

Educational Tourism and Language Accessibility: A Global Review of Academic Mobility and Linguistic Inclusion with a focus on Saudi Tourists

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Abstract

Educational tourism is an important aspect of the growing field of global higher education. However, language accessibility is an important yet often neglected factor that influences the academic achievement and psychosocial adjustment of educational tourists. This review critically synthesizes empirical and theoretical studies on educational tourism, English-medium instruction (EMI), linguistic inclusivity, bilingual cognitive advantages, translation technologies, and institutional language policies from 2020 to 2025, with a special focus on educational tourists from Saudi Arabia. With a particular emphasis on the case study of Saudi Arabia, the study illustrates the ways in which the ‘Scholarships, Inbound and Outbound Mobility Programs, and Multilingual Support’ offered by the ‘Vision 2030’ initiative can be linked to the achievement of the ‘Quality Education’ goal (SDG 4), ‘Decent Work and Economic Growth’ goal (SDG 8), ‘Reduced Inequalities’ goal (SDG 10), and ‘Partnerships for the Goals’ goal (SDG 17). To critically analyze such an initiative, the ‘Educational Tourism Language Accessibility Framework’ (ET-LAF) is proposed, in which English is viewed as an enabler of global academic engagement and as a language that may function as an obstacle to the creation of inequalities. However, despite these policy achievements, existing gaps remain, including inconsistent EMI quality, unbalanced allocation of linguistic capital, insufficient multilingual academic scaffolding, and inadequate pre-departure and in-country language orientation. The review highlights the need for a human-centered, linguistically inclusive approach that incorporates language policies, technological tools, and academic scaffolding. The suggested ET-LAF model attempts to provide a conceptual model for understanding the role of language accessibility for educational tourism outcomes and to provide policy insights for sending countries, receiving countries, and higher education policymakers to improve the academic and social integration of international educational tourists.

Keywords: Educational tourism, Linguistic accessibility, AI in education, Sustainable Development Goals, Multilingual support, international students

1. Introduction

Educational tourism is described as travel motivated in large part by learning, academic exposure, or the desire to acquire skills (Franco et al., 2022; Gutkevych et al., 2024). It has become an industry of great importance that intersects with higher education, global mobility, and English language-mediated access to knowledge (Patiño-Santos & Mansfield, 2025). According to UNESCO, the number of students abroad in 2023 exceeded 6.3 million, with a projected increase by 2030 (Öztemur et al., 2024). However, most definitions of educational tourism agree that it is characterized by two components: learning as the primary motivator and travel as the mechanism (Allison & Green, 2020; Chau & Ren, 2024). Educational tourism is not only an educational practice, policy, and mechanism but is also embedded in the broader human capital policy and global competition (Rooney, 2025). Most importantly, the nature of participation in educational tourism is not equally structured in terms of language, particularly in relation to access and use of English, which remains the dominant language in most educational settings in the destination countries (Tang & Matahir, 2021). This mobility is highly influenced by language accessibility, which, in turn, affects the ease of settlement and the achievement of learning goals (Habib et al., 2022; Li, 2024).

Language is not only a tool of communication but is a social, cognitive, and institutional resource that shapes access to knowledge and participation. Research from the field of applied linguistics and cognitive sciences has shown that bilingualism is associated with better cognitive flexibility, attentional abilities, and problem-solving skills, which are useful skills that students may use as they move between transnational educational spaces and multilingual educational tourism contexts (Acharya et al., 2024; Nuri, 2024). However, whereas English serves as a global lingua franca, it also simultaneously acts as a gatekeeping mechanism that presents a linguistic barrier to students from non-Anglophone speaking nations (Ashrafova, 2025). This is evident in English Medium Instruction settings, academic writing needs, administrative systems, and social interactions (Kantamas et al., 2024; Kopchak et al., 2022). In response, host institutions are increasingly adopting multilingual policies and digital language support tools, such as artificial intelligence-based translation tools and bilingual academic advising tools, to counter linguistic exclusion (Wu et al., 2021). However, access to these facilities varies, and linguistic exclusion continues to perpetuate inequalities in academic mobility and engagement (Ersoy, 2023). These concerns are highly pertinent to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, which include: SDG 4: Quality Education (ensuring inclusive, equitable

learning opportunities), SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth (strengthening human capital and employability), SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities (addressing barriers limiting mobility and access) and SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals (promoting global academic collaboration). The influence of language accessibility on educational tourism outcomes is shown in Figure 1.

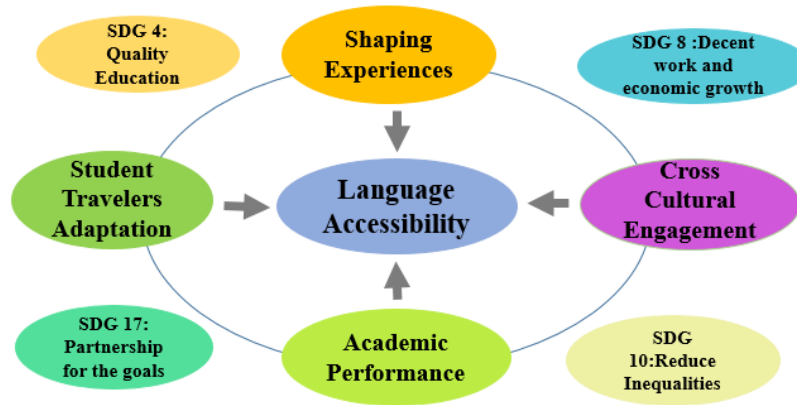


Figure 1. Impact of Language Accessibility on Educational Tourism Outcomes

The figure above illustrates the conceptual relationship between language accessibility and educational tourism outcomes. This provides the conceptual foundation for the proposed Educational Tourism Language Accessibility Framework (ET-LAF). The key factors, such as traveler adaptation, shaping experiences, cross-cultural engagement, and academic performance, are considered to influence language accessibility. The proposed framework is also aligned with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as SDG 4-Quality Education, SDG 8-Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 10-Reduced Inequalities, and SDG 17-Partnerships for the Goals.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in its Vision 2030, believes that educational tourism and scholarship programs are significant contributors to human capital development and global competitiveness (Ersoy, 2023). Saudi learners are becoming active participants in global academic mobility, and the Kingdom is simultaneously developing educational tourism for Arabic language and Islamic studies (Jenkins, 2022). Simultaneously, English proficiency remains a significant challenge in both outbound and inbound educational mobility. This review examines existing research on educational tourism worldwide, with particular emphasis on language accessibility. To address these challenges, this review introduces the Educational Tourism Language Accessibility Framework (ET-LAF), which conceptualizes the collective roles of language accessibility, institutional support, and technological tools.

2. Rationale of Current Review

The significant rise of educational tourism has significantly influenced the world of learning, presenting learners with new opportunities for academic and cognitive development. However, the role of language, especially the accessibility of academic English, has been a significant yet under-researched variable affecting the academic and social outcomes of educational tourists.

The current body of literature often investigates the concept of educational tourism from different angles, including its economic, political, and experiential dimensions, yet it often fails to recognize language as a significant variable. Similarly, the role of bilingualism and AI translation technologies is often overlooked as a significant variable, and the two concepts rarely overlap. This current literature review fills the knowledge gap by exploring the role of language accessibility as a significant variable.

In this regard, this review seeks to bring together current knowledge on the accessibility of English in educational tourism, the linguistic barriers that persist, and efforts to mitigate these barriers through institutions and technology. To guide this analysis, this review will be informed by the Educational Tourism Language Accessibility Framework (ET-LAF), which seeks to conceptualize the interplay among language accessibility, institutional factors, and technological factors in shaping the academic experiences of educational tourists.

This study was guided by three key research questions:

1. How does language accessibility affect the process of learning, adapting, and performing in educational tourists?
2. What are the roles played by language support systems in facilitating educational tourism experiences?
3. How do language barriers in an English-dominated academic setting affect academic engagement, cultural integration, and confidence?

3. Methodology

A. Samples

The sample for this review comprised peer-reviewed journals and policy reports on the interplay between educational tourism, language accessibility, bilingualism, and the use of AI technology for translation. The sources included empirical research articles, theoretical

works, bibliometric analyses, and sectoral reports published in reputable journals and databases such as Scopus, ERIC, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. After filtering sources for relevance to linguistic accessibility, bilingual cognitive advantages, educational tourism, and policy responses, the review corpus for this paper was narrowed to 70 high-quality sources, with the majority included in reputable citation databases such as Scopus, ERIC, and Web of Science. These sources provided a qualitative synthesis for the formulation of the (ET-LAF) and its policy recommendations.

B. Instruments

The main tools employed in the review process include academic database searching (Google Scholar, Scopus, ERIC, and Web of Science) and a structured keyword search method. The application of the keywords and Boolean search terms (e.g., "educational tourism and language accessibility," "bilingualism and cognitive benefits," "AI translation tools in education," "multilingual learning support," "international students and language barriers") facilitated the thorough examination of the research theme. The PRISMA method was employed in the screening, ensuring transparency and methodological robustness throughout the review. A data extraction matrix was used in the review process to document publication details, research settings, methodological approaches, findings, and their applicability to the review objectives. These tools facilitated the reliable, consistent, and analytically robust review of the research theme.

C. Selection procedure

The article selection process for the review article has been conducted using a structured four-step approach. These steps include the following:

1. Identification: A total of 201 articles were identified from Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science databases based on the pre-defined keywords used to search the databases.
2. Screening: After eliminating 33 duplicate articles, the total number of unique articles identified is 168. The unique articles were then screened based on their titles and abstracts.
3. Eligibility: After conducting a thorough analysis of the abstracts of the identified unique articles, the full texts of the identified articles were analyzed. A total of 17 articles were eliminated at this stage.
4. Inclusion: A total of 88 unique articles were identified as relevant to the review article. To conduct the review article with the required depth, 70 high-quality articles were identified.

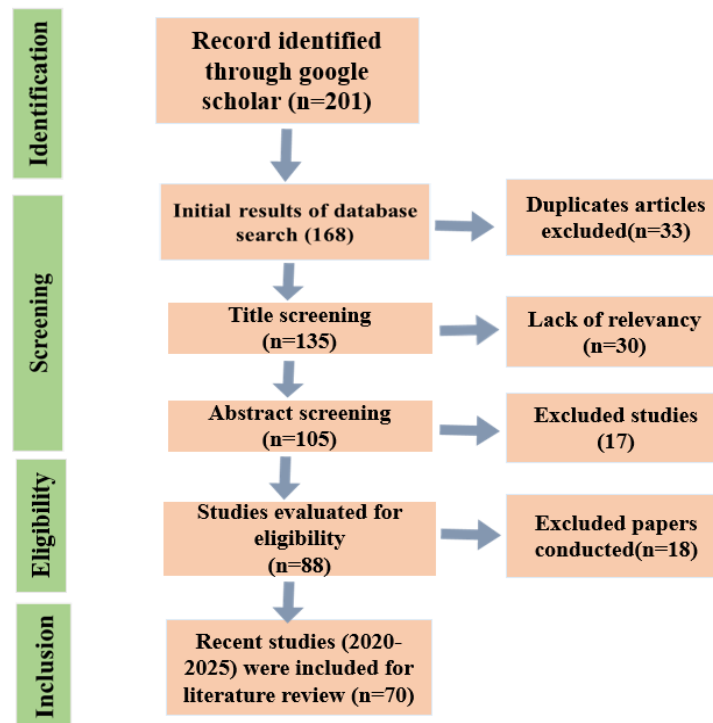


Figure 2. PRISMA Flow Diagram

Duplicates and unrelated articles were removed from the screening process based on their titles and abstracts. Articles were excluded from the review if they were not methodologically sound, had limited relevance to educational tourism and linguistic accessibility, or were outdated with respect to the time frame of the review. In the inclusion process, a final group of recent, relevant, and high-quality articles (n = 70) was used.

1 Data collection

Data collection involved extracting essential details from the selected studies, including the research design, the nature of the participants, analytical procedures, and findings related to the concepts of linguistic accessibility, bilingual learning, and educational tourism. These factors are significant for the effective evaluation of the extent to which the studies conducted to date have aligned with the purpose and objectives of the present review. Important details were presented in tables to facilitate the identification of the methodologies. Qualitative and quantitative factors, as available, were noted to ensure a holistic and balanced analysis of the data, thereby enhancing the analytical value of the thematic analysis.

2 Data Analysis

According to the PRISMA protocol, the results of the last 70 studies were analyzed with a structured extraction matrix. The results included authorship, publication year, context, linguistic accessibility strategies, and results for educational tourists. However, due to the methodological variety, a thematic narrative synthesis method was used. The results were synthesized around key themes, including linguistic capital, bilingual benefits, language barriers, AI-mediated accessibility, and institutional responses. These results revealed trends and gaps, such as the lack of longitudinal research and the absence of research on Middle Eastern educational tourism.

4. Findings

A. Educational Tourism and Global Mobility

Educational tourism has developed as a “dynamic form of international mobility,” but this is now “increasingly contingent upon students’ capacity to operate effectively in English-medium academic environments (Tomasi et al., 2020). According to Arcodia et al. (2021), the nature of participation in educational tourism is increasingly dependent on students’ ability to function effectively in an English-medium academic setting. Smith and Ilkevich (2022) and Suciú et al. (2022) similarly argue that educational tourism has emerged as a key pillar of the world’s mobility regimes, linking higher education, migration, tourism, and the labor market. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, international student mobility has surged worldwide. However, there has been a notable resurgence in international student movement globally after the COVID-19 pandemic. This is evident in post-2021 trends that reveal a resurgence in international student mobility, driven by hybrid learning, scholarship programs, and the reopening of international borders (Ullah et al., 2024). However, this return to physical mobility has reinforced the understanding that in-country immersion is essential for advanced English development, physical mobility, intercultural communication, and professional networking outcomes that virtual platforms cannot match. This also underscores the dual role of educational tourism as a site of learning and a site of linguistic testing, with English proficiency playing a key role in students’ academic confidence.

From a policy perspective, educational tourism directly contributes to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Monaco (2024) highlights that educational tourism directly contributes to achieving SDG 4 on “Quality Education” by expanding access to global learning, promoting equity, and developing multilingual and multicultural competencies. Scheyvens and Cheer (2022) emphasize that educational tourism also helps achieve SDG 17, “Partnerships for the Goals,” by encouraging inter-university, inter-government, inter-scholarship body, and inter-international organization partnerships. Such partnerships facilitate joint research projects, faculty exchanges, intercultural programs, and mobility-based agreements that support transnational cooperation. Thus, while educational tourism encourages globalization, it is important to note that linguistic hierarchies persist unless English accessibility is addressed. Overall, educational tourism has emerged as a dynamic movement with the power to enhance learners’ language competence, fostering genuine intercultural relationships, and strengthening countries’ talent pools worldwide. As international education and cross-cultural engagement become priorities worldwide, educational tourism remains an important link connecting societies.

B. Language accessibility as a determinant of success

Across the reviewed literature, language accessibility, particularly academic English, is one of the most significant predictors of the academic success, social integration, and psychological well-being of educational tourists. Wilczewski and Alon (2023), in a systematic review of over 300 studies, found that there is a lack of proficiency in the host country’s language, which acts as a barrier to cross-cultural adaptation since it restricts the comprehension of lectures, class discussions, and interactions with the host nationals, thereby compromising sociocultural adaptation and psychological well-being. Besides, the lack of proficiency in the host country’s language limits students’ ability to engage in academic writing. This is because many international students feel apprehension when using technical vocabulary and presenting arguments, especially in their second language (Lutfiana et al., 2020; Zakaria et al., 2024). In addition, linguistic barriers are not limited to academic settings. Similarly, understanding accents has become another major issue. A recent mixed-methods study in the UK by Vasquez Diaz and Iqbal (2024) found that exposure to various accents of native English speakers in English-language lectures creates a greater cognitive burden, often leading to disengagement from classroom interaction and social engagement. The researchers argue that these communication barriers to social integration are further compounded by international students’ inability to develop friendships with local students or to express themselves meaningfully, resulting in a sense of disconnection from their own identity. These linguistic barriers are present across academic, administrative, and social settings, thus perpetuating inequalities (Brown et al., 2025). They not only affect their understanding and performance but also their capacity to deal with the administration and socialize with the host community. The following table is a summary of the challenges, their effects, and the relevant literature:

Table 1. Linguistic Barriers Faced by International Students in Educational Tourism: Categories, Specific Challenges, and Impacts

Category	Specific Challenges	Impact on Students
Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty understanding academic terminology (Alam & Angsor, 2024) • Following fast-paced English lectures(Hung et al., 2025) • Completing assessments requiring advanced writing skills (Anderson, 2025) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced comprehension of course material • Lower engagement in lectures and discussions • Decreased academic performance
Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigating visa and enrollment procedures (Amarasinghe Gunawardanala Dona, 2025) • Understanding campus documentation • Managing accommodation processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delays in administrative tasks • Increased stress and anxiety • Potential barriers to enrollment and retention (Belando-Montoro et al., 2022)
Social and Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited integration with local or international peers • Difficulty participating in cultural or extracurricular activities • Challenges in building social networks (Alasmari, 2023) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced sense of belonging • Social isolation • Lower overall satisfaction with the study abroad experience

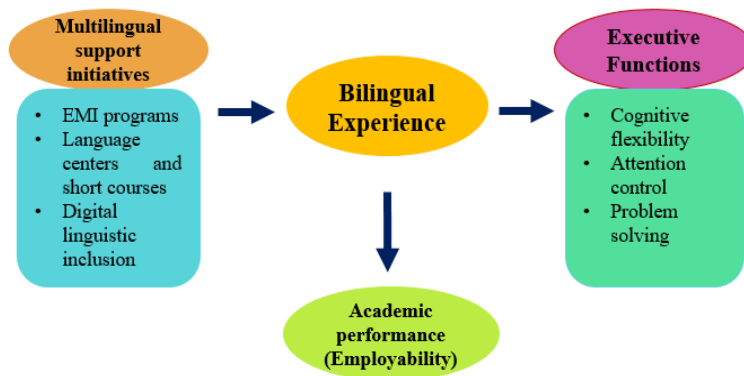
Institutional support is therefore crucial. Empirical evidence by Li (2024) and Eslit (2024) suggested that language support programs, such as ESL, mentoring, real-time translation, and AI chatbots, have a positive effect on academic outcomes, sense of belonging, and acculturative stress. A study in China, for example, found that host-language proficiency mediated the relationship between diversity experiences and personal development among students. A lack of proficiency in the host language led to acculturative stress, hindering academic confidence (Azram et al., 2025).

Viewed through the lens of SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, the lack of language accessibility in educational settings marginalizes certain groups. Students whose backgrounds are not Anglophone or dominant linguistic will be marginalized unless their linguistic and pedagogical needs are supported. It is asserted that “equitable education requires more than admission policies. A recent study by Drissi, Meftah, and Skalli (2025) emphasized the need for universities to foster linguistic inclusion, enabling every student, regardless of their mother tongue, to feel included in academic life. In this regard, language accessibility is not supplementary but constitutive for the success of educational tourism. These findings underscore the importance of language accessibility in educational tourism and thus constitute one of the pillars of the proposed framework for analyzing educational tourism, i.e., the proposed Educational Tourism Language Accessibility Framework (ET-LAF).

C. *Bilingualism and Cognitive Advantages*

A growing body of research in the field of cognitive sciences indicates that bilingualism may offer cognitive benefits that can benefit educational tourists in multilingual academic settings. Classic work by Lehtonen, Fyndanis, and Jylkkä (2023) argues that managing two active languages demands continuous attentional control and inhibitory capacities, thereby enhancing executive capacities over time. Additionally, working memory is considered an active process in bilinguals, as they constantly need to update and suppress interference from the non-target language, thereby enhancing working memory capacities (J. Chen et al., 2025). Figure 1 shows the conceptual model of the role of multilingualism in educational tourism.

Table 2. Conceptual Model Illustrating How Multilingual Support Initiatives Enhance Bilingual Experience and Contribute to Improved Executive Functions and Academic Outcomes



The figure demonstrates the connection between multilingualism strategies, such as English-Medium Instruction (EMI), language centers, and short courses, as well as digital linguistic inclusion and the building of bilingual experiences. This form of bilingual engagement enhances crucial executive cognitive abilities, such as cognitive flexibility, attentional control, and problem-solving capabilities. However,

the cognitive advantages of bilingualism are situational and not absolute.

Bellegarda and Macizo (2021) noted that recent approaches further specify the nature of the cognitive advantage, arguing that it is not simply a 'boost' in control but rather an adaptive process. Bilingualism is seen as subtly affecting the deployment of attentional systems rather than directly enhancing overall task control. The research evidence is consistent with such nuanced approaches. For instance, interpreters, whose bilingual lives are extremely time-pressured, have been shown to excel in a range of executive tasks compared with monolinguals, with the extent of their bilingual involvement seen as crucial (Hu & Fan, 2021).

Nevertheless, systematic reviews have also cautioned against overgeneralizing results, as some research has found a bilingual "advantage" in executive function, while others have reported inconsistent or nonsignificant results, especially in tasks that require verbal fluency. (Giovannoli et al., 2023). Nevertheless, meta-analyses have suggested that under the right conditions, such as the maintenance of bilingual use, high proficiency, and active language switching, bilinguals may demonstrate an advantage in inhibitory control, shifting, and attentional monitoring (Xie et al., 2022). Thus, the cognitive benefits of bilingualism not only facilitate academic performance in study-abroad settings, as demonstrated by improved problem-solving and adaptability skills, but also align with the demands of the job market, as graduates with strong executive skills are often better able to cope with the working world.

D. Digital Transformation in Language Accessibility

The role of AI technologies in language accessibility has become a focal point in ensuring language accessibility in educational tourism settings, especially with the growth in international movement and cross-border learning. AI translation technologies and captioning tools are becoming more important in facilitating language accessibility in international academic settings (Fitas, 2025). This technology enables instant translation of lectures, campus instructions, and communication from the administration and peers. This way, students with limited knowledge of the host country's native language may participate more equitably in their academic lives. Research by Asrifan, de Barros Cardoso, and Vargheese (2025) further demonstrates that AI-assisted translation may improve students' understanding of field terminology and academic confidence, which is important for inclusive learning environments essential to educational tourism. The use of AI-based translation tools improves understanding of discipline-specific terminology and increases students' academic confidence, thereby creating an inclusive learning environment vital to the development of educational tourism.

Apart from improving understanding, the use of AI-based translation tools promotes engagement within a multilingual learning environment. Captioning tools integrated into learning management systems help international students keep up with the lesson pace, while multimodal platforms offer interactive tools such as speech recognition and grammar correction (Hoque, 2025; Malviya & Rajput, 2025). Such tools play a significant role in learners' meaningful participation in the classroom. Recent empirical research by CAK (2024) and Klimova and Chen (2024) showed that the use of AI translation tools is important because it contributes to learners' social integration. In this regard, it is important to note that AI translation tools play a significant role in the smooth flow of communication among learners, particularly during group projects, events, and intercultural exchanges, which are essential to successful educational tourism.

Despite the above-mentioned advantages, scholars raise significant concerns about accuracy, cultural nuances, over-reliance, and academic integrity. Machine translation struggles with idiomatic expressions, culturally embedded words, and discipline-specific contexts, leading to inappropriate interpretations (Guba & Quba, 2025). According to a recent study by Pratiwi et al. (2025), overreliance on AI tools may also hinder the development of crucial language and digital literacy skills, posing a long-term concern for students' academic autonomy. Additionally, the risks of misusing AI tools, such as avoiding authentic learning or producing unoriginal academic work, may raise ethical concerns for the host institutions of international students. These concerns align with Goal 4.4, which not only refers to the provision of digital tools but also to the development of digital skills that are not dependent on those tools. (Vettriselvan, 2025). Modern studies therefore suggest a blend of AI translation technologies, along with human-centric language training and digital literacy instruction, to ensure ethical and pedagogically sound practice in the context of educational tourism.

E. Strategies to Overcome Linguistic Barriers in Higher Education

Universities are increasingly developing strategies to address the linguistic challenges faced by international students. English Medium Instruction (EMI) has become an important part of global higher education systems, with more than 70% of European and Asian universities providing EMI (Lasagabaster, 2022). EMI has become important for providing access to education, admitting international students, and promoting internationalization (Zheng & Choi, 2024). However, research has shown that this is not enough, as students with poor English skills will struggle with lectures, academic vocabulary, and writing-based exams. (NAGAO & Ching-Chang, 2025). Consequently, it is important that the university offers EMI with additional language support.

To supplement EMI, universities have adopted multilingual campus policies and language programs. Multilingual university websites, language support in course materials, and multilingual academic advising, including Arabic, Mandarin, Spanish, and French, have improved the university's accessibility (Jeon, 2025). Additionally, place-based interventions, such as Korea's language villages, Germany's international summer schools, and Saudi Arabia's Arabic-language institutes for non-native speakers, provide immersive environments that strengthen both language proficiency and cultural integration. These programs create low-stakes opportunities for practicing academic discourse and social communication, fostering retention, engagement, and a sense of belonging among international cohorts. These institutional strategies align with key elements of the proposed ET-LAF model, particularly those related to institutional language support and technological accessibility.

Digital linguistic inclusion adds to these strategies by using AI tools to caption lectures, translate documents, check grammar, and facilitate learning (Y. Chen, 2025). Such technologies offer the benefits of scalability in language support for large and diverse student bodies, as well as reduced cognitive load and administrative barriers. However, the literature highlights the need for oversight in the implementation of AI in education to address quality, bias, and privacy concerns (Yadav, 2024). All of these strategies demonstrate that language accessibility is an institutional concern that needs policy, pedagogical, and technological support.

F. Saudi Vision 2030 and Educational Mobility: Linguistic Dimensions

The Vision 2030 program of Saudi Arabia has greatly enhanced the Kingdom's position in the global education arena by investing in international scholarship programs, cross-cultural partnerships, research mobility, and the establishment of branch campuses in cooperation with foreign universities. (Atef, 2025). These initiatives directly contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education. The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Scholarship Program aligns with the objectives of the Vision 2030 program in the "Human Capability Development" category, as it enables Saudi students to pursue higher education at the best international universities worldwide (Nasr, 2025). These efforts not only aim to develop human resources but also to enrich academic connections across the globe and help the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia become the center of knowledge (Alanazi, 2024).

On the outbound side, the number of Saudi students opting to pursue studies in countries such as the UK, USA, Canada, the UAE, and Malaysia is increasing (Alshammari et al., 2025). Their driving forces may include learning English, advancing their professional lives, and gaining cultural exposure on an international platform. However, linguistic barriers pose major challenges for these students, including meeting academic requirements in English, coping with high language demands in academic courses, and understanding language use in new cultural contexts (Karimova et al., 2024). These linguistic barriers are a part of SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, which ensures that international learning experiences are available to these students with linguistic diversity on an equal and full basis (Ekici, 2025). Research on EMI practices in STEM courses in Saudi Arabia emphasizes the linguistic challenges faced by these students, including inequalities despite government policies (Alqarni et al., 2024; Ma et al., 2025).

Saudi Arabia is also developing its inbound educational tourism, targeting international learners for Arabic language studies, Islamic studies, and cultural heritage (Almakaty, 2025). Recent changes, such as the eVisa system for educational programs, multiple languages for tourists, and bilingual signage, are improving accessibility (Khabib & Muliana, 2025). However, there are still limitations, such as the lack of English fluency among service providers, inconsistent English medium educational standards, and insufficient multicultural orientation programs. These limitations align with SDG 17, as they promote international cooperation among universities, governments, and international educational networks to develop inclusive, high-quality, and beneficial educational environments (Ponce & Escudra, 2024). Collectively, these changes illustrate how Saudi Arabia is using international cooperation to achieve its Vision 2030 goals and how they align with the international agenda for sustainable, cooperative, and accessible education.

G. Recommendations to Enhance Linguistic Accessibility in Educational Tourism

Universities and policymakers have a central role in eliminating linguistic barriers and enhancing the quality of international education, a role that cannot be overstated. Establishing multilingual student support centers at universities would enable international students to access a range of support, including academic, administrative, and social support. By implementing academic English bridging programs, international students would have the opportunity to acquire the English language competencies they need to effectively access English-Medium Instruction (EMI) programs, as well as English writing, reading, and communication competencies related to their areas of study. By incorporating AI-driven linguistic accessibility tools, universities would enable international students to access various forms of support and promote equitable learning for linguistically diverse student populations. Policymakers, meanwhile, should expand incentives for inbound educational tourism, standardize EMI guidelines to ensure consistent teaching quality, and strengthen language teacher training programs to equip instructors with strategies for multilingual classrooms. Collectively, the above strategies facilitate academic achievement, student retention, and cross-cultural interaction while promoting SDG 4: Quality Education and SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals. Thus, the recommendations operationalize the ET-LAF framework by facilitating institutional language support, multilingual policy formulation, and technology-based accessibility.

Overall, the research findings show that the accessibility of English in educational tourism plays a significant role as both a gateway and a hindrance. While it can provide academic, social, and cognitive benefits when well-supported, it can also maintain inequalities and hinder the transformative power of international education when ignored. Linguistic strategies that incorporate language policies, pedagogies, bilingual capital, and AI are critical for sustainable educational tourism.

5. Discussion

The present review demonstrates that linguistic accessibility of educational tourism is a key factor that determines its outcomes, including academic performance, social integration, and intercultural engagement. As the studies examined here showed, students' linguistic capacity to access English-dominant academic settings is a key factor in their success, while the lack of this capacity is a barrier to their participation. As the Educational Tourism Language Accessibility Framework (ET-LAF) suggests, the relationship between learners' linguistic capability and their success is mediated by the interplay among three key factors: bilingual cognitive capital, institutional support, and technological accessibility. Bilingualism is a cognitive asset that includes attentional control, problem-solving skills, and cognitive flexibility. These cognitive assets enable learners to adapt to complex social settings. English-Medium Instruction is a key factor that mediates the relationship between bilingualism and academic performance. At the same time, the use of technology, especially

AI-based translation tools and real-time language support, facilitates better comprehension, reduces cognitive load, and fosters more inclusive participation.

ET-LAF is unique among prevailing models of international student support and language policy approaches. Unlike conventional approaches that focus on only one aspect of learner accommodation or institutional support, the ET-LAF considers the interplay among students' linguistic capacity, institutional scaffolding, and technology. This is important because it is now recognized that linguistic accommodation is not only a secondary aspect but a primary factor that influences educational equity. When the issue is adequately addressed, students receive better academic outcomes, social integration, and intercultural understanding; otherwise, they face the same level of inequity as their counterparts from non-Anglophone or under-resourced backgrounds.

The review also emphasizes the significance of context-sensitive application, especially in non-Western educational tourism settings such as Saudi Arabia. For instance, there are indications that a successful application of ET-LAF would require coordinated policies at various levels, including pre-departure language orientation, in-country support, and ethical guidance for integrating AI tools. Excessive dependence on technology or English Medium Instruction alone might only widen inequalities rather than reducing them. Moreover, ET-LAF provides a scientific framework for assessing policy and pedagogical interventions to inform strategic planning aimed at improving inclusivity, equitable access, and other policy agendas, such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 17.

Lastly, this review points to areas for future research. There is a need to conduct longitudinal studies to determine the long-term effects of linguistic accessibility strategies on academic performance, psychosocial adjustment, and mobility patterns. Additionally, future studies should focus on the relationship between bilingual cognitive capital and technological strategies to avoid replacing language development with technology. In summary, ET-LAF has developed a conceptually rich, practically relevant, and theoretically unique framework to understand and improve the phenomenon of educational tourism. By applying the constructs of this framework, it is possible to promote more inclusive, effective, and transformative forms of international learning experiences for students across the globe.

6. Conclusion

Linguistic accessibility, particularly in academic English, is a significant factor in determining success in educational tourism. Academic achievement, social integration, and cross-cultural engagement are affected. The Educational Tourism Language Accessibility Framework (ET-LAF), discussed in this review, addresses this issue. Multilingualism, language programs, and AI tools may facilitate international students' understanding, engagement, and inclusion in English-dominant academic settings. However, over-reliance on English-Medium Instruction and AI translation tools, if not implemented ethically and cautiously, may perpetuate language inequality and limit the effective engagement of international students. Language programs and academic settings must align with the Sustainable Development Agenda, especially the achievement of the following Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 4-Quality Education and SDG 17-Partnerships for the Goals. The evidence from this review indicates that a hybrid, multi-layered approach, including policy, pedagogical language, and technology, is the most effective way to achieve academic and intercultural competence. Moving forward, there is a need for longitudinal research examining the effects of linguistic accessibility on learners' trajectories. Ultimately, the ET-LAF framework is a conceptual model that informs the design of a human-centered and linguistically accessible educational tourism system that enables international students, empowers global education networks, and positions Saudi Arabia as an inclusive hub for educational tourism.

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Competing interests

The author declares that she has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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No additional data are available.

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