

How can Neuro-Linguistic Programming Influence English Language Teaching? A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Integrating NLP into English language teaching transforms the classroom experience for educators and learners alike. Therefore, conducting a systematic review of current research is essential to identify gaps in the application of NLP within ELT. A review of the literature from 2010 to 2025 explores how Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) has been utilized to improve English Language Teaching (ELT), with particular attention to the types of NLP strategies applied, the specific language abilities addressed, the research methodologies employed, and the educational levels of the participants involved. Following the PRISMA model, 19 studies were selected from 590 retrieved across Scopus, ERIC, EBSCO, ScienceDirect, and ProQuest databases and analyzed using NVivo-14. The findings revealed that anchoring, reframing, and modeling were the most frequently applied NLP techniques in ELT, with reading comprehension being the most targeted language skill. Experimental research designs dominated the field, and university students were the primary participants studied. These results suggest that NLP techniques enhance learner engagement, motivation, and communication skills by creating dynamic and supportive learning environments. The study implies that educators and researchers can leverage NLP strategies to improve teaching effectiveness and learner outcomes in English language education. Further research is recommended to explore diverse participant groups and additional language skills to broaden NLP's application in ELT contexts.

Keywords: English Language Teaching, Neuro-linguistic Programming, Systematic Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

Recently, there has been increased interest in employing NLP Methods within English language instruction. By incorporating NLP methods, teachers can enhance students' motivation, encourage active participation, and develop more effective communication skills in language learning. Numbers of studies have shown that NLP techniques such as framing, anchoring, and rapport significantly increase students' interest and confidence in using English (Haidir, 2024). For instance, a study by Zhang et al., (2023) conducted research examining how NLP techniques affect academic performance, emotional and critical thinking competencies among learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). The results showed that NLP strategies could favorably influence these areas, contributing to more successful language learning outcomes. Similarly, Rayati (2021) investigated the use of NLP methods in EFL classrooms through workshops held for practicing teachers. The study concluded that NLP methods could be effectively implemented in language teaching, leading to improved pedagogical practices and enhanced student engagement. Alroudhani (2018) utilized an NLP method called the *Linking Criteria* technique in his teaching approach. This technique involves the teacher initially identifying what holds personal significance for the students, referred to as *Highly Valued Criteria*, and then delivering the lesson content in a way that aligns with those individual priorities.

Furthermore, several studies have concentrated on examining the function of VAK (Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic) learning preferences, both in general and specifically in second or foreign language acquisition, have been widely studied. For example, Farooque et al. (2014) explored the preferred learning styles of first-year medical students, while Marwaha et al. (2015) examined the learning preferences of dental undergraduates. Whereas, many studies have tried to understand how NLP affects language learning skills and their parts. For example, Moharamkhani et al. (2016) examined how NLP influences vocabulary acquisition among EFL learners, while Ilyas (2017) explored how using NLP techniques relates to the growth of basic skills and the cognitive processes of learners during the learning process. Based on earlier studies, it can be concluded that NLP helps both educators and students overcome challenges in education; teachers can expand their students' viewpoints, creating more opportunities for their future (Pishghadam & Shayesteh, 2014). Furthermore, when used properly, NLP offers a structure that enables teachers to build strong relationships with students and guide their motivation and efforts toward achieving specific goals (Kong, 2012).

Despite these promising findings, the implementation of NLP in ELT is not without controversy. For instance, a critical review by Passmore & Rowson (2019) questioned the empirical support for NLP, suggesting that the evidence base is limited and that more rigorous research is needed to substantiate its efficacy. This is in line with Kattimani & Abhijita (2024) who argued that NLP is lack of empirical evidence. Moreover, a systematic study by Sturt et al. (2012) stated that there is not adequate data to suggest NLP for any medical condition other than research. Consequently, this absence of significant proof also applies to its use in language learning, where there is still lack of empirical evidence of its efficacy. Based on preliminary study, there are very few systematic reviews that examine the use of NLP in teaching English. There was an integrative review conducted by Rustan (2022) who synthesized research evaluating how effective NLP is in language education. The review highlighted that methods such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (VAK) learning are commonly applied NLP techniques in language education, contributing to improvements in students' language skills and learning psychology. Earlier reviews have explored the psychological effects of applying NLP in health-related outcomes (Sturt et al., 2012). Consequently, systematic reviews require additional references to be more comprehensive. Addressing these gaps, this study aims to make a valuable contribution toward creating more effective and human-centered English teaching methods using the NLP approach.

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) originated in the early 1970s at the University of California, Santa Cruz, where Richard Bandler and John Grinder collaborated to develop this approach (Khalandi & Zoghi, 2017). NLP is a psychological approach that explores the relationship between language, behavior, and patterns of thinking (Bandler & Grinder, 1975). It helps individuals utilize all their senses to understand at least a portion of their surroundings or environment (Keezhatta, 2019). NLP is a method of interpersonal communication that integrates three main elements: the nervous system (Neuro), language (Linguistics), and behavioral patterns (Programming) (Siddiqui, 2018). Because of its ability to improve communication, motivation, and personal growth, it has been extensively used in diverse areas such as psychotherapy, business, and education (Dilts, 1999). In the field of education, NLP has attracted interest as a means to enhance teaching techniques and learning outcomes, especially in the language learning area (Revell & Norman, 1997). English Language Teaching (ELT) is an evolving discipline that constantly explores new strategies to meet the varied needs of students. While conventional techniques typically concentrate on grammar and vocabulary, modern approaches highlight the significance of psychological and cognitive elements in the process of language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). For instance, Techniques from NLP, including anchoring, reframing, and visualization, have been shown to decrease language anxiety and boost learners' confidence (Pishghadam et al., 2011).

According to Siddiqui (2018), the term "Neuro" refers to brain and nervous system functions, highlighting the connection between the body and mind. "Linguistics" deals with the ways we think and the language we use to communicate with others. "Programming" involves conditioning the mind by studying behavior and language patterns to improve concentration and achieve particular goals. Revell & Norman (1997, 1999) elaborate the three main areas as revolutionary techniques. They explain that the neural aspect focuses on how we perceive the world through our five senses and involves our neurology and thought processes. The linguistic aspect deals with the language we use and the influence it has on us. The programming component focuses on conditioning our minds, language, and actions toward positive patterns, enabling us to reach our full potential and attain significant success. NLP is a communication technique between individuals, specifically relating to the link between effective behavior patterns and the personal experiences that support them (Khalandi & Zoghi, 2017). In other words, NLP is an approach consisting of various techniques aimed at increasing self-awareness, improving communication abilities, and managing mental and emotional habits. According to Tosey and Mathison (2003) state NLP can be understood as the skill of effectively managing communication or the examination of the way personal experiences are organized. They highlight that these definitions reveal a dual nature of NLP: it serves both as a collection of tools for improving communication and personal development, and as a method for understanding and modeling how people think and act.

NLP's main goal is to help people improve their lives by achieving their objectives and improving their interactions with others (Revell & Norman, 1997). NLP teaches useful communication skills and effective methods for making changes how you think and act. Many people have used these

techniques to build stronger relationships, feel more confident, and succeed in different areas of life (Alder & Heather, 1999). Additionally, O'Connor and Seymour (1994) stated that NLP evolved along two interconnected paths: first, as a method for identifying patterns of excellence across various fields, and second, as a powerful approach to thinking and communication employed by exceptional individuals. These identified patterns and abilities can be applied independently and also serve as input to refine and enhance the modeling process, making it more effective. Conclusively, Richards and Rodgers (2001) stated NLP consists of various methods, models, and approaches aimed at facilitating strong communication, individual growth, transformation, and the learning process. This aligns with Millrood (2004) who describes NLP as a language teaching approach aimed at enhancing learner performance. Additionally, Fidinillah (2018) suggested that many behaviors, skills, beliefs, and values can be modified based on the benefits they provide or through experience. Therefore, NLP can be defined as a learning method that is more effective than relying on experience alone.

NLP has become increasingly popular in education due to its ability to assist learners in gaining a clearer awareness of the techniques they employ when learning a new language (Khalandi & Zoghi, 2017). It has been recognized as an innovative approach and a valuable tool in teaching (Paulraj et al., 2023). Serving a fresh avenue for language educators and students alike, NLP helps to overcome difficulties encountered in the classroom (Tosey & Mathison, 2003), provides tools and materials that support and improves language instruction (Helm, 2009; Millrood, 2004). NLP practitioners believe that the effectiveness of language teachers improves when they incorporate NLP techniques (Pishghadam & Shayesteh, 2014). Millrood (2004) noted that, based on various teacher training workshops, the verbal communication of teachers can significantly impact the success or failure of the learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) can be influenced by establishing alignment through the application of NLP techniques. Within the area of language education and acquisition, numerous studies have explored the use of NLP techniques to enhance educational results. One particular study investigated how Iranian EFL teachers use NLP techniques in English Language Teaching (ELT), aiming to understand how these instructors incorporated NLP strategies in their classrooms and the advantages these approaches offered to language learners (Rayati, 2021). Another research examined the effectiveness of NLP-based coaching in English learning, evaluating its influence on learners' language acquisition and indicating that such coaching methods could improve learning outcomes (Alroudhan, 2018).

Additionally, research has explored the correlation between NLP and factors influencing foreign language teaching, such as willingness to communicate. The study aimed to understand how NLP approaches could affect learners' readiness to engage in communication within a foreign language context (Almijbilee, 2023). The study indicates a growing interest in NLP's ability to improve language teaching and learning by targeting both the psychological and communicative aspects of language acquisition. Based on those findings, NLP is viewed as a valuable resource that enables educators to develop key abilities in students, including critical thinking, confidence, and relationship-building, which are vital for academic accomplishment. Consequently, it indicates that NLP helps learners achieve their maximum capabilities (Zarfsaz & Salamat, 2024). In conclusion, NLP proves highly beneficial in teaching English by enhancing students' motivation, developing their language abilities, and fostering better interpersonal connections within the classroom, as well as create a positive and effective learning atmosphere, provided that it is supported by adequate training and understanding from the teacher as well.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What NLP techniques are most commonly implemented in English language teaching according to existing studies?
2. Which English language skills are primarily targeted by NLP interventions in ELT research?
3. What research designs and methodologies are most employed to investigate the effectiveness of NLP in English language teaching?
4. What are the characteristics of the participant samples (e.g., age, education level) involved in studies on NLP implementation in ELT?

METHODS

Systematic Literature Review (SLR) as qualitative research was used to explore previous studies in using Neuro-Linguistic Programming in English language education. The procedures conducted in this study are; 1) Data Selection on Scopus, ERIC, EBSCO, ScienceDirect, and ProQuest database, 2) Data categorization, 3) Data coding, 4) Data visualization and 5) Data interpretation and analysis. The method used is based on the PRISMA Protocol (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses) (Matthew et al., 2021).

The first stage involved data selection using SCOPUS, ERIC, EBSCO, ScienceDirect, and ProQuest, yielding 590 articles with the keywords *Neurolinguistic Programming OR Neuro-linguistic programming*. After filtering for English language teaching contexts, 19 relevant articles (2010–2025) were retained. In the second stage, studies were categorized into NLP in education, NLP in language education, and NLP in ESL/EFL teaching. The third stage applied coding with NVivo 14, covering research topics, NLP techniques, designs, language skills, and samples, generating 180 codes. In the fourth stage, data were analyzed and visualized into a project map, with a matrix interpretation presented as the research findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the PRISMA flow diagram, the systematic literature review began by identifying a total of 590 records through database searches in ERIC, EBSCO, ProQuest, and ScienceDirect (Figure. 1). After removing duplicates, 578 unique and potential records to this review remained. During the screening phase, 550 records were excluded based on their titles and abstracts, leaving 28 records for further review. These 28 records underwent a full-text assessment for eligibility, during which 8 more articles were excluded for not meeting the inclusion criteria because they were not studies investigating NLP implementation in English language teaching. Ultimately, 19 articles were found to be relevant and were included in the final synthesis of the review, ensuring that only the most pertinent and high-quality studies contributed to the analysis.

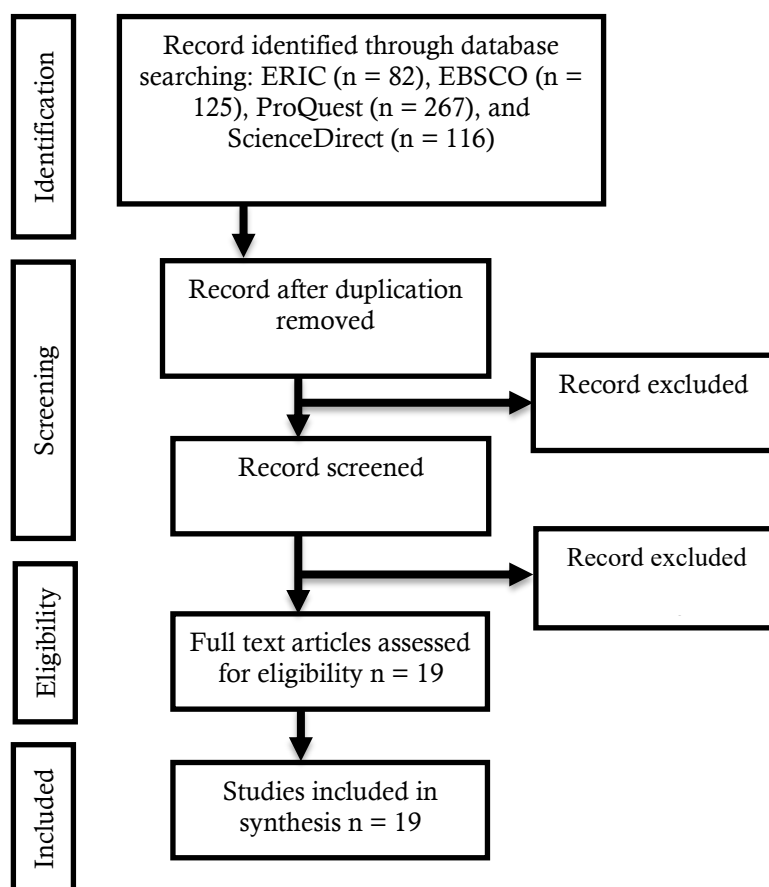


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

FINDING

1. NLP Techniques Implemented in English Language Teaching

NLP has various technique to be implemented and adapted in teaching English. After reviewing all articles, there were around 21 techniques implemented to improve teaching and learning English, such as Anchoring, Modelling, Mirroring, Reframing, and etc. the finding of this review showed that anchoring (Lashkarian & Sayadian, 2015; Hamid & Marzieh, 2017; Caballero & Rosado, 2018; Nahi & Al-Thamery, 2018; Rayati, 2021; Karunananihi et al., 2022; Ghanem et al., 2024; Rayati, 2024) was the most frequent technique used (n = 8) , followed by reframing (n = 7) (Lashkarian & Sayadian, 2015; Nahi & Al-Thamery, 2018; Rayati, 2021; Karunananihi et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2023; Gashi, 2024; Ghanem et al., 2024), modelling (n= 6) (Hamid & Marzieh, 2017; Rayati, 2021; Karunananihi et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2023; Ghanem et al., 2024; Rayati, 2024), establishing rapport (n= 5) (Lashkarian & Sayadian, 2015; Hamid & Marzieh, 2017; Nahi & Al-Thamery, 2018; Rayati, 2021, 2024) and visualization (Kudliskis, 2013; Nahi & Al-Thamery, 2018; Karunananihi et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2023; Ghanem et al., 2024) (n=5), pacing and leading (n= 4) (Hamid & Marzieh, 2017; Nahi & Al-Thamery, 2018; Rayati, 2021, 2024), flexibility and elicitation (n= 3) (Hamid & Marzieh, 2017; Rayati, 2021, 2024), Milton model (Shcherbak & Filippova, 2022; Zhang et al., 2023), meta model (Kovalevska & Kovalevska, 2020; Ghanem et al., 2024) and mirroring (n=2) (Ghanem et al., 2024; Nahi & Al-Thamery, 2018), and some techniques were only used once such as constructionism and neurocognitive based (Selvaraj, 2022), Emotional and cognitive boosters (Rayati, 2024), generalization (Ghanem et al., 2024), linking criteria (Alroudhan, 2018), metaphor (Karunananihi et al., 2022), mind mapping (Farahani, 2018), roleplaying (Zhang et al., 2023), spelling technique (Kovalevska & Kovalevska, 2020), and VAK (Rayati, 2021). However, there were 3 studies which did not specified

and explained the technique in its studies (Sunitha et al., 2021; Cuauhtémoc, 2023; Zarfsaz & Salamat, 2024). The findings of NLP technique used is shown in figure 2.

Figure 2. NLP Method and Technique

2. Targeted Language Skills Targeted by NLP Interventions In ELT

The implementation of NLP in English language teaching was aimed to improve English language Skills such as speaking, listening, reading and writing. Regarding the case, the findings of the reviews revealed that researchers only focused on one language skills in their study. Therefore, this study found reading comprehension (Farahani, 2018; Nahi & Al-Thamery, 2018; Sunitha et al., 2021) was the most targeted skills with 3 studies. Moreover, 2 studies targeted writing skills (Selvaraj, 2022; Zarfsaz & Salamat, 2024), and one study targeted speaking (Karunananihi et al., 2022) and pronunciation (Caballero & Rosado, 2018). These findings can be seen in Figure 3 belows.

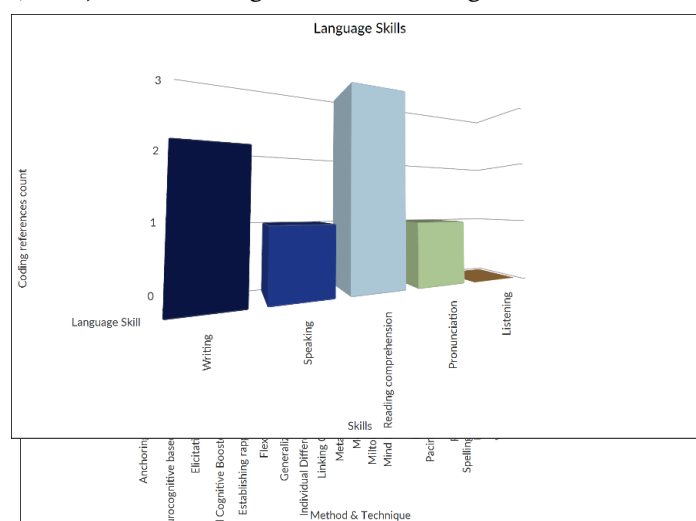


Figure 3. Language Skills

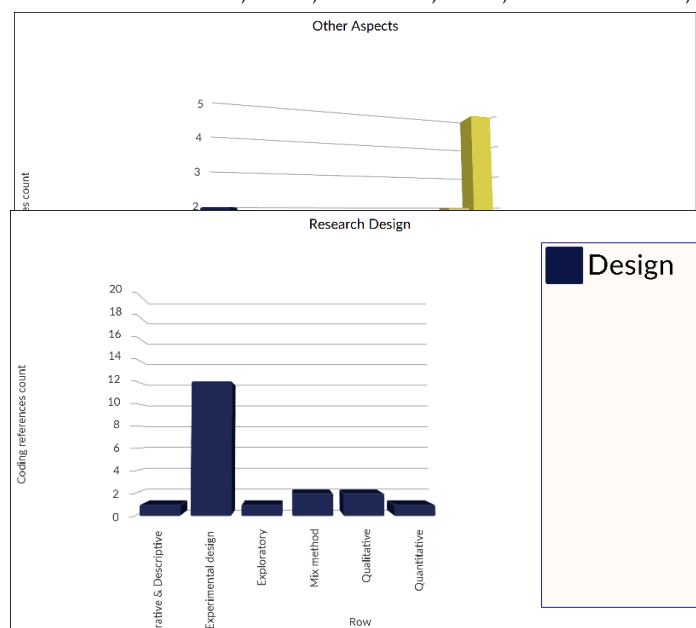
However, there were some studies targeted other aspects. It could be psychological or cognitive aspects; there were studies that did not specified the language skills but teaching and learning as general. As it shown in figure 4. There were 5 studies did not mention the language skill that their targeted, those studies purposed to improve teaching and learning as general (Alroudhan, 2018; Cuauhtémoc, 2023; Hamid & Marzieh, 2017; Kovalevska & Kovalevska, 2020; Rayati, 2021). Moreover, the findings found academic aspect (Ghanem et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023), altered state (Kudliskis, 2013), critical thinking and emotional intelligence (Zhang et al., 2023), linguistic aspect (Shcherbak & Filippova, 2022), motivation (Lashkarian & Sayadian, 2015), students' psych cognitive abilities (Kovalevska & Kovalevska, 2020), and self-confident (Gashi, 2024). Instead of investigating the

students in their research, there were two studies investigated the implementation of NLP to foster teachers' identity (Javadi & Asl, 2020; Rayati, 2024).

Figure 4. Other Aspects

3. Research Design Employed to Investigate the Effectiveness of NLP In English Language Teaching

As it shown in Figure 5. Of the articles, 12 studies had an experimental design with a control group (Alroudhan, 2018; Caballero & Rosado, 2018; Farahani, 2018; Ghanem et al., 2024; Kovalevska &



Kovalevska, 2020; Lashkarian & Sayadian, 2015; Nahi & Al-Thamery, 2018; Selvaraj, 2022; Shcherbak & Filippova, 2022; Sunitha et al., 2021; Zarfsaz & Salamat, 2024; Zhang et al., 2023), two studies had a mixed method design (Kudliskis, 2013; Rayati, 2024), two studies had a qualitative design (Javadi & Asl, 2020; Rayati, 2021), one study used a comparative descriptive method (Gashi, 2024), one study had an exploratory design (Cuauhtémoc, 2023), and one study had a quantitative design (Hamid & Marzieh, 2017).

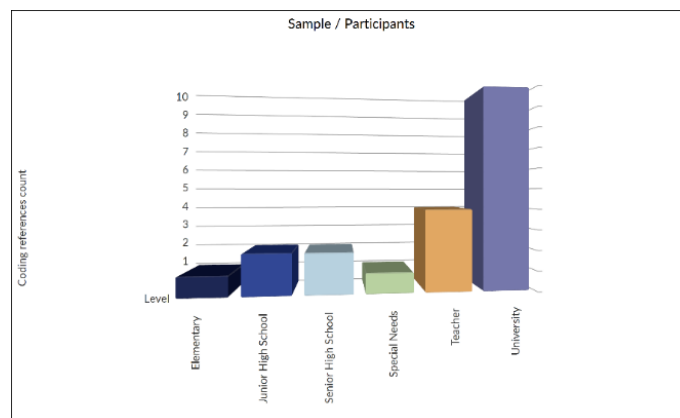
Figure 5. Research Design

4. The Characteristics of The Participant Samples Involved in Studies On Nlp Implementation in ELT

As one of the objectives in this study is to investigate the sample or participants involved in NLP studies, therefore, it found that university students were mostly investigated in NLP studies, there were 10 studies investigating the impact of NLP on university students (Caballero & Rosado, 2018; Farahani, 2018; Nahi & Al-Thamery, 2018; Kovalevska & Kovalevska, 2020; Karunananihi et al., 2022; Shcherbak & Filippova, 2022; Selvaraj, 2022; Cuauhtémoc, 2023; Zhang et al., 2023; Zarfsaz & Salamat, 2024). Two studies chose senior high school students (Sunitha et al., 2021; Gashi, 2024) and two studies chose Junior high school students (Alroudhan, 2018; Lashkarian & Sayadian, 2015). Of

the articles reviewed, there was one study chose elementary students (Ghanem et al., 2024) and students with special needs (Kudliskis, 2013). This result can be seen in figure 6 below.

Figure 6. Sample of the Research



Besides students were not only participants objected as the sample of the studies, there were 4 studies that investigate the impact of NLP on teachers' development (Hamid & Marzieh, 2017; Javadi & Asl, 2020; Rayati, 2021, 2024).

DISCUSSION

1. NLP Techniques Implemented in English Language Teaching

This systematic review found that different NLP techniques significantly influenced the teaching and learning of various English language skills in EFL settings. Additionally, NLP also had some advantages on other aspects such as psychological aspect and academic development. The results also indicated that a total of 21 techniques of NLP were implemented as the intervention for teaching and learning English, and anchoring was the most used technique, suggesting its perceived practicality and adaptability in classroom settings. This prominence is echoed by several studies (e.g., Lashkarian & Sayadian, 2015; Rayati, 2024) which report improvements in students' confidence and engagement. Caballero & Rosado (2018) state that it is a simple but effective technique to have access to emotions, resources or internal states of positive nature. Moreover, it made a difference to bring back the effective certain state any time students need to (Karunananthi et al., 2022). Anchoring supports the idea of continuing multi-sensory teaching because it provides students with a broader range of sensory experiences to associate with the language. It is accepted to have a critical part in making learning more memorable for them. Thus, this technique had significant impact both for teacher and students to achieve success. However, the evidence is not uniformly positive; some studies raise concerns about the superficial application of anchoring, noting that without sufficient training, teachers may struggle to implement it effectively, potentially leading to inconsistent outcomes (Hamid & Marzieh, 2017).

Additionally, Reframing, Modelling, Visualization and Pacing and Leading were some of NLP techniques frequently used in NLP studies. These techniques are often credited with fostering positive classroom dynamics and supporting learner autonomy. However, there is limited empirical data on their long-term impact, and some researchers (e.g., Gashi, 2024) caution that these techniques may not be equally effective across different cultural or educational contexts. For example, while modelling is praised for its role in demonstration and imitation, its success heavily depends on the teacher's own mastery and authenticity, which is not always addressed in the studies reviewed. Establishing rapport and visualization techniques (n=5 each) are highlighted for their role in creating supportive learning environments, but the literature sometimes conflates rapport-building with general good teaching practice, making it difficult to isolate the unique contribution of NLP. Visualization, though promising, is often described in vague or anecdotal terms, lacking rigorous measurement of learning outcomes.

Less commonly used techniques, such as the Milton and Meta models, mirroring, and mind mapping, are typically reported in isolated studies, raising questions about their generalizability. The

reliance on single studies for techniques like constructionism, emotional and cognitive boosters, and VAK points to a lack of replication and a need for broader empirical validation. Conclusively, integrating the NLP technique like reframing into teaching and learning English classroom is highly significant (Lashkarian & Sayadian, 2015). By implementing such a technique efficiently, a teacher can enhance communication with students, improve the learning environment, and boost positive relationships that will lead to academic success (Karunananihi et al., 2022). This aligns with Hamid et al. (2017) who concluded teacher who were familiar with NLP techniques and properly exploiting them could be beneficial in all teaching domains. Therefore, the use of NLP as the intervention or treatment in English language teaching influence both students and teachers.

A critical limitation across the reviewed studies is the inconsistent reporting of methods and outcomes. Three studies (Cuauhtémoc, 2023; Sunitha et al., 2021; Zarfsaz & Salamat, 2024) did not specify which NLP techniques were used, undermining transparency and the ability to compare results. Furthermore, many studies rely on self-reported data or short-term interventions, limiting the ability to draw firm conclusions about the sustained effectiveness of NLP in English teaching. Conflicting results are also evident. While some articles report significant gains in student motivation and achievement, others find minimal or no effect, particularly when NLP is applied in a one-size-fits-all manner. Critics argue that the enthusiastic adoption of NLP in education is sometimes driven more by persuasive promotional literature than by robust evidence (Tosey & Mathison, 2003). Additionally, the lack of critical engagement with potential placebo effects or alternative explanations for observed improvements further complicates interpretation.

2. Targeted Language Skills Targeted by NLP Interventions in ELT

On the other hand, the implementation of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) in English language teaching has shown a varied focus on different English language skills, as illustrated in Figure 3. This study identified four language skills—pronunciation, speaking, reading, and writing—that were focused on to ensure comprehensive application of NLP. The review of existing studies from 2010 to 2025 revealed a predominant emphasis on reading comprehension, which emerged as the most frequently targeted skill, with three separate studies (Farahani, 2018; Nahi & Al-Thamery, 2018; Sunitha et al., 2021) dedicated to enhancing this area. This suggests that researchers may perceive reading comprehension as particularly amenable to NLP implementation, or perhaps as a foundational skill that supports broader language development. Subsequently, Writing skills were the next most commonly addressed, with two studies (Selvaraj, 2022; Zarfsaz & Salamat, 2024) focusing on this area. This indicates a recognition of the importance of productive language skills, though to a lesser extent than reading. Meanwhile, speaking and pronunciation each received attention in only one study (Caballero & Rosado, 2018; Karunananihi et al., 2022, respectively), and listening was notably absent as a primary focus in the reviewed research. This uneven distribution highlights a potential gap in the literature, particularly regarding the development of oral and receptive skills through NLP-based approaches.

Beyond the core language skills, several studies shifted their focus to broader educational or psychological outcomes. Five studies did not specify a particular language skill, instead aiming to improve teaching and learning in general (Alroudhan, 2018; Cuauhtémoc, 2023, 2023; Hamid & Marzieh, 2017; Kovalevska & Kovalevska, 2020; Rayati, 2021). Additional research explored diverse aspects such as academic achievement (Ghanem et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023), altered states (Kudliskis, 2013), critical thinking and emotional intelligence (Zhang et al., 2023), linguistic development (Shcherbak & Filippova, 2022), motivation (Lashkarian & Sayadian, 2015), students' psycho-cognitive abilities (Kovalevska & Kovalevska, 2020), and self-confidence (Gashi, 2024). Notably, two studies investigated the impact of NLP on fostering teachers' professional identity (Javadi & Asl, 2020; Rayati, 2024), further broadening the scope of NLP's application in educational settings.

In summary, while NLP has been applied to a range of language skills, there is a clear concentration on reading comprehension, with less attention given to other essential skills like listening and speaking. The diversity of research topics also reflects an expanding interest in the psychological and cognitive benefits of NLP, both for students and educators. This suggests promising avenues for future research, particularly in underexplored skill areas and holistic educational outcomes.

3. Research Design Employed to Investigate the Effectiveness of NLP In English Language Teaching

The analysis of research designs employed across the reviewed articles reveals a predominant reliance on experimental methodologies. As illustrated in Figure 5, a substantial majority—12 out of the total studies—adopted an experimental design with a control group (Alroudhan, 2018; Caballero & Rosado, 2018; Farahani, 2018; Ghanem et al., 2024; Kovalevska & Kovalevska, 2020; Lashkarian & Sayadian, 2015; Nahi & Al-Thamery, 2018; Selvaraj, 2022; Shcherbak & Filippova, 2022; Sunitha et al., 2021; Zarfsaz & Salamat, 2024; Zhang et al., 2023). This methodological preference underscores a strong commitment within the field to establishing causal relationships and ensuring the internal validity of findings, as experimental designs—particularly those incorporating control groups—are widely regarded as the gold standard for evaluating intervention effects. This is in line with Creswell (2012) who stated that an experiment is used to test whether a certain idea, practice, or procedure affects a specific outcome. Most of the studies used a pre-test and post-test with a control group, while only one study used a quasi-experimental design (e.g. Farahani, 2018). However, the period of intervention or treatment was relatively short between one to two months. Consequently, the findings recommended using a wider range of research designs incorporating mixed methods. Additionally, future studies should consider interventions lasting an entire academic semester to examine the impact of NLP techniques on the development of learners' language skills.

In contrast, other research designs were less frequently employed. Mixed methods approaches were utilized in only two studies (Kudliskis, 2013; Rayati, 2024), reflecting a limited but notable effort to integrate both quantitative and qualitative data for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Similarly, qualitative designs were present in two studies (Javadi & Asl, 2020; Rayati, 2021), highlighting the value of in-depth, contextual insights, albeit on a smaller scale within the literature. The presence of a single comparative descriptive study (Gashi, 2024) and one exploratory study (Cuauhtémoc, 2023) indicated occasional use of approaches aimed at describing or uncovering new perspectives, while only one study (Hamid & Marzieh, 2017) adopted a purely quantitative design without experimental manipulation. Accordingly, this distribution suggests that while experimental rigor is highly prioritized, there remains a need for greater methodological diversity to capture the complexity of research questions in the field. The underrepresentation of qualitative, mixed methods, and exploratory designs may limit the depth and breadth of understanding, particularly regarding contextual and process-oriented factors. Future research could benefit from a more balanced approach, leveraging the strengths of various methodologies to provide both robust evidence of effectiveness and rich, nuanced insights into underlying mechanisms and contextual influences.

4. The Characteristics of The Participant Samples Involved in Studies on NLP Implementation in ELT

The investigation into the participant demographics within NLP research reveals a clear emphasis on university students as the primary sample population. As depicted in Figure 6, ten studies specifically targeted university students to examine the impact of NLP interventions (Caballero & Rosado, 2018; Cuauhtémoc, 2023; Farahani, 2018; Karunananihi et al., 2022; Kovalevska & Kovalevska, 2020; Nahi & Al-Thamery, 2018; Selvaraj, 2022; Shcherbak & Filippova, 2022; Zarfsaz & Salamat, 2024; Zhang et al., 2023). Their educational fields were varied, such as English department, accounting and administration, medical sciences, engineering, management and business technology, and philology etc. their level of proficiency were low to intermediate and they were EFL learners as well. This predominance likely reflects both the accessibility of university populations for researchers and the relevance of NLP applications in higher education settings, where cognitive, motivational, and communication skills are critical for academic success and personal development.

Beyond the university context, the studies also explored younger student populations, albeit to a lesser extent. Two studies focused on senior high school students (Gashi, 2024; Sunitha et al., 2021), and another two investigated junior high school students (Alroudhan, 2018; Lashkarian & Sayadian, 2015). This indicates a growing interest in applying NLP principles earlier in educational trajectories, potentially to foster foundational skills and attitudes that support lifelong learning. Notably, only one study examined elementary students (Ghanem et al., 2024), and another uniquely addressed students with special needs (Kudliskis, 2013), suggesting that research into NLP's impact on younger or more

diverse learner groups remains relatively underexplored. This means that NLP techniques could be implemented in all levels of students even though, the future studies should choose not only higher education students but also more students from elementary and secondary levels because it would be beneficial since there are in the beginning stage of learning English.

Importantly, the scope of NLP research extends beyond student populations. Four studies investigated the effects of NLP on teachers' professional development (Hamid & Marzieh, 2017; Javadi & Asl, 2020; Rayati, 2021, 2024), underscoring the recognition of educators as pivotal agents in the learning process. These studies highlight the potential of NLP to enhance teacher competencies, communication strategies, and classroom dynamics, which in turn may indirectly benefit student outcomes. Hence, this showed that NLP techniques are not merely implemented for developing student's competency and skills but also for developing teachers' identity and career. Overall, the participant distribution reflects a research landscape primarily centered on higher education students, with emerging but limited attention to younger learners and educators. This pattern suggests opportunities for future research to broaden participant diversity, particularly by including more studies with elementary and special needs students, as well as expanding investigations into teacher populations. Such diversification would enrich the understanding of NLP's applicability and effectiveness across different educational stages and stakeholder groups.

In conclusion, this systematic literature review contributes to the existing knowledge by examining previous research on the application of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) to enhance the teaching and learning of English language skills across various student levels. Additionally, the study updates the systematic information and offers a critical overview of current research trends related to the use of NLP in English language education. Additionally, this study suggests that teaching and learning English using NLP is considered become one of significant problem-solving program in the future and should be included in academic programs.

LIMITATIONS

This systematic review on NLP in English language teaching (ELT) has several critical limitations. First, limiting the search to five major databases (Scopus, ERIC, EBSCO, ScienceDirect, and ProQuest) may have excluded relevant studies from less prominent sources, restricting the comprehensiveness and diversity of findings. Second, focusing solely on NLP within ELT narrows understanding of its interdisciplinary potential, overlooking broader cognitive and educational applications. Third, the predominance of experimental designs and scarcity of qualitative or mixed-method research limits insight into contextual factors, teacher perspectives, and learner experiences, while the absence of longitudinal studies restricts knowledge of NLP's long-term effects. Fourth, the participant pool is heavily skewed toward university students, with insufficient representation of younger learners, special needs groups, or varied cultural contexts, limiting generalizability. Fifth, many studies lack clarity on which NLP techniques were used or fail to examine combined effects, impeding the development of standardized pedagogical models. Lastly, limited attention to teachers' roles and professional development overlooks critical factors affecting NLP implementation, such as institutional constraints and curriculum demands. Addressing these gaps through broader database inclusion, diversified methodologies, expanded participant demographics, multi-technique investigations, and deeper exploration of teacher-related factors is essential to advance NLP research and its practical impact in ELT.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review synthesizes research on Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) techniques in English language teaching within EFL contexts, highlighting both their potential and limitations. Various NLP techniques—such as anchoring, reframing, modelling, visualization, and pacing and leading—are widely used and generally perceived to enhance language acquisition as well as psychological and academic outcomes for students and teachers. However, the focus has been uneven, with a strong emphasis on reading comprehension while listening and speaking skills remain underexplored. This suggests a gap in research that needs to be addressed to fully understand the scope of NLP's effectiveness across all language domains. Many studies rely on short-term interventions and self-reported data, limiting conclusions about long-term effects. Methodologically, the field is

dominated by experimental designs with control groups, but there is a scarcity of qualitative and mixed-methods research that could deepen understanding of contextual factors. Most participants are university students, with little attention to younger learners, special needs populations, or teachers themselves. This narrow focus restricts the generalizability of findings and overlooks the potential broader applicability of NLP techniques. Critical limitations include inconsistent reporting of intervention details, lack of replication for less common NLP techniques, and difficulty isolating NLP-specific effects from general teaching practices. Additionally, potential placebo effects and alternative explanations are rarely addressed, raising questions about the robustness of reported benefits.

Based on the review's findings and limitations, several key recommendations for future research and practice are proposed. Research should broaden to include underexplored language skills like listening and speaking, and target diverse populations such as younger learners, special needs students, and teachers at various career stages. Long-term effects and sustainability of NLP interventions need further investigation. Methodologically, more mixed-methods and qualitative studies are encouraged to deepen understanding of NLP's contextual effectiveness. Transparent reporting of intervention details is essential for replication. Improving teacher training on NLP techniques will enhance consistent application, and developing standardized guidelines can reduce variability across studies. Future research should also rigorously control for confounding factors and compare NLP with other teaching approaches to isolate its unique effects. Finally, exploring NLP's psychological and cognitive benefits for both students and educators, and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, will provide a more holistic view of its role in language learning. Overall, NLP shows promise but requires careful, context-sensitive implementation and stronger empirical validation to realize its full potential in education.

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