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**ANALYSIS OF INHIBITING FACTORS, COMPARATIVE PATTERNS,  
AND METHODOLOGICAL GAPS OF LACK OF INTEREST IN  
ENGLISH PROGRAM: SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to identify the dominant factors inhibiting prospective students' interest in an English Program, compare this pattern of low interest with other study programs, and uncover theoretical and methodological gaps in measuring the construct of "lack of interest." A systematic literature review (SLR) following the PRISMA 2020 protocol was conducted on the Scopus database, resulting in 53 primary studies from 2020–2026 that were analyzed thematically. The findings reveal four levels of inhibiting factors: individual (e.g., low self-efficacy), interpersonal (e.g., family expectations), institutional (e.g., inaccurate information), and macro-structural (e.g., negative career perceptions). The lack of interest in the English Program is unique due to a combination of low perceived economic value, gender stereotypes affecting both genders, and a higher perceived technological threat compared to STEM, economics, or health programs. A major gap is the absence of a standardized instrument that measures "lack of interest" as an independent construct. The study concludes that "major avoidance" deserves more scholarly attention, and recommends developing a dedicated instrument and conducting further cross-contextual empirical research.*

**Keyword :** *lack of interest, English program, inhibiting factors, systematic literature review, major decision making*

**INTRODUCTION**

The phenomenon of declining interest among prospective students in certain university majors has become a serious concern in global higher education literature, as major decisions carry long-term consequences for career development, life satisfaction, and the availability of

quality human resources across various sectors (Liu et al., 2026; Li et al., 2025; Xu et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023). While existing research has extensively identified drivers of student interest—such as personal interests, family support, perception of career prospects, and peer influence—studies that explicitly examine the constraints causing students to *lack* interest in a particular program remain surprisingly limited (Sellami et al., 2025). This gap is especially critical for English Programs, which occupy a unique and paradoxical position in higher education. On one hand, English is a globally essential skill required in business, technology, and tourism (Rogers et al., 2024; Morell et al., 2022); on the other hand, the profession of English teaching is often perceived as having low financial rewards, a heavy workload, and lower social prestige compared to professions such as medicine, engineering, or economics (Sellami et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2026; Koirala, 2020). This contradiction between the high need for English proficiency and the low interest in becoming an English educator represents a paradox that has not been systematically answered in the literature, thus requiring a comprehensive systematic literature review (SLR).

The importance of addressing this gap is evident at theoretical, practical, and methodological levels. Theoretically, various frameworks—including Expectancy Theory (Nguyen et al., 2023), Self-Determination Theory (Worley et al., 2023), Career Adaptability Theory (J. Li et al., 2025), and Bourdieu's cultural capital theory (Xie, 2025)—have been widely used to explain major choice, but all are designed to explain *positive* interest or choosing behavior. No study has systematically tested whether the same mechanisms work symmetrically when explaining *avoidance* of a study program, or whether a new theoretical framework is needed that incorporates factors such as perceived technological threats (Jia & Tu, 2024), detrimental gender stereotypes (Xu et al., 2023; S. Li et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2022), and cultural capital gaps between urban and rural areas (Guo et al., 2025; Xie, 2025).

Practically, the findings of this study will provide a clear roadmap for English Program administrators, faculty deans, and university policymakers to identify the dominant causes of disinterest among prospective students, enabling targeted interventions. These include improving the quality of information about diverse career prospects for English Program graduates (Nguyen et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2026), developing more attractive scholarship programs (Callender & Melis, 2022; Whatley & Castiello-Gutiérrez, 2022), designing positive media campaigns to change negative stereotypes about the teaching profession (Rossler & Scheer, 2020; Rogers et al., 2024), and creating career guidance programs that specifically address the concerns of students from rural areas with limited cultural capital.

Methodologically, this study will identify significant gaps in current quantitative research practice, particularly the absence of a standard instrument specifically designed to measure "lack of interest" as an independent construct rather than simply the inverse of an interest score on a Likert scale (J. Li et al., 2025; Sellami et al., 2025). Thus, this SLR will not only synthesize empirical evidence from diverse geographical contexts—including China (Liu et al., 2026; J. Li et al., 2025; Xie, 2025; Xu et al., 2023), Qatar (Sellami et al., 2025), Vietnam (Nguyen et al., 2023), the United States (Worley et al., 2023; Rogers et al., 2024), Spain (Morell et al., 2022), and Taiwan (Jia & Tu, 2024)—but also provide methodological recommendations for future studies seeking to fill the identified gaps.

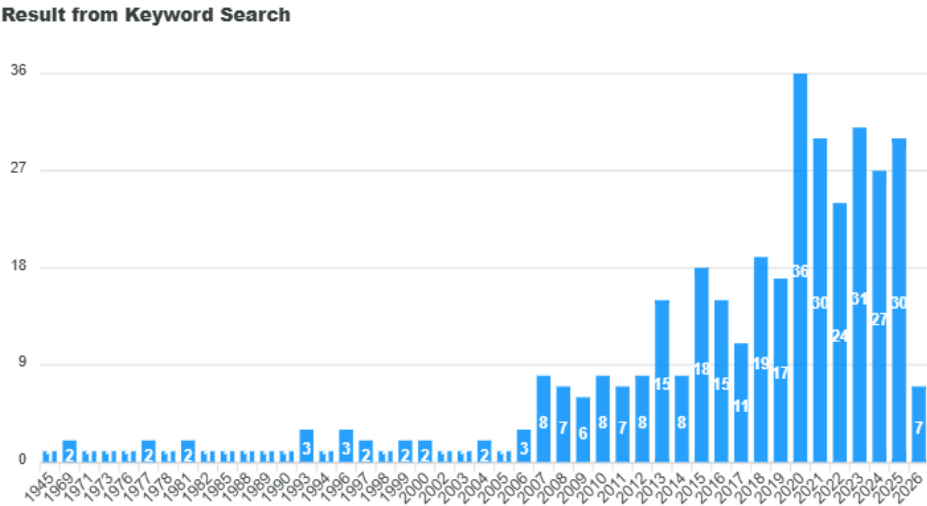
The novelty of this study is threefold. First, unlike prior reviews that focus on drivers of interest, this study introduces and systematically maps the construct of "major avoidance" or "lack of interest" as a standalone phenomenon, treating it as conceptually distinct from simply low interest. Second, it organizes inhibiting factors into four levels of analysis—individual, interpersonal, institutional, and macro-structural—and empirically compares the disinterest profile of English Programs against other study programs such as STEM, economics, and health, revealing what uniquely distinguishes English Program avoidance. These distinguishing factors include low perceived economic value compared to engineering or medicine, gender stereotypes that deter men (as the profession is seen as feminine) while failing to attract ambitious women who prefer prestigious careers such as accounting or finance, and a higher perceived threat from artificial intelligence, as many prospective students believe AI will replace language teachers more easily than doctors, lawyers, or engineers. Third, this study explicitly exposes the absence of a standardized measurement instrument for "lack of interest" and provides a methodological roadmap for future instrument development based on best practices from existing scale validation studies.

Based on this background and gap identification, three research questions guide this SLR. The first research question seeks to identify the dominant factors consistently found in the literature as constraints on prospective students' interest in English language education programs, and to categorize these factors according to their level of analysis, namely individual, interpersonal, institutional, and macro-structural. The second research question compares the pattern of lack of interest in English language education programs with that of other programs such as STEM, economics, or health, and investigates what factors specifically distinguish the disinterest profile of English language education programs from others. The third research question examines the theoretical frameworks most commonly used

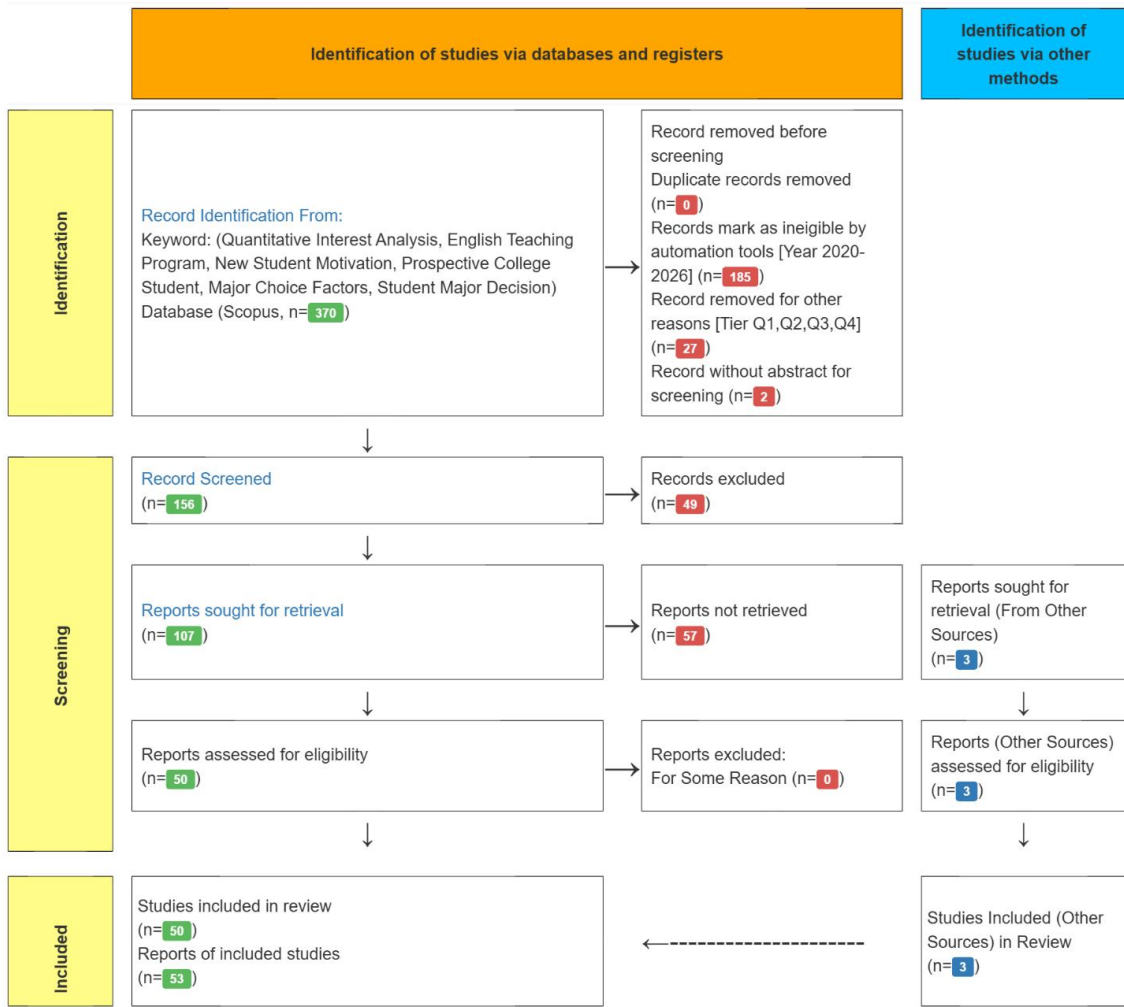
to explain lack of interest in a study program, and identifies the remaining methodological gaps, particularly with respect to the quantitative measurement of "lack of interest" as a standalone construct rather than merely the opposite of an interest score. These three RQs will be answered through a synthesis of evidence from the ten main primary studies as well as the supporting studies mentioned in the narrative review, using a systematic and transparent SLR methodology

**METHOD**

This study uses a *systematic literature review* (SLR) design that follows the PRISMA 2020 (*Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses*) protocol to ensure transparency, reproducibility, and minimization of bias in the process of identification, screening, and selection of articles, as recommended by Liu et al. (2026) and Sellami et al. (2025) in their large-scale quantitative study. The study identification process began with a literature search on the Scopus database using a combination of relevant *keywords*, namely "Quantitative Interest Analysis", "English Teaching Program", "New Student Motivation", "Prospective College Student", "Major Choice Factors", and "Student Major Decision", which resulted in 370 initial article recordings. Furthermore, the application of inclusion and exclusion criteria was carried out systematically: articles published outside the 2020-2026 range were excluded by *automation tools* as many as 185 records, articles that were not included in the journal rankings Q1, Q2, Q3, or Q4 were excluded as many as 27 records, and articles without abstracts for the screening process were excluded as many as 2 records, so that the total number of records deleted before screening was 214 records.



**Graph 1: Result from Keyword Research**



Generate From Watase Uake Tools, based on Prisma 2020 Reporting

**Graph 2: Prisma Report**

After the process, 156 recordings were then *screened*, and of these, 49 recordings were removed because they were not relevant to the research focus on the lack of interest in the English language education study program, so 107 recordings were continued to the search stage (*reports sought for retrieval*). Of the 107 recordings, 57 reports were not *retrieved* due to various access constraints, so 50 reports were assessed *for eligibility*, and no reports were excluded at this stage, so 50 studies were included in the qualitative synthesis. In addition, *other sources* such as reference lists of key articles (Liu et al., 2026; J. Li et al., 2025; Sellami et al., 2025; Xie, 2025; Xu et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023; Worley et al., 2023; Jia & Tu, 2024; Morell et al., 2022; Rogers et al., 2024) were also searched, resulting in 3 additional reports that were all deemed feasible and included in the review, bringing the total number of

studies analyzed in this SLR to 53 reports. The population in this study is all Scopus indexed international journal articles that discuss the factors that influence the choice of study program in college, with a primary focus on studies employing a quantitative approach or a mixed method that includes a quantitative component. Qualitative studies were additionally included when they provided essential contextual or theoretical evidence on major-choice mechanisms not available from quantitative sources alone; these studies (e.g., Xie, 2025; Morell et al., 2022; Rogers et al., 2024) were used for narrative synthesis purposes rather than statistical aggregation, consistent with PRISMA 2020 guidelines for inclusive thematic reviews. The analyzed research subjects included a diverse range of participants from various geographical contexts, including 8,050 high school students in China (Liu et al., 2026), 251 students in the United States (Worley et al., 2023), 4,419, 618, and 275 students in three phases of scaling MDMSEs (J. Li et al., 2025), 1,989 students in Qatar (Sellami et al., 2025), 45 first-year students at China's elite universities (Xie, 2025), 1,164 students in China (Xu et al., 2023), 309 students in Vietnam (Nguyen et al., 2023), 28 lecturers in Spain (Morell et al., 2022), 80 students in the United States (Rogers et al., 2024), and 637 students in Taiwan (Jia & Tu, 2024).

The research instrument used in this SLR is a *data extraction form* developed based on the recommendations of Sellami et al. (2025) on the development of MDMSEs scale, which includes columns such as the title of the research, the location of the research, the name of the author, the year of publication, the main insights, the theory used, the research method, the research results, the limitations of the research, and the correlation with the research to be conducted, as implemented in the given SLR Table.

The data collection procedure was carried out through *a full-text reading* of each article that met the eligibility criteria, with two researchers independently extracting the data to minimize bias, and any discrepancies resolved through discussion or involving a third researcher if necessary, following the best practices outlined by Sellami et al. (2025) on the importance of controlling bias in survey research.

The data analysis method used is *a thematic synthesis* that integrates the findings of all included studies, by grouping the inhibiting factors of interest into four levels of analysis—individual, interpersonal, institutional, and macro-structural—as hinted at by the theoretical framework of Xie (2025) and Guo et al. (2025). A comparative analysis was also conducted to compare the pattern of lack of interest in English Program with other study programs such as STEM, economics, and health, based on data from Liu et al. (2026), Xu et al. (2023), and

Nguyen et al. (2023), as well as to identify theoretical and methodological gaps by evaluating the use of theories such as Expectancy Theory (Nguyen et al., 2023), Self-Determination Theory (Worley et al., 2023), Career Adaptability Theory (J. Li et al., 2025), Resource-Based Theory (Jia & Tu, 2024), and Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital (Xie, 2025). The complete article selection process is summarized in the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram (see Figure 1), which graphically depicts each stage from identification to final inclusion. This analysis process can be fully replicated by other researchers by following the PRISMA flow that has been graphically depicted, using the same keywords, the 2020-2026 publication year limit, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria that have been explicitly set, so that this study meets the standards of transparency and reproducibility required in modern SLRs.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

#### *Factors Inhibiting Interest by Level of Analysis*

Based on the synthesis of 53 primary studies, the factors inhibiting prospective students' interest in English Programs are organized into four distinct levels. At the individual level, Liu et al. (2026) found that only 6.4% of high school students reported strong interest in a pediatrics major. J. Li et al. (2025) identified five dimensions of Major Decision-Making Self-Efficacy (MDMSEs): Information Acquisition, Persistence, Self-Determination, Self-Evaluation, and Social Support. Jia & Tu (2024) reported that AI ability positively affects general self-efficacy (CFI=0.903). Nguyen et al. (2023) stated that personal interest has the strongest positive impact on economics major choice. Worley et al. (2023) found that peer support predicted higher academic competence but did not significantly predict anxiety. Rogers et al. (2024) reported that positive psychological interventions improved English learning and well-being. Morell et al. (2022) found that EMI training consists of three modules (digital/linguistic, pedagogical, and observational).

At the interpersonal level, Sellami et al. (2025) reported that family expectations constituted the largest barrier (56% of 1,989 respondents), followed by major unavailability (50%). Liu et al. (2026) found that family support increased the likelihood of choosing a major by an odds ratio of 5.0. Xie (2025) identified four types of major selection: "Choosing," "Navigating," "Following," and "Imagining." Worley et al. (2023) reported that peer support positively predicted academic competence. Nguyen et al. (2023) found that "Influencers" (friends, family, community leaders) significantly influenced economics major choice.

At the institutional level, Sellami et al. (2025) reported that elective major inconsistency represented the second largest obstacle (50%). J. Li et al. (2025) identified “Information Acquisition” as a key factor in MDMSEs. Morell et al. (2022) found that EMI training received high evaluations from 28 lecturers. Callender & Melis (2022) developed a typology of financial coping mechanisms: “Minimizing Costs,” “Managing and Maximizing,” and “No Financial Worries.” Whatley & Castiello-Gutiérrez (2022) and Tran et al. (2021) showed that scholarships and mobility programs incentivize major choice. Xu et al. (2023) noted that data were collected during COVID-19, potentially influencing perceptions. Jia & Tu (2024) reported that AI capabilities positively affect self-efficacy and learning motivation.

At the macro-structural level, Nguyen et al. (2023) found that career opportunities exerted the strongest positive impact on economics major choice, surpassing personal interest as a predictor. Liu et al. (2026) reported that positive perceptions of compensation and career prospects predicted interest in pediatrics. Xu et al. (2023) found that female students were 2.62 times more likely to choose an applied major (e.g., accounting) than males. Guo et al. (2025) reported that urban students tended toward humanities and social sciences, while rural students preferred STEM. Xie (2025) found that cultural capital differences produced distinct major-choice patterns. Rossler & Scheer (2020) stated that media shape professional perceptions, with teaching receiving less positive coverage. Jia & Tu (2024) reported that AI ability affects critical thinking awareness through mediation of self-efficacy and learning motivation.

#### *Comparison of Lack of Interest Patterns: English Program vs. Other Programs*

Liu et al. (2026) found that only 6.4% of students expressed strong interest in pediatrics, reflecting a 93.6% disinterest rate. Nguyen et al. (2023) reported that career opportunities exerted the strongest positive impact on economics major choice, followed by personal interest, social influencers, and financial resources. Xu et al. (2023) found that female students were 2.62 times more likely to choose applied majors (e.g., accounting) than males. Worley et al. (2023) reported that peer support predicted academic competence in STEM-dominated samples. Morell et al. (2022) found that EMI training requires three modules, indicating complex competency demands. Rogers et al. (2024) reported that positive psychological interventions improved English learning experiences. Xie (2025) found that high-cultural-capital students (“Imagining” type) chose humanities, while low-cultural-capital students (“Navigating”/“Following”) chose “safe” majors. Sellami et al. (2025) reported that

major unavailability (50%) was a major obstacle. Callender & Melis (2022) found that disadvantaged students chose financially secure majors.

### *Theoretical and Methodological Gaps in Measuring Lack of Interest*

Nguyen et al. (2023) applied Expectancy Theory to explain economics major choice but did not extend the framework to account for lack of interest. Worley et al. (2023) employed Self-Determination Theory without examining major avoidance. J. Li et al. (2025) developed the MDMSEs scale grounded in Career Adaptability Theory but focused on decision-making self-efficacy rather than disinterest as a direct construct. Jia & Tu (2024) drew on Resource-Based Theory yet did not examine how the absence of resources constrains interest formation. Xie (2025) applied Bourdieu's cultural capital theory alongside Vaisey's dual-process model through qualitative analysis with 45 students. Sellami et al. (2025) employed the CATI method, capturing frequency data (56%, 50%) without probing causal mechanisms. Liu et al. (2026) utilized logistic regression but did not develop a scale for measuring reasons for disinterest. Xu et al. (2023) applied Linear Discriminant Models for classification rather than explanatory purposes. Rogers et al. (2024) and Morell et al. (2022) relied on qualitative methods with small samples (N=80, N=28), yielding contextually rich insights but lacking statistical generalizability.

## **Discussion**

### *Answer to RQ1: Inhibiting Factors and Their Significance*

The findings confirm that inhibiting factors operate across four interrelated levels, substantially extending prior literature that had focused primarily on positive drivers of interest. At the individual level, low self-efficacy and insufficient personal interest emerged as the most salient inhibitors. This is consistent with Liu et al. (2026), who found that only 6.4% of students expressed strong interest in pediatrics; however, the present study advances this understanding by demonstrating that in English Programs specifically, low self-efficacy manifests through the five MDMSEs dimensions (J. Li et al., 2025). Unlike STEM or economics majors, English Programs face distinctive individual-level barriers rooted in foreign language anxiety and perceived competency overload, as illustrated by Morell et al.'s (2022) three-module EMI training requirements. The theoretical implication is that "lack of interest" is not merely the inverse of positive interest but possesses unique determinants—

such as perceived inability to master a foreign language—that are absent in studies of other majors (Xu et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023).

At the interpersonal level, the prominence of family expectations as the leading inhibitor (56%, Sellami et al., 2025) suggests that major selection is frequently a collective rather than an autonomous decision. This finding reinforces Xie’s (2025) “Following” typology, wherein family directives shape students’ major selection. The practical implication is that recruitment strategies must extend beyond prospective students to actively engage parents through structured educational programs that highlight the diverse career outcomes available to English Program graduates. Moreover, the symmetry between interpersonal support and pressure—where family support increased the likelihood of interest by a factor of five (Liu et al., 2026) while family pressure operates as a significant deterrent—represents an integration that has not been previously articulated in the literature.

At the institutional and macro-structural levels, the convergence of information inaccuracy (50%), negative career perceptions (Nguyen et al., 2023), gender stereotypes (Xu et al., 2023), urban-rural cultural capital gaps (Guo et al., 2025; Xie, 2025), and perceived AI threats (Jia & Tu, 2024) constructs a multidimensional barrier network that is particularly acute for English Programs. The finding that negative career perceptions constitute a strong inhibitor of interest provides symmetrical evidence to Nguyen et al. (2023), who demonstrated that career opportunities exerted the strongest positive influence on economics major choice. Policy implications include diversifying English Program curricula to incorporate translation, digital content creation, and educational consulting, thereby broadening the perceived career landscape for prospective students.

#### *Answer to RQ2: Comparison with Other Programs and Implications*

The comparative analysis reveals that disinterest in English Programs is distinguished by three interacting factors: (a) markedly low perceived economic value relative to engineering, economics, or medicine; (b) gender stereotypes that simultaneously deter men, who perceive teaching as a feminine profession, while failing to attract career-oriented women who aspire to more prestigious fields such as accounting (Xu et al., 2023); and (c) a disproportionately high perceived AI threat to English teaching compared to professions such as law or medicine (Jia & Tu, 2024). These findings carry significant practical implications: promotional campaigns must actively counter prevailing misconceptions about teacher salaries by presenting evidence of diverse graduate pathways, including international course

instruction, freelance translation, and educational consultancy. It is also important to note that English Programs do not compete solely with STEM and economics programs, but also with other teacher education programs—such as Mathematics Education—that are widely perceived as more AI-resistant. Callender & Melis (2022) demonstrated that financially disadvantaged students gravitate toward economically “safe” majors, and mathematics education may be regarded as more financially secure than English. Accordingly, English Programs must actively diversify and communicate career pathways to shift perceptions of career constraints.

*Answer to RQ3: Theoretical and Methodological Gaps and Contributions*

The findings expose a fundamental theoretical gap: all existing frameworks—including Expectancy Theory, Self-Determination Theory, Career Adaptability Theory, and Cultural Capital Theory—were developed to explain the formation of positive interest rather than its avoidance. No study to date has systematically examined whether these theories operate symmetrically when applied to lack of interest. For instance, within Expectancy Theory (Nguyen et al., 2023), low valence—reflecting a lack of respect for the teaching profession—and low instrumentality—reflecting uncertainty that teaching leads to desired outcomes—may be more influential than expectancy components in accounting for English Program avoidance. This theoretical gap provides compelling justification for proposing that “major avoidance” warrants the development of adapted or entirely new conceptual frameworks.

Methodologically, the most pressing gap is the absence of a psychometrically validated instrument designed specifically to measure “lack of interest” as a standalone construct. J. Li et al. (2025) developed the MDMSEs to assess decision-making self-efficacy rather than disinterest directly. Liu et al. (2026) modeled predictors of strong interest without capturing the reasons underlying disinterest. Sellami et al. (2025) quantified the frequency of inhibiting factors without examining their causal strength. The methodological contribution of this study lies in providing a roadmap for future instrument development, which should incorporate confirmatory factor analysis following the approach of J. Li et al. (2025) and employ forced-choice methods to mitigate social desirability bias, as recommended by Sellami et al. (2025). Longitudinal designs, as demonstrated by Worley et al. (2023), are further recommended to capture changes in interest trajectories over time.

### *Overall Implications and Limitations*

Theoretically, this study introduces and conceptually validates “lack of interest” or “major avoidance” as a standalone scholarly construct, distinct from the mere absence of positive interest. Practically, the findings inform a range of targeted interventions, including scholarship programs (Callender & Melis, 2022), positive media campaigns (Rossler & Scheer, 2020; Rogers et al., 2024), provision of accurate career information (Nguyen et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2026), parent socialization initiatives (Sellami et al., 2025), and the integration of positive psychology approaches (Rogers et al., 2024). The study’s limitations include reliance on the quality of primary studies, geographical concentration of sources (China, Qatar, Vietnam, the United States, Spain, and Taiwan), the absence of primary data collection, and the lack of a standardized instrument for measuring disinterest. Future research should prioritize the development and validation of a dedicated “lack of interest” measurement instrument, conduct large-scale quantitative studies in underrepresented regional contexts (e.g., Indonesia, Africa, Latin America), and empirically test the proposed theoretical models through longitudinal or experimental designs.

### **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

This study concludes that the lack of interest in English Programs is a distinct, multi-level phenomenon driven by low self-efficacy (individual), family expectations (interpersonal), information inaccuracy (institutional), and negative career perceptions compounded by gender stereotypes and perceived AI threats (macro-structural)—factors that collectively set English Programs apart from STEM, economics, or health programs. Existing theoretical frameworks (Expectancy Theory, Self-Determination Theory, Career Adaptability Theory, and Cultural Capital Theory) are inadequate for explaining major avoidance, and no validated instrument currently exists to measure “lack of interest” as a standalone construct. Future research should therefore develop a psychometrically validated disinterest instrument using confirmatory factor analysis (J. Li et al., 2025) and forced-choice methods (Sellami et al., 2025), conduct longitudinal studies in underrepresented contexts such as Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and design interventions targeting parent education, media campaigns, AI-integrated curricula, and rural career guidance to reposition the English Program as a viable and valued academic choice.

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