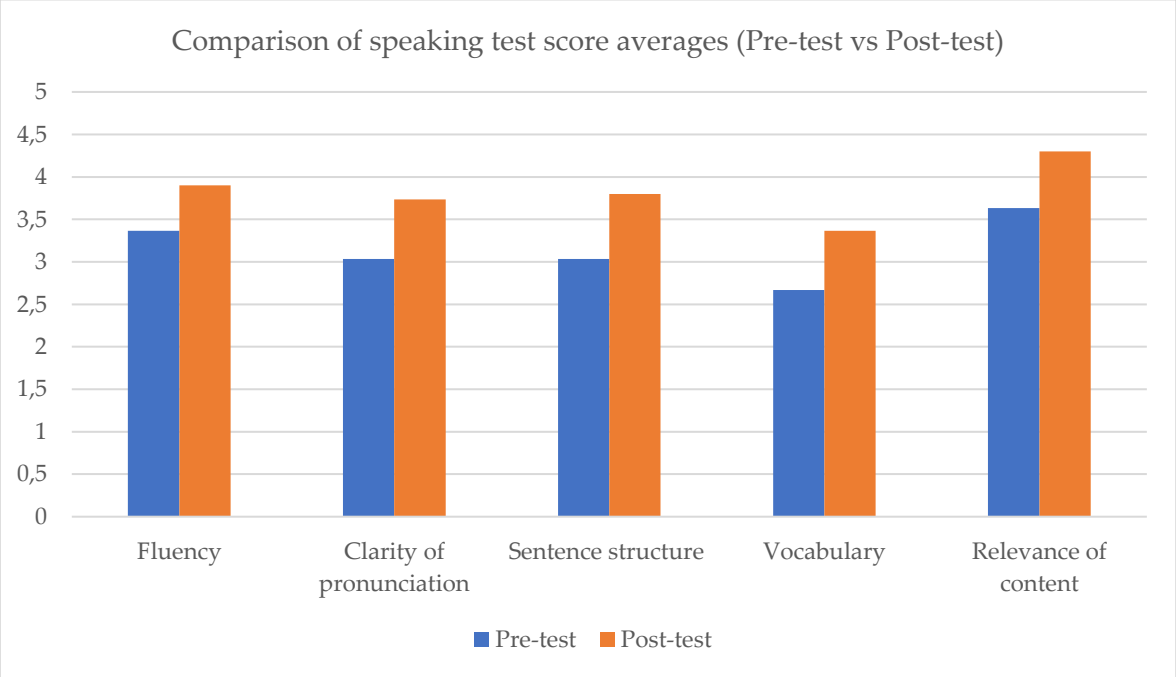

Figure 1. Comparison of speaking test score averages

The figure above compares the average scores for each indicator of students' speaking skills between the pre-test and post-test.

Analysis of Speaking Test Score Improvement

The findings indicate a consistent improvement across all speaking skill indicators following an interdisciplinary teaching intervention that integrated arts elements into German language instruction. Overall, the average post-test scores were notably higher than the pre-test, suggesting that this approach effectively enhanced students' speaking abilities. Fluency showed a significant increase, reflecting students' growing confidence and ability to articulate ideas smoothly, an improvement that can be linked to artistic activities promoting verbal improvisation and expressive communication. Pronunciation clarity also improved, as students demonstrated better articulation and phonetic accuracy, likely influenced by vocal or performance-based art practices that emphasized precision in pronunciation. In terms of sentence structure, students made noticeable progress in constructing grammatically correct sentences, indicating an enhanced understanding of German syntax through contextual learning methods such as movement and storytelling. Vocabulary development was also evident, with a marked expansion in students' active vocabulary; role-playing and narrative exercises encouraged a more natural acquisition of thematic words. Finally, content relevance improved as students became better at speaking appropriately to the given topic, showing stronger skills in connecting language use to meaningful contexts, which was likely fostered through scenario-based and story-driven activities.

These results support the notion that the *"From Movement to Words"* approach positively impacts the development of students' speaking skills in German. By combining artistic expression with linguistic practice, this interdisciplinary method offers a holistic and interactive learning experience that enriches communication and creativity.

Statistical Test Results: Pre-test and Post-test

Based on the paired sample t-test results, a t-statistic value of 10.6484 was obtained, with a p-value of 0.0000 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of students' speaking skills, confirming the effectiveness of the instructional intervention.

t-Statistic	p-value	Interpretation
10.6484	0.0000	Significant ($p < 0.05$)

Statistical Interpretation

The high t-statistic value indicates that the difference between the two data sets (pre-test and post-test) is unlikely to be due to random variation alone. Instead, it points to a meaningful effect of the movement-based instructional intervention on students' speaking skills. Given that the p-value falls well below the 0.05 significance threshold, the null hypothesis (which assumes no difference) is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis, namely, that the movement-integrated approach has a statistically significant positive impact on students' speaking proficiency.

Interpretation

These findings suggest integrating physical movement and artistic expression into German language instruction effectively enhances students' speaking abilities. The statistically significant improvement reflects perceptual and affective gains and concrete progress in students' linguistic performance.

This outcome aligns with the theory of embodied cognition (Wilson, 2002), which posits that cognitive processes, including language, are grounded in bodily and sensorimotor experiences. In this context, bodily movement is a means of expression and a cognitive tool that facilitates language comprehension and production. Furthermore, the results support Madsen's (1983) advocacy for integrating contextualized, communicative oral testing methods to assess speaking skills authentically.

The consistently higher post-test scores across all indicators, such as fluency, sentence structure,

vocabulary, and content relevance, demonstrate the potential of interdisciplinary approaches combining arts and language to bridge the gap between theory and practice in foreign language education.

Based on the t-test results and narrative analysis, it can be concluded that using movement in German language instruction significantly improves students' speaking abilities. Therefore, incorporating movement-based artistic methods into language pedagogy presents a promising and innovative strategy, particularly in higher education settings where active and expressive communication is essential for successful foreign language acquisition.

The t-test results in this study provide strong evidence that a movement-based instructional approach significantly improves students' speaking skills in German. By integrating physical movement into the learning process, students can construct meaning more actively and contextually, reduce psychological barriers to communication, and engage in a richer, more immersive learning experience. Given these benefits, this approach merits further development by designing more flexible curricula and professional development programs that effectively equip instructors with the skills to implement interactive and multimodal teaching strategies.

Participatory Observation Results

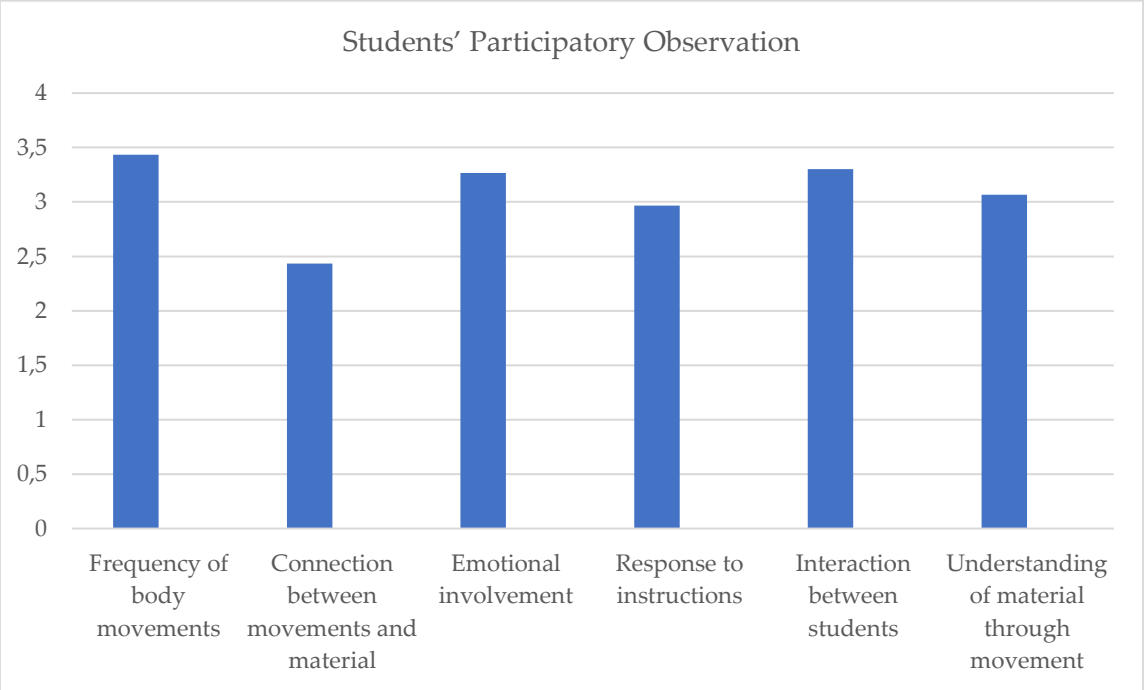

Figure 2. Students' Participatory Observation

The graph above illustrates the average scores from participatory observations conducted with 30 university students across six key indicators. The results show that students generally actively used physical movement during learning sessions. Gestures and body language frequently accompanied their communicative efforts, although the intensity and consistency of movement varied among individuals. Regarding content relevance, the scores were moderate, indicating that while movement was incorporated into the learning process, not all gestures directly represented or reinforced the academic material. This highlights the need for further pedagogical development, particularly in guiding educators to align movements with lesson objectives purposefully.

Emotional engagement was relatively high, suggesting that movement activities encouraged students to express themselves more freely and confidently, an important aspect supporting foreign language learning. Students also demonstrated strong responsiveness to movement-integrated

instructions, reflecting multimodal teaching strategies' potential to enhance focus, comprehension, and active participation. Peer interaction was another area positively influenced by movement-based tasks, as students engaged more collaboratively, fostering social connections and communicative exchanges essential for language learning. Finally, the indicator of understanding content through movement showed that many students could grasp conceptual material more effectively when it was paired with physical actions. However, there is still room for improvement in how movement conveys and reinforces linguistic and academic meaning. Overall, these findings suggest that movement-based learning supports linguistic development and strengthens engagement, collaboration, and comprehension in a dynamic classroom environment.

In conclusion, the interdisciplinary integration of the arts and language instruction in German language learning appears to foster emotional, social, and cognitive engagement among students. Nonetheless, further efforts are needed to optimize the pedagogical linkage between movement and content comprehension to harness the benefits of embodied learning fully.

3.1.1 Interview Result

The following table presents the results of in-depth interviews conducted with 30 experimental and control students. The table includes six key indicators to evaluate their experiences with movement-based instruction and its perceived impact on their German-speaking skills.

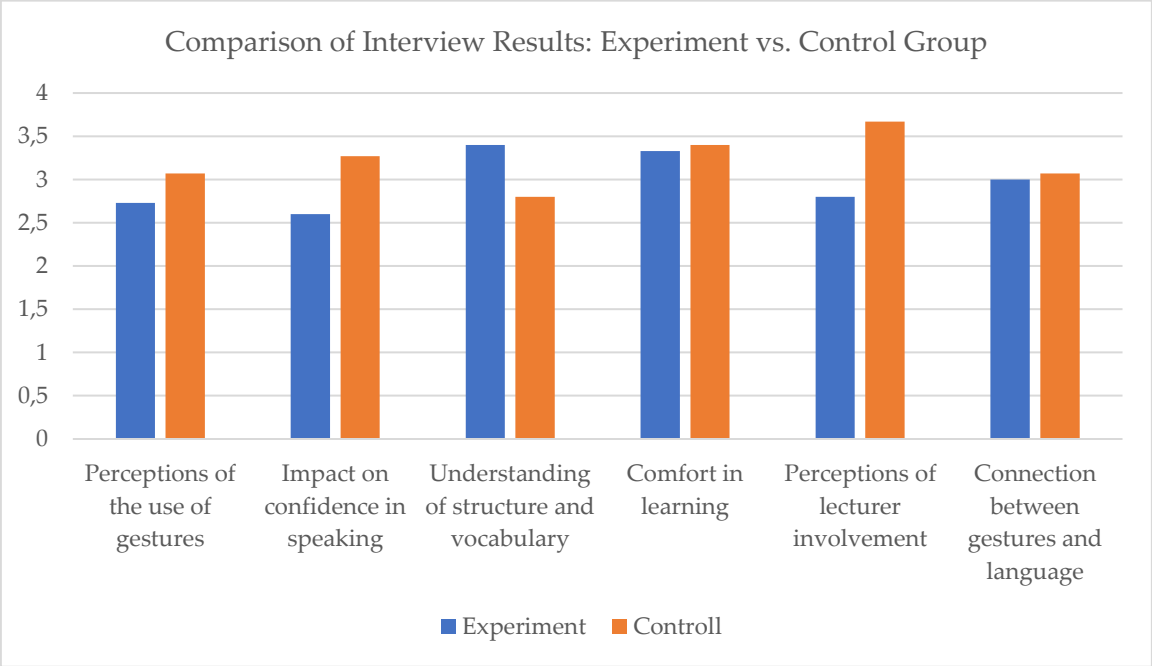

Figure 3. Comparison of Interview Results: Experiment vs. Control Group

The graph above compares the average scores from in-depth interviews between the experimental and control groups, based on six qualitative indicators. The findings show that students in the experimental group reported higher perceptions of movement integration, suggesting that the movement-based approach was more engaging and effective in making language learning contextual and meaningful. Regarding speaking confidence, participants from the experimental group expressed greater ease when using German, as physical movement reduced anxiety and awkwardness while providing visual support that enhanced verbal expression. Similarly, the experimental group scored higher on vocabulary and sentence structure comprehension, as gestures and movements created concrete associations with words and sentence patterns, accelerating linguistic acquisition.

Comfort in the learning environment also differed between the two groups. Students in the experimental group described themselves as feeling more relaxed, active, and motivated during lessons,

while those in the control group tended to remain more passive. Another notable difference appeared in perceptions of instructor engagement: the integration of movement led experimental group students to view their instructor as more interactive and creative, whereas the control group perceived a more traditional teaching style. Finally, the connection between movement and language emerged as a key marker of the method's effectiveness. Students in the experimental group acknowledged that body movement helped them link word meanings with practical usage, a connection that the control group did not perceive. These findings emphasize that movement-based instruction fosters improved linguistic skills and a more dynamic and engaging learning experience than conventional methods.

The movement-based instructional approach enhanced students' speaking skills and fostered a more supportive, creative, and enjoyable learning environment. The in-depth interviews revealed that the intervention contributed to a more meaningful and immersive language learning experience than conventional teaching methods.

Questionnaire Results

The following table presents the results of a student perception questionnaire regarding using a movement-based teaching approach in German language learning. It includes eight indicators designed to assess the method's effectiveness, comfort level, and students' overall perceptions of the approach.

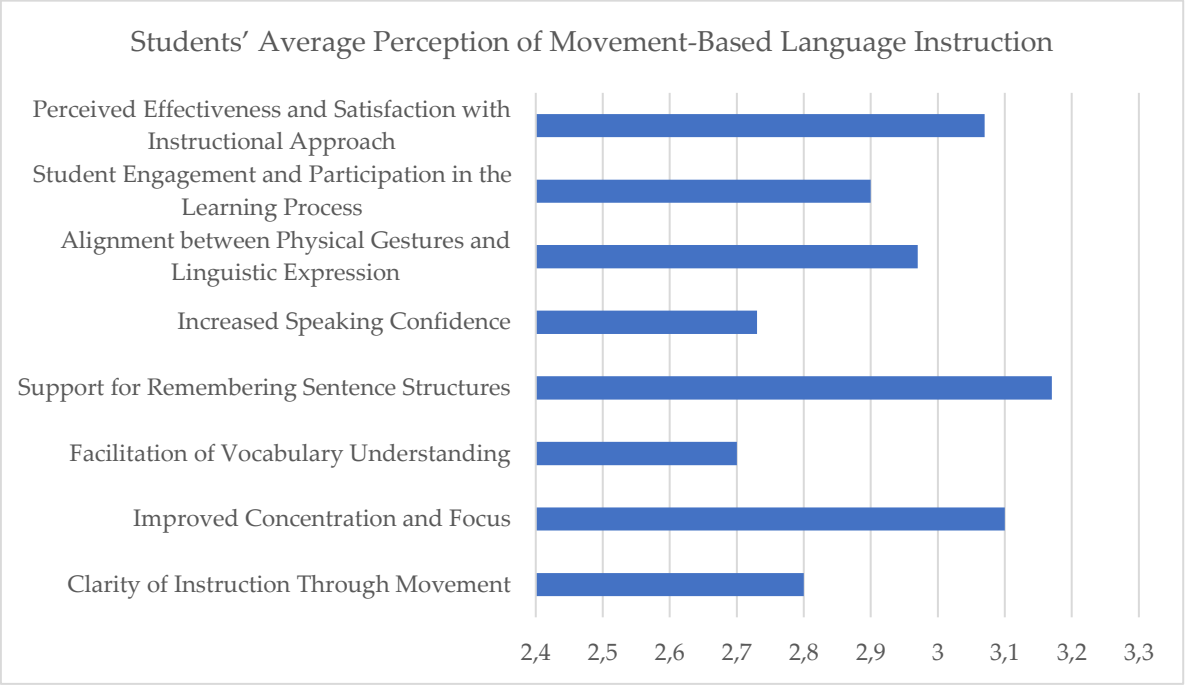

Figure 4. Student Perceptions

The graph above illustrates the average scores across eight questionnaire indicators to measure students' perceptions of movement-based instruction in German language learning. Among these indicators, the highest-rated ones were satisfaction with the teaching method and the clarity of instruction through movement. These results show that most students enjoyed the learning process and found it easier to understand lesson content when it was supported by physical movement. The positive reception suggests that movement-based approaches may effectively increase student motivation, particularly because they transform abstract language concepts into tangible and engaging experiences.

In the mid-range, indicators such as increased confidence in speaking, alignment between movement and language meaning, and ease of vocabulary acquisition were scored moderately. This pattern reflects that students gained noticeable benefits from the approach, including improved speaking confidence and the ability to associate movements with word meanings, facilitating

vocabulary retention. However, the fact that these scores were not as high as satisfaction or clarity indicates that while many students experienced positive outcomes, the degree of effectiveness varied. Some students may have needed more time or additional practice to fully internalize the benefits of movement-based learning, especially when applying new vocabulary in spontaneous communication.

By contrast, the lowest-rated indicators were active engagement in learning and improved concentration and focus. These lower scores may indicate that not all students can remain consistently engaged or concentrate fully during movement-based activities. Several factors could contribute to this outcome, such as differences in individual learning styles, the novelty of the method, or the challenge of balancing physical movement with cognitive focus. This finding also highlights the possibility that some students are still adjusting to this form of instruction and might require gradual adaptation or complementary strategies to benefit from it fully. While the movement-based approach was generally well-received and showed promising potential, the variation in scores across indicators suggests that refinements and additional support may be needed to maximize its effectiveness for all learners.

Students responded positively to the movement-based teaching approach, particularly regarding instructional clarity and overall satisfaction. Nevertheless, targeted instructional adjustments and additional training may further enhance its impact on concentration and active engagement.

Discussion

Based on the findings that integrating body movement into German language instruction significantly impacts students' speaking proficiency, this discussion explores the results through established learning theories and relevant previous studies. Key focus areas include the observed improvement in speaking skills, the pedagogical role of physical movement in language learning, and the broader benefits and challenges associated with implementing this approach in higher education settings.

Improvement in Speaking Skills

Findings from in-depth interviews and participatory observations revealed that students in the experimental group, who were taught using a movement-based instructional approach grounded in artistic expression, demonstrated significant improvements in speaking skills—particularly in fluency, vocabulary richness, and clarity of pronunciation. Students reported associating words with concrete physical movements enhanced their retention and facilitated more intuitive verbal expression. This supports the concept of embodied cognition, where language learning becomes more meaningful through the body's engagement in meaning-making.

These findings align with recent research by Khasawneh, who demonstrated that kinesthetic learning strategies significantly improved students' speaking performance in English as a foreign language. Similarly, (Díaz, J., Hernández, A., & Martínez, 2023). Found that embodied instructional methods helped reduce speaking anxiety while enhancing learners' confidence and expressiveness. Beyond improving linguistic accuracy, movement-based activities foster greater cognitive engagement, allowing students to internalize vocabulary and grammar more effectively. Moreover, incorporating gestures and physical enactment in the classroom encourages active participation and collaboration, creating a more dynamic and interactive learning environment. These results underscore the pedagogical value of movement as a visual aid and a central tool for emotional and cognitive engagement, highlighting its role in promoting deeper learning and sustained motivation among language learners.

Dual Coding Theory remains foundational, positing that information is processed through verbal and non-verbal channels, such as kinesthetic cues (Paivio, 2007). Building on this, recent multimodal perspectives provide additional insights into the role of embodied learning. For example, Zhang, Y., Baills, F., & Prieto highlighted that integrating gestures and body movements can significantly enhance cognitive processing, facilitate retention, and support the internalization of vocabulary and grammatical

structures. Moreover, incorporating movement in classroom activities has increased learner engagement, motivation, and collaboration, contributing to a more dynamic learning environment (Khasawneh, 2024). Consequently, body movement should not be regarded merely as a supplementary technique but as a central pedagogical strategy, essential for fostering a holistic, engaging, and transformative language learning experience. By strategically combining verbal explanations with physical enactment, educators can promote deeper comprehension and long-term retention of language skills, ultimately supporting learners in achieving greater communicative competence.

The Role of Body Movement in Language Learning

One of the notable findings of this study is that embodied, artistic movement significantly enhances student engagement in German language learning. Students in the experimental group, who participated in movement-based activities such as gestural enactments, facial expressions, and body improvisations, reported higher levels of interaction, increased confidence in speaking, and improved vocabulary retention. These outcomes are consistent with (García-Gámez, A. B., & Macizo, 2023) Meta-analysis demonstrated that congruent gestures significantly strengthen foreign language vocabulary recall, whether the gestures are performed or observed. Furthermore, integrating body movement into language instruction fosters a more interactive and collaborative classroom environment, supporting cognitive learning and affective engagement. Such strategies encourage learners to embody the language physically, leading to deeper comprehension, better retention of linguistic structures, and heightened motivation to participate actively in communicative tasks.

Moreover, integrating kinesthetic elements alleviates speaking anxiety (Maruf, F., Santosa, D., & Ivanov, 2022). Found that gesture-based corrective feedback facilitated rapid student uptake of linguistic accuracy, with learners demonstrating over 80% correction frequency across diverse contexts in Indonesia, Thailand, and Ukraine. Students in the present study echoed these findings, reporting feeling more relaxed, confident, and expressive when engaging in body-based activities. This suggests that movement-based instruction supports cognitive development and fosters an emotionally supportive learning environment, essential for effective oral language production. By allowing learners to embody language structures physically, kinesthetic strategies can enhance self-efficacy, reduce performance-related stress, and encourage active participation in communicative tasks, ultimately contributing to more meaningful and sustained language acquisition.

Finally, these findings are theoretically grounded in embodied multimodal frameworks, including Dual Coding Theory and sensorimotor enrichment approaches (Paivio, 2007). Dual Coding Theory posits the existence of parallel verbal and non-verbal channels, and the current study supports recent extensions from embodied learning theories. For example, (Agawrin et al., 2023) Demonstrated that iconic gestures and congruent body movements generate multimodal memory traces, significantly improving vocabulary retention, pronunciation, and oral proficiency. Moreover, integrating movement into language instruction promotes active engagement, reinforces cognitive processing, and facilitates long-term internalization of linguistic structures. Therefore, movement should not be regarded merely as an illustrative or supplementary tool but as a central pedagogical strategy for fostering holistic, interactive, and transformative language learning experiences.

Active Engagement and Collaborative Learning

One of the key discoveries of this study is that integrating movement into German language lessons significantly enhanced student engagement. Students in the experimental group demonstrated enhanced participation, experiential collaboration, and confidence in speaking by utilizing structured bodily actions—such as gestures, partner mirroring, and simple choreographed sequences. Interviews revealed that these movements encouraged them to initiate discussions, negotiate meaning, and provide peer feedback more willingly, fostering a dynamic atmosphere of co-construction rather than passive reception.

This collaborative dynamic aligns with Vygotsky's social learning theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive development. Recent research, however, provides deeper insights into how embodied interaction facilitates shared understanding and co-construction of knowledge. For example, Mondada Highlights that synchronized gestures during peer discourse help establish common ground and support interactive language processing. Similarly, Faella (Reports that "embodied activities" enhance collaborative learning outcomes, particularly when students actively reflect on and verbalize their movements and interactions. Together, these findings suggest that movement stimulates individual cognitive engagement and fosters a socially rich learning environment, promoting peer-to-peer scaffolding, cooperative problem-solving, and more meaningful communicative practice in language classrooms.

From a constructivist perspective, movement-based learning provides meaningful, hands-on experiences supporting the internalization of linguistic form and communicative usage. Recent embodied learning frameworks describe this process as creating "multimodal meaning-making traces," in which gestures and physical engagement leave enduring imprints in memory systems while facilitating real-time negotiation of meaning (Skulmowski, A., & Rey, 2018). Moreover, movement-based instruction encourages active learner participation, collaboration, and reflection, allowing students to integrate cognitive, social, and bodily dimensions of language learning. Connecting intellectual understanding with physical enactment and social interaction fosters a more holistic acquisition of German, enhancing vocabulary retention, grammatical accuracy, and overall communicative competence.

Additional Benefits of a Movement-Based Approach

Beyond improvements in speaking performance, the movement-based instructional model proved highly effective in enhancing learners' motivation and self-confidence. Many students in the experimental group described the sessions as "more alive" and "less intimidating," attributing their increased enthusiasm to the physical expressiveness embedded in the learning activities. As (Mir, Z., Rehman, R., & Mahmood, 2025) Note, "active learning approaches that engage learners bodily and emotionally help reduce classroom anxiety and strengthen learner autonomy." Incorporating physical activities such as gesturing, role-play, and enactment enabled students to experience language more holistically, fostering greater willingness to participate, take verbal risks, and engage collaboratively. Consequently, movement-based instruction supports linguistic development and cultivates positive affective and social dimensions of language learning, reinforcing learner agency and overall engagement.

Moreover, incorporating physical movement into language learning promoted emotional safety and expressive freedom, contributing to a stronger sense of communicative confidence. (Nguyen, T. M., Vo, L. H., & Pham, 2022). Emphasize that "students who learn through movement show greater willingness to communicate and a notable reduction in self-monitoring anxiety." Consistent with these findings, learners in the current study reported that engaging in movement-based activities helped them "relax" and "connect ideas physically," fostering a sense of security when producing spoken German in class. By reducing affective barriers and encouraging bodily engagement, movement-based instruction enhances linguistic performance and supports the development of self-efficacy, risk-taking, and active participation in communicative tasks.

These results are consistent with broader research on multimodal teaching. According to Changlong (2023), multimodal instruction incorporating gestures, posture, and physical actions offers emotional scaffolding that helps reduce foreign language anxiety. Similarly, the findings of this study demonstrate that integrating movement into language learning not only enhances cognitive processing and memory retention but also supports students' emotional well-being. By cultivating a classroom atmosphere where learners feel more confident, expressive, and motivated, movement-based instruction fosters an effective and enjoyable learning environment. Thus, embodied teaching strategies

function as a dual approach, advancing linguistic competence while simultaneously encouraging socio-emotional engagement (Changlong, 2023).

Challenges and Insights from the Control Group

Although the control group demonstrated modest improvements in speaking proficiency, their progress remained considerably lower than that of the movement-based experimental group. This pronounced difference underscores the limitations of conventional language instruction, which often relies predominantly on pronunciation drills and theoretical explanations without incorporating physical engagement. Supporting this perspective, (Robinson, H., & Mills, 2023) Found that traditional, non-kinesthetic approaches frequently lead to smaller gains in fluency and lower levels of learner motivation among intermediate L2 students. These findings suggest that language instruction may inadequately address both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning without embodied and interactive components, thereby constraining students' opportunities for meaningful communicative development.

Critiques of conventional language teaching approaches echo earlier observations by (Littlewood, 2004), who emphasized that, in the absence of meaningful physical engagement and social interaction, language learning can become rigid, monotonous, and uninspiring. Recent research further supports this perspective; for example, a study published in Frontiers in Education (Faella, 2025) Demonstrates that embodied, movement-based classroom environments significantly enhance student motivation and willingness to communicate, whereas passive, lecture-style instruction yields comparatively lower gains. The limited progress observed in the control group in the present study aligns with these findings, highlighting the critical need to integrate embodied and creative pedagogies into language teaching. By foregrounding movement, artistic expression, and collaborative activities, such approaches cultivate a more dynamic, interactive, and holistic learning environment that addresses cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of second language acquisition.

Practical Implications for German Language Instruction

The outcomes of this study suggest that movement-based instruction holds considerable promise for teaching German and other foreign languages. Integrating kinesthetic elements such as body gestures, facial expressions, and creative movement helps learners overcome speaking anxiety and facilitates deeper comprehension and more effective language acquisition. Supporting this, "Incorporating artistic physical activities into language lessons significantly increased learner motivation and reduced anxiety," leading to improved oral fluency, retention, and overall communicative competence. Moreover, embedding movement within language pedagogy encourages active engagement, collaborative participation, and experiential learning, creating a classroom environment where learners can internalize linguistic forms while developing confidence and enjoyment in using the target language.

In practical classroom settings, movement-based instruction can be implemented through engaging activities such as dramatized dialogues, gestural vocabulary drills, and visual props integrated with expressive body movements. Role-play techniques, for example, enable students to "embody new linguistic forms" and bring language to life ((Darmawan, 2024). By connecting words to physical actions, learners develop a stronger sense of ownership over their speech patterns, enhancing spontaneity and communicative confidence. Furthermore, these embodied activities encourage peer interaction and collaborative problem-solving, allowing learners to experiment with language in context while reinforcing memory retention and fluency.

Integrating creative physical expression with linguistic practice transforms traditional rote drills into rich, experiential learning opportunities (Elouali, 2023). Demonstrates that the use of role-play and multimodal strategies not only enhances creativity but also strengthens communicative competence among foreign language learners. These findings suggest that positioning movement as a central

pedagogical tool cultivates a dynamic, immersive classroom environment that promotes expressive freedom, reduces anxiety, and fosters vocal confidence. By simultaneously engaging cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of learning, embodied instructional strategies enable learners to internalize language more effectively while experiencing greater enjoyment, motivation, and active participation in communicative tasks.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that integrating body movements into German language instruction significantly enhances students' speaking abilities. Using gestures, role-play, and other physical activities facilitates vocabulary retention, improves understanding of word context and meaning, and fosters greater confidence in oral expression. Students participating in movement-based activities demonstrated more spontaneous and fluid speech than those in traditional learning settings. Additionally, these activities helped learners connect abstract language concepts to concrete actions, making lessons more memorable and meaningful. The physical engagement also appeared to reduce anxiety, allowing students to participate more actively and take risks in their spoken language production.

Moreover, the movement-based instructional approach promotes active engagement in the classroom. By encouraging students to participate physically and creatively, this method cultivates a dynamic learning environment that supports interaction, collaboration, and experiential learning. Learners were more willing to take verbal risks, experiment with language, and communicate freely, contributing to a deeper internalization of linguistic structures. The strategy also stimulated peer-to-peer learning, as students often learned from observing and mirroring each other's movements, gestures, and speech patterns, enhancing both social and cognitive aspects of language acquisition.

Overall, incorporating physical movements and artistic elements into German pedagogy proves to be an effective strategy for developing speaking competencies. Beyond improving fluency and pronunciation, this approach enhances learner motivation, self-confidence, and communicative competence. It creates a more immersive and enjoyable classroom environment, where learners feel encouraged to express themselves fully. By bridging cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions of learning, movement-based teaching represents a promising and innovative pathway for creating a holistic and transformative language learning experience that can also be applied to other foreign language contexts.

REFERENCES

Agawrin, Y., Baills, F., & Prieto, P. (2023). Embodied gesture training enhances vocabulary retention and pronunciation: Evidence from multimodal instruction. *Language Teaching*, *56*(2), 123–138. https://doi.org/. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444823000083

Agawrin, Y., Baills, F., & Prieto, P. (2023). Embodied gesture training enhances vocabulary retention and pronunciation: Evidence from multimodal instruction. *Language Teaching*, *56*(2), 123–138. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444823000083

Böttger, H., & Höppner, B. (2024). Muscle memory and the development of speaking skills: Unveiling neuromotor foundations and methodological approaches in foreign language education. *Journal of Linguistics and Language Teaching*, *15*(1), 45–61.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Changlong, H. (2023). The application of a multimodal teaching approach to reduce foreign language anxiety. *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, *12*(4), 75–84. https://doi.org/10.18533/jah.v12i4.2338

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research. *SAGE Publications*.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among. *SAGE Publications*.

Darmawan, K. A. (2024). The effectiveness of using the role play method in enhancing the English speaking skills of junior high school students. *Journal of Education Innovation and Curriculum Development*, *2*(1), 34–40. https://journals.iarn.or.id/index.php/educur/article/view/436

Díaz, J., Hernández, A., & Martínez, L. (2023). Embodied strategies for public speaking anxiety. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *115*(4), 789–803. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000456

Elouali, F. Z. (2023). Incorporating role play as an innovative approach to fostering EFL students' creativity and critical thinking. *Global Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, *13*(2), 142–155. https://doi.org/10.18844/gjflt.v13i2.8718

Engelkamp, J., & Zimmer, H. D. (1989). Memory for action events: A new field of research. *Psychological Research*, *51*(4), 153–157. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00309142

Faella, P. (2025). Embodied activities and collaborative learning in higher education. *Frontiers in Education*, *10*, 987654. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.987654

García-Gámez, A. B., & Macizo, P. (2023). Gestures as scaffolding to learn vocabulary in a foreign language: A review. *Brain Sciences*, *13*(12), 1712. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/brainsci13121712

García-Monge, A., Guijarro-Romero, S., Santamaría-Vázquez, E., Martínez-Álvarez, L., & Bores-Calle, N. (2023). Embodied strategies for public speaking anxiety: Evaluation of the CorpOral program. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, *17*, 1268798. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2023.1268798

Guerrettaz, A. M., Jusslin, K., & Korpinen, E. (2024). The use of the creative movement method in teaching foreign languages to very young language learners. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, *32*(2), 178–193. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2024.2312345

Khasawneh, S. (2024). The relationship between multisensory stimulus-integrated foreign language learning and reading skills. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *15*, 123–134. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.123456

Littlewood, W. (2004). The task-based approach: Some questions and suggestions. *ELT Journal*, *58*(4), 319–327.

Liu, Y., & Smith, J. (2024). The effects of artistic physical activities on motivation, anxiety, and oral fluency in foreign language learning. *Language Teaching Research*, *28*(3), 456–478. https://doi.org/. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168824123456

Macedonia, M., & von Kriegstein, K. (2012). Gestures enhance foreign language learning. *Biolinguistics*, *6*(3), 393–416.

MacIntyre, P. D., & Mercer, S. (2014). Introducing positive psychology to SLA. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, *4*(2), 153–172. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2014.4.2.2

MacIntyre, P. D., & Mercer, S. (2014). Introducing positive psychology to SLA. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, *4*(2), 153–172. https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2014.4.2.2

Maruf, F., Santosa, D., & Ivanov, S. (2022). Gesture-based corrective feedback in foreign language learning: Cross-cultural evidence from Indonesia, Thailand, and Ukraine. *System*, *106*, 102848. https://doi.org/. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2021.102848

Mathias, B., Andrä, C., Schwager, A., Macedonia, M., & von Kriegstein, K. (2022). Twelve- and fourteen-year-old school children differentially benefit from sensorimotor- and multisensory-enriched vocabulary training. *Educational Psychology Review*, *34*(4), 1123–1142. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-022-09647-4

Mathias, B., Andrä, C., Schwager, A., Macedonia, M., & von Kriegstein, K. (2022). Sensorimotor- and multisensory-enriched vocabulary training benefits school children differently by age. *Educational Psychology Review*, *34*(4), 1123–1142. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-022-09647-4

Mayer, K., Macedonia, M., & von Kriegstein, K. (2021). Gestures support the multisensory learning of foreign language vocabulary. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.638558

Mir, Z., Rehman, R., & Mahmood, S. (2025). Implementing an active learning approach to promote motivation, reduce anxiety, and shape positive attitudes: A case study of EFL learners. *ELT Journal*, *79*(1), 45–60. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccae001

Mondada, L. (2024). Gesture synchronization and interactional alignment in classroom discourse. *Classroom Discourse*, *15*(2), 123–145. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/19463014.2024.1234567

Nguyen, T. M., Vo, L. H., & Pham, Q. T. (2022). No Title. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, *38*(3), 1–15. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445

Paivio, A. (2007). *Mind and its evolution: A dual coding theoretical approach*. Psychology Press.

Papitto, G., Lugli, L., Borghi, A. M., & Gatti, R. (2021). Embodied negation and levels of concreteness: A TMS study on German and Italian language processing. *Brain and Language*, *220*, 105026. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bandl.2021.105026

Robinson, H., & Mills, S. (2023). The effectiveness of traditional versus kinesthetic approaches in second language acquisition: A systematic review. *Language Learning Journal*, *51*(4), 456–478. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2023.1987654

Skulmowski, A., & Rey, G. D. (2018). Embodied learning: Introducing a taxonomy based on bodily engagement. *Educational Psychology Review*, *30*(2), 541–569. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-018-9442-5

Stavridi, M.-C. (2023). No Title. *Educational Practice and Theory*, *45*(1), 67–83. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.7459/ept/45.1.05

Tang, C., Shangguan, L., Liu, L., & Mei, J. (2024). The Model and Path for Digital Cultural Tourism to Promote Rural Revitalization. *Journal of Resources and Ecology*, *15*(3), 528–540. https://doi.org/10.5814/j.issn.1674-764x.2024.03.002

Tarasenko, R., Laktionova, O., & Petrushenko, N. (2022). The use of AR elements in studying foreign languages at the university. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (IJET)*, *17*(3), 121–134. https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v17i03.28407

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2010). SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research (2nd ed.). *SAGE Publications*.

Usuluddin, U., Fikni, Z., Husnu, M., & Nadia, R. (2024a). Exploring the impact of kinesthetic learning strategies on EFL learners' speaking ability. *Culturalistics: Journal of Cultural, Literary, and Linguistic Studies*, *8*(2), 149–158. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14710/ca.v8i2.24128

Usuluddin, U., Fikni, Z., Husnu, M., & Nadia, R. (2024b). Exploring the impact of kinesthetic learning strategies on EFL learners' speaking ability. *Culturalistics: Journal of Cultural, Literary, and Linguistic Studies*, *8*(2), 149–158. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14710/ca.v8i2.24128

Wilson, M. (2002). Six views of embodied cognition. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, *9*(4), 625–636. https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03196322

Xue, S., Xue, X., Son, Y. J., Jiang, Y., Zhou, H., & Chen, S. (2013). A data-driven multidimensional assessment model for higher education English listening and speaking courses. *Frontiers in Education*, *8*, 1198709. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2023.1198709

Zhang, Y., Baills, F., & Prieto, P. (2024). Embodied music training can help improve speech imitation and pronunciation skills. *Language Teaching*. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444824000500