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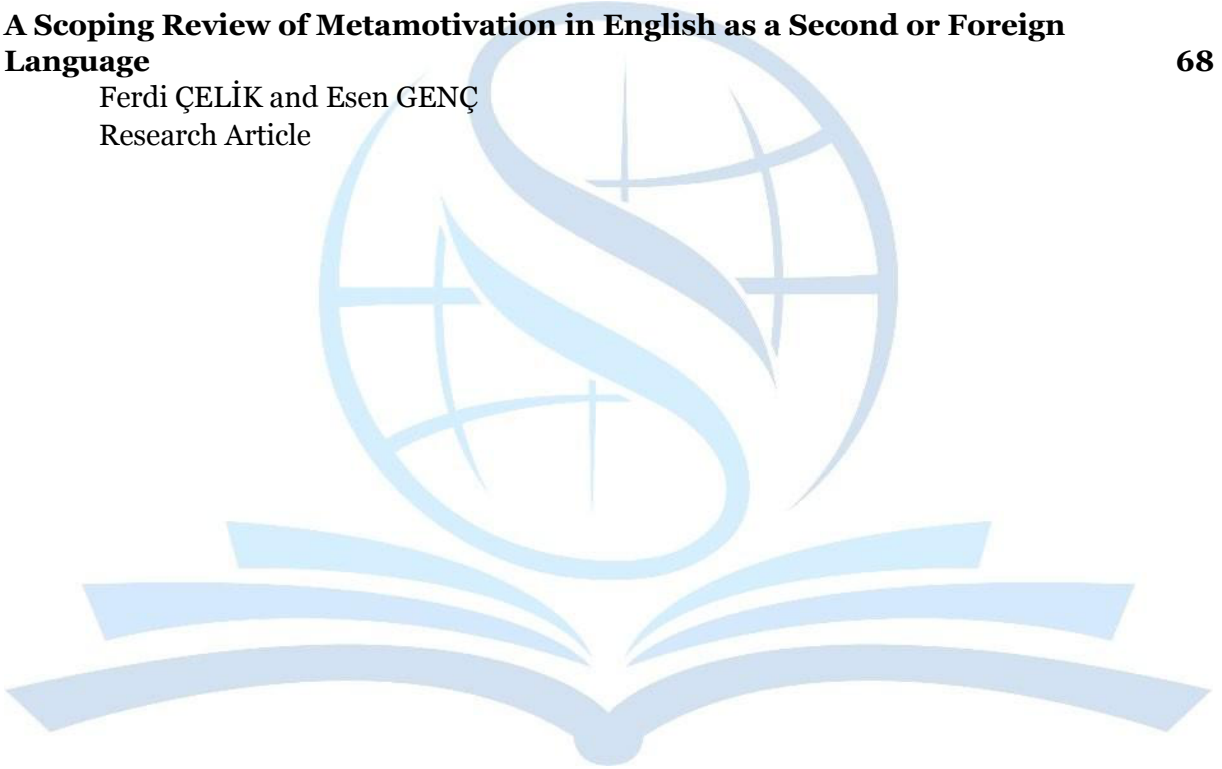
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Translating the Postmodern: A Qualitative Analysis of Intertextual References in the Turkish Subtitles of *Mad Men*

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Abstract

This study investigates how the U.S.-based television series *Mad Men* (2007–2015) employs intertextuality, including literary, commercial, historical–political and popular culture references, and how these intertextual references are translated into Turkish. The study builds upon theoretical models of intertextuality, specifically Julia Kristeva’s model that describes each text as composed of prior texts, and Leppihalme and Pedersen’s models for the translation of allusions. A qualitative analysis is conducted of a purposeful sample of six episodes selected from the first two seasons of *Mad Men*, accessed via Amazon Prime Video in Turkey. 35 intertextual references were identified, of which nine representative examples were selected for detailed comparative analysis. The results indicate that the translators predominantly employed retention as the main translation strategy when rendering intertextual references in *Mad Men*. While this strategy preserves intertextual meaning to some extent, it has notable implications for audience reception. When references are unfamiliar or obscure to audiences with a different cultural background from the writers’, the degree of intertextual resonance may be significantly reduced among Turkish audiences. The study further identifies cultural embeddedness as a secondary variable that determines the effectiveness of the official-equivalent strategy, suggesting that the availability of an established translation is insufficient if it is not widely recognized by the target audience. Finally, it introduces the notion of graduated intertextual access to account for cases in which evaluative language affords target audiences differential rather than purely dichotomous access to intertextual meaning.

Keywords: intertextuality, audiovisual translation, subtitling, translation strategies, *Mad Men*

1. Introduction

Texts do not exist in isolation but are shaped by their relationships with other texts within a broader cultural and discursive context. Intertextuality refers to the way in which a text is

shaped by prior texts and, in turn, contributes to those that follow, through allusions, quotations, and other references to earlier textual knowledge. T.S. Eliot (1920, p. 44) states that “no poet or artist has his complete meaning alone”; instead, each piece of literature is influenced by past works, and thus, gains significance because of the connection to them. Julia Kristeva (1986) first introduced the term “intertextuality” within her paper titled “Word, Dialogue and Novel.” Kristeva’s position was that a message is never communicated directly from an author to an audience; instead, it is always transmitted through codes that carry the influence of accumulated meaning. She further states that “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (Kristeva, 1986, p. 37). Therefore, intertextuality is not simply an additional characteristic of textuality; it is one of the fundamental characteristics.

This theoretical complexity assumes a practical dimension for the subtitle translator. Media forms like film and television, typically use extensive webs of intertextuality. Subtitle translators face particular difficulties translating these complex artifacts due to the limitations imposed by the technical characteristics of the subtitling medium. Subtitles can last for only the time that a character speaks, usually between 1-5 seconds. Furthermore, most subtitles are restricted to 38 characters per line (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2007, p. 84). These restrictions on space and time severely restrict the translator’s options to explain the intended meanings of intertextual references contextually. Thus, when deciding whether to retain, if at all possible, to modify them so that they correspond to a target-culture equivalent, or simply to eliminate them altogether, translators face both practical and ideological consequences (Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998; Gambier, 2008). The decision regarding intertextual references is also ideologically charged. Translation may either domesticate the ST, making it transparent and consistent with the norms of the target culture (TC), or foreignize it, retaining the cultural otherness of the source text (ST) and making the translator visible (cf. Venuti, 1995; Pedersen, 2011).

1.1. Mad Men and Postmodern Intertextuality

Since *Mad Men* (AMC, 2007–2015), created by Matthew Weiner and set in the New York advertising industry of the 1960s, relies heavily on intertextual references, it constitutes a particularly productive corpus for this study. The series exemplifies what Hutcheon (1988, p. 11) terms the postmodern paradox of simultaneously using and interrogating the cultural conventions of the past: its narrative is constructed not through direct historical representation but through a dense accumulation of intertextual references that collectively reconstruct the cultural world of the 1960s for a contemporary audience. Don Draper’s appropriation of a real Lucky Strike slogan, the appearance of actual Frank O’Hara poetry in voice-over narration, and the invocation of historically specific broadcast events all operate as what Kristeva (1986, p. 37) describes as intersections of textual surfaces whose full significance is only accessible to

audiences who can activate the relevant cultural memory. In this sense, translation decisions do not merely affect the comprehensibility of individual lines. They also determine the extent to which the show's broader cultural argument remains legible to Turkish audiences, making *Mad Men* an unusually revealing object of study for subtitle translation research.

1.2. The Turkish Reception Context and Research Gap

The Turkish reception context adds a further layer to the study. Subscription-based streaming services such as Amazon Prime Video have made high-quality American prestige television widely accessible to Turkish audiences. At the same time, the cultural and historical distance between 1960s American advertising culture and contemporary Turkish audiences remains substantial. A pertinent question, therefore, is what challenges translators face when rendering prestige television characterized by dense postmodern intertextuality under the formal constraints of subtitling. Despite its scholarly relevance, there has been very limited research on the subtitling of English-language prestige television into Turkish.

This study addresses the above-mentioned gap by integrating Kristeva's (1986) theory of intertextuality and the subtitle-specific allusion translation frameworks of Leppihalme (1997) and Pedersen (2011). It seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What types of intertextual references appear in *Mad Men*?
- Which translation strategies are employed in the Turkish subtitles for these references?
- To what extent do the Turkish subtitles preserve or alter the intertextual functions of the source text?

The subsequent sections will address the theoretical and empirical literature most relevant to this research; they will also outline the methodology and analysis procedures used to conduct this study. Finally, the analysis from each of the four intertextual categories will be presented in a cross-category section, followed by the conclusion which will discuss the implications of these findings for both audiovisual translation (AVT) theory and practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Approaches to Intertextuality

Kristeva's concept of intertextuality, based upon the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (a dialogical view of language), views textual space as a confluence of writer, addressee, and other texts, where each word "moves" forward and backward through the literary universe (Kristeva, 1986). Accordingly, all texts can be viewed as dynamic dialogues in which meaning emerges from the relationships among elements within a given text or across several texts, rather than solely from an individual utterance. Moreover, Kristeva (1986) suggests that a reader's prior knowledge of other texts plays an active role in determining meaning, rather than simply providing an option for additional interpretation. Extending Kristeva's ideas, Allen (2011)

argues that because intertextuality presupposes the absence of a singular or originary text, each text participates in a broader network of cultural discourse and social memory.

Subsequent scholars have expanded these frameworks within translation studies and media studies. As such, Barthes' (1977) representation of a text as a "tissue of quotations" illustrates the way in which a reader is able to productively engage with the text in a manner that exceeds what the original author intended (p. 146). By doing so, Barthes opens up questions about how different readers, including those reading across languages and cultures, create distinct meanings from the same text. Similarly, Genette (1997) provides a systematic typology of relationships between texts through his description of transtextuality, which encompasses paratextuality, metatextuality, and hypertextuality. Genette demonstrates that texts are often linked together through multiple layers of reference and connection beyond mere quotation. Fiske (1987) develops a socio-historically oriented conceptualization of media as inherently intertextual, identifying television in particular as a medium that continuously references prior media texts, genres, and social discourses. Gray (2010) also demonstrates how audiences draw upon shared memories and prior competencies to shape meaning-making while watching television, with different audiences bringing distinct intertextual repertoires to bear on the same program.

Together, these perspectives demonstrate that intertextuality is equally applicable to the process of producing texts and to processes of audience reception. The receptive aspect of intertextuality is particularly significant in terms of audiovisual translation. If there exists insufficient overlap in the intertextual repertoires between the target audience and the presumed competence level of the ST, then members of the target audience may completely miss an allusion contained within the ST regardless of whether the surface-level content was translated into the target language (TL) appropriately (Hatim & Mason, 1990). Therefore, the issue of how subtitle translators can effectively manage the structural asymmetry between the competence levels of source and target audiences becomes a theoretical question about how cultural differences are mediated through translation.

2.2. Intertextuality and Allusions in Translation

Allusions represent another vehicle of intertextuality in audiovisual texts, and thus their translation can be challenging as they operate by evoking prior knowledge rather than providing the content itself. Intertextual signals have a pragmatic dimension that cannot be recovered solely from the surface structure of the utterance. Therefore, the loss of such signals in translation is not limited to reducing the stylistic variety, but may also alter the pragmatic force of the translated text.

Leppihalme (1997) identifies two major categories of allusion and outlines the principal translation strategies applicable to each (pp. 62–77). Proper-name allusions are defined as referring to persons, places, etc., while key-phrase allusions represent quotations, idioms or

slogans. Three major strategies for proper-name allusions can be identified by Leppihalme (1997): retaining the name (possibly supplemented with additional explanations), replacing it with a source- or target-culture equivalent, or completely eliminating it (pp. 78–79). In addition to this, Leppihalme (1997) provides a broader range of options for key-phrase allusions: minimal literal translation, additional explanation of the original phrase, replacement by a target-culture term, reduction of a phrase to its sense, effect reproduction or complete elimination of the original phrase (pp. 84–85).

Pedersen (2011) develops and expands upon Leppihalme's framework with regard to subtitles and proposes seven strategies for extralinguistic references to cultures: official equivalents, retention, specification, direct translation, generalization, substitution and omission (pp. 74–100). Relevant for the purpose of the current study is Pedersen's differentiation between retention, the preservation of the source language (SL) version of a reference, and official equivalent, the use of a pre-existing, culturally accepted TL equivalent for the SL version. The latter is not made explicitly clear in Leppihalme's framework but proved to be a useful analytical tool in this study; retention was found to occur in relation to proper-name allusions.

2.3. Prior Studies on Intertextuality in Audiovisual Translation

Although empirical studies on intertextuality in the context of AVT, particularly AVT in TV series, have grown significantly over the last few decades, the distribution of such research remains uneven with regard to the SL(s) and/or the TL(s). According to Gambier (2008), the problem of translating culturally embedded references is among the most enduring in AVT. He explains that an additional challenge associated with intertextual references is the fact that their meaning is constructed collectively by competent culturally knowledgeable audiences. While translation may reproduce the form of a reference, it does not ensure that the target audience can activate or understand its meaning based on their pre-existing cultural knowledge.

Research related to specific AVT products has illustrated and expanded upon these findings. For example, Pedersen's (2011) study examined subtitling strategies used in Scandinavian television using a large-scale corpus. The results of his study indicated that translators' decisions relative to retaining references were significantly influenced by the extent to which they believed the reference was recognizable to their target audience. Specifically, Pedersen reported that when translators determined that a reference was likely to be recognizable to their target audience, they retained it. On the other hand, when translators did not believe that a reference would be recognized by their target audience, they often chose alternative forms of expression. Similar to Pedersen's study, Pilyarchuk's (2023) study of *The Simpsons* also explored how translators determine what references to include in translations. However, unlike Pedersen's study, Pilyarchuk focused on allusions rather than humor. She

explained that her results indicated that translators' ability to recognize familiarity with allusions among their target audience was much more important than the linguistic distance between their SL and TL. Chiaro (2008) provided similar evidence relative to culture-specific humor indicating that it generally cannot be directly translated. Additionally, Nedergaard-Larsen (1993) and Lievois (2017) studied historical and ironic allusions, respectively. Both researchers concluded that maintaining functionally equivalent intertextual relationships in SL and TL requires a high degree of overlap in source-culture contextual knowledge possessed by the target audience.

In sum, the existing literature highlights the central tension between preserving intertextual richness and ensuring accessibility for a target audience with diverse cultural repertoires. Yet no systematic investigation addresses the Turkish subtitling of English-language television characterized by dense postmodern intertextuality. The present study addresses this gap in three specific respects. First, it provides the first multi-category analysis of intertextual reference translation in Turkish subtitles of English-language prestige television, extending the empirical reach of AVT research into an understudied language pair and genre. Second, it suggests a refinement of Pedersen's (2011) strategy taxonomy by identifying a secondary variable, namely the depth of target-audience familiarity with available official equivalents. This variable influences whether the official-equivalent strategy is deployed even when an established equivalent exists, a finding with practical implications beyond the Turkish context. Third, it introduces the notion of graduated intertextual access. This concept accounts for cases in which a reference's evaluative language affords the target audience differential access to intertextual meaning depending on their prior cultural knowledge. Thus, it offers a more nuanced model of functional equivalence than the binary preserved/lost framework currently dominant in the field.

3. Methodology

This study employs qualitative analysis, as defined by Creswell and Creswell (2018), which prioritizes detailed textual analysis and interpretation over statistical inference. This study utilizes two complementary analytical frameworks: Leppihalme's (1997) classification system for identifying allusions in media products and her strategy taxonomy to describe how allusions are translated; and Pedersen's (2011) subtitle-specific strategy model, which identifies how translators strategically employ subtitling conventions to convey the intended message.

The data for this study were obtained through the official streaming service Amazon Prime Video, which contains both English and Turkish subtitles for the same official releases. Six episodes were selected using purposeful sampling (Creswell and Creswell, 2018) for their density of intertextual material and collectively for their representation of all four intertextual categories: Season 1, Episode 1 ("Smoke Gets in Your Eyes"); Season 1, Episode 2 ("Ladies

Room”); Season 1, Episode 8 (“The Hobo Code”); Season 1, Episode 12 (“Nixon vs Kennedy”); Season 2, Episode 1 (“For Those Who Think Young”); and Season 2, Episode 9 (“Six Month Leave”). These six episodes cover the first two seasons of *Mad Men* and all four intertextual categories, thereby providing a systematic opportunity for comparison across categories. Preliminary close viewing of all six episodes was used to assess the density of intertextual content.

Data collection was conducted in three phases. Phase one involved downloading and time-stamping both subtitle tracks. In phase two, each intertextual segment was identified in the ST through close viewing, utilizing the taxonomy of intertextual categories presented above. An intertextual reference was defined as a reference to a prior text, historical event, or cultural artifact outside the diegetic universe of *Mad Men*, the interpretation of which depends on the audience’s recognition of the external referent (Allen, 2011; Leppihalme, 1997). Once all intertextual segments were identified in the ST, those same segments were aligned with their Turkish versions at the sentence-level instead of by timestamp due to Turkish’s agglutinative morphology and verb-final word order, often resulting in different segmentation patterns for subtitles. This alignment strategy was adopted due to systematic mismatches in segmentation between the ST and TT arising from linguistic structure and subtitling conventions. In phase three, each aligned pair was analyzed through two perspectives. First, each Turkish subtitle was categorized using Leppihalme’s (1997) and Pedersen’s (2011) classifications. Second, each pair was evaluated for functional shifts occurring during translation relative to the extent to which the intertextual function of the ST, as related to irony, cultural relevance, characterization of characters and ideological framing, was maintained, diminished or altered in the TT. 35 intertextual references were identified across the corpus. Of these, nine were selected for detailed analysis on the basis of three criteria: representing all four intertextual categories collectively; illustrating the range of translation strategies observed in the corpus; and including cases of both functional preservation and functional attenuation, as well as the more complex case of simultaneous gain and loss. The remaining 26 references broadly corroborated the retention-based patterns observed in the selected examples and informed the cross-category discussion in Section 4.5, even where they are not individually analyzed.

4. Findings and Discussion

The following analysis provides a detailed examination of nine specific intertextual examples from the corpus, grouped into four categories based on their function. These categories are literary intertextuality, commercial intertextuality, historical–political intertextuality, and popular culture intertextuality. Drawing on Leppihalme (1997) and Pedersen (2011), each example is examined with respect to both the translation strategy employed and the degree to which its intertextual function is retained or transformed.

4.1. Literary Intertextuality

Mad Men utilizes literary intertextuality to provide insight into characterization, to demonstrate its own self-reflexive postmodern style, and to add depth to the aesthetic identity. As Hatim and Mason (1990) point out, literary citations are especially susceptible to intentional strategic choices when they convey both denotative and connotative meanings and even slight modifications to the ST's wording can sever the relationship to the cited literary work. Two forms of literary intertextuality are examined: a key-phrase allusion in the form of direct poetic quotation, and a proper-name allusion functioning as ideological shorthand (Leppihalme, 1997).

The first example is a direct quote from Frank O'Hara's "Meditations in an Emergency." It occurs in Season 2, Episode 1, "For Those Who Think Young," and is delivered in a voiceover by Don Draper. Therefore, this reference to the poem is unusually salient, and structurally central to the scene. Functionally, the reference serves to project Don's image as an intellectual with connections to modernist literature, and through O'Hara's ideas on alienation and existential crises, creates a heightened sense of Don's inner turmoil and emotional disconnection. Intertextually, the quote provides a metatextual lens through which to view Don's psychological condition. Through O'Hara's use of language, the quote imports O'Hara's ideas into the narrative of Mad Men. The ST-TT pair for this example is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 *Literary intertext: Frank O'Hara, "Meditations in an Emergency" (S2E1)*

Source Text (English)	Target Text (Turkish Subtitle)
<i>Now I am quietly waiting for</i>	<i>Bekliyorum sessizce,</i>
<i>the catastrophe of my personality</i>	<i>kişiliğimin felaketinin</i>
<i>to seem beautiful again,</i>	<i>tekrar güzel görünmesini.</i>
<i>and interesting, and modern.</i>	<i>Ve ilginç. Ve modern.</i>
<i>The country is grey and</i>	<i>Kırlar boz ve kahverengi</i>
<i>brown and white in trees,</i>	<i>ve beyaz ve ağaçlar.</i>
<i>snows and skies of laughter</i>	<i>Karlar ve gülüşün göğü</i>
<i>always diminishing,</i>	<i>yavaşça yitip gidiyor hep.</i>
<i>less funny, not just darker,</i>	<i>Daha az şen, sadece daha kasvetli değil.</i>
<i>not just grey.</i>	<i>Sadece boz değil.</i>

It may be the coldest day of the year

Bu, yılın en soğuk günü olabilir.

what does he think of that? I mean, what do I?

Bu konuda ne düşünüyor? Yani ben ne düşünüyorum?

And if I do, perhaps I am myself again.

Eğer düşünüyorsam, belki kendim olmuşumdur yine.

The TT has adopted a primarily literal approach in order to preserve the semantic content of the original. In keeping with what Leppihalme (1997) refers to as a ‘minimum change’ translation for key-phrase allusions, the words were preserved along with most of their respective meanings (p. 85). However, the stylistic characteristics and rhythms inherent in the original quote have been severely diminished. Regardless of the intention of the translators, Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007) note that due to the structural limitations of subtitles, such as segmentation, line breaks, and reading time, it would be virtually impossible to reproduce the poetic rhythm of O’Hara’s verse. Thus, despite preserving the overall thematic and emotional content of Don’s reflection, his introspective melancholy remains discernible in the TT. However, the distinctly intertextual dimension of the passage has been significantly diminished. For viewers unfamiliar with O’Hara’s poetry, the voice over may be interpreted as an expression of Don’s interior state rather than as a direct quote from a specific literary work. This results in a partial functional displacement, where the narrative and character functions are retained in translation, but the metatextual function—the dialogue between the Mad Men episode and O’Hara’s original poem—can only be fully understood by audiences familiar with the poem.

The second example of intertextuality appears in Season 1, Episode 8, “The Hobo Code.” When Bert Cooper gives Don Draper a copy of Ayn Rand’s *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), he positions himself as an ideologically informed mentor and frames Don’s refusal to subordinate artistic judgment to client demands as consistent with Randian values. The intertextuality of the reference does not occur through the conversation surrounding the reference but through the knowledge of “*Atlas Shrugged*” as an indicator of American capitalism and self-sufficiency. Table 2 presents the ST-TT pair for this example.

Table 2 *Literary intertext: Ayn Rand’s Atlas Shrugged (S1E8)*

Source Text (English)	Target Text (Turkish Subtitle)
<i>Have you read it?</i>	<i>Onu okudun mu?</i>
<i>Rand.</i>	<i>Rand.</i>
<i>Atlas Shrugged.</i>	<i>Atlas Shrugged.</i>

*Very important.**Çok önemli.*

This translation shows how clearly the retention strategy was applied. Although both the author and the book title were retained in their original English forms in the translation, no use was made of the standard Turkish equivalent for the title (“Atlas Silkindi”). Pedersen (2011) refers to this as a retention strategy, as opposed to an official equivalent strategy, which has significant analytical implications. The translators could have used the Turkish version of the book title, “Atlas Silkindi,” which might have activated the intertextual link more immediately for audiences who recognize the title. The audiences who recognize the work as “Atlas Silkindi”, would then need to bridge the gap between their own knowledge of the Turkish and English titles themselves, whereas those unfamiliar with the work in either language would experience no intertextual activation. Therefore, this example demonstrates how employing an official equivalent strategy could have facilitated the intertextual link more effectively than the retention strategy that was actually selected (Leppihalme, 1997; Pedersen, 2011).

4.2. Commercial Intertextuality

As a series based around a 1960s advertising agency, *Mad Men* uses commercial language as an intertextual resource of great pervasiveness. Unlike the aesthetic richness of literary intertexts, the effects of commercial references derive entirely from shared knowledge of specific advertising discourses, i.e., slogans, brand names and the ideological presumptions they carry. Chiaro (2008) suggests that culture-specific commercial references represent one of the most difficult forms of reference to be translated within screen texts due to their inherent intertextuality being inextricable from the advertising ecosystem(s) from which they originate (p. 580).

There are two commercial intertexts from the corpus to be considered here. The first example is the Lucky Strike slogan “It’s toasted,” used during the key pitch scene of Season 1, Episode 1. The slogan was not created by the writers; instead, “It’s toasted” was a real advertising claim made by Lucky Strike. Therefore, the dramatic irony of the scene derives directly from audience recognition of the slogan as having been employed in a real-world context. Draper’s appropriation of the slogan as a way to deflect attention away from the industry’s growing concern about tobacco-related illness and death, as well as his presentation of this action as an exemplar of successful advertising logic over medical fact, can only be understood by those familiar with the real-world advertising context. Table 3 illustrates the original and subtitled versions.

Table 3 *Commercial intertext: Lucky Strike slogan (S1E1)*

Source Text (English)	Target Text (Turkish Subtitle)
------------------------------	---------------------------------------

*It's toasted.**Kavrulmuş.*

In comparison to the ST, the Turkish translation of the slogan contains only a single past participle adjective (“toasted”), which preserves the denotative content but eliminates the declarative construction that gives the slogan its rhetorical quality. The full sentence structure (“It’s toasted”), which in English conveys a self-contained, authoritative compression typical of actual advertising copy, is reduced to a predicate in Turkish. A viewer unfamiliar with the original Lucky Strike slogan is highly likely to perceive “Kavrulmuş” simply as an ordinary descriptive adjective and might therefore receive a lessened critique of advertising ideology as presented throughout the entire scene.

A second commercially oriented intertext is found in Season 2, Episode 9, “Six Month Leave,” (set on 5 August 1962), the morning following Marilyn Monroe’s death. In response to her colleagues’ mourning, Peggy Olson expresses herself through a pragmatic business perspective: “We are lucky Playtex did not go for that Jackie/Marilyn campaign”. The reference here to this actual marketing approach depends on audiences simultaneously recognizing both cultural icons and the commodity logic at play in attempting to turn them into brand archetypes.

Table 4 *Commercial intertext: Playtex Jackie/Marilyn campaign reference (S2E9)*

Source Text (English)	Target Text (Turkish Subtitle)
<i>We're lucky Playtex didn't go for that Jackie/Marilyn campaign.</i>	<i>Playtex, Jackie-Marilyn kampanyasını istemediği için şanslıyız.</i>

By retaining all three proper nouns (Playtex, Jackie, and Marilyn), the Turkish subtitle remains consistent with the broader retention-based tendency observed across the corpus. For audiences familiar with the two figures, the primary commercial and popular cultural intertextual functions remain largely intact. However, two micro-level changes are significant enough to warrant additional attention. Although the original contains the colloquialism “go for”, which can imply that a negotiated decision was made regarding the campaign, the translation uses the less idiomatic expression “istemediği” (“did not want”). It is important to note that while there is some loss of nuance in the commercial deliberation involved in creating the campaign, this reduction is unlikely to result in a substantial alteration of audience perception. In addition, the demonstrative “that” preceding “the campaign” has been omitted from the Turkish subtitle, further reducing a very small marker of informal conversation. While these changes do result in some shift away from aspects of the original’s intertextuality, both the commercial and cultural popular references contained within them survive relatively intact for audiences with sufficient cultural awareness to interpret these elements appropriately (Hatim & Mason, 1990).

4.3. Historical–political Intertextuality

Historical–political intertexts differ from literary and commercial references in that their force depends less on textual recognizability alone and more on shared historical memory. The first example comes from Season 1, Episode 12, “Nixon vs Kennedy,” where a broadcast of Nixon’s concession to Kennedy can be heard. Its intertextual force derives from the historical specificity of the 1960 U.S. presidential election discourse and from the broader symbolic weight that the Kennedy–Nixon election carries in American cultural memory.

Table 5 *Historical–political intertext: Kennedy reference (S1E12)*

Source Text (English)	Target Text (Turkish Subtitle)
<i>And again, my congratulations to Senator Kennedy for his fine race in this campaign.</i>	<i>[...] ve tekrar Senâtor Kennedy’yi yürüttüğü güzel kampanya için tebrik ediyorum.</i>

The Turkish subtitle adopts a highly literal strategy and introduces little linguistic deviation from the ST. Beyond the limits of linguistic transfer, the intertextual force of the reference remains located at the level of historical context, which cannot be fully recreated through subtitle translation (Leppihalme, 1997). Thus, the reference may resonate with Turkish audiences who are familiar with the Kennedy political legacy. There are likely many people who do not have such knowledge. In their case, they are likely to perceive the line as simply being neutral, expository information. This constitutes a clear instance of Leppihalme’s (1997) concept of a “culture-bump.” Although the translation of the line was correct on linguistic grounds, it is a culturally based reference and is therefore likely to be “inert” for all Turkish audiences lacking the requisite cultural background (p. 4). No form of subtitling or captioning would be able to close this gap, due to the limitations of the media format used (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2007).

The “structurally” most complex historical–political intertext is seen in Season 2, Episode 9, “Six Month Leave.” In this episode, Joan Holloway mourns the death of Marilyn Monroe. In mourning Monroe’s death, Holloway calls out Roger Sterling’s indifference when she says: “This world destroyed her.” The line exists at two separate levels. First, it can be viewed as an emotional reaction to Monroe’s passing among audiences who are aware of it. Second, it can exist as a cultural/ideological reaction to the larger socio-cultural and political discourse surrounding Monroe’s life and the systemic exploitation of women within mid-century American public life.

Table 6 *Historical–political intertext: Joan on Marilyn Monroe (S2E9)*

Source Text (English)**Target Text (Turkish Subtitle)**

This is not a joke. This world destroyed her.

Bu bir şaka değil. Dünya onu yok etti.

The Turkish subtitle reproduces the broader utterance accurately, but two lexical decisions are particularly significant for the intertextual force of the line. One is the fact that “This world” was translated as *Dünya* (“world”), which loses the indexical deictic element “this.” In the ST, “this world,” along with its accusatory tone toward the celebrity, wealth, power and exploitation that Monroe experienced, is a very specific rhetorical gesture. Thus, losing “this” is an important diminution of the rhetorical specificity that the ST has, transforming the accusation against the world of celebrity, wealth, power and exploitation to simply an indictment of the world in general. Additionally, “destroyed” was translated as “yok etti” (“annihilated”, “obliterated”, literally made nonexistent), which is stronger than “destroyed”. Therefore, the intensification of the evaluation of “yok etti” does not weaken, but instead increases the emotional weight of the evaluation contained in Joan’s words. These two changes have opposing effects: one reduces the rhetorical specificity regarding the reference (loss of the demonstrative), whereas the other increases the evaluative force (lexical strengthening through use of *yok etti*). The operation of the concept of graduated intertextual access (elaborated in Section 4.5) is evident here: audiences who possess knowledge of the Monroe/Kennedy relationship and/or the larger social/political context around her death will be able to connect with the fuller historical allusions. Those who do not will still understand a powerful statement of how women are systemically destroyed by their engagement in public life. A reading that may be universally understood and transcends national/cultural boundaries, even though they might not understand the deeper historical references.

4.4. Popular Culture Intertextuality

Popular culture intertexts in *Mad Men* include a wide range of recognizable cultural icons whose names function as immediate triggers of intertextual meaning, alongside culturally specific allusions that require more specialized knowledge. Three examples across this spectrum are examined here.

The first example comes from Season 2, Episode 9, when Jimmy Barrett addresses Don Draper as “the man in the gray flannel suit,” referencing the 1956 film “The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit.” The film functions as a critique of postwar corporate conformity and the personal compromises associated with white-collar professional life, positioning Draper as an example of the corporate identity being criticized in the film.

Table 7 *Popular culture intertext: The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit (S2E9)*

Source Text (English)**Target Text (Turkish Subtitle)**

If it isn't the man in the gray flannel suit.

Gri takımlı adam değil mi?

The Turkish subtitle adopts a literal rendering that preserves the surface-level meaning of the phrase but does not mark its allusive relation to the film. No reference is made to the film's already released Turkish title (Romadaki Sevgili), and there is also no signal given to show that the sentence is referencing another work. As such, it functions similarly to the Atlas Shrugged example, where an existing Turkish translation could have been used. In Pedersen's (2011) terms, it does not fully correspond to either retention or direct translation. Therefore, it is most likely to be interpreted by Turkish speakers as a simple descriptive phrase and not as a culturally encoded allusion (Leppihalme, 1997) which represents a substantial functional transformation in which the ideologically charged critique contained within the reference is diminished. A comparative analysis with the Atlas Shrugged example demonstrates a recurring pattern. In both examples, established Turkish equivalents for English language cultural texts were available but not used. This indicates that the translators tended to retain the ST rather than actively determining whether an official equivalent would better serve the intended intertextual function.

The way The Twilight Zone is treated in Season 1, Episode 2 represents a compelling example relative to the other two examples. A character asks: "Have you seen it? The Twilight Zone?" The Turkish subtitles employ Alacakaranlık Kuşağı, a commonly recognized Turkish title. Table 8 presents the ST and TT.

Table 8 Popular culture intertext: *The Twilight Zone* (S1E2)

Source Text (English)	Target Text (Turkish Subtitle)
<i>Have you seen it? The Twilight Zone?</i>	<i>Alacakaranlık Kuşağı'nı izlemedin mi hiç?</i>

The use of a culturally sanctioned TL title preserves both the reference and maximizes recognition which represents Pedersen's (2011) recommended translation strategy. It is one of the most practical strategies for translating proper-name references from popular culture because it allows for total intertextual preservation while minimizing space costs associated with explicitness (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2007). As such, the three examples studied Atlas Shrugged, The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, and The Twilight Zone, constitute a tripartite pattern that has theoretical implications. Specifically, although established Turkish titles for both books (e.g., Atlas Silkindi and Romadaki Sevgili) existed, they were not adopted, and the retention strategy was used instead. In contrast, the pre-existing Turkish title (Alacakaranlık Kuşağı) was used for The Twilight Zone. The primary explanatory variable appears to be differential cultural familiarity. The Twilight Zone has long been a staple of television viewing in Turkey and, therefore, its Turkish title is an established element of what the average Turkish audience knows about the show. Conversely, neither Atlas Shrugged nor The Man in the Gray

Flannel Suit have similar levels of exposure for Turkish audiences. While this finding supports Pedersen’s (2011) recommendation that official equivalents should be used when the equivalent can be reasonably expected to be recognized by the intended audience, it also highlights the limitations of using retention as a default strategy. Where an officially approved equivalent exists but is not well known across different sections of the population, retention may be the safest pragmatic option, despite potential loss of intertextual activation.

The third type of popular culture intertext is culturally known symbols that have the same significance worldwide with no need for additional information to understand the intertextual reference. In Season 2, Episode 1, the creative staff at Sterling Cooper discusses an idea by Playtex to advertise their products using a description of women as either “a ‘Jackie’ or a ‘Marilyn.’” Table 9 shows one of the characters’ response, along with its subtitle translation.

Table 9 *Popular culture intertext: Jackie/Marilyn (S2E1)*

Source Text (English)	Target Text (Turkish Subtitle)
<i>I don't know if all women are a Jackie or a Marilyn.</i>	<i>Bütün kadınların ya bir Jackie ya da bir Marilyn olduğundan emin değilim.</i>

The Turkish subtitles preserve both names but provide no explanation or clarification, assuming that the audience is already familiar with the intended cultural references. This corresponds to Leppihalme’s (1997) notion of “retention”, which is the least formal version of retaining reference, and as such is suitable due to their international celebrity status. Comparable research by Pilyarchuk (2023), conducted on a similar corpus, demonstrates that audiences are generally able to recognize icons such as Monroe’s and Kennedy. Target audiences unfamiliar with these figures will interpret the line as a more generic statement about different types of women. In addition to preserving the coherence of the overall narrative, this involves an acceptable loss of the intertextual layer, which aligns with Pedersen’s (2011) argument that such loss may be justified when audience recognition is sufficiently high.

4.5. Cross-Category Discussion

In the context of the nine examined examples, and in the broader sense of the four categories, the findings show a coherent, yet complex pattern of behavior related to translation in the Turkish subtitles of *Mad Men*. Three cross-cutting patterns emerge from the data:

First, the most common behavior across all categories was retention. This tendency aligns with Pedersen’s (2011) observations on the preference for retention in TV subtitling, particularly when it is assumed that the target audience possesses sufficient cultural knowledge to interpret the reference. A general assumption regarding audience familiarity with culturally specific material exists among translators. At times, this assumption is reasonably grounded as globally recognizable figures such as Monroe and Kennedy can reasonably be expected to be

widely known. At other times, however, this assumption is less reliable. Culturally specific American advertising references may be retained in their original form to preserve the advertisement's surface text, but this does not necessarily activate the extradiegetic intertextual layer for Turkish audiences. Therefore, the findings reflect a relatively undifferentiated foreignizing tendency, rather than a consistent and systematic approach grounded in the recognizability of individual references. This results in similar outcomes at the strategic level, but inconsistent outcomes at the functional preservation level (Leppihalme, 1997; Pedersen, 2011).

Second, beyond the general preference for retention, the analysis reveals an important internal distinction within retention strategies themselves. In three cases—Atlas Shrugged, The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, and The Twilight Zone—translators had to choose between retaining the SL title and replacing it with a widely recognized Turkish title. In two of the cases (Romadaki Sevgili/The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, and Atlas Silkindi/Atlas Shrugged), an official Turkish title was available, but was not used. In the third instance (Alacakaranlık Kuşağı/The Twilight Zone), the pre-existing official Turkish title was adopted. The decisive factor appears to be the degree to which the officially recognized title is embedded in the cultural knowledge of the Turkish audiences. This finding suggests a refinement of Pedersen's (2011) framework by showing that the availability of a pre-existing official translation is not sufficient on its own. Rather, the degree of its cultural embeddedness also plays a decisive role in determining whether it is selected (cf. Leppihalme, 1997).

Third, the Joan/Monroe example presents a finding that complicates the otherwise uniform tendency toward intertextual attenuation under subtitle constraints. The translations of "This world destroyed her" produced two counterbalancing effects. On the one hand, "Dünya" loses the demonstrative "this", reducing Joan's accusation to less rhetorically specific terms. On the other hand, "yok etti" increases the value judgment involved for "destroyed". The overall effect cannot be understood as a simple gain or loss, but rather as a redistribution of meaning across different functional dimensions, where evaluative intensity becomes more prominent while referential precision is reduced. This case challenges the binary adequate/inadequate evaluation framework. It indicates the need for a more refined model of functional equivalence in intertextual translation, capable of accounting for cases in which losses occur alongside gains with respect to different aspects of a reference's meaning (Hatim & Mason, 1990).

5. Conclusion

The present study investigated how the dense intertextuality of *Mad Men* was treated in Turkish subtitle translation across a six-episode corpus. The analysis focused specifically on the retention, transformation, and loss of the intertextual reference function. Synthesizing the

nine examples across four intertextual categories, the study yields three principal findings that contribute to AVT research at both empirical and theoretical levels.

At the empirical level, the analysis demonstrates that the dominant tendency observed in the corpus is a retention-based, foreignizing strategy across all four intertextual categories. This finding is consistent with the professional norms of AVT subtitling documented by Pedersen (2011). The study shows that there are no overt omissions of intertextual materials from the corpus. Although some references may be culturally obscure, the translator consistently retains the textual element most directly associated with the reference. This approach enables culturally competent audiences to recognize the reference if they choose to do so. This is a coherent and rational way to deal with the problem of representing intertextual meaning in subtitling (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2007; Gambier, 2008). However, it also suggests that a rigid retention policy has limitations. In cases where a well-established Turkish equivalent exists but is not utilized, retaining the SL form is less likely to elicit intertextual awareness among Turkish-speaking audiences than using the available official equivalent (Pedersen, 2011).

At the theoretical level, the study yields two analytical refinements. First, it identifies a potential secondary factor within the official equivalent strategy: not only whether an established equivalent exists in the TC, but also the extent to which that equivalent is embedded in potential audiences' cultural knowledge. This distinction highlights a continuum of equivalent familiarity that current frameworks (e.g. Leppihalme, 1997; Pedersen, 2011) do not adequately represent. Secondly, the study presents the idea of graduated intertextual access. It suggests that references whose evaluative language can function independently allow the target audience differential access to intertextual meaning rather than purely dichotomous access. Finally, the study builds on this idea by analyzing a representative example. It demonstrates how subtitling can lead to functional transformations, involving not only a reduction in meaning but also an expansion of meaning, with a simultaneous loss at one level of meaning and a gain at another.

Taken together, the study offers practical implications for subtitling practice. Specifically, the fact that official equivalents were not used in cases where they could have been highlights the need for subtitle translators dealing with TV in culturally dense settings to develop more differentiated strategies. These should distinguish between instances where mere retention of an original reference is sufficient and those where a familiar TC equivalent is available, allowing for a more effective use of the official-equivalent strategy (Pedersen, 2011; Leppihalme, 1997).

However, several limitations restrict the applicability of these conclusions. The study is confined to six episodes and nine examples, resulting in an analytically rich but necessarily partial picture of *Mad Men's* intertextual universe. Moreover, as the analysis focuses on the

translated product rather than the translation process, no systematic investigation of translator decision-making was conducted. As a result, it is not possible to determine whether the observed strategies reflect deliberate translational choices, institutional norms, time constraints, or platform-related constraints. Additionally, no empirical data were collected on audience reception. Accordingly, claims regarding the Turkish-speaking audience's recognition of the references remain speculative. Finally, the findings are specific to one language pair (English to Turkish) and genre (American prestige drama), and they cannot be generalized across other language pairs or genres. Future research would benefit from employing audience-centered methods to directly investigate how audiences perceive, interpret, and process intertextual references.

Disclosures

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Terminological Variation and Legal Interpretation in Turkish Translations of Medical Malpractice Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights: A Corpus-Based Analysis*

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Abstract

In this study, the consistency of legal terminology in the Turkish translations of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) medical malpractice judgments is examined, and the impact of terminological variation on legal interpretation is evaluated. ECHR judgment in the field of healthcare are widely relied upon by national judicial authorities rendering the accurate and consistent translation of legal terminology essential for preserving legal meaning. Analysis of medical malpractice judgements available in the European Court of Human Rights Case-Law Database (HUDOC) indicates that key legal concepts such as negligence, fault, obligation, liability and responsibility are translated into Turkish using more than one equivalent which may lead to conceptual ambiguity and differences in interpretation. A comparative corpus analysis of eight ECHR medical malpractice judgments and their Turkish translations (2015-2025), using Voyant Tools, examines term frequency, contextual patterns and translational variation. Terminological choices were evaluated within the framework of Relevance Theory and Toury's theory of translation norms. The findings of the study indicate that terminological standardisation is high in the English texts of the ECHR judgments, whereas in the Turkish, the same conceptual domain is distributed across multiple terminological variants. The study contributes to the fields of legal translation and comparative legal linguistics by demonstrating the importance of terminological consistency in the translation of ECHR judgments.

Keywords: corpus analysis, ECHR judgments, legal translation, medical malpractice, terminological variation

* This study is derived from the doctoral dissertation of the first author, Zeynep Sema Erduran Akkaya, currently being conducted at the Department of Translation and Interpreting at Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University.

1. Introduction

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) is an international judicial body responsible for interpreting and enforcing the obligations of the States Parties to the European Convention on Human Rights concerning fundamental rights and freedoms. The Court's judgments, particularly those delivered in the context of the right to life (Art. 2 ECHR), the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment (Art. 3 ECHR), and the right to respect for private life (Art. 8 ECHR), constitute important case-law defining the positive obligations of member states in the field of healthcare and directly affecting domestic legal systems. These judgments not only shape national legal orders but also generate normative implications for patient rights, medical ethics, and the organisation of healthcare services.

Turkish translations of ECHR case-law constitute primary reference sources for members of the judiciary, academics, and legal practitioners. The binding force and interpretation of the judgments are often determined on the basis of these translated texts. For this reason, the terminology used in the translation process is not merely a linguistic choice but also a process of reconstructing legal meaning. In particular, concepts such as *negligence*, *fault*, *obligation*, *liability*, and *responsibility*, which frequently occur in medical malpractice judgments, are observed to be rendered by different equivalents in Turkish translations. This terminological variation not only produces lexical differences but may also lead to conceptual shifts and divergent interpretations. Even relatively minor differences in legal terminology may become decisive in the process by which courts interpret judicial judgments. For example, the English term “negligence” may be rendered in Turkish as “ihmal” or “kusur”, each of which may evoke different legal implications in terms of liability regimes under Turkish law.

Although there are studies in the literature on the translation of ECHR judgments, research that examines the legal terminology used in the Turkish translations of medical malpractice judgments in a comparative, data-driven, and corpus-based manner remains limited. This gap makes the investigation of how legal terminology in the ECHR's medical malpractice judgments is reconstructed in the translation process an important area of research. Whereas previous studies have generally addressed issues of legal translation at a general level, the present study systematically analyses how key legal concepts in ECHR judgments are reconstructed in Turkish translations by combining corpus-based analysis with digital text mining tools.

This study aims to examine the consistency of legal terminology used in the Turkish translations of the ECHR's medical malpractice judgments and to demonstrate the effects of terminological variation on legal interpretation. To this end, the English source texts of the judgments and their Turkish translations are analysed comparatively, and how the terms are rendered in the target language, as well as the functions these renderings assume in the legal context, are evaluated.

The study seeks to answer three main research questions:

- 1) Which legal terms related to medical malpractice show variation in Turkish translations of ECHR judgments?
- 2) What types of terminological variation occur (synonymy, semantic shift, generalization)?
- 3) How might these variations influence legal interpretation within the Turkish legal context?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Legal Translation

Legal translation is one of the most challenging and critical areas of specialised translation. This field involves the activity of building a bridge between different legal systems and languages. In legal translation, not only linguistic differences but also the specific concepts, terminology, and institutions of each legal system play a crucial role (Kurmel, 2021, p. 53). Biel (2017) defines legal translation as a transfer process that operates between both languages and legal systems. Since translation errors in legal texts may lead to loss of rights and the risk of incorrect judicial judgments, the tolerance for error is extremely low.

In her study, Altun Orhan (2017) argues that shifts in meaning may occur in ECHR translations due to a preference for acceptability-oriented translation strategies. Şirin (2021) demonstrates that the equivalents used for the concepts of “jurisdiction”, “tribunal”, and “law” may lead to incorrect normative interpretations. Similarly, Albayrak (2024) argues that not only terminological equivalence but also the hierarchy of norms affects legal certainty.

One of the most important features that distinguishes legal translation from other types of translation is that there is almost no room for misinterpretation. In contractual provisions, court judgments, and regulatory texts, even a minor translation error may result in disputes, invalidity, or legal liability. In particular, the incorrect rendering of culturally and system-specific terms may lead to the loss of legal effect and to incorrect interpretations. For this reason, terminological consistency and the use of accurate equivalents are of great importance in legal translation. The translator must have command of the legal terminology of both languages and be able to reproduce the legal effect of the source text in the target language (Kurmel, 2021, p. 51).

There is a general consensus that legal translation is not merely a process of linguistic transfer but also functions as a form of mediation between different legal systems. Terminological equivalence and conceptual differences between legal systems constitute a central area of research in legal translation. Susan Sarcevic (1997) emphasizes that the primary aim of legal translation is to reproduce the legal effect of the source text functionally within the target legal system. Deborah Cao (2007) argues that legal language is a specialized language

shaped by cultural and systemic factors, and that legal terms do not always have direct equivalents across different legal systems. Similarly, Anne Lise Kjær (2007) highlights that terminological consistency in multilingual legal texts plays a crucial role in ensuring legal certainty. Although studies have been conducted in the field of legal translation, research on the legal terminology used in the Turkish translations of the ECHR's medical malpractice judgments remains limited. Existing studies have generally focused on the general principles of legal translation, functional equivalence, or translation norms. However, comparatively fewer studies have examined how terminological choices influence legal interpretation in specific categories of international case-law. This makes the examination of the role of terminological consistency in the transfer of the ECHR's judgments concerning the right to life and healthcare-related rights into the national legal system an important area of research.

2.2. Terminological Challenges

The most fundamental problems related to terminology can be identified as consistency, equivalence, and standardisation. In particular, the use of different terms for the same concept or the use of a single term with multiple meanings creates challenges. Although Wüster advocated the principle of univocity in terminology, he also acknowledged that polysemy is inevitable in practice (Trojar, 2017). The inconsistent use of terminology makes the accurate understanding of the message more difficult.

Prieto Ramos (2021) states that conceptual incongruity is one of the main problems in legal translation and emphasises the importance of ensuring consistency in multilingual institutional translation environments. Biel (2017) argues that the quality of translation depends on its capacity to produce the same effect within the target legal system. Cosmulescu (2021), on the other hand, notes that semantic shifts may occur in the translation of legal texts and that evaluation should be carried out at the level of legal effect. Terminological equivalence is not only a grammatical issue but also a functional problem dependent on the legal system. Terminological ambiguity and the existence of multiple equivalents for a single term become more apparent in the transfer of international judicial judgments into different legal systems. This situation makes the question of how the legal terminology used in the ECHR's medical malpractice judgments is rendered in the target language an important area of inquiry for both translation studies and legal practice.

2.3. Medical Malpractice in ECHR Case-Law

ECHR case-law has significant implications for both domestic law and translation studies. In cases involving medical malpractice, where human life is at stake, terminological consistency and the preservation of the legal context are of vital importance in the translation process.

Medical malpractice is defined as harm suffered by a patient as a result of a healthcare professional's failure to comply with professional standards (Kaya & Yumak, 2024). In international malpractice cases, language barriers and the lack of translation may lead to serious legal consequences. Quan and Lynch (2010) demonstrate that the absence of language services can have serious implications for both patient safety and legal liability. Van Kempen (2007), on the other hand, considers language insufficiency to constitute legal fault. These studies demonstrate that linguistic transfer may produce direct legal effects in both healthcare and legal contexts.

Therefore, translation is not merely a technical transfer but a process with legal and ethical consequences. Terminological consistency and the accurate transfer of meaning are of critical importance for the protection of human rights and for ensuring the right to a fair trial.

Existing literature demonstrates the effects of language and communication factors in the fields of healthcare and law; however, comparative analyses of the legal terminology used in the translation of judicial judgments of international courts remain limited. The limited number of corpus-based studies on the ECHR's medical malpractice judgments makes this topic an important area of research for both translation studies and legal practice.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study examines the debates outlined in the previous section on legal translation and terminology through the Turkish translations of the ECHR's medical malpractice judgments. In the study, the cognitive and contextual effects of translation choices are addressed within the framework of Relevance Theory, while the normative orientation of terminological choices is examined within the framework of Toury's theory of translation norms. In order to analyse theoretical discussions on the basis of empirical data, the study adopts a corpus-based and comparative approach. The English source texts of the ECHR's medical malpractice judgments and their Turkish translations are analysed in terms of terminological consistency and the transfer of normative meaning.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

In this corpus-based digital text analysis (Baker, 1995) a systematic comparison was conducted between the English source texts of the ECHR's medical malpractice judgments and their Turkish translations. The study is not merely a descriptive terminological analysis but an analytical investigation examining the effects of translation preferences on legal interpretation. It aims to reveal the relationship between linguistic choices and the production of legal meaning. In this context, not all medical malpractice judgments of the ECHR were subjected to a comprehensive translation evaluation; instead, judgments that have legal consequences and directly affect normative assessment were examined through selected terms. The study

adopts a mixed-methods approach by combining qualitative and quantitative data analysis (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative findings obtained through corpus-based digital text analysis were supported by term-based contextual and legal analyses, and the statistical distribution of translation choices was evaluated together with their effects on normative meaning.

Within the scope of the analysis, each selected term with legal effect was subjected to a multi-layered analysis by considering its core meaning in the English source text, its Turkish equivalent, and its conceptual equivalent in the Turkish legal system. The terminological variation of the terms across different judgments was evaluated together with its possible effects on legal interpretation. The purpose of using Voyant Tools in the study was not only to provide quantitative data, but also to determine the terms to be analysed, to reveal their contextual patterns, and to ensure that the analysis was conducted in a systematic manner. In this way, the analytical process went beyond intuitive reading and acquired a structure that is reasoned and traceable.

4.2. Corpus Design and Data Collection

The main characteristics of the corpus used in this study are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 *Corpus Characteristics of the Study*

Feature	Description
Number of Judgment	8 ECtHR medical malpractice cases
Time Period	2015- 2025
Corpus Type	Parallel Corpus (English-Turkish)
Total word count	24,729 (Eng) – 20,996 (Tr)
Term extraction	Frequency-based exploratory analysis
Software	Voyant Tools
Analysis Methods	Frequency analysis, KWIC, collocation and trend analysis

The study is based on a multi-component research design combining corpus-based comparative text analysis with term-oriented analysis from the perspectives of law and translation studies. Since the study compares English source texts and their Turkish translation, the corpus was treated as a parallel corpus. The alignment between the source and target texts was conducted at the document level rather than sentence by sentence alignment. Each English judgment was paired with its corresponding Turkish translation, allowing the analysis of terminological distribution and contextual usage across the two languages. This enabled the identification of the conceptual shifts and terminological variation between the

source and target texts within the same legal decisions. This approach aims to reveal not only how the terminology used in the Turkish translations of ECHR judgments functions at the textual level, but also how it is interpreted within the context of legal practice. The texts analysed in the study consist of eight medical malpractice cases selected from among the judgments published within the last ten years (2015-2025) in the European Court of Human Rights Case-Law Database (HUDOC). The case texts were identified through searches conducted in HUDOC using the following keywords: “doctor negligence”, “failure to diagnose”, “failure to treat”, “hospital negligence”, “medical error”, “medical malpractice”, “medical negligence”, “Article 2 positive obligations”, “death following after treatment”, “denial of medical treatment”, and “inadequate medical care”. Following the search, the most relevant judgments for the purposes of the analysis were determined, and only those cases available in both English and Turkish were included in the scope of the study.

During the analysis process, five terms selected from among medical and legal terms that have legal effect and directly affect normative assessment were subjected to a multi-layered and context-based analysis. These five terms were chosen because they constitute central concepts in the ECHR’s case-law and directly affect the legal regime of “liability”, “negligence”, and “obligation”. Although the number of terms analysed in the study is limited to five, the meanings through which these terms are rendered in Turkish (“ihmal”, “kusur”, “hata”, “suç”, “arıza”) were reported in the findings as target-language equivalents. In the selection of the terms, the principle of qualitative saturation was adopted to preserve analytical depth and explanatory power rather than expanding the quantitative scope. This approach made it possible to examine the terms not only at the level of frequency but also in terms of their contextual and legal functions.

The theoretical framework of the study is based on Relevance Theory, which approaches translation evaluation through the inferential processes of the target audience, and Toury’s theory of translation norms.

The cases included in the corpus were selected according to the following criteria:

- The case involved allegations of medical malpractice or medical negligence;
- The judgment contained an assessment in the context of the right to life, bodily integrity, or the right to an effective remedy;
- The judgment explicitly included legally significant concepts such as positive obligation, procedural obligation, liability, negligence, causal link, and compensation;
- The judgment was available in both its English source text and Turkish translation.

The judgments examined in the study consist of translations from English into Turkish published by the Human Rights Department of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of

Türkiye. These translations are not official, but they are widely used in practice. The fact that the translation texts consist of unofficial yet widely used translations in practice indicates that the study does not seek to define a normatively “ideal” translation, but rather to examine the effects of terminological preferences in actual use on legal interpretation. The study adopts a practice-oriented approach that evaluates the normative consequences of translations used in real contexts. The corpus was methodologically justified so as to allow meaningful comparisons from both translation studies and legal perspectives, and it constitutes a data set aligned with the aims of the study.

4.3. Digital Text Analysis Using Voyant Tools

A digital text analysis tool was employed in this study to ensure a systematic and objective evaluation of the texts. In legal translation and discourse analysis, features such as word frequency, contextual relations, and terminological distribution are difficult to identify using manual methods.

Voyant Tools, a digital text analysis tool, was used in the study in order to analyse the five selected terms in the eight judgment texts in a comprehensive manner, both quantitatively and visually. Through Voyant Tools, the visualisation of the selected terms, as well as their distribution and density across the judgment texts, were presented graphically. The use of this tool increased the methodological reliability of the study and made it possible to evaluate terminological consistency at both statistical and discourse levels. The study aims to provide an example of the multidimensional use of digital text analysis in legal translation research and to present data-driven findings in a more robust manner.

All texts analysed in the study were converted into .txt format to ensure compatibility with digital text analysis tools. The English source texts obtained from HUDOC and their Turkish translations were cleaned of formatting elements (such as footnotes, page numbers, and repeated headings) and prepared as an analysable corpus. Each judgment text was organised as a separate document, and the corpus consisting of eight case texts was configured as a unit of text for analysis in the Voyant Tools. This procedure enabled systematic and traceable comparative analyses across the texts. Accordingly, the study serves as an example of the multidimensional use of corpus-based digital analysis methods in legal translation research.

5. Findings

This section presents the main findings of the corpus-based analysis of ECHR medical malpractice judgments and their Turkish translations. The analysis focuses on the frequency, distribution and contextual usage of key legal terms as well as patterns of terminological variation in the target texts. The results are discussed through a combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses supported by digital text analysis tools.

5.1. Corpus Analysis Findings

Figure 1 Summary of the English ECHR Corpus Generated by Voyant Tools

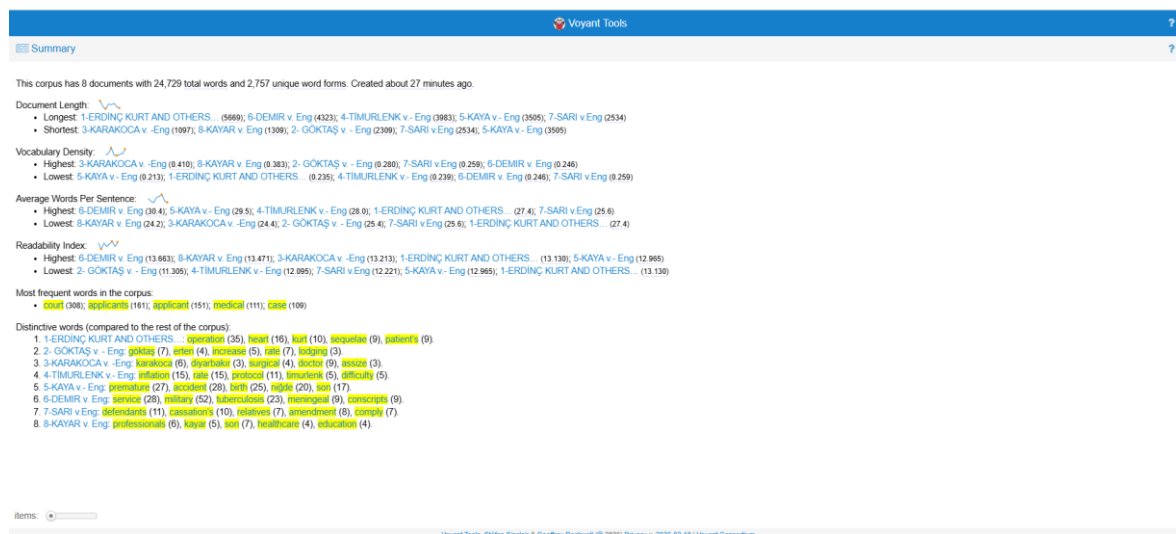
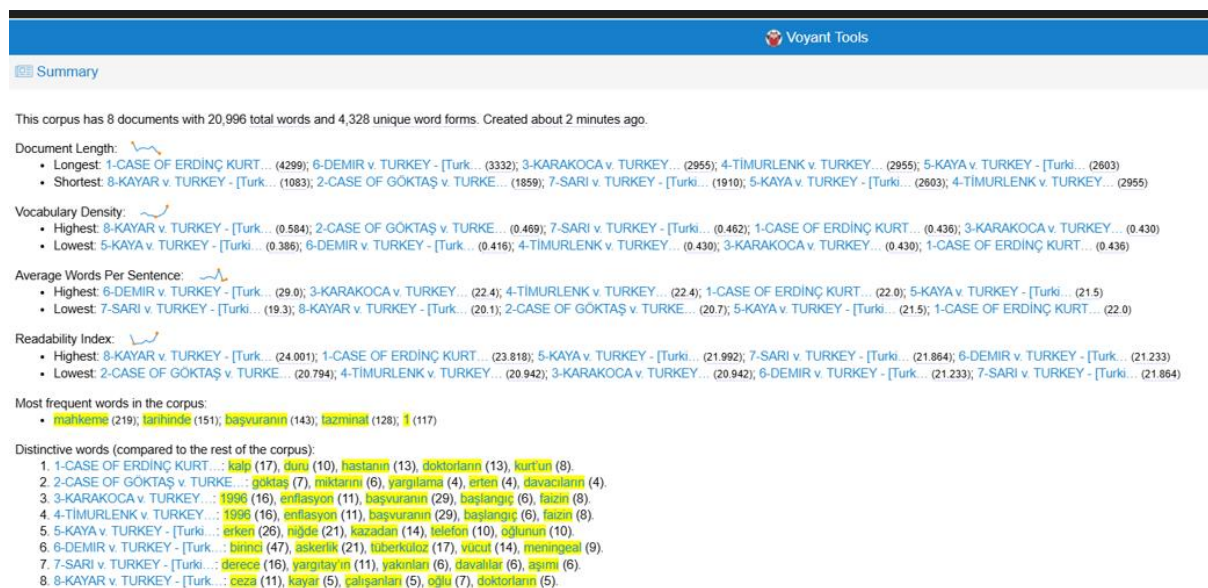


Figure 2 Summary of the Turkish ECHR Corpus Generated by Voyant Tools



Within the scope of the study, a bilingual English-Turkish corpus consisting of medical malpractice judgments of the ECHR was analysed using the digital text analysis software Voyant Tools. The corpus is composed of the English and Turkish versions of eight judgments. The analysis focused on the following terms: “negligence”, “fault”, “obligation”, “liability”, and “responsibility”.

Table 2 Quantitative Comparison of the English and Turkish Corpus

Metrics	English Corpus	Turkish Corpus	Interpretation
Total Words	24,729	20,996	The English corpus is larger in size.
Unique Words	2,757	4,328	The Turkish corpus shows higher lexical diversity.
Type Token Ratio	0.11	0.20	Terminological distribution is wider in the Turkish texts.
Average Sentence Length	27-30	20-22	English sentence structures are longer and more complex.
Readability	Lower	Higher	The Turkish texts are more explicit and contain more parenthetical expressions.

According to the quantitative findings obtained through digital text analysis using Voyant Tools, both discourse-level and quantitative differences were identified between the English and Turkish judgment texts. Although both corpora consist of eight documents, the English texts contain a total of 24,729 words and 2,757 unique word forms, whereas the Turkish corpus contains 20,996 words and 4,328 unique word forms. When the two corpora are compared, although the total number of words in the Turkish corpus is lower than in the English corpus, the higher number of unique words indicates greater lexical diversity in the target texts. This finding indicates that the same conceptual domain is represented in the Turkish translations through a wider range of lexical items.

When analysed in terms of word frequency, the most frequent terms in the English corpus are “court” (308), “applicants” (161), “applicant” (151), “medical” (111), and “case” (109). In the Turkish corpus, the most frequent words are “mahkeme” (219), “tarihinde” (151), “başvuranın” (143), and “tazminat” (128).

In terms of distinctive words differentiating the two corpora, medical and procedural terms such as “operation”, “heart”, “sequelae”, “protocol”, and “tuberculosis” are prominent in the English corpus, whereas in the Turkish texts terms related to legal consequences and liability, such as “hastanın”, “doktorların”, “yargılamanın”, “faizin”, “enflasyon”, and “tazminat”, are more prominent.

5.2. Cirrus (Word Cloud) Analysis

Figure 3 *Word Cloud Representation of the English ECHR Corpus Generated by Voyant Tools*



Figure 4 Word Cloud Representation of the Turkish ECHR Corpus Generated by Voyant Tools



Table 3 Most Frequent Words in English and Turkish Corpus

Rank	Word	Frequency
1	Court	308
2	Applicants	161
3	Applicant	151
4	Medical	111
5	case	109

Turkish Corpus

Rank	Word	Frequency
1	mahkeme	219
2	tarihinde	151
3	başvuran	143
4	tazminat	128
5	karar	117

When the word cloud of the English corpus is analysed, the terms “court”, “applicant”, “applicants”, “case”, “medical”, “article”, “convention”, “decision”, “compensation”, “report”, and “expert” appear as the most prominent items. The words “court”, “case”, and “decision” reflect the judicial nature of the texts, whereas the terms “medical”, “hospital”, “expert”, and “report” highlight the medical malpractice context. The prominence of the terms “compensation” and “pecuniary” points to the compensation and legal liability dimension of the judgments.

When the word cloud of the Turkish corpus is analysed, on the other hand, words such as “mahkeme”, “başvuran”, “başvuranın”, “tarihinde”, “tazminat”, “sözleşme”, “kararın”, “hukuk”, and “ilişkin” appear as prominent items. In particular, the high frequency of the words “tazminat”, “karar”, “başvuran”, and “sözleşme” indicates their central role in the corpus.

5.3. Trend Analysis

Figure 5 Distribution Trends of Key Legal Terms in the English ECHR Corpus (Voyant Tools)

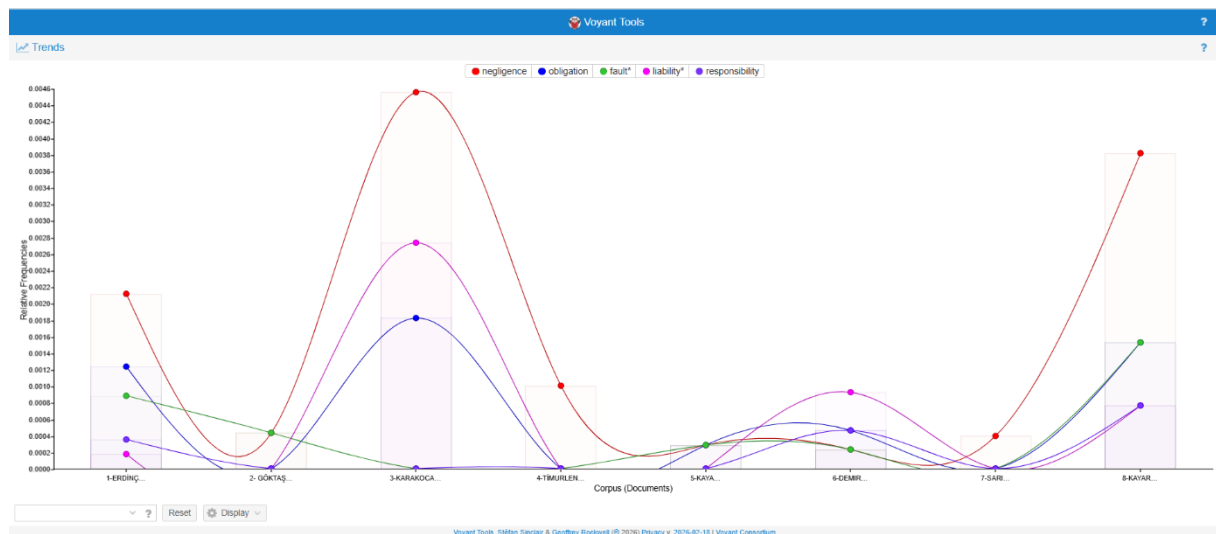


Figure 6 *Distribution Trends of Key Legal Terms in the Turkish ECHR Corpus (Voyant Tools)*

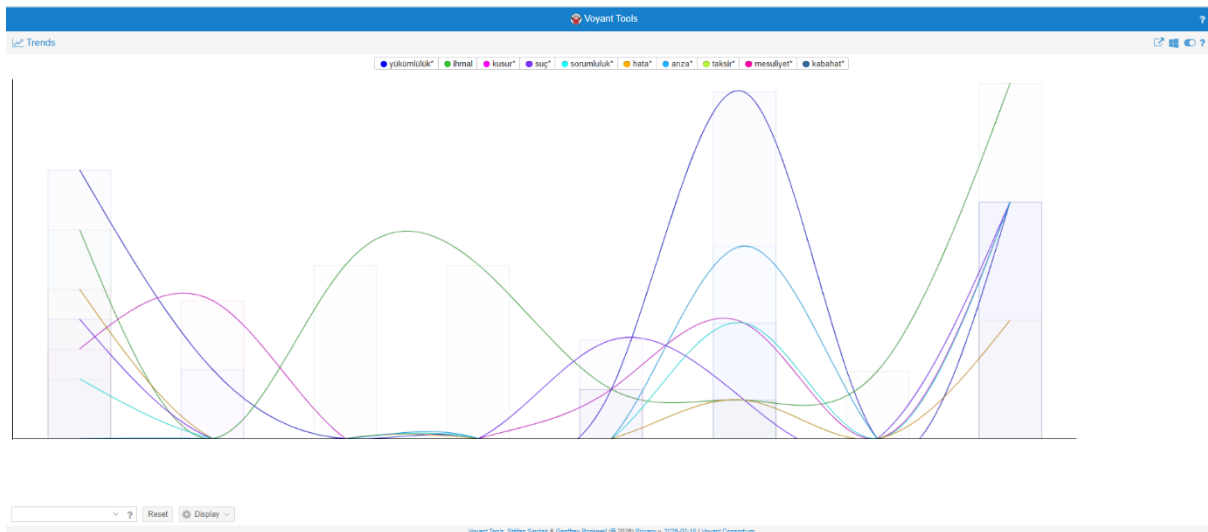


Table 4 *Frequency Distribution of Key Legal Terms*

Term	Frequency
negligence	highest
liability	high
obligation	moderate
fault	moderate
responsibility	low

Turkish Term Frequency

Term	Frequency
yükümlülük	very high
ihmal	high
kusur	high
sorumluluk	moderate
hata	low
suç	context-dependent

The analysis conducted using the Voyant Tools Trends module shows that the five main terms in the English corpus are represented by nine different equivalents in the Turkish

translation texts. Examination of the English corpus indicates that the term “negligence” functions as a central and dominant concept throughout the corpus and is particularly concentrated in the Karakoca and Kayar judgments. The term “obligation” becomes prominent in the context of the State’s positive and procedural obligations, especially in assessments related to Article 2 of the Convention. In contrast, in the Turkish translation texts the same conceptual domain is transferred into Turkish through different terms such as “ihmal”, “kusur”, “hata”, and in some contexts “suç”. It is also observed that the distinction between “liability” and “responsibility” is largely merged under the single term “sorumluluk” in Turkish translations. These findings suggest that the terminological standardisation observed in the English texts turns into a broader conceptual dispersion in the Turkish translations.

5.4. KWIC (Keyword in Context) Analysis

The contextual analysis conducted using the KWIC (Keyword in Context) module of Voyant Tools reveals that there are distinctive pattern differences between the English source texts and the Turkish translations not only at the lexical level but also at the discursive and conceptual levels.

When the English corpus is analysed, the terms “negligence”, “fault”, “liability”, and “responsibility” are used systematically within legal patterns. Context data for “negligence” show that it occurs in recurrent expressions such as “no negligence or fault has been established”, “alleged medical negligence”, “negligence in treatment”, and “cases of medical negligence”, which represent a specific category of legal liability.

Similarly, the term “obligation” in the English corpus is concentrated in expressions such as “positive obligation under Article 2”, “procedural obligation”, “State’s positive obligation”, and “obligation to protect”, which are formulations specific to ECHR case-law.

When the KWIC context findings of the Turkish corpus are examined, the same conceptual domain is represented in a more flexible and variable manner. Context data show the use of expressions such as “herhangi bir kusur veya ihmal bulunmadığı”, “doktor hatası”, “tıbbi ihmal”, “kusurunun bulunmadığı”, and “ihmaller nedeniyle”.

The term “obligation” in the Turkish corpus occurs as “pozitif yükümlülük”, “yükümlülüklerini yerine getirme”, “devletin yükümlülükleri”, and “usuli yükümlülük”, and in some contexts the use of “sorumluluk” is also observed.

5.5. Collocation Analysis

The collocation analysis conducted using Voyant Tools was carried out for the five selected terms (“negligence”, “fault”, “obligation”, “liability”, and “responsibility”).

When the English corpus is analysed, the terms are observed to display highly fixed and predictable collocational patterns. In collocation analysis, the term “negligence” typically co-

occurs with a limited set of technical elements such as “medical”, “alleged”, “established”, “treatment”, “fault”, and “responsibility”, and appears in formulaic expressions such as “medical negligence”, “alleged negligence”, “no negligence or fault”, “negligence in treatment”, and “cases of medical negligence”. Similarly, the term “obligation” occurs in collocational structures such as “positive obligation”, “State’s obligation”, “obligation under Article 2”, “obligation under Article 8”, and “obligation to protect”. The term “liability” co-occurs with expressions such as “civil liability”, “criminal liability”, “strict liability”, “liability of doctors”, and “liability under Article...”, reflecting contexts of legal responsibility and compensation. The term “responsibility”, on the other hand, appears in uses such as “State responsibility”, “bear responsibility”, “engage responsibility”, and “limit of responsibility”, indicating the institutional and normative position of the State.

In the collocation analysis of the Turkish corpus, a broader pattern with greater collocational overlap is observed. Collocational networks centred on a single term in the English corpus are dispersed across multiple terms in the Turkish translation texts. The concepts of “negligence” and “fault” are distributed in Turkish among the terms “ihmal”, “kusur”, and “hata”, which generally co-occur with elements such as “doktor”, “sağlık personeli”, “sorumluluk”, “iddia”, “bulunmadığı”, “tespit”, and “inceleme”. The term “ihmal” is observed to occur in expressions such as “tıbbi ihmal”, “ihmal iddiası”, “ihmal nedeniyle”, “ihmal sonucu”, and “ihmalin tespiti”, which are typically associated with causality and establishment of fault.

The term “kusur” appears in expressions such as “kusurun bulunmadığı”, “kusur derecesi”, “kusurlu oldukları”, “kusurun tespiti”, and “kusursuz sorumluluk”, indicating the emergence of a gradational structure of fault. The term “hata” is associated with more general and technical medical usages such as “doktor hatası”, “cerrahi hata”, and “hata veya ihmal”. The term “yükümlülük” appears in normative structures such as “pozitif yükümlülük”, “usuli yükümlülük”, “yükümlülüklerini yerine getirmek”, and “yükümlülüklerin ihlali”, largely preserving the conceptual basis of the English term “obligation”. However, in the Turkish texts the term appears to extend across a broader contextual range.

The findings reveal that while ECHR judgments display a high degree of terminological standardisation in English, the Turkish translations show a broader conceptual dispersion across multiple terms, which may affect legal certainty and consistency of interpretation.

5.6. Terminological Variation Types

In order to better understand the patterns of terminological variation observed in the corpus, the variations were classified into several analytical categories commonly discussed in legal translation studies. These include synonymic variation, semantic narrowing, semantic broadening, conceptual shift and inconsistent standardization. This classification enables a

more systematic examination of how legal concepts in ECtHR judgments are represented in Turkish translations and how such variations may influence legal interpretation.

Table 5 *Types of Terminological Variation in the Corpus*

Variation Types	Description	Example
Synonymic Variation	Same concept translated with different synonymous terms	Negligence -İhmal / Kusur
Semantic narrowing	Target term expresses a more specific concept	Responsibility-Sorumluluk (only legal liability context)
Semantic broadening	Target term covers a wider conceptual field	Liability/responsibility sorumluluk
Conceptual shift	Translation introduces a concept belonging to a different legal category	Negligence-suç
Inconsistent standardization	Same English term translated with multiple different equivalents across judgments	Negligence-ihmal/kusur

Table 6 *Terminological Variation in the Corpus*

Source Term	Turkish Variants	Frequency (Eng)	Frequency (Tr Variants)	Observation
Negligence	İhmal-kusur-hata	High	İhmal (33), kusur (11), hata (7)	Synonymic variation, partial conceptual shift
Fault	Kusur-hata	Medium	Kusur (11), hata (7)	Overlapping conceptual field
Liability	Sorumluluk	Medium	Sorumluluk (7)	Semantic broadening
Responsibility	Sorumluluk	Low	Sorumluluk (7)	Conceptual merging with liability

Obligation	Yükümlülük	Medium	Yükümlülük (22)	Relatively stable equivalence
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As shown in Table 6, The English source terms tend to display relatively stable usage patterns, whereas their Turkish equivalents are distributed across multiple variants. The most prominent variation is observed in the translation of the term negligence, which appears in Turkish as “ihmal”, “kusur” and “hata”. This distribution indicates both synonymic variation and conceptual overlap between different categories of legal responsibility in Turkish legal context.

6. Discussion

The study has shown that there are differences between the English source texts and the Turkish translations of the ECHR medical malpractice judgments in terms of terminological usage as well as conceptual and discursive structures. Unlike procedural terms such as court or applicant, which mainly reflect the structural conventions of ECtHR judgments the terms analysed in this study (negligence, liability, responsibility and obligation) carry specific legal meanings that structure the attribution of responsibility in the Court’s reasoning. The classification of variation types shows that synonymic variation and inconsistent standardization constitute the most frequent patterns in the Turkish translations of ECtHR judgments. By classifying the observed variations into systematic categories such as synonymic variation, semantic narrowing, semantic broadening, conceptual shift and inconsistent standardization, this study contributes to a more structured understanding of terminological variation in the translation of international judicial decisions.

The analysis indicates that the legal key terms in ECHR case-law (“negligence”, “fault”, “liability”, “responsibility”, and “obligation”) are reconstructed through multiple equivalents in the Turkish translations. This reconstruction may produce different outcomes in terms of legal certainty and consistency of interpretation in the Turkish legal system. The corpus-based findings show that legal translation is not only a process of establishing linguistic equivalence, but also a multilayered process in which normative meaning, responsibility, and the framework of legal interpretation are reconstructed in the target language.

When the quantitative findings obtained from the analyses conducted using the Voyant Tools Trends, KWIC, and Collocate modules are considered together, it becomes evident that terminological standardisation is highly prominent in the English ECHR texts. The recurrent use of structures such as “no negligence or fault”, “alleged medical negligence”, and “positive procedural obligation” indicates that these terms operate within the institutionalised discourse of ECHR case-law as singular and clearly delimited legal categories. This consistency contributes to the stabilisation of conceptual boundaries within the text and facilitates their consistent recognition by the reader.

The use of multiple terminological equivalents to express the same conceptual domain in the Turkish translation texts reveals a process of conceptual redistribution. The findings show that the five main terms examined in the study are represented by nine different equivalents in Turkish. In particular, the concepts “negligence” and “fault” are distributed across the terms “ihmal”, “kusur”, “hata”, and in some contexts “suç”. This variation is not merely stylistic but may also influence legal interpretation. In the English legal context, the term “negligence” refers to a specific category of civil liability based on breach of a duty of care. When translated as “ihmal” the concept largely preserves this meaning within Turkish legal discourse. However, when the same term is rendered as “kusur” or “suç”, the conceptual scope may shift. In Turkish law, “kusur” refers to fault within the broader framework of legal responsibility, while “suç” is associated with criminal liability. Such terminological shifts may lead readers to interpret the legal reasoning of the judgment within different doctrinal frameworks. Therefore, terminological variation in translated judicial decisions may not only reflect linguistic diversity but also shape how legal responsibility is conceptually understood in the target legal culture. The potential interpretative impact of terminological variation can be illustrated through a simplified example derived from the corpus patterns observed in ECtHR judgments. In the English legal context, a sentence such as “The Court found no medical negligence on the part of the doctors” refers to the absence of a breach of professional duty.

When translated into Turkish as “Mahkeme doktorların tıbbi ihmalinin bulunmadığı sonucuna varmıştır”, the conceptual meaning remains largely aligned with the original legal framework. However, if the same statement is rendered as “Mahkeme doktorların kusurlu olmadığına karar vermiştir”, the focus shifts to the concept of fault within Turkish liability law. In a more extreme case, translating the concepts as “suç” could potentially evoke criminal liability rather than civil responsibility. Although the factual outcome of the judgment may remain unchanged, such terminological shifts may guide readers toward different doctrinal interpretations of legal responsibility. This example illustrates how terminological variation in translated judicial decisions may influence the conceptual framing of legal reasoning in the target legal culture. This terminological variation does not merely indicate synonymic variation but also involves the use of concepts that have different degrees of responsibility and distinct normative implications within the Turkish legal system. Similarly, the fact that the terms “liability” and “responsibility” are often merged under the single concept “sorumluluk” may lead to a weakening of the conceptual distinction present in the English texts. As a result, the type of responsibility to which the text refers is often left to contextual inference. This conceptual redistribution is summarised in Table 7.

Table 7 *English-Turkish Conceptual Mapping of Key Legal Terms*

English Term	Institutional Usage in the English Corpus	Turkish Equivalents	Conceptual Redistribution	Risk to Legal Certainty
Negligence	Consistent use, often with “fault”	“ihmal”, “kusur”, “hata”, “suç”	Semantic expansion and conceptual redistribution	Moderate–High
Fault	Consistent use, either with “negligence” or as a distinct category of fault	“kusur”, “hata”	Conceptual overlap with “negligence”	Moderate
Liability	Systematic use in the context of compensation and liability regimes	“sorumluluk”	Conceptual merging of “liability” and “responsibility”	High
Responsibility	Use in institutional and actor-related reference contexts	“sorumluluk”	Category neutralisation	Moderate
Obligation	Consistent use in the context of legal obligations	“yükümlülük”	Minimal transformation	Low

It is widely acknowledged in the literature that the pursuit of “full equivalence” in legal translation is often limited. However, the present study makes this abstractly discussed phenomenon visible through empirical data. Focusing on a text type characterised by a high degree of institutional standardisation in ECHR discourse, the study seeks to show where terminological multiplication in the target language becomes concentrated and which conceptual distinctions it weakens.

The analysis conducted using Voyant Tools shows that there are differences between the two corpora in terms of the word cloud, frequency, and distinctive words, which indicate that the discursive focus is not identical across the two languages. While medical and procedural elements such as “operation”, “heart”, “protocol”, and “tuberculosis” are more visible in the English source texts, elements related to legal outcomes such as “tazminat”, “faiz”, “enfasyon”,

and “yargılama” become more prominent in the Turkish texts. This suggests that translation involves not only the transfer of terms, but also a reorganisation of which elements are foregrounded and which are backgrounded in the text. The discursive shift between the English source texts and the Turkish translation texts emerges on two main levels. First, the fact that the Turkish translations are generally used by national practitioners in a context focused on “legal consequences, judicial proceedings, and compensation” leads to the text being read within a more result-oriented framework. Second, from the perspective of normative interpretation, elements such as medical evaluation and expert reports, which function as part of the normative justification of the judgment, may shift towards a different centre of emphasis for the target reader. This shift in discursive focus can be considered an important finding supporting the view that terminological variation has a direct impact on interpretation.

Another finding of the study is that the terms selected as the focus of the analysis do not appear as the most dominant elements in the word cloud. The fact that a term has a low frequency within the text does not necessarily mean that its normative weight is low. On the contrary, some terms perform critical functions in determining the reasoning of the judgment, the applicable standard, and the framework of responsibility.

When evaluated from the perspective of Relevance Theory, terminological variation constitutes not only a problem of consistency but also a cognitive process that affects how the text is interpreted. The more explicit use of a “one concept-one term” pattern in the English texts makes it easier for the reader to identify the legal category with lower inferential effort. The consistent repetition of terms throughout the text allows the reader to carry the meaning established in earlier occurrences into subsequent parts of the judgment. In contrast, in the Turkish translation texts the same conceptual domain is rendered through different terms such as “ihmal”, “kusur”, and “hata”, which may require the reader to reconstruct the conceptual distinction in each occurrence. While this situation may increase contextual effect by using expressions closer to the target legal culture, it may also lead to the blurring of conceptual boundaries and to differences in interpretation.

On the other hand, from the perspective of Toury’s theory of translation norms, terminological choices in the texts are not random, but are shaped within a particular normative orientation. These choices are positioned between “adequacy”, which refers to adherence to the source text, and “acceptability”, which refers to conformity with the target language and culture. The texts examined in this study consist of translations published by the Human Rights Department of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Türkiye, which are not official yet widely used in practice. In these translations, the priority appears to be readability, clarity, and usability within the target community rather than strict terminological standardisation. The findings suggest that the Turkish translations often display an acceptability-oriented tendency. One indicator of this tendency is that the terms “liability” and

“responsibility” are generally rendered as “sorumluluk” in Turkish. A second indicator is that the terms “negligence” and “fault” are represented by multiple equivalents such as “ihmal”, “kusur”, and “hata”. This preference may be related to the graded and multi-layered structure of the concept of fault in the target legal culture. These observations reveal that conformity to translational norms does not always preserve normative meaning completely; rather, such meaning may be reshaped and reproduced within the target culture in some cases.

The findings show that terminological usage in the English texts of ECHR judgments is highly standardised, whereas in the Turkish translations the same conceptual domain is distributed across multiple terms. This finding suggests that terminological variation may affect legal certainty.

7. Conclusion

The study has demonstrated that there is a clear restructuring in the terms determining legal outcomes (“negligence”, “fault”, “obligation”, “liability”, and “responsibility”) between the English source texts of the ECHR medical malpractice judgments and their Turkish translations through corpus-based findings. The frequency, trend, KWIC, and collocation analyses conducted using Voyant Tools show that while the English texts display an institutionalised and consistent terminological usage, the same conceptual domain in the Turkish translations is distributed across different equivalents such as “ihmal”, “kusur”, “hata”, and “suç”, and that the distinction between “liability” and “responsibility” is often merged under the single term “sorumluluk”. As a result, the standard of responsibility and the normative boundaries in the target text become more dependent on contextual inference.

From a theoretical perspective, within the framework of Relevance Theory, terminological variation may increase contextual effect by bringing the text closer to the target legal culture, while simultaneously increasing inferential effort due to the blurring of conceptual boundaries. Within the framework of Toury’s theory of translation norms, on the other hand, the findings indicate that an acceptability-oriented approach is generally preferred in the Turkish translations, although this approach may weaken conceptual distinctions in the target language and therefore carries the risk of a reconstruction of normative meaning.

The findings show that terminological consistency in the translation of human rights judicial judgments is not merely a linguistic issue, but has a direct impact on legal certainty, consistency of interpretation, and the perception of responsibility. For this reason, strengthening terminological standardisation in the translation of international judicial judgments and developing approaches that support conceptual consistency in translation processes are of particular importance.

The findings also suggest several practical implications. Preparing a terminology guide for legal terms used in the translation of international court judgments may provide a common frame of reference for translators and practitioners. A systematic review of the terminological

choices used in the translation of ECHR judgments may contribute to strengthening conceptual consistency in the target language. Such institutional and terminological standardisation efforts may help ensure that international judicial judgments are interpreted in a more consistent and predictable manner within national legal systems.

Finally, it should also be noted that the study has two main limitations. First, the corpus is limited to eight judgments, and therefore the results cannot be directly generalised to all ECHR medical malpractice judgments. The second limitation is that the translations analysed were taken from sources that are “not official but are widely used” in practice. Future studies may strengthen these findings by examining a larger corpus covering different periods and by comparing different Turkish translation sources to analyse the relationship between terminological preferences and its effect on interpretation in practical applications. Moreover, the distribution of terms such as “ihmal”, “kusur”, “hata”, and “suç” may be discussed in greater detail through comparative legal analysis in the context of distinctions between criminal, civil, and administrative law, as well as different types of liability.

Disclosures

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Social Media Content and Teacher Influencers: EFL Teachers’ Perceptions and Attitudes

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Abstract

Social media, when used consciously and ethically, supports teachers’ professional identities and increases their participation in global learning communities. In the field of foreign language education, social media has made professional development more accessible for teachers, created new professional pathways, and supported the foundation of novel professional identities. One such identity is the “teacher influencer”: a teacher who creates and shares educational content on social media. This new aspect of professional identity enables teachers to shape their own public personas, create content, and interact with broad online communities. This mixed-methods study explored the perceptions and attitudes of pre- and in-service teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) regarding teacher influencers and their educational social media content. The participants were 79 EFL teachers in Türkiye: 39 pre-service and 40 in-service teachers. Data were collected through an online questionnaire including closed- and open-ended questions. Closed-ended responses were analysed using descriptive statistics, whereas open-ended responses were analysed using thematic analysis. Findings showed that both groups of participants have a generally positive attitude towards educational content on social media. Findings also highlighted that pre-service EFL teachers show a comparatively higher interest and interact more with this type of social media content. Participants noted that social media offers opportunities in terms of professional development, sharing ideas, and motivation. Although they acknowledged the potential benefits, participants also mentioned some concerns regarding teacher influencers and their social media content. These concerns were about the quality of content, privacy, ethical principles, and the reputation of the profession. Moreover, both groups stated that they are reluctant to create educational content on social media.

Keywords: social media, EFL teachers, teacher influencers, teacher identity, educational content

1. Introduction

Social media has become an embedded part of our daily communication and a commonly used medium for sharing and searching for information. This widespread use of social media has also greatly affected the field of education (Mejía-Laguna et al., 2021). This inevitable integration of social media into our lives has also transformed the ways educators participate in professional development processes and construct professional identities (Mercado & Shin, 2025). Pre- and in-service teachers of EFL often attend conferences and workshops; they often utilise various platforms to support their own professional development. However, today, social media platforms provide new and unique opportunities for these types of events. These platforms support the establishment of communities of practice and facilitate continuous learning processes (Marcelo-Martínez et al., 2024). While the immediate access to educational content and the opportunities for global-level collaboration on social media provide valuable advantages for teachers, they also present some challenges (Ping, 2022).

Numerous studies have explored the benefits of social media in learning from a student perspective. However, there are comparatively limited studies focusing on teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and experiences regarding social media (Aydoğmuş et al., 2023). This limitation applies to the study of foreign language education as well. Given the increasing number of EFL teachers using social media platforms for content creation and self-branding, which is an area that has not gotten much attention in applied linguistics, this gap is especially noteworthy (Nejadghanbar & Fotouhi, 2025). Therefore, this study aims to contribute to bridging this gap by investigating the attitudes of pre-service and in-service EFL teachers towards educational content and teacher influencers on social media. This study also explores pre- and in-service EFL teachers' perceptions of benefits, challenges, and ethical concerns associated with creating such content. Specifically, this study explores how EFL teachers interact with and contribute to the digital scene of language education on social media in terms of both the opportunities and challenges or complexities that arise from their engagement with social media for professional purposes. With this aim, this study seeks answers to the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the attitudes of pre- and in-service EFL teachers toward educational content and teacher influencers on social media?

RQ2. What are pre- and in-service EFL teachers' perceptions about benefits, challenges, and ethical concerns related to teachers' creation of educational content on social media?

2. Educational Content in Social Media and Teacher Influencers

Over the past two decades, social media has become an inseparable part of daily life. Although most people have been using social media platforms as sources of entertainment and means of communication, these platforms are also popular sources of information and serve as

personalised learning spaces for many people. Social media platforms have played a particularly significant role in language education. Both teachers and learners of foreign languages use these platforms for formal and informal purposes.

For foreign language learners, social media provides several crucial benefits. Access to authentic language input on social media supports learning autonomy. Interactions with other people in the form of commenting on content, sharing content, and discussions in the target language provide foreign language learners with opportunities to produce and negotiate meaning in the target language, in a multicultural environment. This multicultural nature of social media, therefore, also helps learners develop an intercultural awareness. Furthermore, social media platforms facilitate informal English learning by providing a global space for interaction, instant feedback, and diverse content. In this way, social media platforms foster interactivity and enhance learners' motivation and language skills (Zhu, 2025). Indeed, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube have been shown to enhance various English language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Alkamel, 2024). Moreover, many learners follow teacher influencers on social media for accessible, bite-sized educational content. These bite-sized pieces of educational content available on social media may not be able to replace formal instruction. However, they complement formal instruction and therefore support foreign language learning outside of the limited classroom hours. In language education research, the widespread availability and flexible communication affordances of these high-profile platforms attract considerable attention from language learning scholars, with studies frequently highlighting their positive impact as learning environments (Barrot, 2022).

For foreign language teachers, social media has also drastically transformed education. Social media has empowered teachers in numerous ways. It enabled them to add a novel layer to their multifaceted professional identities, which can exceed their geographical boundaries. Social media enabled language teachers to create public personas for themselves, become teachers of the global digital world we live in, and become their own personal brands. This drastic transformation in education has also led to the emergence of “teacher influencers”, teachers who use social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok to share instructional strategies, construct professional identities, and interact with broad audiences (Yıldız & Şeker, 2025). For teachers who do not desire to create and share educational content, social media still offers empowerment through instant and free access to content that would support their professional development. These networks offer dynamic spaces for teachers to exchange ideas, find emotional support, and address professional issues through peer and expert connections. Especially for novice language teachers, social media provides access to valuable resources created and shared by other teachers (Yıldız & Şeker, 2025). Social media content addressing key aspects of teaching, such as material design,

classroom management, and lesson planning, can be inspirational for both novice and experienced language teachers worldwide. Because educational content is widely shared on social media, language teachers can now connect with much larger communities to exchange their professional insights and innovative teaching methods more easily.

Active engagement with social media has the potential to lead to self-development in several ways. It can broaden professional contacts, enhance career prospects, and generate new insights that can be effectively applied in classrooms. Active engagement with social media is changing conventional professional development by offering personalised learning opportunities and encouraging career growth for teachers (Mercado & Shin, 2025). In the digital space of social media, language teachers can assume various roles; they can be passive learners or active influencers and community builders. Social media offers teachers opportunities to impact and shape the educational field. Many educators now find, create, and share valuable resources on social media and help connect formal education with informal learning opportunities in an accessible and collaborative environment. The accessible and collaborative nature of these social media platforms contributes to building supportive communities that enhance teaching practices and ultimately benefit student learning (Mercado & Shin, 2025). Despite the benefits regarding teachers' professional development, social media content also carries risks in terms of the spreading of misinformation, violation of ethics, and misleading content. Therefore, there is a necessity for focused teacher training on ethical and effective social media use in language education.

With more educational content related to language education and teacher influencers appearing on social media, it is increasingly important to be able to evaluate the trustworthiness of the sources and value of the information being shared. Digital literacy and critical thinking are essential for effective online engagement when evaluating information sources and language teaching practices on social media. The internet has simplified accessing and sharing information. Although easy access to information has helped teachers' professional development immensely, it has also created the need for digital literacy. Teachers' digital literacy is especially crucial for effectively using technology to improve teaching. So, teachers should not only have the technical proficiency to use different digital platforms but also the capacity to evaluate the pedagogical integrity and accuracy of shared content (Bui et al., 2023).

The universal and inescapable integration of social media into the language teaching profession has led to a promising and growing area of academic inquiry into the pedagogical advantages and impacts of social media within educational contexts, particularly regarding its usefulness in professional development and the enhancement of teaching practices (Mercado & Shin, 2025; Otchie et al., 2021). Understanding how teachers view and use social media in their work is crucial for managing and responding to ongoing changes. Therefore, this study

examines both pre- and in-service EFL teachers' attitudes toward teacher influencers and their content. The study also explores how pre- and in-service EFL teachers perceive the advantages, challenges, and ethical issues related to creating educational content on social media. In this regard, this study explores how EFL teachers, both pre- and in-service, act as users and creators on social media in the context of language education.

3. Methodology

For the present study, a mixed-methods approach to research was adopted to explore pre- and in-service EFL teachers' attitudes towards and perceptions of teacher influencers and their educational content on social media. This section presents the methodological framework of the study, including the research design, participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods research design, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analysed during the same phase and then integrated to provide an overall interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 77). The data-validation variant of the convergent mixed-methods design was used, where the researcher included both open- and closed-ended questions on a questionnaire and the results from the open-ended questions to confirm or validate the results from the closed-ended questions, as described by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, p. 81). This design was employed to provide a comprehensive understanding of pre- and in-service EFL teachers' attitudes and perceptions regarding educational social media content and teacher influencers. The quantitative component which consisted of the data from the closed-ended questions, focused on identifying general trends through frequency and percentage analyses. The qualitative component which consisted of the data from the open-ended questions aimed to explore participants' perspectives in greater depth through thematic analysis. The integration of these two types of data enabled a more in-depth interpretation of the findings.

3.2. Context

The present study was conducted in Türkiye, in 2026. Participants of the study consisted of pre- and in-service EFL teachers in Türkiye. Data were collected online through social media circulation. This study focused on perceptions regarding teacher influencers and educational social media content in language education.

3.3. Participants

Participants of this study were selected via the convenience sampling technique, whereby researchers select participants among individuals who are easily accessible and available to them (Sedgwick, 2013). The researcher of this study created an online questionnaire via Google

Forms and shared this form with her followers on social media. By doing this, the researcher reached seventy-nine participants. Thirty-nine of these participants were pre-service EFL teachers studying in various language teacher education programmes in Türkiye. Forty of the participants were in-service EFL teachers working at various schools and levels in Türkiye. Nine of the thirty-nine pre-service teachers reported limited teaching experience (1–2 years) through activities such as private tutoring or practicum-based teaching prior to formal employment. Demographics of participants were summarised in Table 1. Participation in this research was entirely voluntary, and all data were anonymised. Informed consent was secured through the online questionnaire form. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. All data collected were treated with strict confidentiality.

Table 1 *Participant Demographics*

Variable	Category	Number of participants (n)	Percentage (%)
Teaching Status	Pre-service	39	49.4
	In-service	40	50.6
Teaching Context	Pre-service (ELT programme)	39	49.4
	Elementary school	12	15.2
	Middle school	7	8.9
	High school	6	7.6
	Preschool	4	5.1
	Age Range	18-24	53
	25-34	17	21.5
	35-44	8	10.1
	56+	1	1.3
Teaching Experience	No teaching experience	30	38.0
	1-2 years	28	35.4
	3-5 years	8	10.1
	6-10 years	7	8.9
	11-15 years	4	5.1
	16-20 years	1	1.3
	21+ years	1	1.3
Educational Status	Undergraduate student	39	49.4
	Bachelor's degree	31	39.2
	Master's degree	6	7.6
	Doctoral degree	3	3.8

Total	79	100.0%
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3.4. Data Collection Instruments

Data collection was conducted through an online questionnaire developed by the researcher and distributed on the researcher's social media accounts. This online questionnaire consisted of both open- and closed-ended questions in order to capture both general trends and in-depth perceptions regarding teacher influencers and educational social media content. The questionnaire was originally administered in Turkish to ensure clarity and ease of understanding for the participants. The full questionnaire is provided in Appendix A in both Turkish and English.

The open-ended items in the questionnaire were designed to elicit qualitative data on participants' general perceptions, opinions, and concerns about the issue at hand. The open-ended questions enabled the researcher to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon by providing an opportunity to analyse the participants' perceptions of teacher influencers on social media in-depth (e.g., Kross & Giust, 2019).

The closed-ended items were used to collect supportive quantitative data regarding participants' demographics (see Table 1), interests, social media following habits, and their perceptions of the impact of social media on education. Quantitative data were only used to summarise the tendencies of participants in terms of their interests in teacher influencers and their social media content, and to present these trends with descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies and percentages).

The development of the questionnaire was informed by existing literature on teachers' use of social media for professional development (Marcelo-Martínez et al., 2024; Mercado & Shin, 2025), teacher identity in digital contexts (Ping, 2022; Nejadghanbar & Fotouhi, 2025), pedagogical affordances of social media in education (Otchie et al., 2021), and ethical considerations in online educational content (Yıldız & Şeker, 2025). In line with the aims of the study, the instrument was designed to explore participants' levels of engagement with educational social media content, their attitudes towards teacher influencers, and their perceptions of the benefits, challenges, and ethical concerns associated with such content. The questionnaire was also reviewed by a specialist in English language teaching and educational research to improve the clarity and relevance of the items.

3.5. Data Analysis

To enable comparison, participants were categorised into two groups: (1) pre-service EFL teachers and (2) in-service EFL teachers. Quantitative data obtained from the closed-ended items were analysed using descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies and percentages) to identify general trends and patterns among participants. Qualitative data obtained from the open-ended items were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). The thematic analysis followed the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke

(2006). First, all responses were read repeatedly to achieve familiarity with the dataset. Second, initial codes were generated by identifying recurring ideas, concerns, and evaluations in participants' responses. Third, codes were organised into broader categories by grouping related patterns of meaning. Fourth, these categories were reviewed and refined to develop candidate themes. Fifth, the themes were defined and named in relation to the research questions. Finally, the themes were interpreted and reported to present a coherent and meaningful account of the data.

In line with the flexible nature of thematic analysis, which allows for identifying patterns of meaning across qualitative datasets, particular attention was given to identifying similarities and differences between pre-service and in-service teachers. The themes were therefore examined comparatively across the two groups in order to highlight both shared and distinct perspectives.

3.6. Trustworthiness

To increase the trustworthiness, the researcher did repeated readings of the data and revisited the coding process multiple times to ensure that the raw responses, codes, and themes were consistent. Analytic notes were kept throughout the coding process. The resulting themes were reviewed and refined to ensure internal coherence and alignment with the research questions. Additionally, the researcher conducted peer debriefing with an expert in the field. The external expert reviewed the coding structure and theme development. Any divergences were discussed and resolved. These procedures contributed to the credibility of the analysis.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process. Ethical approval was obtained from Maltepe University Ethics Committee in Türkiye dated 29.04.2026, numbered 2026/07-08. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants through the online questionnaire. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. All data were collected anonymously and were treated with strict confidentiality.

4. Findings

This study generated both quantitative and qualitative data, through closed- and open-ended questions in an online questionnaire. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) to identify general trends, while qualitative data were analysed through thematic analysis to reveal patterns and recurring themes. The findings from both types of data are presented below. The findings are presented below under two main sections: quantitative and qualitative findings.

4.1. Quantitative Findings

The quantitative findings provide an overview of participants' engagement with and perceptions of educational social media content and teacher influencers. Specifically, the results present participants' interest levels in educational content, their following behaviours related to teacher influencers, their perceptions of the role of such content in education, the perceived impact on their own understanding of teaching, and their intentions to create educational content for social media. The first set of findings relates to participants' interest levels in educational social media content, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2 *Interest Levels in Educational Social Media Content*

Group	<i>n</i>	Interest Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Pre-service teachers	39	Interested	32	82.1
		Sometimes interested	6	15.4
		Not interested	1	2.6
In-service teachers	40	Interested	27	67.5
		Sometimes interested	8	20.0
		Not interested	5	12.5

The findings indicate that a large majority of pre-service EFL teachers are interested in such content, with 32 out of 39 participants (82.1%) reporting clear interest. An additional 6 participants (15.4%) stated that they are sometimes interested, while only 1 participant reported no interest.

A similar pattern was observed among in-service teachers, although at slightly lower levels. Among this group, 27 out of 40 participants (67.5%) reported being interested in educational social media content, while 8 participants (20.0%) indicated that they are sometimes interested. A higher proportion compared to pre-service teachers, 5 participants (12.5%), stated that they are not interested. Overall, these findings suggest that both groups display a generally positive attitude towards educational social media content, with pre-service teachers showing a comparatively higher level of interest. Further findings regarding participants' following behaviours related to teacher influencers are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 *Teacher Influencer Following Rates*

Group	<i>n</i>	Actively Follow (%)	Sometimes Follow (%)	Never Follow (%)
Pre-service teachers	39	74.4	15.4	10.3
In-service teachers	40	55.0	20.0	25.0

When the participants' followings of teacher influencers were analysed, it was seen that most of the pre-service teachers (89.8%) followed these kinds of accounts on social media. Out of 39 pre-service teachers, 29 (74.4%) stated that they actively followed these accounts, 6

(15.4%) stated that they follow these accounts from time to time, and 4 (10.3%) stated that they never follow them.

A similarly high rate of following (75.0%) was observed among in-service teachers. Twenty-two in-service teachers (55.0%) stated that they followed teacher influencers, 8 (20.0%) stated that they sometimes followed these influencers, and 10 (25.0%) stated that they never followed them. These findings show that both groups have a considerable interest in following teacher influencers on social media. In addition to this, it can be seen that compared to the in-service teachers, a larger share of the pre-service teachers follows teacher influencers on social media. These findings indicate that pre-service EFL teachers are more active in their search for professional development and inspiration on digital platforms. Further findings regarding the role of educational social media content in education are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 *Perceptions of the Role of Educational Social Media Content in Education*

Group	n	Crucial Role	Aid to Education	Little/No Relation	Negative Impact
Pre-service teachers	39	15 (38.5%)	23 (59.0%)	1 (2.6%)	0 (0.0%)
In-service teachers	40	10 (25.0%)	24 (60.0%)	5 (12.5%)	1 (2.5%)

Within the group of pre-service EFL teachers, the results show that the vast majority (97.5%) perceive such content as either playing a crucial role or serving as an aid to education. 15 out of 39 pre-service teachers (38.5%) stated that social media plays a crucial role in education, while 23 participants (59.0%) indicated that it serves as an aid. Only 1 participant (2.6%) reported that educational social media content has little or no relation to education.

A similar trend was observed among in-service EFL teachers; however, the rates suggest a more cautious approach. Out of 40 in-service teachers, 10 (25.0%) stated that social media plays a crucial role, 24 (60.0%) reported that it serves as an aid, 5 (12.5%) indicated that it has little or no relation to education, and 1 (2.5%) stated that it may have a negative impact. Overall, these findings indicate that while both groups recognise the value of educational social media content, pre-service teachers tend to adopt a more positive and innovative perspective, whereas in-service teachers demonstrate a comparatively more cautious and critical stance. An additional set of findings relates to participants' perceptions of whether teacher influencers contribute to the wider use of technology in education, as presented in Table 5.

Table 5 *Perceptions of Teacher Influencers' Role in Promoting Technology Use in Education*

Group	n	Yes	Partially	No
Pre-service teachers	39	25 (74.0%)	7 (21.0%)	2 (6.0%)

In-service teachers	40	22 (55.0%)	12 (30.0%)	6 (15.0%)
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The results indicate that a clear majority of pre-service teachers (74.0%) believe that teacher influencers play a role in promoting the use of technology in educational contexts. This proportion is notably lower among in-service teachers (55.0%), although it still represents the majority of participants. In contrast, in-service teachers reported higher levels of uncertainty (30.0%) compared to pre-service teachers (21.0%). Similarly, a greater proportion of in-service teachers (15.0%) indicated that they do not perceive such an impact, compared to a much smaller percentage among pre-service teachers (6.0%).

These findings suggest that while both groups generally recognise the role of teacher influencers in promoting technology use in education, pre-service teachers tend to adopt a more confident and positive stance, whereas in-service teachers demonstrate a comparatively more cautious and uncertain perspective. The findings about the participants' perceptions regarding how their own teaching practices are impacted by the teacher influencers' content are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 *Perceptions of Teacher Influencers' Impact on Their Own Understanding of Teaching*

Group	<i>n</i>	Major Impact	Partial Impact	Little or No Impact
Pre-service teachers	39	10 (25.6%)	25 (64.1%)	4 (10.3%)
In-service teachers	40	4 (10.0%)	22 (55.0%)	14 (35.0%)

The results indicate that most of the pre-service teachers (89.7%) perceive themselves as being influenced by this type of social media content. Specifically, 10 out of 39 pre-service teachers (25.6%) reported that such content has a major impact on their understanding of and approaches to teaching, while 25 participants (64.1%) indicated a partial impact. Only 4 participants (10.3%) stated that this type of content has little or no impact on their teaching-related understanding.

In contrast, among in-service teachers, a more limited perception of impact was observed. Of the 40 participants, 4 (10.0%) reported that teacher influencers' content had a major impact on them, 22 (55.0%) indicated a partial impact, and 14 (35.0%) stated that such content had little or no impact on their own understanding of and approaches to teaching. Overall, these findings suggest that pre-service teachers tend to perceive teacher influencers as more influential sources for professional development and inspiration, whereas in-service teachers adopt a comparatively more distant perspective towards such influence. Additional findings regarding participants' intentions to create educational content for social media are presented in Table 7.

Table 7 *Intentions to Create Educational Content for Social Media*

Group	Intend to Create Content	Indecisive/ Not Sure	No Intention	Overall Unwilling or Unsure (%)
Pre-service teachers	10 (25.6%)	13 (33.3%)	16 (41.0%)	74.3%
In-service teachers	6 (15.0%)	12 (30.0%)	22 (55.0%)	85.0%

When participants' responses were analysed, it was observed that both groups exhibited a clear reluctance or indecisiveness regarding their intention to create educational content for social media. Among pre-service teachers, only 10 participants (25.6%) reported that they intend to create educational content for social media, while 13 (33.3%) indicated that they are indecisive, and 16 participants (41.0%) stated that they have no intention of doing so. These results show that more than two-thirds (74.3%) of the pre-service teachers are either undecided or reluctant about content production.

This tendency is even more pronounced among in-service teachers. Of the 40 participants, 6 (15.0%) reported that they intend to create educational content, 12 (30.0%) indicated that they are unsure, and 22 (55.0%) stated that they have no intention. Overall, 85.0% of in-service teachers are either unwilling or uncertain about producing educational content for social media. Compared to pre-service teachers, this group demonstrates a higher level of reluctance towards content creation. The next set of findings focuses on participants' perceptions of the impact of teachers' social media content on teacher–student interaction, as presented in Table 8.

Table 8 *Perceived Impact of Teacher Influencers' Social Media Content on Teacher–Student Interaction*

Group	Stronger Interaction	No Change	Negative Impact
Pre-service (<i>n</i> =39)	22 (56.0%)	11 (28.0%)	6 (15.0%)
In-service (<i>n</i> =40)	15 (38.0%)	17 (43.0%)	8 (20.0%)

The results indicate that a majority of pre-service teachers (56.0%) believe that social media content strengthens teacher-student interaction, whereas a smaller proportion of in-service teachers (38.0%) share this view. In contrast, a higher percentage of in-service teachers (43.0%) reported that such content does not create a notable change in interaction, compared to pre-service teachers (28.0%). Additionally, negative perceptions were more frequently observed among in-service teachers (20.0%) than pre-service teachers (15.0%). These findings suggest that consistent with other aspects of educational social media content, pre-service teachers tend to adopt a more positive view, whereas in-service teachers demonstrate a comparatively more cautious stance. The final set of quantitative findings relates to

participants' concerns regarding teachers' social media content production, as presented in Table 9.

Table 9 *Participants' Concerns Regarding Educational Social Media Content*

Concern Category	Pre-service (n=34)	In-service (n=40)
No concerns	8 (24.0%)	7 (18.0%)
Privacy and security	11 (32.0%)	8 (20.0%)
Misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the teaching profession	11 (32.0%)	11 (28.0%)
Content quality	3 (9.0%)	14 (35.0%)
Multiple concerns	1 (3.0%)	0 (0.0%)

Note. "Multiple concerns" refers to responses in which participants mentioned more than one concern category.

It should be noted that not all pre-service EFL teachers responded to this item; therefore, the analysis for pre-service teachers is based on 34 valid responses. Among pre-service teachers, the most frequently reported concerns were privacy and security (32.0%) and the potential misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the teaching profession (32.0%). A notable proportion of participants (24.0%) reported having no particular concerns, while content quality was less frequently identified (9.0%).

In contrast, in-service teachers reported a different pattern, with content quality emerging as the most prominent concern (35.0%), followed by the misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the teaching profession (28.0%) and privacy and security (20.0%). A smaller proportion of in-service teachers (18.0%) indicated that they had no concerns. These findings suggest that while pre-service teachers' concerns are primarily centred around ethical considerations and professional identity, in-service teachers place greater emphasis on the quality and reliability of educational content shared on social media.

Taken together, the quantitative findings provide a comprehensive overview of participants' engagement with and perceptions of educational social media content and teacher influencers. Across the different dimensions examined, both pre-service and in-service teachers generally demonstrate a positive orientation towards such content, particularly in terms of its accessibility, supportive role in education, and potential to contribute to professional development. However, consistent differences between the two groups are also evident, with pre-service teachers adopting a more favourable and confident stance, while in-service teachers tend to express more cautious, critical, and context-dependent perspectives. In addition, concerns related to ethical issues, professional identity, and content quality further highlight the complexity of participants' evaluations. While these findings provide a comprehensive overview of general trends and patterns, they are complemented by qualitative

insights that offer a more detailed and interpretive understanding of participants' views. Therefore, the following section presents the qualitative findings.

4.2. Qualitative Findings

The qualitative analysis of participants' general views revealed several recurring themes regarding teacher influencers and the content they create, including perceived pedagogical value, concerns about content quality and reliability, issues related to professional identity, and ethical considerations. In the excerpts presented below, participants are identified through codes, where "PST" refers to pre-service teachers and "IS" refers to in-service teachers, followed by a number indicating the participant (e.g., PST1, IS1). All quotations originally provided in Turkish were translated into English by the researcher for reporting purposes.

4.2.1. Perceived Pedagogical Value and Professional Support

Both pre-service and in-service teachers frequently highlighted the pedagogical benefits of educational social media content, particularly in terms of accessibility, idea sharing, and professional development. Pre-service teachers, in particular, emphasised the practical value of such content for learning new teaching techniques and gaining exposure to diverse instructional approaches. For instance, one participant noted that social media enables them to "learn various teaching methods, activities, and games" and access "rich content from different parts of the world" (PST5). Similarly, others emphasised that such content is especially helpful for novice teachers by providing "idea sharing, resources, and ready-made materials" (PST2).

In-service teachers also acknowledged these benefits, particularly in relation to classroom practice. Some participants stated that they actively apply ideas encountered on social media, noting that they "use different teaching techniques" or adapt instructional strategies in their own classrooms (IS8). Additionally, social media was described as a space that provides "creative suggestions for materials and activities" (IS2) and facilitates access to practical teaching knowledge.

4.2.2. Content Quality and Reliability Concerns

Despite these positive perceptions, concerns regarding the quality and reliability of content emerged strongly, particularly among in-service teachers. Several participants questioned the pedagogical competence of content creators, with one participant explicitly stating that they "do not think most content creators have sufficient pedagogical content knowledge" and that content production is often driven by financial motives (IS1). Similarly, others pointed to the risk of misinformation, noting that "incorrect or unverified information may lead to information pollution" (IS12) and that "many content creators provide incomplete or inaccurate information" (IS43).

Pre-service teachers also expressed similar concerns, although less strongly. Some participants acknowledged that while they benefit from such content, “some of the information shared may be incorrect” (PST8), indicating an emerging awareness of the limitations of social media as a learning resource.

4.2.3. Misinterpretation and Misrepresentation of the Teaching Profession

Another prominent theme relates to the perceived tension between teaching as a profession and social media influencing. Participants from both groups expressed concerns that social media may lead to the misinterpretation or misrepresentation of the teaching profession. Pre-service teachers highlighted that “being a social media phenomenon and being a teacher are different and should not be combined” (PST10), emphasising a potential weakening of professional identity.

This concern was even more pronounced among in-service teachers, who frequently associated content creation with commercialisation and performative behaviour. Some participants noted that content is often produced “for engagement and popularity rather than educational value” (IS41) and that teaching is at times reduced to “a commercial or entertainment-oriented activity” (IS25). These findings suggest that in-service teachers adopt a more critical stance regarding the professional implications of social media presence.

4.2.4. Ethical and Privacy Concerns

Ethical concerns, particularly related to privacy and the sharing of student-related content, were also frequently mentioned. Participants from both groups criticised practices such as sharing students’ images without consent, describing these as “disturbing” and “ethically problematic” (IS44). One participant explicitly stated that “teachers sharing students’ faces publicly is very uncomfortable” (IS30), highlighting the seriousness of privacy concerns. While pre-service teachers also referred to these issues, their concerns were often framed as potential risks, such as “privacy and security problems” or negative reactions from students and parents (PST2). In contrast, in-service teachers discussed these issues in a more concrete and experience-based manner, reflecting their professional awareness of ethical responsibilities.

4.2.5. Conditional Acceptance and Balanced Perspectives

Overall, both groups demonstrated a balanced perspective, acknowledging both the benefits and limitations of educational social media content. Many participants emphasised that such content can be valuable “when used correctly” or “depending on how it is applied” (PST29). Similarly, in-service teachers highlighted that while social media can support learning and teaching, its effectiveness is highly dependent on context, content quality, and user awareness. Notably, pre-service teachers tended to adopt a more optimistic and exploratory stance, frequently emphasising learning opportunities and inspiration. In contrast, in-service teachers demonstrated a more cautious and critical perspective, drawing attention to issues such as

misinformation, professional boundaries, and ethical risks. These findings suggest that experience in the field plays a significant role in shaping how teacher influencers are perceived.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the present study suggest that pre- and in-service teachers of EFL have a generally positive orientation towards teacher influencers and their educational content on social media. However, a comparison between the groups shows that pre-service teachers have more interest and engagement with such influencers and content than in-service teachers of EFL. This result aligns with previous research (Marcelo-Martínez et al., 2024), which suggests that pre-service teachers are more likely to participate in digital platforms and online communities for professional development. The results indicate that teachers of EFL, particularly pre-service teachers, perceive social media as a platform that provides access to information, supports the sharing of innovative ideas, and promotes a sense of professional connectedness with other teachers. These results also align with previous studies that identify social media as an extension of professional development for teachers (Mejía-Laguna et al., 2021; Nejadghanbar & Fotouhi, 2025). This may suggest that social media is increasingly being integrated into teachers' informal professional learning practices.

Pre-service EFL teachers that participated in this study displayed a more positive stance when compared to in-service participants. This comparatively more positive stance may be associated with pre-service teachers' openness to learning and innovation as individuals at the beginning of their professional journey, particularly in terms of their willingness to explore new practices. Compared to the pre-service participants, in-service EFL teachers demonstrated a more cautious and critical perspective. This difference in in-service teachers' perspectives may be considered a reflection of their professional experience and heightened awareness of pedagogical, ethical, and contextual considerations. This may also indicate that professional experience fosters a more critical filtering of digital content. This finding is consistent with the literature (Ping, 2022), which highlights that teachers' engagement with digital tools is shaped by factors such as experience, age, and attitudes towards technology.

The qualitative findings of the study revealed that participants hold complex and multi-dimensional views regarding teacher influencers and their content. The findings showed that both groups recognise the pedagogical value of educational social media content, particularly in terms of idea sharing, access to diverse teaching practices, and increased student engagement. Nevertheless, they also have some important concerns. This suggests that teachers do not adopt a purely positive or negative stance, but rather a balanced and reflective perspective. Participants' concerns relate to the quality and reliability of content, the ethical implications of sharing student-related materials, and the potential misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the teaching profession. This may reflect broader tensions between the professional identity of teachers and their public representation in digital spaces. These

findings are consistent with recent research conducted in the Turkish context, which highlights that while teacher influencers are perceived as valuable sources of pedagogical inspiration, they are also criticised for ethical issues, privacy violations, and motivations driven by personal gain or prestige (Yıldız & Şeker, 2025).

Findings revealed that while pre-service teachers tend to emphasise the learning opportunities and inspirational aspects of educational content on social media, in-service teachers adopt a more critical stance regarding issues such as misinformation, commercialisation, and the blurring of boundaries between personal and professional roles. This highlights the need for clearer professional guidelines in online engagement. Similar concerns were also emphasised in previous research indicating that teacher influencers may prioritise visibility, engagement, or personal benefit over pedagogical responsibility (Yıldız & Şeker, 2025). These concerns are also consistent with previous studies that emphasise the importance of maintaining ethical responsibility in digital environments (Mercado & Shin, 2025; Ping, 2022).

Another important finding is that both groups demonstrate reluctance or uncertainty about creating educational content for social media. This suggests that although teachers recognise the potential value of social media, this does not necessarily translate into active participation as content creators. This may suggest a gap between perceived value and actual practice. This hesitation may stem from the time and effort required, concerns about public visibility and criticism, as well as ethical and professional considerations. This indicates that teachers approach content creation with a strong sense of responsibility. In this respect, the findings highlight the importance of supporting teachers not only as consumers and content creators but also as critical evaluators of digital content.

These findings have several implications for language teacher education and policy. First, the results underline the importance of integrating digital literacy and critical evaluation skills into teacher education programmes. Given participants' concerns about misinformation and content quality, teachers need to be equipped with the skills to assess the credibility and pedagogical value of online materials. This becomes increasingly important in the context of widespread misinformation. In line with this, previous research highlights the importance of embedding digital literacy into teacher education as a core component of professional preparation (Zhang, 2023). In addition, fostering critical thinking skills is essential for enabling teachers to engage more analytically with digital content and function effectively in complex information environments (Ju-Zaveroni & Lee, 2023), particularly in today's increasingly digital world.

In conclusion, this study provides insight into how pre-service and in-service EFL teachers perceive educational social media content and teacher influencers. While both groups recognise the potential benefits of social media for learning and professional development,

important differences emerge in terms of levels of trust, perceived impact, and concerns. Pre-service teachers tend to adopt a more positive and exploratory stance, whereas in-service teachers demonstrate a more cautious and critical perspective. Overall, the findings suggest that social media can serve as a valuable resource in language education when approached with critical awareness, ethical sensitivity, and professional responsibility. This suggests that the benefits of social media are highly dependent on how critically and ethically it is used. This aligns with recent findings suggesting that the growing presence of teacher influencers requires clearer ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks to ensure the protection of students' rights and the integrity of the teaching profession (Yıldız & Şeker, 2025).

The findings of this study have several implications for language teacher education and policy. First, the findings suggest that social media should be recognised as a form of informal professional development and more deliberately integrated into teacher education programmes. The differences observed between pre-service and in-service teachers further suggest that teacher education programmes should adopt more targeted strategies. They should place greater emphasis on developing critical awareness and ethical sensitivity among pre-service teachers, and among in-service teachers they should further strengthen critical evaluation practices. The results of the present study also indicate that teacher education programmes should promote balanced and reflective engagement with digital content. They should not encourage teachers to outright reject or uncritically accept teacher influencers and educational social media content. Instead, teacher education should encourage teachers to critically evaluate both opportunities and risks of digital content. In particular, the findings point out the importance of explicitly addressing matters such as ethical issues, privacy concerns, and professional responsibility in digital environments. Moreover, there is a clear need to support teachers not only as consumers but also as confident and ethically responsible content creators. Overall, these findings emphasise the importance of integrating digital literacy and critical thinking as core components of teacher education curricula in an increasingly digitalised world.

6. Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be considered. First, the data are based on self-reported responses collected from a specific context, which may limit the generalisability of the findings. Second, the quantitative analysis relies primarily on frequency- and percentage-based results, which capture general trends but do not allow for more detailed statistical examination. In addition, although qualitative data were included, the depth of insight was limited by the scope of the questionnaire format. Future research could employ more in-depth qualitative methods, such as interviews or longitudinal designs, to better understand how teachers engage with social media over time. Expanding the sample to different contexts and

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including other stakeholders, such as students or policymakers, may also provide a more comprehensive perspective.

Disclosures

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire (Original Turkish Version and English Translation)

The questionnaire was originally administered in Turkish to ensure clarity and ease of understanding for the participants. English translations are provided below, on the right column, for reference purposes.

Turkish version	English Translation
<p>1. Hangi yaş aralığındasınız?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> 18-24 <input type="radio"/> 25-34 <input type="radio"/> 35-44 <input type="radio"/> 45-55 <input type="radio"/> 56+ 	<p>1. Which age range do you belong to?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> 18-24 <input type="radio"/> 25-34 <input type="radio"/> 35-44 <input type="radio"/> 45-55 <input type="radio"/> 56+
<p>2. Hangi eğitim kademesinde öğretmenlik yapıyorsunuz?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Okul öncesi <input type="radio"/> İlkokul <input type="radio"/> Ortaokul <input type="radio"/> Lise <input type="radio"/> Yükseköğretim <input type="radio"/> İngilizce öğretmenliği programında öğrenimime devam ediyorum 	<p>2. At which educational level do you teach/study?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Preschool <input type="radio"/> Primary school <input type="radio"/> Middle school <input type="radio"/> High school <input type="radio"/> Higher education <input type="radio"/> I am currently studying in an English language teacher education programme
<p>3. Öğretmenlik deneyiminiz ne kadardır?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> 0-2 yıl <input type="radio"/> 3-5 yıl <input type="radio"/> 6-10 yıl <input type="radio"/> 11-15 yıl <input type="radio"/> 16-20 yıl <input type="radio"/> 21+ yıl 	<p>3. How many years of teaching experience do you have?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> 0-2 years <input type="radio"/> 3-5 years <input type="radio"/> 6-10 years <input type="radio"/> 11-15 years <input type="radio"/> 16-20 years <input type="radio"/> 21+ years
<p>4. Eğitim durumunuz nedir?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Lisans <input type="radio"/> Yüksek Lisans <input type="radio"/> Doktora <input type="radio"/> İngilizce öğretmenliği lisans programında öğrenimim devam ediyor 	<p>4. What is your educational background?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Bachelor's degree <input type="radio"/> Master's degree <input type="radio"/> Doctoral degree <input type="radio"/> I am currently studying in an English language teacher education programme
<p>5. En sık kullandığımız sosyal medya platformları hangileridir? (Birden fazla seçenek işaretleyebilirsiniz.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Instagram <input type="radio"/> YouTube <input type="radio"/> Facebook <input type="radio"/> Twitter <input type="radio"/> TikTok <input type="radio"/> LinkedIn <input type="radio"/> Diğer 	<p>5. Which social media platforms do you use most frequently? (You may select more than one option.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Instagram <input type="radio"/> YouTube <input type="radio"/> Facebook <input type="radio"/> Twitter <input type="radio"/> TikTok <input type="radio"/> LinkedIn <input type="radio"/> Other
<p>6. Sosyal medyada eğitimle ilgili içeriklere ilgi duyar mısınız?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Evet <input type="radio"/> Hayır <input type="radio"/> Bazen 	<p>6. Are you interested in educational content on social media?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Sometimes

<p>7. Sosyal medya üzerinden eğitimle ilgili içeriklere ne sıklıkla erişirsiniz?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Her gün <input type="radio"/> Haftada birkaç kez <input type="radio"/> Haftada bir <input type="radio"/> Ayda bir veya daha az 	<p>7. How often do you access educational content on social media?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Every day <input type="radio"/> Several times a week <input type="radio"/> Once a week <input type="radio"/> Once a month or less
<p>8. Sosyal medyada eğitim içerikleri üreten öğretmenleri (teacher influencer'ları) takip ediyor musunuz?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Evet <input type="radio"/> Hayır 	<p>8. Do you follow teachers who create educational content on social media (teacher influencers)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
<p>9. Sosyal medyada takip ettiğiniz teacher influencer'ların içerikleri hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Çok faydalı <input type="radio"/> Kısmen faydalı <input type="radio"/> Kendim için faydalı bulmuyorum <input type="radio"/> Genel olarak faydalı bulmuyorum 	<p>9. What do you think about the content created by the teacher influencers you follow on social media?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Very useful <input type="radio"/> Partly useful <input type="radio"/> I do not find it useful for myself <input type="radio"/> I do not find it useful in general
<p>10. Öğretmenlerin sosyal medya üzerinden eğitim içerikleri üretmesinin eğitimdeki rolü hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Eğitimde önemli bir rol oynuyor <input type="radio"/> Yardımcı bir araçtır <input type="radio"/> Eğitimle çok ilişkili değil <input type="radio"/> Zararlı olabilir 	<p>10. What do you think about the role of teachers creating educational content on social media in education?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> It plays a crucial role in education <input type="radio"/> It serves as an aid in education <input type="radio"/> It has little or no relation to education <input type="radio"/> It may have a negative impact
<p>11. Sosyal medyada takip ettiğiniz teacher influencer'ların içeriklerinin öğretmenlik anlayışınız ve uygulamalarınız üzerinde etkisi olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Evet, çok etkiledi <input type="radio"/> Evet, kısmen etkiledi <input type="radio"/> Hayır, neredeyse hiç etkilemedi 	<p>11. Do you think the content created by the teacher influencers you follow on social media has an impact on your understanding of and approaches to teaching?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Yes, it had a major impact <input type="radio"/> Yes, it had a partial impact <input type="radio"/> No, it had little or no impact
<p>12. Teacher influencer'ların eğitimde teknoloji kullanımını yaygınlaştırdığına inanıyor musunuz?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Evet <input type="radio"/> Hayır <input type="radio"/> Kısmen 	<p>12. Do you believe that teacher influencers contribute to the wider use of technology in education?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Partially
<p>13. Sosyal medya üzerinden öğretmenlerin paylaştığı içeriklerin mesleki gelişiminize nasıl bir etkisi olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Çok faydalıdır, yeni yöntemler öğreniyorum <input type="radio"/> Kısmen faydalıdır, bazı içerikler faydalı <input type="radio"/> Hiç faydalı değil <input type="radio"/> Zararlı olabilir 	<p>13. What kind of impact do you think the educational content shared by teachers on social media has on your professional development?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Very useful; I learn new teaching methods <input type="radio"/> Partly useful; some content is beneficial <input type="radio"/> Not useful at all <input type="radio"/> It may be harmful
<p>14. Sizce, öğretmenlerin sosyal medya üzerinden içerik üretmesi öğrencilerle olan etkileşimlerini nasıl etkiler?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Öğrencilerle daha güçlü bağlar kurmalarını sağlar <input type="radio"/> Öğrencilerle etkileşimde bir değişim yaratmaz <input type="radio"/> Olumsuz bir etkisi olabilir <input type="radio"/> Diğer (lütfen açıklayınız): 	<p>14. In your opinion, how does teachers' creation of content on social media impact their interaction with students?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> It helps them build stronger connections with students <input type="radio"/> It does not create any change in their interaction with students <input type="radio"/> It may have a negative impact <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify):

<p>15. Öğretmenlerin sosyal medyada içerik üretmeleriyle ilgili herhangi bir endişeniz var mı? Varsa nelerdir?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Gizlilik ve güvenlik<input type="radio"/> İçeriklerin kalitesi<input type="radio"/> Öğretmenlik rolünün yanlış anlaşılması veya yanlış temsil edilmesi<input type="radio"/> Hiçbir endişem yok<input type="radio"/> Diğer (lütfen açıklayınız): ...	<p>15. Do you have any concerns about teachers creating content on social media? If yes, what are they?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Privacy and security<input type="radio"/> Quality of content<input type="radio"/> Misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the teaching role<input type="radio"/> I have no concerns<input type="radio"/> Other (please specify): ...
<p>16. Kendiniz de sosyal medya için eğitim içerikleri üretmeyi düşünür müsünüz?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Evet<input type="radio"/> Hayır<input type="radio"/> Emin değilim	<p>16. Would you consider creating educational content for social media yourself?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Yes<input type="radio"/> No<input type="radio"/> I am not sure
<p>17. Sosyal medya için eğitim içerikleri üreten öğretmenler hakkındaki genel görüşlerinizi paylaşır mısınız?</p>	<p>17. Could you share your general views on teachers who create educational content for social media?</p>

A Scoping Review of Metamotivation in English as a Second or Foreign Language

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the scope and nature of metamotivation research in English as a foreign language (EFL)/ English as a second language (ESL) contexts, clarify how the construct has been conceptualized, identify methodological patterns, and highlight gaps and future directions. Included studies were peer-reviewed journal articles or review articles in English that treated metamotivation, metamotivational beliefs, or metamotivational knowledge as a central construct in EFL, ESL, second language acquisition (SLA), or closely related English language education contexts. Studies outside language education or focused primarily on adjacent constructs without explicit metamotivational framing were excluded. A systematic search of the Web of Science Core Collection was conducted in March 2026. From 82 records initially identified, 7 studies published between 2024 and 2026 met the inclusion criteria. Data were charted using a form covering bibliographic details, context, participants, design, instruments, theoretical framing, metamotivational constructs, key findings, limitations, and future directions. Recurring findings showed that teachers and learners often overvalued extrinsic rewards, learners demonstrated a promotion-oriented bias, and qualitative evidence suggested adaptive but experience-based regulation strategies.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, English as a second language, language learning motivation, metamotivation, scoping review

1. Introduction

Motivation has long been recognized as a central factor in second and foreign language learning, yet motivation alone does not explain how learners maintain effort when interest fluctuates, tasks become difficult, or progress feels slow. In response to this limitation, the concept of metamotivation has begun to attract attention in language education. Although there has been much research in language education focusing on motivational self-regulation,

the literature suggests that metamotivation and motivational self-regulation are closely related, but distinct constructs.

The clearest distinction in the research is this that motivational self-regulation usually refers to the processes or strategies learners use to manage their motivation so they can keep working on a task, while metamotivation refers to the meta-level awareness, monitoring, and knowledge that helps people recognize what kind of motivation they need and how to regulate it effectively (Fujita et al., 2024; Miele & Scholer, 2018; Miele et al., 2020). Thus, metamotivation can be defined as learners' ability to monitor and regulate their own motivational states to align them with the task demands (Scholer & Miele, 2016). Rather than viewing motivation as something learners simply possess, metamotivation frames learners as active agents who can recognize motivational changes and respond strategically to sustain engagement. Although this construct has stronger roots in general self-regulated learning theory than in applied linguistics, it provides a useful lens for understanding how language learners manage their motivation in challenging language-learning situations (Boekaerts, 1995; Al-Hoorie, 2024b). This distinction has important implications for research design: whereas motivational self-regulation studies typically focus on which strategies learners use to sustain effort, metamotivation research focuses on whether learners possess accurate knowledge of how motivation works and whether their regulatory choices are well-matched to the motivational demands of their tasks (Scholer et al., 2018). In applied linguistics, this means that a study reporting learner use of interest-enhancement or goal-setting strategies would fall within the motivational self-regulation domain, whereas a study examining whether learners correctly understand the conditions under which extrinsic rewards support or undermine intrinsic motivation would fall within the metamotivation domain.

2. Review of Literature

The learning of a language is a long-term and labour-intensive process that needs to be sustained over time and this makes metamotivation a crucial factor in language learning. Students who are aware of their metamotivation are more likely to cope with the fluctuations of interest, challenges, and pressures, and achieve greater learning success (Gu, 2026). Research shows that metamotivation strategies are effective in language learning. Motivation regulation, for instance, is positively related to academic performance, persistence and effort in various learning environments (Fong et al., 2024). Thus, metamotivation works together with other learning processes to improve language learning outcomes.

In EFL/ESL studies, metamotivation is a relatively new and still evolving concept. The scarce research that explicitly mentions it has conceptualised it in a number of different ways. Some conceptualise it as metamotivation beliefs, focusing on learners' understanding of the nature of motivation and its controllability (Al Sultan, 2024). Some conceptualise it as task-motivation fit, referring to learners' understanding of which type of motivational goal is most

appropriate for a given task (Al-Hoorie, 2024b). Others integrate it into models of self-regulated learning, where it emerges as metamotivational strategies, metamotivational factors, or motivational regulation, alongside metacognitive, affective and social factors (Habók et al., 2022; Luo et al., 2026; Pipattarasakul & Singhasiri, 2018; Truong, 2025).

This variety is reflected in research methods. Research has been conducted in a range of designs, contexts and units of analysis. Studies have included qualitative explorations of learners' beliefs (Al Sultan, 2024), task-based quantitative studies of motivational fit (Al-Hoorie, 2024), questionnaire studies relating metamotivational or motivational-regulation dimensions to language proficiency and strategy use (Habók et al., 2022; Luo et al., 2026; Truong, 2025) and studies that identify metamotivational strategy use during specific language tasks such as speaking (Pipattarasakul & Singhasiri, 2018). At the same time, reviews of self-regulated learning in EFL/ESL contexts indicate that research in this field is becoming more methodologically varied, but is still heavily focused on quantitative, questionnaire-based studies, suggesting that metamotivation may be emerging within a broader SRL tradition but has yet to be systematically mapped out as a field (Mazandarani, 2024).

For these reasons, a scoping review is needed. The current evidence suggests that metamotivation in EFL/ESL contexts is promising but scattered across different terminologies, theoretical traditions, and methodological choices. Without a clear synthesis, it remains difficult to determine what has actually been studied, how the construct has been understood, which populations and settings have been examined, and where the most important gaps lie. A scoping review is therefore well suited to map the current scope and nature of this literature, clarify how metamotivation has been conceptualized, identify recurring methodological patterns, and highlight neglected areas requiring further inquiry. Accordingly, this scoping review examines metamotivation research in EFL/ESL education through four guiding questions:

RQ1. What is the current scope and nature of metamotivation research in EFL/ESL contexts?

RQ2. How has metamotivation been conceptualized in this literature?

RQ3. What methodological patterns characterize the existing studies?

RQ4. What gaps and future directions emerge from the reviewed evidence?

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a scoping review methodology to map the existing literature on metamotivation within EFL, ESL, second language acquisition (SLA), and related language education contexts. Scoping reviews are appropriate when the goal is to chart the breadth of evidence on a topic, identify key concepts, and clarify how a construct has been operationalized across a body of literature, particularly when the field is emerging and a systematic meta-

analysis is premature (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010; Munn et al., 2018). The present scoping review followed the methodological framework proposed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and subsequently refined by Levac et al. (2010), and it is reported in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR; Tricco et al., 2018). No review protocol was developed or registered for this scoping review.

A systematic search was conducted in the Web of Science Core Collection, selected for its comprehensive indexing of peer-reviewed applied linguistics and language education journals and its support for Boolean proximity searching. The search was performed in March 2026. The decision to search a single database was deliberate. The Web of Science Core Collection offers the most comprehensive and consistent indexing of peer-reviewed applied linguistics and language education journals among major academic databases, and its advanced Boolean search capabilities are particularly suited to locating a precisely defined construct. While supplementing with additional databases such as Scopus might have retrieved additional records, prior scoping reviews of closely adjacent constructs have similarly relied principally on one or two databases without compromising the validity of their mapping exercise (Mazandarani, 2024; Trautner et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the single-database approach is acknowledged as a potential source of coverage bias, and its implications for the breadth of the review are discussed in Section 6. A two-component Boolean search string was constructed: one component capturing the focal construct of metamotivation and its orthographic variants, and a second component capturing the language learning domain. No date restrictions were imposed, as the aim was to retrieve all available evidence on a construct whose formal application to language learning is recent. The full search string is presented in Table 1. The decision to restrict the search string to explicit metamotivation terminology was also deliberate. Because metamotivation is a theoretically distinct construct from motivational self-regulation, broadening the search string would have retrieved a large body of studies on motivation regulation strategies, self-regulated learning, or self-efficacy that do not explicitly engage with metamotivational theory. This would have risked conflating constructs that the review was specifically designed to differentiate.

Table 1. *Database search string*

Component	Terms
Metamotivation	metamotivation OR "meta motivation" OR "meta-motivation"
Language Learning	"second language" OR "foreign language" OR "EFL" OR "ESL" OR "language learning" OR "SLA"

Boolean [Component 1] AND [Component 2]

Note. The search was executed in the Web of Science Core Collection using Topic field searching (title, abstract, author keywords, and Keywords Plus). Quotation marks indicate phrase searching; OR is used within components; AND joins the two components.

The initial search returned 82 records. No additional records were retrieved from supplementary sources (e.g., hand-searching of key journals, reference list checking, or grey literature) at the identification stage, though reference lists of all included full-text articles were inspected during the eligibility phase to check for any relevant studies not captured by the database search. No additional records were identified through this process.

3.2. Study Selection

3.2.1. Eligibility criteria

The screening process followed a focused eligibility framework developed prior to screening and applied consistently across all stages. Records were evaluated against the inclusion and exclusion criteria presented in Table 2. In brief, records were included if they examined metamotivation, metamotivational beliefs, or metamotivational knowledge as a central construct within an EFL, ESL, SLA, foreign language learning, or closely related language education context. Records were excluded if they were situated outside language education (e.g., medical education, STEM, science education, general psychology, or workplace learning), or if they focused primarily on adjacent constructs such as general motivation, metacognition, self-regulated learning, self-efficacy, language assessment, or writing performance, without a clear and explicit emphasis on metamotivation.

Table 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria applied at each screening stage

Dimension	Inclusion	Exclusion
Domain / Field	EFL, ESL, second language acquisition (SLA), foreign language learning, or closely related language education contexts	Medical education, STEM/science education, general psychology, workplace learning, or other non-language domains
Primary Construct	Metamotivation, metamotivational beliefs, or metamotivational	Adjacent constructs treated as primary focus without clear emphasis on

	knowledge treated as a central (rather than peripheral) construct; motivation regulation examined explicitly through a metamotivational lens	metamotivation: general motivation, metacognition, self-regulated learning (SRL), self-efficacy, language assessment, or writing performance, general motivational regulation
Document Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles and review articles	Conference papers, book chapters, dissertations, theses, editorials, letters, and non-peer-reviewed outputs
Language	English-language publications	Non-English-language publications (not applied as a filter but reflected in database search results)
Duplicates	Unique records retained after de-duplication	Duplicate records identified through title, author, and abstract comparison

Note. *Criteria were operationalized prior to screening and applied independently by the reviewer.*

The distinction between motivation regulation and metamotivation followed Scholer et al.'s (2018) definition of metamotivation as the deliberate monitoring and control of motivational states; studies treating motivation regulation as a behavioral or cognitive strategy repertoire without explicit metamotivational framing were classified as outside scope.

Screening proceeded in three sequential stages. In the first stage, the 82 identified records were filtered by document type. Records restricted to articles and reviews were retained, resulting in the exclusion of 20 records (e.g., conference proceedings, book chapters, editorials). This yielded 62 records. In the second stage, one duplicate record was identified through title, author, and abstract comparison and removed, leaving 61 unique records for abstract screening.

In the third stage, the abstracts of all 61 records were screened against the eligibility criteria. Fifty-two records were excluded at this stage. The most frequent reason for exclusion

was situatedness outside a language learning context ($n = 38$), followed by studies in which a language learning context was present but metamotivation was not the primary construct of investigation ($n = 13$; e.g., studies of motivation strategies, self-efficacy, or SRL in which metamotivation appeared only incidentally). One additional record was excluded because it addressed the teaching and learning of a language other than English ($n = 1$). This left nine records for full-text retrieval and review. At the full-text eligibility stage, nine articles were retrieved and read in their entirety. Two records were subsequently excluded because closer reading revealed that their primary focus was motivation regulation as a behavioral process rather than metamotivation as defined by Scholer et al. (2018) that is, the deliberate monitoring and control of motivational states with reference to knowledge of motivational dynamics and task–motivation fit. Specifically, Zhang and Dong (2022) and Luo et al. (2026) addressed motivational strategy use and regulation in language learning contexts but did not position metamotivation as a focal theoretical or empirical construct. Their exclusion was confirmed through consensus between the lead reviewer and a co-reviewer, who independently reviewed all nine full texts. This process resulted in a final sample of seven studies included in the scoping review. The complete record selection process is illustrated in Figure 1 in the format of the PRISMA-ScR flow diagram (Tricco et al., 2018). This boundary was maintained consistently to prevent the review from becoming a broader survey of motivational regulation in language learning (Fong et al., 2024; Trautner et al., 2025) and readers should interpret the review's scope with this constraint in mind.

Figure 1. PRISMA-ScR flow diagram of the study selection process

IDENTIFICATION		
Records identified via database search (Web of Science) (n = 82) Search string: (metamotivation OR "meta motivation" OR "meta-motivation") AND ("second language" OR "foreign language" OR EFL OR ESL OR "language learning" OR SLA)		
▼		
SCREENING		
Records after document-type filter (articles and reviews retained) (n = 62) Excluded: conference papers, book chapters, dissertations, editorials (n = 20)		• Non-article/review document types excluded (n = 20): conference papers, book chapters, dissertations, theses, editorials
Records after de-duplication (n = 61) Duplicate record removed (n = 1)		• Duplicate record (n = 1)
Records screened (abstract review) (n = 61)		• Not a language-learning / SLA / EFL / ESL context (n = 38) • Language-learning context but metamotivation not primary construct (n = 13) • Teaching/learning language other than English (n = 1) • Total excluded at abstract stage (n = 52)
▼		

ELIGIBILITY		
Full-text articles assessed for eligibility (n = 9)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zhang & Dong (2022): primary focus on motivation regulation rather than metamotivation as defined (n = 1) • Luo et al. (2026): primary focus on motivation regulation rather than metamotivation as defined (n = 1) • Total excluded at full-text stage (n = 2)
▼		
INCLUDED		
Studies included in the final scoping review (n = 7) Al-Hoorie (2024a, 2024b, 2025); Alrashood et al. (2026); Al Sultan (2024, 2025); Gu (2026)		

Note. PRISMA-ScR = Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (Tricco et al., 2018). Yellow boxes indicate excluded records with reasons. The green box indicates the final included studies.

3.3. Data Charting and Data Items

Data charting, the scoping review equivalent of data extraction, was conducted using a standardized charting form developed iteratively in accordance with Levac et al.'s (2010) recommendation that charting should be treated as an ongoing and reflexive process. For each included study, the following information was extracted: (a) bibliographic details (author, year, journal, and country of study); (b) research design and methodology; (c) sample characteristics (participant role, n, gender composition, educational level, and language learning context); (d) data collection instruments and analytical procedures; (e) theoretical and conceptual framework(s) employed; (f) metamotivational constructs operationalized (e.g., metamotivational knowledge, monitoring, control, misbeliefs, task–motivation fit); (g) key findings relevant to each research question; and (h) stated limitations and directions for future research.

Charting was carried out by the lead reviewer. To enhance accuracy and confirmability, a second reviewer independently charted two of the seven studies (approximately 29%), and discrepancies were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached. No quantitative synthesis (e.g., meta-analysis) was conducted, consistent with the interpretive and mapping aims of scoping review methodology (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Munn et al., 2018).

4. Findings

This section presents findings organized around the four research questions that guided this scoping review. Seven empirical and conceptual studies published between 2024 and 2026 were analyzed to characterize the scope, conceptualization, methodology, and identified gaps within metamotivation research in EFL and ESL contexts. An overview of all included studies is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Overview of included studies (n = 7)

Citation	Journal	Country	Design	Participants	Context	Key Constructs
Al-Hoorie (2024a)	System	Saudi Arabia	Quantitative	130 teachers; 252 students	EFL university	Undermining effect; extrinsic vs. intrinsic motivation
Al-Hoorie (2024b)	Porta Linguarum	Saudi Arabia	Quantitative	311 EFL learners	EFL university	Task–motivation fit; regulatory focus (promotion/prevention)
Al-Hoorie (2025)	Language Learning Journal	Saudi Arabia	Quantitative	316 EFL learners	EFL university	Task reward structures; SDT reward typology
Alrashood et al. (2026)	Int'l J. Applied Linguistics	Saudi Arabia	Qualitative	20 female teachers	Intermediate school (EFL)	Teacher beliefs; extrinsic incentives; SDT; undermining effect
Al Sultan (2024)	Forum for Linguistic Studies	Saudi Arabia	Qualitative	57 female EFL students	EFL university	Intrinsic/extrinsic motivation; self-efficacy; growth mindset
Al Sultan (2025)	J. Language Teaching & Research	Saudi Arabia	Qualitative	115 female EFL learners	EFL university	Metamotivational strategies; promotion/prevention orientations
Gu (2026)	Int'l J. Applied Linguistics	China	Theoretical/Conceptual	N/A (integrative review)	Language learning (broad)	DMCs; metamotivation; SRL; task–motivation fit

Note. SDT = *Self-Determination Theory*; SRL = *Self-Regulated Learning*; DMC = *Directed Motivational Current*.

4.1. Research Question 1: Scope and Nature of Metamotivation Research in EFL/ESL Contexts

The seven studies reviewed provide a narrow yet expanding body of scholarship (Table 3). All empirical studies were conducted in Saudi Arabia, which shows the region's emerging role as a significant site of applied linguistics research on metamotivation mainly with the help of Al-

Hoorie (2024a; 2024b; 2025) contributing with three studies to our scoping review. The single exception to this was Gu (2026), whose conceptual integrative review was conducted with a Chinese university affiliation yet drew on language learning evidence broadly, including Saudi contexts. Publication venues were diverse, including *System*, the *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* (two studies), the *Language Learning Journal*, *Porta Linguarum*, the *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, and the *Forum for Linguistic Studies*, which indicates that metamotivation construct is attracting editorial or reader interest across both established and emerging applied linguistics outlets.

Participant profiles varied considerably in terms of role (students vs. teachers), gender (predominantly female, especially in qualitative studies), and educational level (university foundation year through postgraduate). Sample sizes ranged from 20 teachers in the smallest qualitative study (Alrashood et al., 2026) to 382 participants in the largest quantitative study (Al-Hoorie, 2024a). As the study of Gu (2026) was conceptual, it had no participants. Thematically, the literature is dominated by two focal concerns: (a) metamotivational beliefs about the role of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation (Al-Hoorie, 2024a, 2025; Alrashood et al., 2026), and (b) awareness of task–motivation fit and regulatory orientation (Al-Hoorie, 2024b; Al Sultan, 2025; Gu, 2026). A third, smaller strand examines students' phenomenological understandings of motivation itself as a form of metamotivational knowledge (Al Sultan, 2024).

4.2. Research Question 2: Conceptualization of Metamotivation in the Literature

Across all seven studies, metamotivation was consistently grounded on the studies of (Miele & Scholer, 2018; Scholer & Miele, 2016) and anchored to Scholer et al.'s (2018, p. 437–438) foundational definition: "the processes by which individuals monitor and control their motivational states in order to achieve their goals." Beyond this shared starting point, however, the studies operationalized the construct in notably different ways.

Self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2017) served as the primary motivational framework in six of the seven studies, with the undermining effect of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation functioning as a central empirical referent. Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET), as one SDT mini-theory, was explicitly invoked by Al-Hoorie (2024a, 2025) to explain how reward contingencies affect the functional significance learners attach to external incentives. Regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997; 2000) was drawn upon in two quantitative studies (Al-Hoorie, 2024b; Al Sultan, 2025) to distinguish between promotion-oriented (eager, gain-focused) and prevention-oriented (vigilant, loss-focused) motivational states, with the construct of task–motivation fit emerging as the organizing principle for evaluating metamotivational accuracy.

A summary of the conceptual landscape across studies is provided in Table 4, and the overarching structure of metamotivational constructs identified in the review is illustrated in Table 5.

Table 4. *Conceptualization of Metamotivation Across Studies*

Citation	Theoretical Anchors	Metamotivational Constructs Addressed	Overarching Framework(s)	Analytical Approach
Al-Hoorie (2024a)	Scholer et al. (2018); Miele et al. (2020)	Metamotivational misbeliefs; undermining effect; extrinsic vs. intrinsic motivation	Self-determination theory (SDT)	Quantitative prediction task; Chi-square
Al-Hoorie (2024b)	Scholer & Miele (2016); Nguyen et al. (2022)	Task–motivation fit; promotion vs. prevention orientations; overgeneralization bias	Regulatory focus theory; SDT	Within-subjects survey; ANOVA
Al-Hoorie (2025)	Miele et al. (2020); Scholer et al. (2018)	Metamotivational knowledge of reward types; task-motivation fit; SDT reward typology	SDT; Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET)	Scenario-based survey; Friedman/Wilcoxon tests
Alrashood et al. (2026)	Scholer et al. (2018); Miele et al. (2020)	Metamotivational misalignment; teacher beliefs about extrinsic incentives; cognitive biases	SDT; metamotivation framework	Semi-structured interviews; magnitude coding
Al Sultan (2024)	Scholer et al. (2018); Miele & Scholer (2018)	Metamotivational beliefs as reflections of intrinsic value, self-efficacy, self-control; growth mindset	SDT; metamotivational approach	Thematic analysis of reflective writing
Al Sultan (2025)	Miele et al. (2020); Scholer & Miele (2016)	Metamotivational knowledge (self, task, strategy); promotion–prevention imbalance; motivational flexibility	SDT; regulatory focus; metamotivation framework	Thematic analysis (ATLAS.ti); 258 initial codes
Gu (2026)	Miele & Scholer (2018); Fujita et al.	Metamotivation as internal orienting/monitoring mechanism; task–	DMC theory; metamotivation; SRL	Conceptual integrative review

(2024); Scholer et al. (2018) motivation fit; knowledge–monitoring–control triad (Zimmerman, 2000)

Note. SDT = Self-determination theory; CET = Cognitive evaluation theory; SRL = Self-regulated learning; DMC = Directed motivational current. Theoretical anchors reflect primary sources cited in each study.

Table 5. *Metamotivational Constructs Identified Across the Seven Reviewed Studies*

Conceptual Domain	Key Elements Identified Across Studies
Metamotivational Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-knowledge (recognition of motivational states; Al-Hoorie, 2024b; Al Sultan, 2024) • Task knowledge (promotion vs. prevention task demands; Al-Hoorie, 2024b; Gu, 2026) • Strategy knowledge (self-talk, goal orientation, interest regulation; Al Sultan, 2025)
Metamotivational Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of current motivational state against task demands (Gu, 2026) • Awareness of misfit signals (boredom, anxiety, procrastination; Al Sultan, 2024, 2025) • Situational awareness of fluctuating states (Al Sultan, 2024, 2025)
Metamotivational Control / Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion-oriented strategies dominant across studies (Al-Hoorie, 2024b; Al Sultan, 2025) • Prevention-oriented strategies underused (Al Sultan, 2025; Gu, 2026) • External reward reliance as default regulatory tool (Al-Hoorie, 2024a, 2025; Alrashood et al., 2026)
Misbeliefs & Misalignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extrinsic rewards widely believed to enhance intrinsic motivation (Al-Hoorie, 2024a; Alrashood et al., 2026) • Competition and performance-contingent rewards favoured despite SDT evidence (Al-Hoorie, 2025) • Overgeneralization bias toward promotion focus (Al-Hoorie, 2024b; Al Sultan, 2025)

Note. Bullets represent recurring findings across two or more studies. Single-study contributions (Gu, 2026) are noted parenthetically.

4.3. Research Question 3: Methodological Patterns in the Existing Literature

The methodological landscape of the seven studies reflects an emerging and methodologically heterogeneous field. Three broad design categories were represented: quantitative (n=3, 43%), qualitative (n=3, 43%), and conceptual or theoretical review (n = 1, 14%). The distribution of designs, instruments, and analytical strategies is summarized in Table 6, and Table 7 provides a concise visual overview of methodological frequency.

4.3.1. Quantitative approaches

Al-Hoorie (2024a, 2024b, 2025) used scenario-based, self-report measures in Arabic to reduce language barriers. In these three studies, the same paradigm was adopted: participants read descriptions of real or hypothetical experimental scenarios and were asked to make predictions or express their preferences for a variety of motivational strategies or reward structures. Quantitative analyses involved chi-square tests, mixed-design ANOVAs, Friedman tests, Wilcoxon signed-rank tests and Mann-Whitney U tests. Al-Hoorie (2024b) used a within-subjects approach to compare preferences for promotion- and prevention-oriented tasks in independent and interdependent contexts, utilising a counterbalanced order of presentation. Al-Hoorie (2024a) was the only study that recruited both teachers and students, allowing for role comparisons.

4.3.2. Qualitative approaches

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was the main analysis method used in three qualitative studies. Al Sultan (2024) examined 57 written responses to one open-ended reflective prompt, and Al Sultan (2025) examined 115 responses to three prompts, with manual coding complemented by the use of the computer software ATLAS.ti and 258 initial codes. Alrashood et al. (2026) conducted semi-structured, audio-recorded interviews of about 30 minutes duration, using an experimental vignette (the Murayama et al., 2010, paradigm) to elicit beliefs. Each of the three qualitative studies involved only Saudis and all-female samples, reflecting gender segregation in Saudi higher and intermediate education. Coding in all three studies included multiple coders and debriefing sessions to improve credibility.

4.3.3. Conceptual approach

Gu (2026) used a theory-driven integrative review approach (Cooper, 2017; Hart, 2018) with searches in Web of Science and Scopus with a set of keywords. The sources were purposefully and conceptually selected, favouring studies that focused explicitly on the mechanisms of sustaining, breaking and repairing intensive motivation. The product of this synthesis was not a systematic review in the sense of meta-analysis; rather, it was intended to propose a new model, the metamotivation-embedded DMC model, by connecting gaps between three literatures.

Table 6. *Methodological Characteristics of Included Studies*

Citation	Design	Instrument(s)	Data Source	Sample	Analysis
Al-Hoorie (2024a)	Quantitative	Prediction task + Likert confidence scale	Survey (Arabic)	130 teachers; 252 students	Chi-square
Al-Hoorie (2024b)	Quantitative	Scenario-based incentive preference scale (24 items)	Survey (Arabic)	311 learners	Mixed ANOVA; one-sample t-tests
Al-Hoorie (2025)	Quantitative	Scenario-based attitude/effect/prevalence scale + open-ended	Survey (Arabic)	316 learners	Friedman; Wilcoxon; Mann–Whitney U
Alrashood et al. (2026)	Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews (~30 min); vignette stimulus	Interview (Arabic)	20 female teachers	Descriptive coding; magnitude coding
Al Sultan (2024)	Qualitative	Single open-ended reflective task on Google Classroom	Written response (English)	57 female students	Thematic analysis (6 steps; Braun & Clarke, 2006)
Al Sultan (2025)	Qualitative	Three open-ended reflective tasks on Google Classroom	Written response (English)	115 female students	Thematic analysis (ATLAS.ti); 258 codes
Gu (2026)	Conceptual review	Web of Science & Scopus literature search	N/A	N/A	Selective integrative synthesis

Note. *Limitations column omitted here for space; see Table 8 for stated limitations per study.*

Table 7. *Distribution of Research Designs Across Included Studies (N = 7)*

Research Design	n (%)	Citations	Data Collection Methods
Quantitative	3 (43%)	Al-Hoorie (2024a, 2024b, 2025)	Scenario-based surveys; prediction tasks; Likert scales

Qualitative	3 (43%)	Alrashood et al. (2026); Al Sultan (2024, 2025)	Thematic analysis; semi-structured interviews; reflective writing
Conceptual/Review	1 (14%)	Gu (2026)	Integrative literature synthesis
Total	7 (100%)	—	—

Note. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. No mixed-methods studies were identified in this review.

A few methodological observations are in order. First, all six empirical studies were conducted in Saudi Arabia, which limits generalizability and the ability to compare across cultures at present. Second, all qualitative studies featured only female participants, which while reflective of the gender-segregated nature of institutions, precludes understanding of potential differences in male learners' metamotivational beliefs and strategies. Third, all self-report studies acknowledged the potential for social desirability and limited introspective awareness, with none triangulating self-reported beliefs with direct observation of behaviour or other objective performance indicators. Fourth, all studies were cross-sectional; none gathered data on changes in metamotivational beliefs over time; thus, no inferences can be made about developmental patterns or the persistence of identified misbeliefs. Fifth, although three studies explicitly discussed measurement issues (Al-Hoorie, 2024a, 2024b, 2025), no study used implicit measures or behavioral indicators to capture metamotivational processes that may be unconscious.

4.4. Research Question 4: Gaps and Future Directions Emerging From the Evidence

Despite the contributions of each included study, the reviewed literature collectively reveals several substantive gaps that constrain current knowledge. These are organized below under five cross-cutting themes, with the specific gaps and directions proposed by each study presented in Table 8.

4.4.1. Geographic and cultural concentration

The near-exclusive concentration of empirical work in Saudi Arabia constitutes the most pervasive limitation in the current literature. While this concentration reflects the productivity of researchers in that region, it means that the generalizability of findings particularly those concerning metamotivational misbeliefs about extrinsic rewards and promotion-orientation bias cannot be assessed across different educational cultures, societal reward structures, or language learning goals. Multiple authors explicitly called for cross-cultural replications (Al-Hoorie, 2024a, 2024b, 2025; Alrashood et al., 2026), and Gu's (2026) conceptual review

deliberately drew on broader international scholarship on DMCs as a counterweight to this concentration.

4.4.2. Gender representativeness

All three qualitative studies sampled exclusively from female populations, and in Al-Hoorie (2024b), the female subsample was considerably smaller than the male subsample (60 vs. 251). Al Sultan (2024, 2025) and Alrashood et al. (2026) acknowledged this limitation explicitly. The available quantitative data suggest that gender moderates metamotivational preferences specifically, female learners display a more pronounced overgeneralization bias toward promotion-focused incentive structures (Al-Hoorie, 2024b; Al Sultan, 2025) yet the qualitative evidence, which might illuminate the experiential and cultural underpinnings of these differences, currently comes entirely from female perspectives.

4.4.3. Absence of longitudinal and behavioral data

No study in the reviewed set followed participants over time, meaning that questions about whether metamotivational misbeliefs are stable or amenable to change through education and experience remain unanswered. Similarly, no study linked self-reported metamotivational beliefs to actual motivational behavior, language learning outcomes, or academic achievement. This gap is particularly significant given Gu's (2026) theoretical argument that metamotivational competence should predict the sustainability of intensive motivational episodes, and given the preliminary evidence from non-language contexts (Ross et al., 2023) showing that accurate metamotivational beliefs predict academic achievement. The absence of intervention studies is equally notable: no study in the set tested whether targeted instruction in metamotivational awareness led to shifts in beliefs or improvements in motivation regulation.

4.4.4. Methodological Limitations Within Designs

Within the quantitative studies, all instruments were self-report surveys administered in a single session. Although scenario-based paradigms have been validated in general psychology (Scholer & Miele, 2016), their ecological validity in EFL/ESL contexts has not been established, and no study checked whether self-reported beliefs corresponded to choices made in actual classroom tasks. Within the qualitative studies, the reflective writing tasks used by Al Sultan (2024, 2025) may have been influenced by course content on motivation, potentially producing socially desirable or academically primed responses that do not reflect naturalistic metamotivational processing. Alrashood et al.'s (2026) use of a one-off interview vignette, while innovative, captures a snapshot of belief that may differ from the reasoning teachers apply in their daily practice. Across all studies, there is an absence of observational data, think-aloud protocols, experience-sampling methodologies, or implicit measures that might access metamotivational processes operating below conscious awareness.

4.4.5. Theoretical Gaps and Conceptual Underdevelopment

While Gu's (2026) integrative review proposed the most ambitious theoretical extension of the metamotivation construct, embedding it within DMC theory and self-regulated learning, this model remains empirically untested. Specific theoretical gaps include: (a) the mechanisms by which metamotivational monitoring detects task–motivation misfit in real-time during language learning tasks; (b) the relationship between metamotivational beliefs and autonomous versus controlled motivational regulation in SDT terms; (c) the role of teacher metamotivational beliefs in shaping the motivational climate experienced by students; and (d) the applicability of the metamotivation framework to multilingual learning contexts where multiple languages compete for motivational resources. Additionally, the interface between metamotivation and other self-regulatory constructs like grit, growth mindset, and emotional regulation, has not been examined in EFL/ESL research.

Table 8. *Identified gaps and future research directions across studies*

Citation	Key Limitations Identified	Sample/Context Restrictions	Future Directions Proposed
Al-Hoorie (2024a)	Single-country sample (Saudi Arabia); no gender analysis of metamotivational change	All EFL; no qualitative follow-up on belief rationales	Longitudinal studies; interventions targeting metamotivational misbeliefs in teacher education; cross-cultural comparisons
Al-Hoorie (2024b)	Predominantly male sample (251/311); single institution; indirect belief measurement	EFL university context only	Gender differences in metamotivational beliefs; assessment beyond scenario tasks; multilingual contexts
Al-Hoorie (2025)	No behavioral indicators; no classroom observations; single institution	EFL higher education; Saudi Arabia	Qualitative interviews on belief rationales; examining age and SES as moderators; cross-cultural belief comparisons
Alrashood et al. (2026)	All-female sample; single city; stated beliefs vs. actual practice not triangulated	Saudi EFL intermediate schools	Diverse samples (male teachers; multiple regions); classroom observation

			studies; longitudinal professional development research
Al Sultan (2024)	Single question; SLA course context may have biased responses; 57- participant sample	Saudi EFL female university students	Multi-method designs; interviews; pre/post measures; diverse educational levels and proficiency groups
Al Sultan (2025)	Self-report only; ungraded reflective tasks; no behavioral observation	Saudi female EFL university students	Mixed-methods; longitudinal designs; observational data; studies across genders and national contexts
Gu (2026)	Conceptual only; no primary data; selective (non- systematic) literature synthesis	Language learning broadly	Empirical DMC studies with metamotivational measures; experience- sampling studies; pedagogical intervention studies on metamotivational competence; multilingual contexts

Note. Limitations and future directions are drawn from authors' own statements in each study. SES = Socioeconomic status; SDT = Self-determination theory; DMC = Directed motivational current.

The studies reviewed reveal a narrow yet growing body of scholarship on metamotivation in English language teaching contexts that, as of 2024–2026, is geographically concentrated in Saudi Arabia, methodologically split between quantitative scenario-based surveys and qualitative thematic analyses, and theoretically anchored in self-determination theory. Three convergent substantive findings emerge across the studies: (a) both teachers and learners hold systematic metamotivational misbeliefs that overestimate the motivational value of extrinsic rewards and underestimate the sustaining power of intrinsic motivation; (b) learners display an overgeneralization bias toward promotion-oriented strategies even when prevention-focused orientations are theoretically more appropriate for the task at hand; and (c) despite these misbeliefs at the declarative level, learners' phenomenological accounts of motivation reveal a sophisticated, adaptive, and context-sensitive repertoire of self-regulation strategies.

These findings are constrained by several persistent methodological limitations like geographic homogeneity, gender imbalance in qualitative samples, cross-sectional designs, and an absence of behavioral or longitudinal data that represent the primary priorities for future research in this domain.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

This scoping review revealed that metamotivation in EFL/ESL is a small but emerging area of research that is starting to coalesce around a meta-regulatory view of motivation. The seven studies included in this review show that the field is heavily centred in Saudi Arabia, roughly equally divided between quantitative and qualitative studies, and consistently focused on learners' and teachers' beliefs about reward, task demands, and motivational regulation. More significantly, the reviewed studies indicate that metamotivation is emerging as a valuable construct to explain not only whether learners are motivated, but how they perceive, monitor, and try to regulate their motivational states when they learn languages.

First, the review suggests that the EFL/ESL literature has taken up a definition of metamotivation that is largely in line with that used in educational psychology. Across the broader literature, metamotivation is defined in terms of learners' knowledge about motivation, monitoring of motivational states, and ability to regulate motivational states in response to task demands and goals (Miele & Scholer, 2018; Miele et al., 2020). This is reflected in the language-learning studies, but with some different emphases. Al Sultan's qualitative studies focus on metamotivation mainly as learners' self-knowledge, self-reported regulation strategies, and subjective awareness of motivational change (Al Sultan, 2024; Al Sultan, 2025), while Al-Hoorie's studies emphasise task-motivation fit and the accuracy of learners' metamotivational beliefs (Al-Hoorie, 2024b). These studies suggest that metamotivation in EFL/ESL is already being conceptualised as a multifaceted construct rather than simply an alternative term for motivation or motivational self-regulation.

A second significant pattern is the recurrent evidence of metamotivational misbeliefs, particularly about the role of extrinsic rewards in motivation. The studies investigating the undermining effect and reward structures (Al-Hoorie, 2024a, 2025; Alrashood et al., 2026) collectively suggest that both students and teachers overestimate the benefits of extrinsic rewards and competition in promoting motivation. This finding is consistent with the general metamotivation research literature showing that people hold only partially correct beliefs about the adaptive value of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation, and that more accurate metamotivational beliefs predict improved choices and performance (Hubley et al., 2024; Ross et al., 2023).

Third, there is a tendency for learners to favour promotion-oriented motivational regulation, even when a task might require vigilance for prevention. This is most evident in the included task–motivation fit study (Al-Hoorie, 2024b) and qualitative study of Saudi women

learners' regulation strategies (Al Sultan, 2025), which show a clear preference for promotion and less awareness of prevention-based regulation strategies. Gu's conceptual contribution pushes this point further by arguing that metamotivation should be understood as an internal orienting and monitoring mechanism capable of sustaining or repairing intensive motivational trajectories, especially when task demands shift over time.

What distinguishes metamotivation from the self-regulated learning frameworks already established in EFL/ESL research is not simply its level of analysis but its explanatory focus. Standard SRL models describe the processes by which learners plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning, with motivation treated as one among several affective or cognitive inputs. Metamotivation, by contrast, makes the accuracy of motivational beliefs itself the central object of investigation: not merely whether learners are motivated, but whether their theories about motivation are correct, and whether their regulatory choices are well-calibrated to the demands of the task at hand (Miele & Scholer, 2018; Scholer et al., 2018). This shift in focus opens genuinely new empirical questions for language education, such as whether misconceptions about reward undermine pedagogically intended motivational structures, whether learners who hold more accurate metamotivational beliefs sustain effort more effectively across the long arc of language learning, and whether metamotivational competence is teachable. These are questions that SRL frameworks, as currently applied in EFL/ESL research, do not directly address, and they constitute the core of metamotivation's distinctive explanatory contribution to applied linguistics.

Beyond portraying learners as being reflective, situationally aware, and capable of exhibiting a range of strategies for regulating their motivation, the qualitative studies in the current data set show far less evidence for this variable than the quantitative studies. For instance, while Al Sultan (2024) found many learners believed motivation was dynamic, personal and controllable, not fixed. The gap identified here may be a result of the fact that a learner's statement of their metamotivation beliefs may not align with their situationally dependent metamotivation practice. The literature on metamotivation implies that there are different elements to the development of metamotivation, including developing knowledge of one's learning (self-knowledge), keeping a record of one's learning (monitoring) and choosing strategies for learning (strategy selection) (Norouzi et al., 2023). This finding suggests that when EFL/ESL researchers undertake new research, they need to be careful not to equate self-reported beliefs, metacognition and motivational behaviour.

The seven studies also show a clear methodological maturity of the field. The quantitative studies use scenario-based self-report measures, the qualitative studies use reflective writing or interviews, and the sole review study is conceptual. These features are not unique to metamotivation in language learning; they are similar to those of related literatures. A recent review of the methods used to study self-regulated learning in EFL/ESL contexts found that

quantitative designs, questionnaires, and university samples are heavily favoured (Mazandarani, 2024), whereas a recent evidence-and-gap map study of motivation regulation found most studies in the broader field are similarly cross-sectional, self-report, and university-based (Trautner et al., 2025). But the identified methodological limitations are still severe: all empirical studies were in Saudi Arabia, all qualitative samples were female, none was longitudinal, and none connected metamotivation beliefs to classroom behavior or objective performance. The critical implication of these converging methodological weaknesses is that the current evidence base does not yet support generalizable claims about metamotivational misbeliefs: the documented patterns may reflect features of Saudi EFL culture, institutional reward structures, or the specific sampling and elicitation methods employed, rather than universal properties of language learners' metamotivational knowledge. Future research must therefore prioritize contextual diversity, behavioral validation, and longitudinal design before broad pedagogical recommendations can be made with confidence.

The review has significant pedagogical implications. If the reviewed studies are right in assuming that teachers and students may hold incorrect beliefs about rewards, task fit, and motivational strategies, then metamotivation should be taught and developed, rather than taken for granted. This is especially true in the EFL/ESL context, where motivation can be variable across skills, tasks, and over extended learning periods. The wider language-learning literature indicates motivational beliefs, mastery goals, and self-efficacy are linked with self-regulated learning and language learning outcomes (Teng, 2024; Wang & Bai, 2023). There is also evidence that teaching self-regulated language learning can enhance motivation, strategic knowledge, and language achievement (Yang et al., 2025). In this context, the studies in this review suggest that future pedagogical research should explore whether we can teach learners to identify motivational misfit, reward types, and more task-appropriate motivational strategies.

This scoping review identified the current state of the field on metamotivation in EFL/ESL contexts and revealed an emerging but still fledgling field that is gaining conceptual traction, but is currently lacking empirical depth and ripe for theoretical and methodological expansion. Across the seven studies examined, metamotivation was uniformly defined as a higher-order process that refers to learners' and teachers' awareness, monitoring, and regulation of motivational states, but was operationalized in different ways that focused on reward-related misbeliefs, task-motivation fit, self-knowledge, and strategy knowledge. The review also identified a number of recurrent themes: learners and teachers seem to entertain systematic metamotivational misbeliefs about the effectiveness of extrinsic rewards, learners demonstrate a strong preference for promotion-focused regulation, and qualitative evidence indicates that learners have a sophisticated, experiential repertoire of motivational self-regulation strategies. Overall, these findings suggest that metamotivation has considerable

explanatory potential for applied linguistics because it provides a process-sensitive perspective on how motivation is managed, maintained and refocused in language learning, bringing general metamotivation theory to EFL/ESL education.

However, the review also indicates that metamotivation research in language education has not yet matured to the point that generalisation is warranted. The evidence is geographically limited to Saudi Arabia, largely self-reported and cross-sectional, and isolated from behavioral, longitudinal, and intervention evidence. This leaves many questions unanswered about how metamotivation monitoring works in action, the extent to which reported beliefs predict learning behaviours and outcomes, and whether metamotivation awareness can be explicitly taught. As such, research needs to advance beyond exploratory and proof-of-concept studies to more cumulative designs that involve conceptual rigour, contextual diversity and outcome-relevant measurement. In turn, metamotivation can be more fully developed not merely as a borrowed construct from educational psychology, but as a well-established and pedagogically relevant construct for explaining self-regulated motivation in EFL/ESL learning.

6. Limitations

This scoping review has several limitations. The number of studies ($n = 7$) was limited, reflecting the nascent nature of metamotivation research and restricting the scope of the review. We searched only the Web of Science database and only English-language, peer-reviewed literature, which could have led to the omission of relevant studies and publication bias. The restriction to studies using explicit metamotivation terminology, while theoretically justified by the need to delineate a conceptually distinct construct, further narrows the scope of evidence captured. Studies addressing conceptually adjacent phenomena such as learners' beliefs about reward, incentive sensitivity, or motivational knowledge may have been missed if they did not adopt the specific metamotivation label. The practical consequence is that the review likely underestimates the volume of potentially relevant work, and its conclusions should be read as statements about the explicitly labelled metamotivation literature rather than about the broader domain of motivational beliefs in language learning. The review was not registered, and no quality assessment was performed, so studies of different quality were included with no assessment of their quality. Data charting and screening were largely carried out by a single reviewer, which could have introduced bias. Also, the inclusion of only studies that explicitly examined metamotivation may have overlooked studies on related topics such as motivational regulation or self-regulated learning. More broadly, the geographically concentrated, self-report, and cross-sectional nature of the reviewed studies means that strong claims about the generalizability or stability of metamotivational misbeliefs cannot be sustained on the basis of the current evidence; the findings support only tentative, context-specific conclusions that require replication across diverse settings before they can be

considered robust. Finally, being a scoping review, the study offers a descriptive rather than evaluative synthesis, and the findings are limited by the limitations of the studies reviewed, which are mostly cross-sectional, self-reported and geographically limited. AI was used solely to enhance language clarity and conciseness. All text, analyses and conclusions are original and have been verified.

Disclosures

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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