

# Understanding English Language Mindsets among Undergraduate Students in the ASEAN Region

Thanh Duy Vo<sup>1</sup>, & Jeffrey Dawala Wilang<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Muban Chombueng Rajabhat University, Ratchaburi, Thailand

<sup>2</sup>School of Foreign Languages, Suranaree University of Technology, Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand

Correspondence: Jeffrey Dawala Wilang, School of Foreign Languages, Suranaree University of Technology, Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand. E-mail: wilang@g.sut.ac.th

Received: June 24, 2025

Accepted: September 29, 2025

Online Published: March 2, 2026

doi:10.5430/wjel.v16n3p294

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v16n3p294>

## Abstract

Understanding students' language mindsets, beliefs about language intelligence, aptitude, and age sensitivity, can offer valuable insights into their language learning experiences, particularly in the linguistically diverse ASEAN region. This quantitative study investigated the language mindsets of undergraduate students from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand. Participants completed an online survey based on the Language Mindset Inventory (LMI) by Lou and Noels. Descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA, and exploratory factor analysis were employed. The results revealed a consistent preference for growth mindset beliefs across all participating countries. Students generally expressed strong agreement with statements emphasizing the potential to improve language abilities through effort, while showing less agreement with the belief that language ability is fixed. Among the participating groups, Malaysian students exhibited the strongest growth-oriented beliefs, while students from the Philippines and Thailand showed the least agreement with fixed views related to age and language learning ability. Further analysis indicated significant differences in certain mindset beliefs across nationalities, particularly in how students perceived the fixed nature of language intelligence and aptitude. However, beliefs about age-related limitations and general language learning potential were more consistent across groups. Exploratory factor analysis identified three distinct belief categories: growth language mindset, fixed language mindset, and age-related fixed language mindset. Students who aligned with the growth mindset believed in the capacity for continuous language development regardless of age or current ability. Those who endorsed a fixed mindset viewed language intelligence as a stable, unchangeable trait. The age-related fixed mindset reflected the belief that there are age limits beyond which language learning becomes substantially more difficult. These findings emphasize the importance of fostering growth-oriented perspectives and implementing culturally responsive language education practices across diverse learning contexts.

**Keywords:** language beliefs, fixed mindset, growth mindset, mindsets, ASEAN region

## 1. Introduction

Language learning is a critical skill in an increasingly globalized world, where multilingual competencies offer significant advantages in communication, cultural exchange, and economic activities. This is particularly relevant in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a region characterized by linguistic diversity and cultural richness. Understanding the beliefs that underlie language learning can provide insight into how individuals within the region approach acquiring foreign languages and how these beliefs may influence their learning strategies and outcomes.

In recent decades, educators across different fields, including language education, have recognized the significance of research on mindset. Psycholinguistic studies have linked mindset to individual differences in learners' beliefs regarding their language learning abilities or perceptions of the roles of talent and effort (Mercer & Ryan, 2010; Ryan & Mercer, 2012; Chuanon et al., 2021). Another line of research has primarily explored the relationship between language mindset and meaning-making and motivation, language mindset's associations with attitude, confidence, positive reinforcements, self-awareness, resilience, efficacy, teaching practices, gender, language proficiency, and factors that can influence language mindsets (Lou & Noels, 2016; 2017; 2019; 2020; Yeager & Dweck, 2012; Waller & Papi, 2017; Wilang, 2021; 2022; Sawongta, 2023).

Previous research has highlighted two distinct language mindsets that influence language acquisition: the fixed and growth mindsets. A fixed mindset, as described by Carol Dweck and colleagues, presupposes that language ability is a static, unchangeable, and innate trait. Conversely, a growth mindset suggests that language ability is malleable and can be developed through dedication and hard work. These mindsets are crucial for individual learners and have broader implications for educational policies and teaching methodologies across different cultures and societies. Moreover, age sensitivity in language learning — the belief that language learning capacity diminishes with age — is another crucial factor that may impact learners' motivation and engagement with language education. This belief can potentially discourage older learners from pursuing language studies under the assumption that their efforts will be less fruitful than those

of their younger counterparts.

However, the full scope of language mindset research across different contexts remains unclear, especially in the ASEAN countries. With its fast-growing economies and increasing integration into the global marketplace, the ASEAN region offers a fertile ground for examining these beliefs. This research explores the beliefs of undergraduate students across Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand regarding language intelligence, language aptitude, and age sensitivity. By investigating these beliefs, the study seeks to uncover the extent to which ASEAN students feel they can influence their language abilities and whether these beliefs are uniform across the region or vary by nationality. Utilizing mean score comparisons, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and factor analysis, this study addresses several pertinent research questions: How do undergraduate students in the ASEAN region perceive their ability to learn new languages? Is there a consensus across different ASEAN countries regarding the malleability of language skills? Do nationality and cultural background influence these beliefs? Moreover, does age affect this demographic's perceived ability to learn languages?

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of language learning beliefs in multilingual and multicultural settings by addressing these questions through quantitative analysis, including descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and exploratory factor analysis. The findings have implications for educational policy, curriculum design, and teacher training, especially in promoting growth-oriented learning environments throughout the ASEAN region.

### 1.1 Language Mindset

In *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (Dweck, 2006), Dweck examines two distinct cognitive paradigms: the fixed mindset, also known as the entity theory of intelligence, and the growth mindset, referred to as the incremental theory. Individuals possessing a fixed mindset contend that their abilities are inherent and unchangeable, suggesting they are either naturally intelligent or not. Conversely, the growth mindset views abilities as malleable and subject to enhancement through learning and effort. This perspective asserts that intelligence is not static but can be developed incrementally. Notably, numerous authors suggest that mindsets may vary across domains, allowing individuals to adopt a growth mindset in one area while maintaining a fixed mindset in another (Mercer & Ryan, 2010; Dweck, 2006).

Learners with a growth mindset, those who perceive personal traits as malleable, tend to achieve higher success levels than their fixed-mindset counterparts, who view traits as immutable. Individuals with a growth mindset are confident in their capacity to enhance skills through effort and persistence (Dweck, 2006). These learners often adopt mastery-oriented goals, motivating them to persevere through challenges and sustain interest in tasks despite difficulties (Tang et al., 2019). Specifically, the belief in growth language mindsets—the notion that language-learning abilities can be developed through effort—acts as a motivational tool, encouraging learners to focus on improvement and the learning process (Zarrinabadi et al., 2021). Engagement, a critical factor in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, is shaped by both external factors, such as teacher support, and internal factors, including a growth mindset in language learning and L2 grit (Saedoughi & Hejazi, 2023).

Lou and Noels (2016, 2017) developed the Language Mindset Inventory (LMI) in the context of second language acquisition. They devised the LMI to assess learners' perceptions of linguistic intelligence, language aptitude, and age-related constraints, recognizing that language acquisition presents unique challenges compared to other disciplines. The LMI distinguishes between fixed and growth attitudes in these dimensions, offering a more comprehensive understanding of learners' beliefs regarding their language abilities. A fixed perspective on linguistic intelligence may lead learners to perceive themselves as either inherently proficient or not, whereas a growth mindset promotes the notion that anyone can improve their abilities through consistent effort. Similarly, the age factor relates to the widespread belief that older learners experience disadvantages, while convictions regarding language aptitude pertain to the perception of inherent language-learning ability. By incorporating age sensitivity, a critical component of multilingual and adult learning environments, the LMI improves Dweck's paradigm.

The LMI was also selected for the current investigation because of its robust psychometric characteristics and its relevance to multilingual education. The LMI is particularly well-suited for use in the ASEAN region due to its strong internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha values range from .92 to .94) and its strong theoretical foundation, which allows researchers to evaluate mindset beliefs across culturally diverse groups.

Numerous studies highlight the positive impact of a growth mindset on various aspects of language learning. These include goal orientation and responses to failure (Lou & Noels, 2016; 2017), writing skills (Lee et al., 2023), motivation for writing (Waller & Papi, 2017), grammar learning strategies (Zarrinabadi et al., 2021), self-regulated writing strategies (Xu & Wang, 2022), and language achievement (Khajavy et al., 2021; Rui & Muthikrishnan, 2019). Additional studies have linked growth mindsets to academic performance (Wang et al., 2020), self-efficacy and task values (Bai et al., 2021), intrinsic value (Bai & Wang, 2023), and learning engagement (Lin-Siegler et al., 2016; Schmidt et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2021). Furthermore, researchers have noted positive relationships between growth mindsets and preferences for corrective feedback, motivation, and writing skills (Papi et al., 2019; Zhao, 2015; Fatima Zohra & Hamitouche, 2022; Ferris, 2010; Saito, 1994). Classroom climate, achievement goal orientation, and student engagement have also been correlated with growth mindsets (Ma et al., 2024). Additionally, the effects of positive education interventions on resilience have been explored (Jianping et al., 2024).

Despite the well-documented benefits of the growth mindset, a gap remains in understanding how undergraduates in ASEAN countries, particularly Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand, conceptualize language intelligence and its malleability. The region's unique multilingual environments suggest the need for region-specific studies that examine these factors more thoroughly.

### 1.2 Language Mindset in the ASEAN Region: A Contextual Overview

In the linguistically varied ASEAN region, language acquisition is crucial for facilitating socio-economic and cultural exchanges, as efficient communication is vital. Research highlights the significant role of learners' attitudes in shaping language acquisition outcomes. While language mindset theory has been thoroughly examined in various contexts, including Iran (Zarrinabadi et al., 2021; Saedoughi & Hejazi, 2023; Khajavy et al., 2020; Ebn-Abbasi et al., 2024), China (Yao et al., 2021a; 2021b; Zhang & Cui, 2010; Wang et al., 2025), and Spain (Papi et al., 2021), its implementation in ASEAN countries—namely Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand—offers unique insights into the interplay between mindset and language acquisition.

The ASEAN region's landscape for language acquisition is shaped by its culturally varied and multilingual environment. In Indonesia, English is mandated as a second language in high schools; yet, achieving communicative competence is a significant barrier (Mukminin et al., 2015). Research in this domain has examined variables including written performance (Prihatini et al., 2024), English proficiency (Herawati & Fithriani, 2023), and speaking anxiety (Nadia et al., 2024). The findings suggest that fostering a growth mindset may alleviate linguistic barriers and enhance student engagement.

Malaysia's multilingual context emphasizes the importance of perspective in language teaching. Research indicates that students with fixed mindsets often prioritize maintaining their existing talents, whereas those with growth mindsets demonstrate more potential for intellectual development (Shaari et al., 2017). A growth mindset is associated with improved academic and personal outcomes in rural educational settings (Fontaine & Elkheloufi, 2015). These findings underscore the need to foster adaptive mindsets to enhance successful language learning, especially in contexts where socioeconomic barriers may hinder progress.

English serves both as a co-official language and a medium of education in the Philippines, providing a unique perspective on the importance of mentality in language acquisition. Numerous studies have examined the influence of self-efficacy, growth mindset, and tenacity on English language learners (Advincula, 2023; Iribani et al., 2024). These studies indicate that pupils with higher self-efficacy are better equipped to overcome linguistic challenges; however, demographic factors significantly influence the formation of their attitudes. Consequently, it is essential to cultivate a growth mindset to enhance English proficiency, particularly given its significance in employment prospects and international mobility.

In Thailand, where English is emphasized for commerce, tourism, and international communication, an increasing number of studies focus on the relationship between learner motivation, English ability, and viewpoint. Numerous studies indicate that Thai students exhibit varied mindsets, with growth mindsets correlating with enhanced competency and motivation (Lou & Noels, 2016; Wilang, 2021; 2022; Sawongta, 2023). These findings underscore the need for focused interventions to address learners' attitudes about their potential for progress, aptitude, and effort.

Although the significance of growth mindsets in enhancing language learning outcomes is generally recognized, further research is necessary to explore the regional characteristics affecting students' mindsets in ASEAN countries, including linguistic intelligence, aptitude, and age-related plasticity. This will yield more refined insights on promoting efficient language acquisition in various contexts.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Participants

This quantitative study aimed to explore the mindset of undergraduate students in selected ASEAN countries. Through convenience sampling, 425 undergraduate students participated in the study. This method was chosen due to practical reasons, such as limited access to national student databases and the challenges of conducting cross-country research within a short timeframe. By using existing academic networks, the researchers were able to reach students from different institutions and countries more efficiently. From December 2023 to April 2024, an online survey was distributed to colleagues in different ASEAN countries.

Participants were recruited based on the following criteria: they had to be (1) currently enrolled as full-time undergraduate students, (2) citizens of one of the selected ASEAN countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, or Thailand), and (3) able to understand and respond to an English-language questionnaire. The final sample included 232 students from Indonesia (55%), 27 from Malaysia (6%), 64 from the Philippines (15%), and 102 from Thailand (24%).

### 2.2 Instruments

The online survey questionnaire was based on the Language Mindset Inventory (LMI) developed by Lou and Noels (Lou & Noels, 2017). It assessed three subcomponents of intelligence, aptitude, and age sensitivity in language learning. It consisted of 18 items (six per subcomponent, three reflecting a fixed mindset, and three a growth mindset). A 6-point Likert Scale was used: 1 - Strongly disagree; 2 - Moderately disagree; 3 - Slightly disagree; 4 - Slightly agree; 5 - Moderately agree; and 6 - Strongly agree. The survey questionnaire demonstrated high reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha from .92 to .94 range (Lou & Noels, 2017; Wilang, 2024).

### 2.3 Data Collection Procedure and Analysis

Following approval from the university's Institutional Review Board, the online survey questionnaire, along with informed consent forms, was distributed to academic colleagues within the ASEAN region, who assisted in sharing the survey link with eligible undergraduate students. The questionnaire was administered via an online platform, and participation was voluntary. The data collection process required approximately 10 to 15 minutes per respondent.

All quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the participants' language-related mindset beliefs. One-way ANOVA was conducted to examine potential differences in mindset scores based on nationality. Additionally, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was employed to identify the underlying structural dimensions of students' language mindsets. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .95, indicating suitability for factor analysis, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ), confirming the appropriateness of the data for factor extraction.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Research Question 1: What Are the Mean Levels of Agreement with Fixed and Growth Language Mindsets among Undergraduate Students in the ASEAN Region?

Table 1. Language intelligence beliefs of undergraduate students in the ASEAN region

Language intelligence beliefs	Indonesia (n=232) M, SD	Malaysia (n=27)	Philippines (n=64)	Thailand (n=102)	M, SD
1. To be honest, you can't really change your language intelligence	2.82, 1.45	2.55, 1.33	2.85, 1.41	2.31, 1.40	2.68, 1.45
2. Your language intelligence is something about you that you can't change very much.	2.92, 1.46	2.96, 1.37	3.18, 1.45	2.43, 1.26	2.82, 1.42
3. You have a certain amount of language intelligence, and you can't really do much to change it.	3.03, 1.34	2.96, 1.37	3.01, 1.25	2.90, 1.25	2.99, 1.30
4. You can always improve your language intelligence substantially.	4.45, 1.27	4.88, 1.36	4.87, 1.18	4.39, 1.32	4.52, 1.28
5. No matter who you are, you can significantly improve your language intelligence level.	4.55, 1.35	5.18, 1.35	4.95, 1.20	4.70, 1.27	4.69, 1.32
6. No matter how much language intelligence you have, you can always improve it quite a bit.	4.67, 1.30	5.14, 1.23	4.67, 1.16	4.79, 1.27	4.73, 1.27

In Table 1, the mean scores across undergraduate students in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand indicate a more robust endorsement of growth mindset beliefs over fixed mindset beliefs regarding language intelligence. Students in all four countries demonstrate higher mean scores for statements that align with a growth mindset, such as the belief that one can always significantly improve their language intelligence (mean scores ranging from 4.39 to 5.18). Conversely, the lower mean scores for statements indicative of a fixed mindset (mean scores ranging from 2.31 to 3.18) suggest less agreement with the notion that language intelligence is unchangeable. Notably, students from Malaysia tend to have higher mean scores for growth mindset statements and lower means for fixed mindset statements, indicating a stronger inclination towards the belief in the malleability of language intelligence. This pattern reflects a generally positive belief among students in these ASEAN countries that language abilities can be developed through effort rather than static traits.

Table 2. Language aptitude beliefs of undergraduate students in the ASEAN region

Language aptitude beliefs	Indonesia (n=232) M, SD	Malaysia (n=27)	Philippines (n=64)	Thailand (n=102)	M, SD
1. You can't really change how capable you are at learning a new language.	2.98, 1.41	2.15, 1.31	2.73, 1.34	2.25, 1.30	2.73, 1.40
2. To be honest, you can't really change your basic ability to learn and use new languages.	2.93, 1.41	2.77, 1.45	2.71, 1.31	2.23, 1.19	2.71, 1.37
3. To a large extent, your ability to learn new language is innate and you can't change much.	3.00, 1.39	2.62, 1.30	3.01, 1.45	2.57, 1.24	2.87, 1.37
4. You can always improve how good you are at learning new languages.	4.35, 1.30	5.18, 1.11	4.81, 1.31	4.48, 1.31	4.50, 1.33
5. No matter who you are, you can always improve your basic ability to learn new languages.	4.59, 1.28	5.25, 1.16	4.96, 1.20	4.68, 1.28	4.71, 1.27
6. No matter how much your ability you have in learning languages, you can improve it considerably.	4.46, 1.26	5.07, 1.14	4.93, 1.08	4.60, 1.19	4.60, 1.22

As shown in Table 2, the language aptitude beliefs reflect a predominant growth mindset. Mean scores are consistently higher for statements associated with the ability to improve language learning skills (ranging from 4.35 to 5.25), signifying a consensus that language aptitude is not fixed and can be enhanced through effort. Conversely, mean scores for fixed mindset statements—that language learning capability is unchangeable—are lower (ranging from 2.15 to 3.01), indicating less agreement with this view. Notably, students from Malaysia displayed the lowest mean scores for fixed mindset beliefs and the highest for growth mindset beliefs, suggesting a particularly strong growth-oriented perspective on language learning within this group. Overall, the data suggest that students in these ASEAN countries hold a positive view about the potential for developing their language aptitude, with less belief in inherent limitations.

Table 3. Language age sensitivity beliefs of undergraduate students in the ASEAN region

Age sensitivity beliefs	Indonesia (n=232) M, SD	Malaysia (n=27) M, SD	Philippines (n=64) M, SD	Thailand (n=102) M, SD	M, SD
1. After a certain age, you have a very limited ability to learn new languages.	2.92, 1.44	3.48, 1.34	3.25, 1.15	3.06, 1.46	3.04, 1.40
2. You don't really have the ability to learn new languages after a certain young age.	2.84, 1.39	3.00, 1.61	2.48, 1.22	2.57, 1.37	2.73, 1.38
3. Your ability to learn new languages is restricted after a certain age, and you can't really change it.	2.87, 1.31	2.81, 1.49	2.51, 1.12	2.44, 1.31	2.71, 1.31
4. No matter how old you are, you can always improve your ability to learn new languages.	4.60, 1.30	4.92, 1.49	4.96, 1.16	4.65, 1.28	4.69, 1.29
5. Regardless of age, you can significantly improve how good you are at learning new languages.	4.51, 1.22	4.81, 1.35	5.01, 1.07	4.66, 1.27	4.66, 1.23
6. Ever after a certain age, you can substantially improve your ability to learn new languages.	4.61, 1.15	5.00, 1.20	4.84, 1.14	4.75, 1.21	4.70, 1.17

As shown in Table 3, the beliefs of undergraduate students in the ASEAN region regarding age sensitivity and language learning favor the growth mindset over the fixed mindset. The mean scores are lower for statements suggesting that age significantly limits the ability to learn new languages (mean scores ranging from 2.44 to 3.48), indicating a lower degree of agreement with the idea that language learning is restricted after a certain age. In contrast, the higher mean scores for statements affirming the potential to improve language learning ability regardless of age (mean scores ranging from 4.51 to 5.01) reveal a more prevalent belief in the capacity for growth. Students from the Philippines, in particular, exhibit the highest mean scores for growth mindset beliefs, and, alongside those from Thailand, the lowest for fixed mindset beliefs, indicating a strong belief in the ability to learn languages at any age. Collectively, the data suggests that these ASEAN students are more inclined to believe that age is not a barrier to enhancing language proficiency.

3.2 Research Question 2: Are There Statistically Significant Differences in Language Intelligence Beliefs, Language Aptitude Beliefs, and Age Sensitivity Beliefs among Undergraduate Students from Different ASEAN Countries?

Table 4. Differences in English mindsets among undergraduate students in the ASEAN region

Factors of English language mindset	Category of mindset	Differences
Language intelligence beliefs	Fixed Mindset	F(3, 424) = 3.08, p=0.029
	Growth Mindset	F(3, 424) = 2.29, p=0.078
Language aptitude beliefs	Fixed Mindset	F(3, 424) = 7.04, p=0.001
	Growth Mindset	F(3, 424) = 4.87, p=0.002
Age sensitivity beliefs	Fixed Mindset	F(3, 424) = 1.22, p=0.299
	Growth Mindset	F(3, 424) = 2.12, p=0.096

In Table 4, the analysis of English language mindset beliefs among undergraduate students in the ASEAN region reveals the following: nationality significantly influences beliefs regarding fixed language intelligence and aptitude, with significant differences noted among students from different countries (p = 0.029 and p = 0.001, respectively). Conversely, nationality does not significantly impact the growth mindset toward language intelligence or fixed beliefs about age sensitivity in language learning. However, it affects the growth mindset regarding language aptitude and potential for improvement, as evidenced by significant differences (p = 0.002). This suggests that while students across these countries might share certain beliefs about the malleability of language ability, there are notable differences in how firmly they hold to the idea that language skills are innate and unchangeable, depending on their nationality.

3.3 Research Question 3: What Underlying Factors Can Be Identified in the Mindset Beliefs about Language Learning among Undergraduate Students in the ASEAN Region?

Table 5. Factors of English language mindsets among undergraduate students in the ASEAN region

Factors of English language mindsets	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
<b>Growth Language Mindset</b>			
1. You can always improve your language intelligence substantially.	.77		
2. No matter who you are, you can significantly improve your language intelligence level.	.83		
3. No matter how much language intelligence you have, you can always improve it quite a bit.	.75		
4. You can always improve how good you are at learning new languages.	.77		
5. No matter who you are, you can always improve your basic ability to learn new languages.	.85		
6. No matter how much your ability you have in learning languages, you can improve it considerably.	.83		
7. No matter how old you are, you can always improve your ability to learn new languages.	.78		
8. Regardless of age, you can significantly improve how good you are at learning new languages.	.78		
9. Ever after a certain age, you can substantially improve your ability to learn new languages.	.78		
<b>Fixed Language Mindset</b>			

1.	To be honest, you can't really change your language intelligence	.76
2.	Your language intelligence is something about you that you can't change very much.	.81
3.	You have a certain amount of language intelligence, and you can't really do much to change it.	.75
4.	You can't really change how capable you are at learning a new language.	.74
5.	To be honest, you can't really change your basic ability to learn and use new languages.	.74
6.	To a large extent, your ability to learn new language is innate and you can't change much.	.70
<b>Age-related Fixed Language Mindset</b>		
1.	After a certain age, you have a very limited ability to learn new languages.	.72
2.	You don't really have the ability to learn new languages after a certain young age.	.76
3.	Your ability to learn new languages is restricted after a certain age, and you can't really change it.	.73

As indicated in Table 5, the factor analysis results from the English mindsets among undergraduate students in the ASEAN region suggest a clear categorization of beliefs into three distinct factors:

Growth Language Mindset is characterized by strong positive loadings (ranging from .75 to .85) on statements that reflect a belief in the malleability and developability of language skills. The high factor loadings on statements like "You can always improve your language intelligence substantially" indicate that students who score high on this factor strongly believe in the potential for language learning and improvement, regardless of their current ability or age.

The second factor, Fixed Language Mindset, represents a fixed perspective on language ability, with significant loadings (.70 to .81) on statements asserting that language intelligence is an immutable trait. Students with high scores on this factor likely agree with statements such as "You have a certain amount of language intelligence, and you can't really do much to change it," indicating a belief that language capabilities are static and unchangeable.

Age-related Fixed Language Mindset factor, with loadings from .72 to .76, captures the belief that age significantly limits the capacity to learn new languages. This factor includes agreements with statements like "After a certain age, you have a very limited ability to learn new languages," suggesting that students who score high believe there is a cutoff point in age beyond which learning new languages becomes significantly more difficult or impossible.

#### 4. Discussion

The findings of this study offer significant insights into the language learning mindsets of undergraduate students across selected ASEAN countries, highlighting critical aspects of language intelligence, aptitude, and age sensitivity. In a globalized world, multilingual competencies are increasingly recognized for their substantial advantages in communication, cultural exchange, and economic activities (Mercer & Ryan, 2010; Ryan & Mercer, 2012). This is especially relevant for the ASEAN region, which is characterized by its linguistic diversity and cultural richness.

##### 4.1 Language Intelligence and Aptitude

Consistent with existing literature, most students in this study endorsed growth mindset beliefs over fixed mindset beliefs regarding language intelligence and aptitude (Lou & Noels, 2016; 2017; 2019; 2020). This reflects a broader understanding that language abilities can be developed through effort and learning, aligning with Dweck's (Dweck, 2006) incremental intelligence theory. The high mean scores for growth mindset statements indicate that students believe in the potential to improve their language intelligence and aptitude, which can positively influence their motivation and learning strategies (Waller & Papi, 2017; Wilang, 2021; 2022; Sawongta, 2023).

Notably, students from Malaysia demonstrated the strongest endorsement of growth mindset beliefs and the lowest endorsement of fixed mindset beliefs. This finding aligns with studies highlighting the positive impact of growth-oriented educational policies and practices in Malaysia (Shaari et al., 2017; Fontaine & Elkheloufi, 2015). This trend suggests that Malaysian educational frameworks might be particularly effective in fostering adaptive learning attitudes and resilience in language acquisition. Conversely, the lower mean scores for fixed mindset statements among students from all countries suggest a general rejection of the notion that language intelligence and aptitude are static traits. This collective inclination towards a growth mindset can be seen as a positive indicator for language education in the ASEAN region, as it promotes the idea that persistent effort and effective learning strategies can lead to substantial improvements in language proficiency.

While English proficiency levels were not measured in this study, it is plausible that they interact with mindset beliefs in meaningful ways. Students with higher proficiency may have experienced tangible evidence of their progress, reinforcing growth-oriented beliefs that language ability can be developed through sustained effort. Conversely, students with lower proficiency might either adopt a growth mindset if they attribute difficulties to a lack of practice and seek to improve, or lean toward fixed beliefs if they perceive their challenges as stemming from inherent limitations. This interaction may help explain why Malaysian students, who demonstrated the strongest endorsement of growth mindset beliefs, could also benefit from relatively higher English proficiency levels fostered by national language policies and exposure to English in daily life. Prior research suggests that perceived competence can strengthen the relationship between a growth mindset and persistence in language learning (Lou & Noels, 2019; Waller & Papi, 2017), indicating that proficiency and mindset may mutually reinforce each other over time. Future studies in Thai and other contexts should examine both variables to better understand how proficiency level shapes, and is shaped by, students' beliefs about language learning.

#### 4.2 Age Sensitivity in Language Learning

The study also explored beliefs about age sensitivity in language learning, revealing a predominant growth mindset. Students generally disagreed with statements suggesting that age limits the ability to learn new languages, instead endorsing the view that language skills can be improved regardless of age. This finding challenges the common belief that language learning is less effective after a certain age, suggesting that educational interventions should foster a lifelong learning mindset (Yeager & Dweck, 2012; Zarrinabadi et al., 2021).

The belief in the potential for language learning at any age can have significant implications for educational policy and practice. It suggests that adult education programs and continuing education initiatives should emphasize language learning opportunities, thus catering to older learners who might wish to acquire new linguistic skills for personal or professional reasons. Furthermore, this mindset can help reduce age-related anxieties about learning, encouraging more people to engage in language learning throughout their lives.

#### 4.3 National Variations and Cultural Influences

The analysis revealed significant differences in fixed mindset beliefs about language intelligence and aptitude across different nationalities, with significant variations among students from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand. These differences may be influenced by cultural factors and educational practices unique to each country (Mukminin et al., 2015; Trisnadewi, 2019). For instance, Indonesian students' strong endorsement of growth mindset beliefs regarding language aptitude may be attributed to the national emphasis on English proficiency as a critical skill for global competitiveness (Herawati & Fithriani, 2023). Indonesia's educational reforms and policies, which focus on English language skills, could contribute to students' beliefs in their ability to improve and succeed in language learning.

In Thailand, the mixed language mindsets observed among students indicate diverse beliefs about talent and effort in language learning (Chuanon et al., 2021; Wilang, 2021; Wilang, 2022). This diversity suggests that there may be varying influences within Thai education and society regarding the nature of language learning. It highlights the need for tailored educational strategies that address these varied beliefs and promote a growth mindset across all aspects of language education. Thai educational policies could benefit from integrating more consistent messaging about the value of effort and perseverance in language learning to foster a more unified growth mindset among students.

Moreover, the differences observed across these countries underscore the importance of considering cultural and contextual factors when designing educational interventions. Educational policymakers and practitioners should recognize and leverage the unique cultural attributes and educational practices that exist in each country to effectively promote growth mindsets in language learning. Understanding these national variations can help create more culturally responsive and effective educational strategies that enhance language learning outcomes.

However, these interpretations should be considered in light of the study's methodological limitations, including the use of convenience sampling without recorded response rates and the absence of institutional-level data within each country, which may have influenced the representativeness of the findings. Additionally, future research should adopt a more extensive, stratified sampling design to ensure proportionate representation across ASEAN nations, a broader range of age groups, and varied socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings.

#### 4.4 Implications

The findings from this study provide critical implications for enhancing language education policies, curriculum design, and targeted interventions in the ASEAN region.

The widespread growth mindset among students highlights the potential of educational strategies that focus on skill development and perseverance in language learning. By reinforcing students' beliefs in their capacity to improve their language abilities, educators and policymakers can design curricula that promote a positive learning environment. These interventions should incorporate evidence-based practices that encourage persistence, foster intrinsic motivation, and enable students to achieve better language acquisition outcomes.

Significant variations in mindset beliefs across ASEAN nations underscore the necessity of culturally adaptive teaching methods. Language education strategies should reflect the unique cultural, educational, and societal contexts of each country to address diverse beliefs about language learning. Professional development programs should be introduced to equip teachers with the skills to recognize fixed mindset tendencies and foster growth-oriented behaviors in their classrooms. This will ensure a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for students from varied cultural backgrounds.

The study reveals a lower adherence to age-related fixed mindsets, suggesting a promising opportunity to promote lifelong learning. Policies and programs should emphasize that language learning is not restricted to younger individuals and can be pursued at any age. By encouraging adult participation in language acquisition programs, ASEAN countries can foster a culture of continuous learning and skill enhancement, particularly relevant for older learners reentering the workforce or pursuing new career opportunities in a globalized economy.

Given the global importance of multilingual communication, particularly in ASEAN economies that navigate international markets, language education must be aligned with broader economic and developmental objectives. Fostering multilingual competencies will not only empower students for individual success but also contribute to regional economic integration and cohesion.

Based on these findings, specific educational interventions should include the integration of mindset-supportive practices into both formal and informal language learning environments. For example, curriculum modules could incorporate reflective activities that allow students to track their own progress over time, thereby reinforcing the link between effort and improvement. Teachers can use formative assessment feedback that emphasizes strategies and effort rather than innate ability, coupled with opportunities for peer collaboration, to normalize challenges as part of the learning process. Language programs should also provide differentiated pathways that cater to varying proficiency levels, ensuring that learners at all stages experience achievable successes that sustain their motivation. To address age-related mindsets specifically, teacher training programs can incorporate strategies to challenge stereotypes about age and language learning, and policy initiatives can highlight successful older language learners to normalize and encourage lifelong language acquisition. These approaches aim to help students overcome obstacles related to age-related beliefs, thereby fostering inclusive and sustained engagement in language learning across all age groups. At the policy level, ministries of education could also launch public awareness campaigns highlighting successful language learners of diverse ages and backgrounds, thereby promoting lifelong language learning as a shared cultural value in the ASEAN region.

#### *4.5 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Studies*

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, while participants were drawn from four ASEAN countries, the sample size was not evenly distributed, which may limit the generalizability of cross-country comparisons. Future research should aim for a more balanced representation to ensure more accurate regional insights. Second, this study did not account for differences in students' English proficiency levels, which could influence their language mindset beliefs. Further studies should explore how proficiency shapes students' perceptions and motivation. Third, the study did not distinguish between students from international and local schools, whose learning environments and exposure to English may differ significantly. Examining such distinctions could provide deeper insights into how institutional contexts shape mindset development.

Additionally, gender and socioeconomic background were not analyzed in depth; future research should investigate how these factors intersect with language mindset to inform more targeted and equitable educational strategies. Moreover, while the survey items were adapted from previously validated instruments, they were not explicitly developed for the ASEAN context; future studies could create and validate culturally grounded mindset measures to enhance contextual relevance. Finally, a further limitation concerns the absence of precise response rate data across the participating institutions. Without this information, there is a risk of non-response bias, as students or faculty who chose to participate may systematically differ from those who did not, potentially influencing the representativeness and generalizability of the findings. In addition, institutional variation, such as differences in size, available resources, program structures, and language policies, may have shaped the results in ways that a general statement cannot fully capture. These differences, for example, could account for variations in participants' experiences, perceptions, or access to support. While this study attempted to mitigate these issues by including multiple institutions, the findings should be interpreted with caution. Future research would benefit from strategies to track response rates and account more systematically for institutional-level differences.

### **5. Conclusion**

This study provides valuable insights into the language mindset beliefs of undergraduate students in selected ASEAN countries, revealing a predominance of growth-oriented perspectives alongside notable cross-country differences. These findings highlight the potential for targeted educational interventions that not only strengthen learners' belief in their capacity to develop language skills but also address cultural, contextual, and age-related factors influencing these beliefs. While methodological limitations, such as the use of convenience sampling and the absence of institutional-level and proficiency data, constrain the generalizability of the results, they also point to clear avenues for future research. By leveraging these insights, educators, policymakers, and researchers can work collaboratively to design inclusive, culturally responsive, and mindset-supportive language education policies and practices that promote lifelong learning and multilingual competence across the ASEAN region.

### **Acknowledgments**

The authors would like to acknowledge all the individuals who facilitated this project, including administrators, teachers, and research participants, for their cooperation and support.

### **Authors' contributions**

Thanh Duy Vo and Jeffrey Dawala Wilang contributed equally to the data collection and manuscript preparation. Jeffrey Dawala Wilang conceived the study, provided supervision, and secured funding. Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

### **Funding**

This work was supported by (i) Suranaree University of Technology (SUT), (ii) Thailand Science Research and Innovation (TSRI), and (iii) National Science, Research and Innovation Fund (NSRF) (NRIIS number 204264).

### **Competing interests**

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

**Informed consent**

Obtained.

**Ethics approval**

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

**Provenance and peer review**

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

**Data availability statement**

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

**Data sharing statement**

No additional data are available.

**Open access**

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

**Copyrights**

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

**References**

- Advincula, J. L. (2023). Grit competency, growth mindset, and mental ability among Filipino high school students. *Literacy and Research Journal*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.18050/rev.espergesia.v10i1.2427>
- Bai, B., & Wang, J. (2023). The role of growth mindset, self-efficacy, and intrinsic value in self-regulated learning and English language learning achievements. *Language Teaching Research*, 27(1), 207-228. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820933190>
- Bai, B., Wang, J., & Nie, Y. (2021). Self-efficacy, task values, and growth mindset: What has the most predictive power for primary school students' self-regulated learning in English writing and writing competence in an Asian Confucian cultural context? *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 51(1), 65-84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2020.1778639>
- Chuanon, C., Kuroda, A., & Yuankrathok, P. (2021). Exploring Thai EFL university students' growth language mindsets: The beliefs about the role of talent and effort. Proceedings of the 6th Annual International Seminar on Transformative Education and Educational Leadership (AISTEEL 2021). *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 591.
- Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York: Random House.
- Ebn-Abbasi, F., Fattahi, N., Noughabi, M. A., & Botes, E. (2024). The strength of self and L2 willingness to communicate: The role of L2 grit, ideal L2 self, and language mindset. *System*, 123.
- Fatima Zohra, R., & Hamitouche, F. (2022). Exploring Learners' and Teachers' Preferences Regarding Written Corrective Feedback Types in Improving Learners' Writing Skill. *Arab World English Journal*, 13(1), 117-128. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol13no1.8>
- Ferris, D. R. (2010). Second language writing research and written corrective feedback in SLA: Intersections and practical applications. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 32(2), 181-201. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263109990490>
- Fontaine, R., & Elkeloufi, A. (2015). Preliminary evidence of mindsets and training satisfaction in Malaysia. *Malaysian Institute of Management*, 50(2).
- Herawati, N., & Fithriani, N. (2023). Indonesian university students' mindset about the roles of talent and effort in EFL learning. *Journal of Language*, 5(1), 1-10.
- Iribani, A., Julhamid, N., & Sabdani-Asiri, M. (2024). Growth mindset and English language learning efficacy among high school students at Sulu State College – Laboratory High School. *Social Psychology and Human Experience*, 1(1).
- Jianping, G., Roslan, S., Soh, K. G., & Zaremohzzabieh, Z. (2024). Effects of positive education intervention on growth mindset and resilience among boarding middle school adolescents in China: A randomized controlled trial. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1446260. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1446260>
- Khajavy, G. H., MacIntyre, P. D., & Hariri, J. (2020). A closer look at grit and language mindset as predictors of foreign language achievement. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 43(2).
- Khajavy, G. H., Pourtahmasb, F., & Li, C. (2021). Examining the domain-specificity of language mindset: A case of L2 reading comprehension. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2021.1956936>

- Lee, H., Lee, J. H., & Scarcella, R. C. (2023). Influencing language mindsets and English writing competence through an EAP program: A longitudinal study with latent transition analysis. *Language Teaching Research. Online Advance Publication*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688221143258>
- Lin-Siegler, X., Ahn, J. N., Chen, J., Fang, F. F. A., & Luna-Lucero, M. (2016). Even Einstein struggled: Effects of learning about great scientists' struggles on high school students' motivation to learn science. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 108*(3), 314-328.
- Lou, N. M., & Noels, K. A. (2016). Changing language mindsets: Implications for goal orientations and responses to failure in and outside the second language classroom. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 46*, 22-33.
- Lou, N. M., & Noels, K. A. (2017). Measuring language mindsets and modeling their relations with goal orientations and emotional and behavioral responses in failure situations. *The Modern Language Journal, 101*, 22-33.
- Lou, N. M., & Noels, K. A. (2019). Promoting growth in foreign and second language education: A research agenda for mindsets in language learning and teaching. *System, 86*, 102-126. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2019.102126>
- Lou, N. M., & Noels, K. A. (2020). Language mindset, meaning-making, and motivation. In M. Lamb, K. Csizer, A. Henry, & S. Ryan (Eds.), *Palgrave Macmillan Handbook of Motivation for Language* (pp. 537-559). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ma, W., Yang, W., & Bu, Q. (2024). Interconnected factors in EFL engagement: Classroom climate, growth mindset, and achievement goals. *Frontiers in Psychology, 15*, 1353360. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1353360>
- Mercer, S., & Ryan, S. (2010). A mindset for EFL: Learners' beliefs about the role of natural talent. *ELT Journal, 64*(4), 436-444. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccp083>
- Mukminin, A., Noprival, Masbirorotni, Sutarno, Nelly, A., & Maimunah. (2015). EFL speaking anxiety among senior high school students and policy recommendations. *Journal of Education and Learning, 9*(3), 217-225.
- Nadia, A. H., Herlina, & Sukmawati, F. (2024). Analyzing EFL students' language mindset to overcome their speaking anxiety: A case study. *Proceedings of The 3rd Undergraduate Conference on Applied Linguistics, Linguistics and Literature, 3*(1).
- Papi, M., Rios, A., Pelt, H., & Ozdemir, E. (2019). Feedback-Seeking Behavior in Language Learning: Basic Components and Motivational Antecedents. *Modern Language Journal, 103*(1), 205-226. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12538>
- Papi, M., Wolff, D., Nakatsukasa, K., & Bellwoar, E. (2021). Motivational factors underlying learner preferences for corrective feedback: Language mindsets and achievement goals. *Language Teaching Research, 25*(6), 858-877. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688211018808>
- Prihatini, A. P., Pangesti, F., & Wuryaningrum, R. (2024). The relationship among language mindset, corrective feedback preferences, and follow-up strategies of students in writing scientific texts. *Journal of Languages and Language Teaching, 12*(1), 104-119.
- Rui, Y., & Muthikrishnan, P. (2019). Growth mindset and students' perception of their English language teachers' feedback as predictors of language proficiency of the EFL learners. *Asian EFL Journal, 3*(2), 32-60.
- Ryan, S., & Mercer, S. (2012). Language learning mindsets across cultural settings: English learners in Austria and Japan. *OnCUE Journal, 6*(1), 6-22.
- Saedoughi, M., & Hejazi, S. Y. (2023). Teacher support, growth language mindset, and academic engagement: The mediating role of L2 grit. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 77*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2023.101251>
- Saito, H. (1994). Teachers' Practices and Students' Preferences for Feedback on Second Language Writing: A Case Study of Adult ESL Learners. *TESL Canada Journal, 11*(2), 46-70. <https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v11i2.633>
- Sawongta, W. (2023). The relationship between language mindsets and English proficiency of EFL learners in higher education. *Journal of Liberal Arts, Maejo University, 11*(1).
- Schmidt, J. A., Shumow, L., & Kackar-Cam, H. Z. (2017). Does mindset intervention predict students' daily experience in classrooms? A comparison of seventh and ninth graders' trajectories. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 46*(3), 582-602. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-016-0489-z>
- Shaari, Z. H., Amar, A., & Zainol, M. R. (2017). Exploring the mindsets and well-being of rural secondary school students in Perak, Malaysia. *Global Business and Management Research: An International Journal, 9*(1).
- Tang X., Wang M.-T., Guo J., & Salmela-Aro K. (2019). Building grit: the longitudinal pathways between mindset, commitment, grit, and academic outcomes. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 48*, 850-863. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-019-00998-0>
- Trisnadewi, K. (2019). The difficulties of Indonesian students in learning English plural form: Contrastive analysis. *Journal of English Language Education, 2*(2), 12-19.
- Waller, L., & Papi, M. (2017). Motivation and feedback: How implicit theories of intelligence predict L2 writers' motivation and feedback orientation. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 35*, 54-65. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2017.01.004>
- Wang, D., Yuan, F., & Wang, Y. (2020). Growth mindset and academic achievement in Chinese adolescents: A moderated mediation

- model of reasoning ability and self-affirmation. *Current Psychology*, 41, 783-792. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-019-00597-z>
- Wang, J., Zhou, T., & Fan, C. (2025). Impact of communication anxiety on L2 WTC of middle school students: Mediating effects of growth language mindset and language learning motivation. *PLoS ONE*, 20(1), e0304750.
- Wilang, J. D. (2021). Mindsets of high school students in English language learning. *TESOL International Journal*, 16(2), 86-105.
- Wilang, J. D. (2022). English language mindsets of engineering students. *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, 19(3), 1063-1071.
- Wilang, J. D. (2024). Exploring the mindsets of Thai undergraduate students: A comprehensive study of general and language-related beliefs. *SAGE Open*, 14(2), 1-17.
- Xu, J., & Wang, Y. (2022). The differential mediating roles of ideal and ought-to L2 writing selves between growth mindsets and self-regulated writing strategies. *System*, 110.
- Yao, Y., Guo, N. S., Wang, W., & Yu, J. (2021a). Measuring Chinese junior high school students' language mindsets: What can we learn from young EFL learners' beliefs in their language ability? *System*, 101.
- Yao, Y., Wang, W., & Yang, X. (2021b). Perceptions of the inclusion of Automatic Writing Evaluation in peer assessment on EFL writers' language mindsets and motivation: A short-term longitudinal study. *Assessing Writing*, 50.
- Yeager, D. S., & Dweck, C. S. (2012). Mindsets that promote resilience: When students believe that personal characteristics can be developed. *Educational Psychologist*, 47(4), 302-314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2012.722805>
- Zarrinabadi, N., Lou, N. M., & Shirzad, M. (2021). Autonomy support predicts language mindsets: Implications for developing communicative competence and willingness to communicate in EFL classrooms. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 86.
- Zhang, X., & Cui, G. (2010). Learning beliefs of distance foreign language learners in China: A survey study. *System*, 38(1), 30-40. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2009.12.003>
- Zhao, H., Xiong, J., & Qi, C. (2021). Growth mindset and college students' learning engagement during the Covid-19 Pandemic: A serial mediation model. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12.
- Zhao, W. (2015). *Learners' preferences for oral corrective feedback and their effects on second language noticing and learning motivation [Master's thesis]*. McGill University, Montreal.