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Apr 3rd, 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Understanding ESL Undergraduate Students' Beliefs About Learner-Centered Instruction

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Understanding English as a Second Language (ESL) Undergraduate Students' Beliefs about Learner-centered Instruction

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Introduction: Timeline of teaching methods

1900   1910   1920   1930   1940   1950   1960   1970   1980   1990   2000

Grammar Translation

Suggestopedia

Communicative Language Teaching

Audio-lingualism

Direct Method

The Silent Way

Principled Eclecticism

Total Physical Response

Community Language Learning

Key:

—————— Method is widely used or popular

— — — — Limited use, in some special cases, or in specific regions
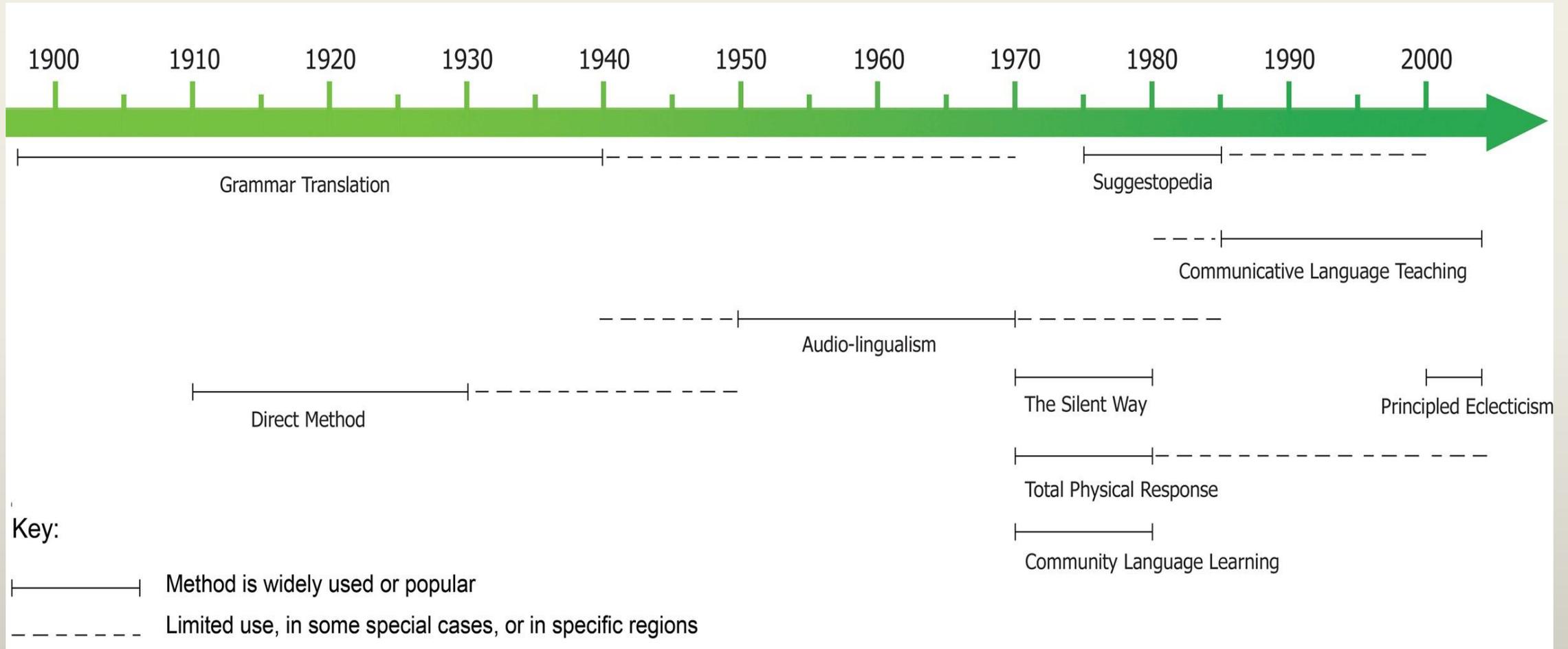
"Principled eclecticism" (Larsen-Freeman, 2012)
"More a cluster of approaches than a single methodology" (Nunan, 1988, p. 24).

"A key perspective in understanding the impact of a learner-centered model is through the eyes of students"

(Wohlfarth et al., 2008).

Significance

- Learner-centeredness in HE institutions
- ESL students' learner-centered beliefs
- Knowledge-base of learner-centered education

Purpose

Two-fold purpose:

(1) to determine undergraduate ESL students' beliefs and experiences about learner-centered teaching (LCT) practices in English classes

(2) to understand to what extent undergraduate ESL students' learner-centered experiences influence their beliefs about the quality of LCT practices

Research Questions

(1) What beliefs and experiences do undergraduate ESL learners in a Midwestern university have about learner-centered teaching practices in English classes?

(2) How do learner-centered learning experiences affect their beliefs about the quality of learner-centered teaching practices in English classes?

Conceptual Framework

LCT is

the perspective that couples **a focus on individual learners** *(their heredity, experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests, capacities, and needs) with* **a focus on learning** *(the best available knowledge about learning and how it occurs and about teaching practices that are most effective in promoting the highest levels of motivation, learning, and achievement for all learners).*

(McCombs & Whisler, 1997, p.9)

Conceptual Framework

LEARNER

LEARNING

LEARNER

LEARNING

Integration of Factors
Influencing Learners & Learning

- **Metacognitive & Cognitive** (1-6 LCP)
- **Motivational & Affective** (7-9 LCP)
- **Developmental & Social** (10-12 LCP)
- **Individual Differences** (13-14 LCP)

Learner-centered Psychological Principles (LCPs)

(APA, 1997)

(McCombs, Lauer, & Peralez, 1997)
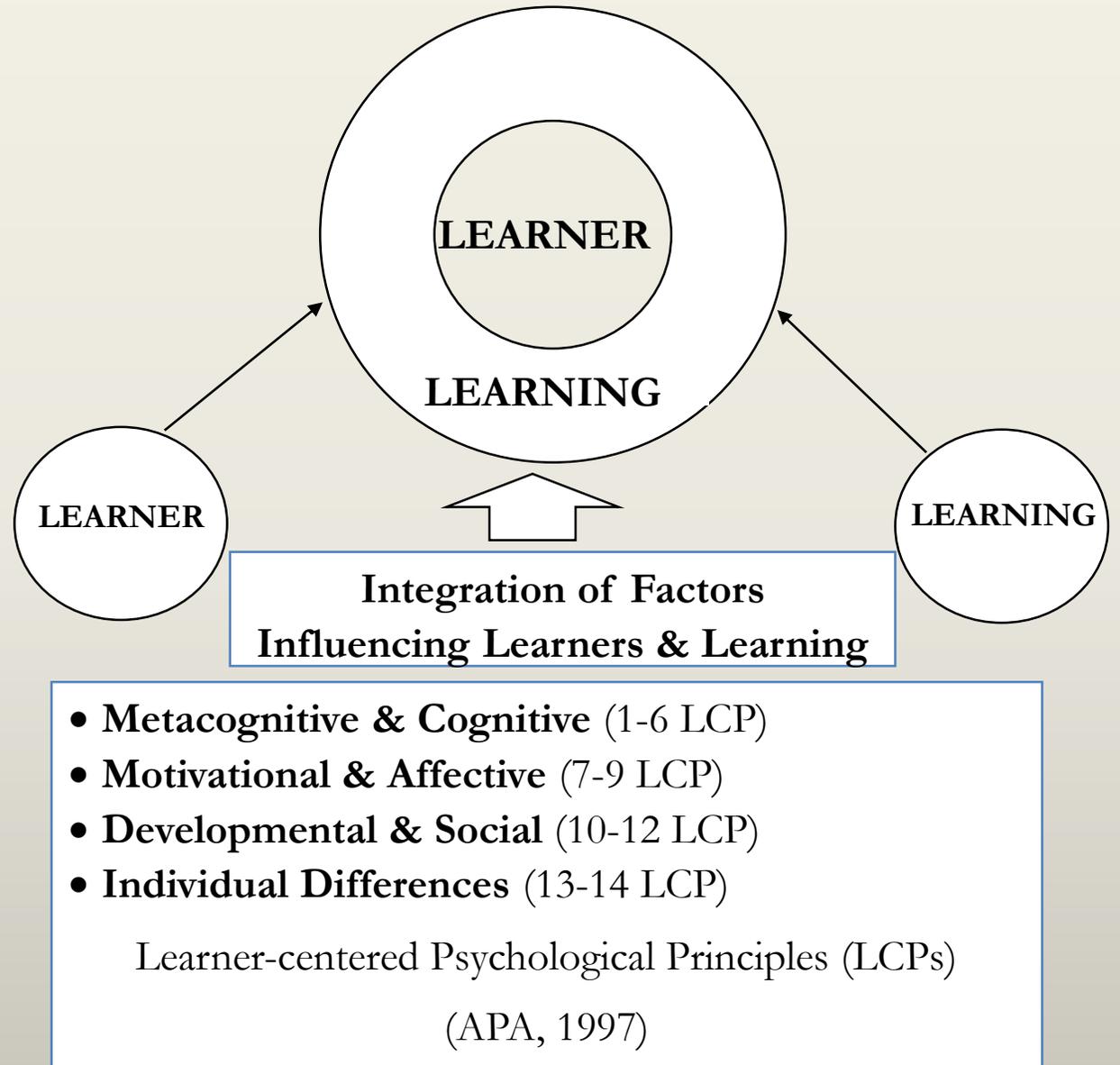
Methodology

An explanatory sequential mixed methods design consists of first collecting quantitative data and then collecting qualitative data to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results (Creswell, 2012, p. 542).

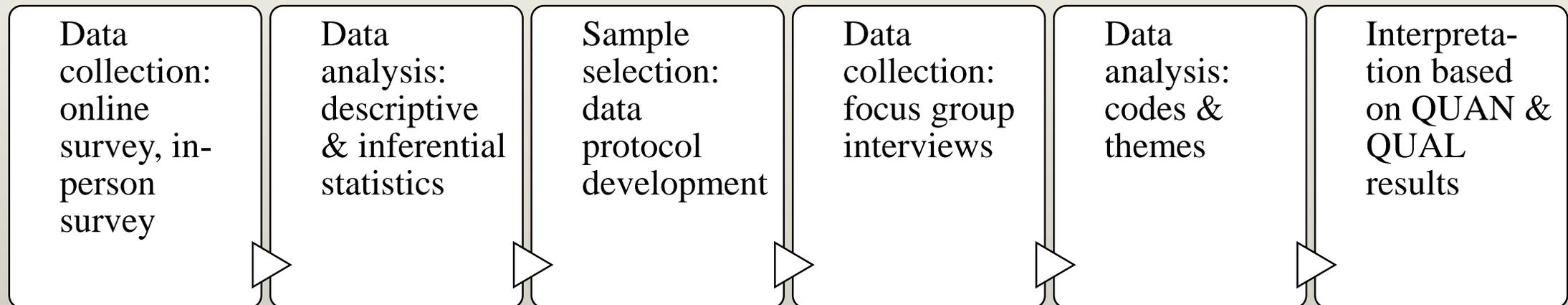| Data collection: online survey, in-person survey	Data analysis: descriptive & inferential statistics	Sample selection: data protocol development	Data collection: focus group interviews	Data analysis: codes & themes	Interpreta-tion based on QUAN & QUAL results

Fig 1. Conceptual Model of Procedures in the Explanatory Sequential QUAN → QUAL Design

Methodology

Learner-centered Battery Student Survey (LCBSS)

(McCombs, Lauer, & Peralez, 1997)

Scale 1: Student perceptions of teaching practices

(1) Creates positive interpersonal relationships (PosRel)

(2) Honors student voice, provides challenge, and encourages perspective taking (StuVoic)

(3) Encourages higher-order thinking and self-regulation (HOTS)

(4) Adapts to individual developmental differences (AIDD)

		Almost Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
1.	My instructor shows me that he or she appreciates me as an individual.	1	2	3	4
2.	My instructor lets me express my own thoughts and beliefs	1	2	3	4
3.	My instructor helps me learn how to organize what I'm learning so I can remember it more easily.	1	2	3	4
4.	My instructor changes learning assignments when I seem to be failing.	1	2	3	4

Quantitative Data

Research site:

Midwestern university

Participants:

purposive sample

(Merriam, 2009)

N = number of cases

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for sample population		
Variable label		N (%)
TOTAL		112
Gender:	**Male**	61(54.5%)
	Female	42(37.5%)
	Missing	9(8%)
Age:	**18 – 22**	74(66.1%)
	23 – 26	18(16.1%)
	27 – 30	12(10.7%)
	Missing	8(7.1%)
Student Classification:	Freshmen	15(13.4%)
	Sophomore	14(12.5%)
	Junior	37(33%)
	Senior	37(33%)
	Missing	9(8%)
Ethnicity:	Asian	63(56.3%)
	Middle Eastern	33(29.5%)
	Others	8(7.2%)
	Missing	8(7.1%)

Qualitative Data

- **Focus group** (Krueger & Casey's, 2015)
- **Recruitment**
- **Focus group size**
- **Focus group interview site**
- **Researcher-moderator**
- **Interview guide**
- **Full transcript**
- **Constant-comparative framework (**Krueger & Casey, 2015)

Results

Findings from Research Question 1:

What beliefs and experiences do undergraduate ESL students in a Midwestern university have about learner-centered teaching practices?

Quantitative Data - Results

Table 2. Frequency of Average LC Scores of 4 Subscales: PosRel, StuVoic, HOTS, & AIDD

LC Score	Meaning of LC score			
	Entirely TC (1 = Almost Never)	Low level of transitioning to LC (2 = Sometimes)	High level of transitioning to LC (3 = Often)	Entirely LC (4 = Almost Always)
	1.00-1.49	1.50-2.49	2.50-3.49	3.50-4.00
PosRel				
f	1	22	56	33
%	0.9	19.6	50	29.5
StuVoic				
f	0	25	57	30
%	0	22.3	50.9	26.8
HOTS				
f	2	21	59	30
%	1.8	18.8	52.6	26.8
AIDD				
f	9	38	50	15
%	8.1	33.9	44.6	13.4

Note: TC = Teacher-centered, LC = Learner-centered, f = frequency, % = percentage; Creates positive interpersonal relationships/climate (PosRel); Honors student voice, provides challenge, & encourages perspective taking (StuVoic); Encourages higher-order thinking & self-regulation (HOTS); Adapts to individual developmental differences (AIDD).
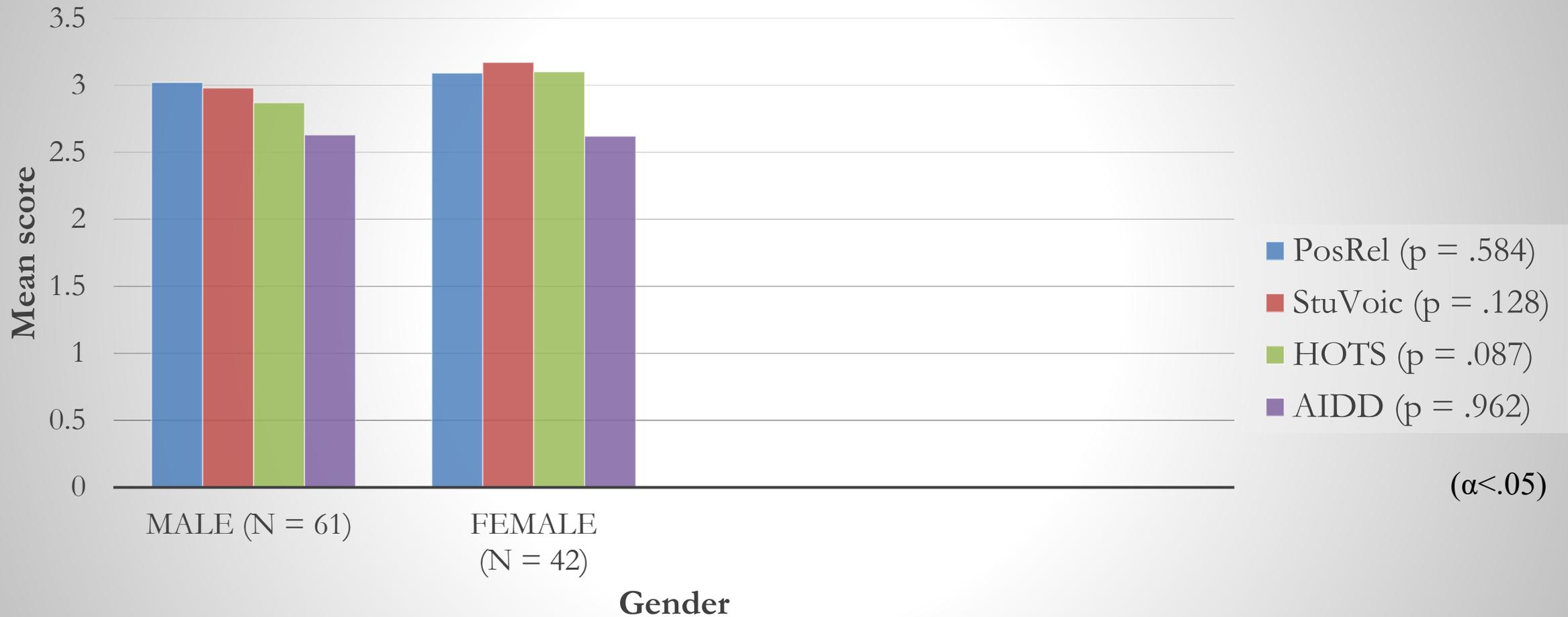
Results

Findings from Research Question 2:

How do learner-centered learning experiences affect ESL students' beliefs about the quality of learner-centered teaching practices?
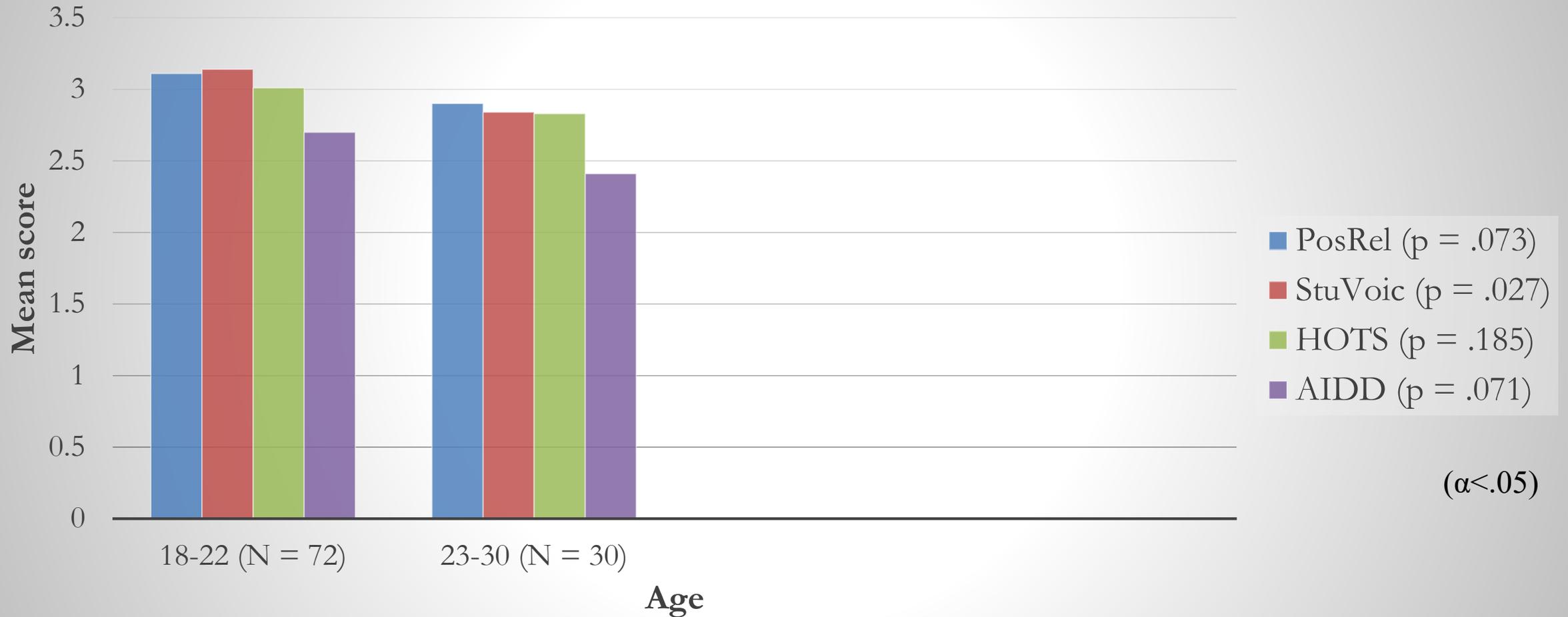
Quantitative Data - Results

Overall Perception Mean Score of Male and Female Participants

- PosRel (p = .584)
- StuVoic (p = .128)
- HOTS (p = .087)
- AIDD (p = .962)

(α<.05)

Quantitative Data - Results

Overall Mean Perception Scores of Younger and Older Age Groups

Legend:
- PosRel (p = .073)
- StuVoic (p = .027)
- HOTS (p = .185)
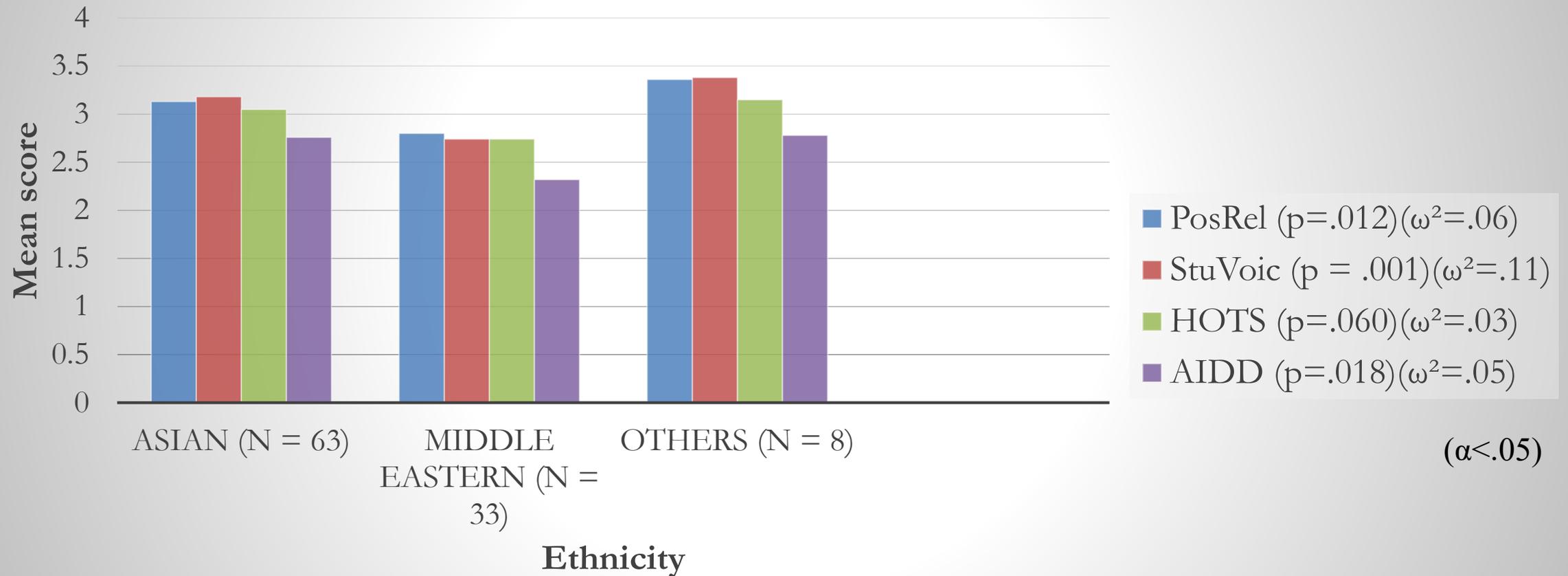- AIDD (p = .071)

(α<.05)

Age groups: 18-22 (N = 72), 23-30 (N = 30)

Quantitative Data - Results

Difference in subscale means according to college credit patterns of ESL undergraduate students

Mean score — College credits

- PosRel (p = .359)
- StuVoic (p = .224)
- HOTS (p = .263)
- AIDD (p = .087)

(α<.05)

FRESHMAN (N=15) | SOPHOMORE (N = 14) | JUNIOR (N = 37) | SENIOR(N = 37)
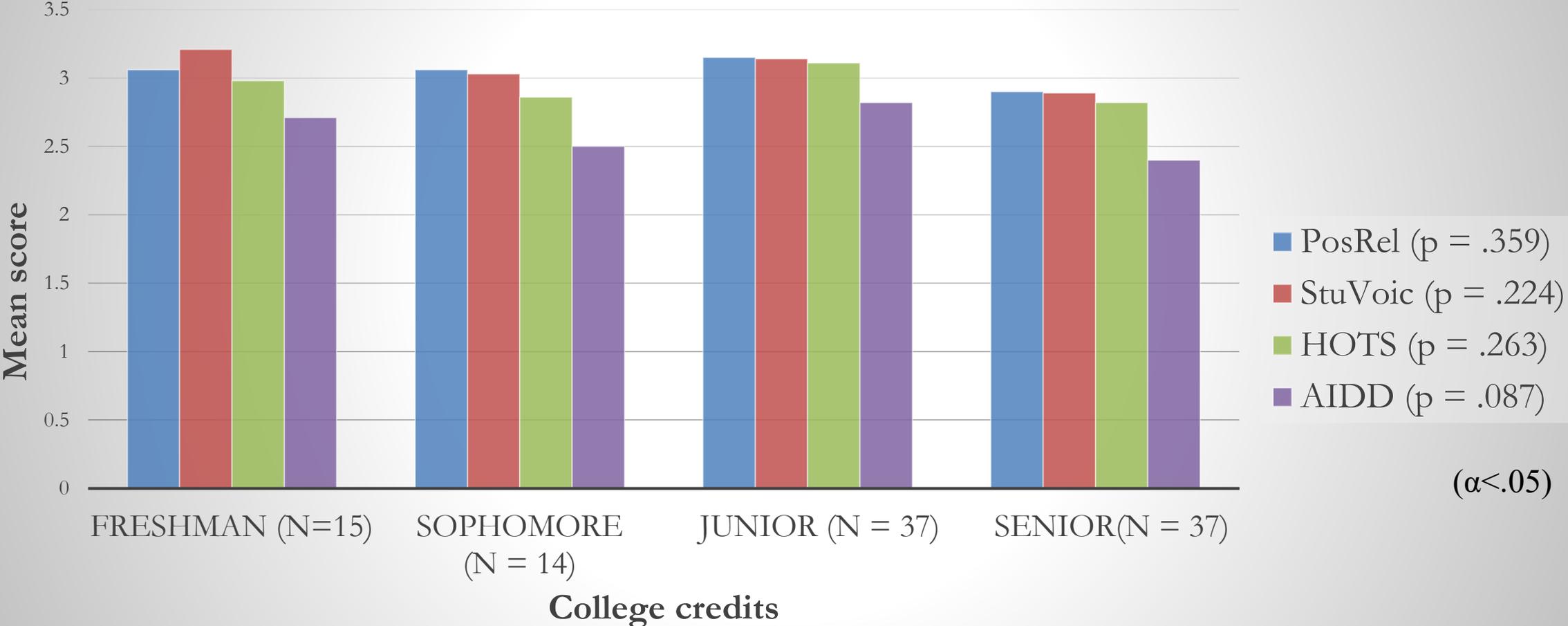
Quantitative Data - Results

Differences in subscale means according to ethnicity patterns of ESL undergraduate students

Legend:
- PosRel (p=.012)(ω²=.06)
- StuVoic (p = .001)(ω²=.11)
- HOTS (p=.060)(ω²=.03)
- AIDD (p=.018)(ω²=.05)

(α<.05)

Qualitative Results

Findings from Research Question 1:

What beliefs and experiences do undergraduate ESL students in a Midwestern university have about learner-centered teaching practices?

Qualitative Data – Results

LCT practices are characteristically learner-focused and learning-focused

Learning opportunities and the learning environment

*M: Can you say a little bit more about what you mean when you say that the environment is important in learner-centered teaching?

**P7: Well, the teacher first of all creates the environment where students are open to make mistakes….They don't scold you for making mistakes and then they don't make you feel inferior….you're allowed to challenge them….you're forced to think about things instead of being a recipient of information you're actively participating in your own learning and those two things I feel are vital for that environment.

(FG2.1, l.193-208)

*M: moderator

**P7: participant 7

Qualitative Data – Results

LCT practices set challenges in learning environments

Learner's prior learning experiences

P16: *Everybody has a different set of mind. The thing which I didn't like about that like we had to write a reflection every time. That was, you know, we, very (…)*

P17: *Tiring*

P16: *Yeah, tiring! …. I have to submit this assignment which was a burden.*

P14: *Exactly….what was that that during the very start, we were not familiar with that particular concept and thus we found it very hard to express our proper thoughts and convey them to the professor…One thing is that it shouldn't have been monotonous; it shouldn't have been the same all along…*

(FG4, l.147-156)

Qualitative Data – Results

LCT practices lead to academic and non-academic outcomes

Alternative perspective & Acculturation

P2: *I remember we took that Academic [strategies?] where we had an assignment to interview a person, American people and then write a report on that.*

[Everyone nodded in agreement]

P3: *We had to ask questions based on culture and what, religion?*

P2: *Culture, religion, family, family structure.*

P3: *Relationship?*

P1: *Anything related that's like inside this culture.*

P3: *I talked to my resident assistant. I think I talked to two people. One of them was my RA, I think I talked to two RAs and asked them their perspective, then I told them what my perspectives are and how our culture is very different from what theirs is like. I think it was really helpful for us first-year students who all experience culture shock when we come first in like we've come to a country that was really helpful.*

(FG1.2, l.81-98)

Qualitative Data – Results

Findings from RQ 2:

How do learner-centered learning experiences affect learners' beliefs about the quality of learner-centered teaching practices?

Qualitative Data – Results

- Recognized fundamental differences:

(1) evaluating LCT learning via past learning experiences

- Recognized qualitative differences:

(2) identifying learner-centered and non-learner-centered teaching practices

Qualitative Data – Results

"Learning never ends"

P5: *Just remember stuff, just remember stuff, we don't know but we're reading, we just know we have to do it.*

P8: *The idea is that <u>learning never ends all your life</u>. But back in our country was like, okay, I'm going to learn, go to school, go to college, then have a job that's it. I'm not even learning.*

P7: *Your learning is finished!*

P8: *Yeah! Your learning is finished!*

P5: *Even in learning there's no concern, just keep learning.*

P8: *Just keep learning! <u>Here it's like it's just one part of your life. It's going to go further</u>.*

P7: *More, you know, kind of more you know, how much you don't know the more you want to know. <u>I just know maybe the tip of vast iceberg of knowledge</u> that's out there and <u>it's kind of a humbling experience</u>!*

P8: *Yeah, yeah!*

(FG2.1, l.274-285).

Qualitative Data – Results (RQ 2)

(2) b. Interpersonal relations

Learner-centered:

Both of you are in that comfortable zone where you can, you know, discuss your opinions, so it breaks that stranger thing. You know each other. (P10, FG3, l.520-522)

I didn't feel overwhelmed because I started to knew the students (P2, FG1.1, l.117-118)

Non-learner-centered:

I couldn't make connection with him. I don't want to say like he didn't try. He showed interest in all of the students and all of that, but not specific interest, just because I'm an international student in a way which makes me feel comfortable but I'm not sure. (P4, FG1.1, l. 154-156)

Discussion

- Prefer choice of activities

- Require support to cope with stress

- Have affective needs & cognitive challenges

- Require recognition of individual differences

- Require help manage prior knowledge

- Require facilitative mechanisms in learning activities

Implications for ESL learner-centered Instruction

- Have adequate student knowledge

- Consider motivational & affective factors

- Use existing knowledge as reference point

- Employ variety of learning activities

- Incorporate learning-to-learn strategies

Conclusion

- HE courses teacher-centered (Blumberg, 2009; Doyle, 2011; Weimer, 2013)

  Low-level transitioning to LC (Blumberg & Pontiggia's, 2011)

- Highly transitioning toward LC (e.g., Gomez, 2015; McCombs et al., 1997; Schuh, 2004)

- Importance of ESL students' LC beliefs

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Thank you!

Questions?