Journal of Education and Teacher Training Innovation (JETTI)
Published by Pusmedia Group Indonesia

Journal of Education and Teacher Training Innovation
Volume 4 Issue 1 Year 2026 Pages 01-24
e–ISSN : 3025-3500
DOI: 10.61227
e-mail : jetti.pusmedia@gmail.com
https://journal.pusmedia.com/index.php/JETTI

Philosophy in Context: Learning Experiences of Language and Translation Students in Libya

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Abstract: This study examines the students' experiences, expectations, and perceptions of philosophy courses which is taught in non-philosophy major programs at the Faculty of Languages and Translation, University of Zawia, Libya. By using a mixed-methods research design, quantitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 250 undergraduate students from departments of English, French, Arabic and Italian languages. Qualitative insights were obtained from semi-structured interviews with 20 participants. The questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations), while interview transcripts were examined through thematic analysis to generate and triangulate key themes. The findings show that although students recognize philosophy as intellectually and ethically valuable, they consistently perceive it as abstract, demanding, and insufficiently connected to their academic specialization in language and translation studies. A notable gap emerges between students' high expectations, particularly regarding critical thinking, ethical awareness, and practical relevance, and their actual learning experiences. Challenges related to conceptual complexity, philosophical language, teaching pace, and assessment methods were prominently reported. However, qualitative evidence indicates that students stay positively disposed toward philosophy and express strong willingness to engage with the subject when instructional barriers are reduced. The study argues that these challenges came primarily from pedagogical and curricular disintegration rather than from students' rejection of philosophy itself. The paper concludes by offering context-sensitive pedagogical implications for teaching philosophy to non-specialists in Libyan higher education, emphasizing the need for applied, student-centered, and interdisciplinary approaches. These findings imply that philosophy courses for non-specialists in Libyan higher education should be redesigned through stronger curriculum integration with language and translation programs, student-centered instruction, and assessment formats that emphasize applied reasoning rather than memorization.

Keyword: Philosophy education; non-philosophy majors; Libyan higher education; language and translation studies

Article info: Submitted : 2026-01-04 | Accepted : 2026-01-30 | Published : 2026-02-07

How to Cite :

Introduction

Philosophy has long been regarded as a foundational pillar in the tradition of higher education, rooted in its capacity to cultivate critical reasoning, ethical reflection, and rigorous analytical skills that transcend disciplinary boundaries (Barnett, 2011; Alriteemi et al., 2025). In contemporary universities, philosophy is increasingly valued

not only as a specialized field of inquiry but also as a liberal arts subject that supports broader educational outcomes for students in diverse academic programs. This shift reflects global debates on the purpose of higher education, emphasizing the development of reflective thinkers who can engage with complexity, ambiguity, and moral questions in personal, professional, and civic life (Biesta, 2009; Paul & Elder, 2014). Yet, while this pedagogical vision enjoys strong endorsement in educational literature, its translation into practice within specific cultural and institutional contexts often encounters challenges that are shaped by local policy frameworks, curricular structures, and student expectations.

In Libya, the landscape of higher education has undergone significant expansion and transformation over recent decades, with a proliferation of institutions, diversification of academic programs, and an intensified focus on quality assurance and strategic planning. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research's National Strategy for Higher Education and Scientific Research 2025–2035 underscores the need to strengthen the higher education system through enhanced curricular relevance, international cooperation, and integration of research and learning objectives that respond to national development needs (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2025). Although the strategy does not single out philosophy as a distinct curricular priority, its emphasis on critical competencies and diversified skill sets implicitly aligns with the pedagogical functions traditionally associated with philosophical education, such as critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and reflective judgment.

At the University of Zawia, one of Libya's public universities with a broad range of faculties and programs, curricular design reflects a blending of disciplinary specialization with general education requirements intended to provide a holistic academic experience. The university's faculties, among them the Faculty of Languages and Translation, are structured to deliver comprehensive undergraduate programs that integrate language competence, cultural insight, and analytical skills (Ibrahim et al., 2025). Within this context, philosophy is most often encountered not as a major specialization but as a supporting course or elective designed to enrich students' intellectual repertoire. In some colleges, such as the Faculty of Education, the Department of Philosophy functions as a unit that contributes to the broader intellectual formation of students. This institutional reality situates philosophy teaching within a non-philosophy major context, wherein students typically pursue language, translation, and other humanities disciplines as their primary specialization while meeting general education requirements that include philosophical content.

The Faculty of Languages and Translation at the University of Zawia exemplifies this curricular integration. Students are exposed to philosophy-related subjects that are intended to complement their linguistic and cultural studies with intellectual skills that enhance interpretation, critical writing, discourse analysis, and ethical literacy. Although the official curriculum documents and quality assurance plans of the faculty affirm the importance of broad educational goals, such as enhancing cognitive skills and preparing graduates for dynamic socio-professional environments, students' actual experiences of philosophy courses often reveal a gap between aspirational curriculum policy and pedagogical practice. This disparity is compounded by broader systemic challenges in Libyan higher education, including

fluctuating academic calendars, resource constraints, and institutional instability, which affect both teaching quality and student engagement (Yahya et al., 2025; Masoud et al., 2025; Sulistyowati et al., 2025; Maati et al., 2025).

The rationale for investigating philosophy teaching in this specific context is multifaceted. On an epistemological level, philosophy offers conceptual frameworks and modes of inquiry that can enrich students' understanding of language, meaning, and interpretation, core concerns in translation studies (Pym, 2023). On a pedagogical level, philosophy courses have been linked with improved critical thinking and ethical reasoning skills, which are increasingly recognized as essential competencies in the 21st-century knowledge economy (Facione, 2015; Paul & Elder, 2014). From the perspective of curriculum design, constructive integration theory suggests that students' perceived value of a course depends on the coherence between intended learning outcomes, teaching activities, and assessment methods (Biggs, 2003). When philosophy is delivered to non-specialists without such integration, students may experience it as abstract and demanding even if they endorse its intellectual aims (Barnett, 2011).

At the same time, the Libyan higher education context, with its policy emphasis on strategic development and quality enhancement, provides a unique setting for exploring how non-philosophy majors experience philosophy instruction, how they reconcile it with their disciplinary goals, and what expectations they hold regarding its relevance to their academic and professional trajectories. Despite the theoretical and practical importance of philosophy education, empirical research examining students' perspectives in non-philosophy majors within Libyan universities remains scarce. Most existing studies on philosophy teaching focus on Western contexts or philosophy majors themselves, leaving a notable gap in understanding how students outside philosophy departments perceive and engage with philosophical content (Lipman, 2003; Abdulghani et al., 2025). Moreover, while prior scholarship highlights philosophy's contribution to critical thinking and ethical reasoning (Facione, 2015; Paul & Elder, 2014), fewer studies examine how philosophy "service courses" are experienced in applied humanities settings such as language and translation programs, particularly in North African or Libyan institutions. There is also limited comparative evidence that synthesizes what is known across contexts and clarifies where Libyan students' expectations and classroom experiences converge or diverge from those reported internationally.

Given the strategic importance of aligning curricula with national development goals and the University of Zawia's commitment to improving educational quality and relevance, this study aims to foreground students' experiences and expectations of philosophy courses within the Faculty of Languages and Translation. This study contributes in three ways: first, it provides one of the few empirical accounts of philosophy learning from non-philosophy majors in a Libyan public university. Second, it integrates questionnaire patterns with interview evidence to explain the expectation–experience mismatch in terms of curriculum and pedagogy rather than student resistance. Third, it offers context-sensitive implications for redesigning philosophy courses for language and translation students, with attention to alignment, accessibility, and practical relevance. By capturing students' voices and comparing

them with curricular intentions articulated in institutional quality plans and national education strategies, the research contributes to ongoing discussions about curriculum design, interdisciplinary education, and the role of philosophy in enhancing the intellectual capabilities of Libyan university students.

Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design in order to capture a comprehensive understanding of students' experiences and expectations regarding philosophy teaching in a non-philosophy major context at the University of Zawia. The mixed-methods approach is particularly appropriate for educational research that seeks to combine the breadth of quantitative data with the depth of qualitative insights, allowing for both generalization and contextual interpretation. Quantitative data provide an overview of students' perceptions, levels of satisfaction, and perceived relevance of philosophy courses, while qualitative data illuminate the meanings students attach to their learning experiences within the Faculty of Languages and Translation. This design aligns with constructivist and interpretive paradigms that emphasize understanding educational phenomena from the learners' perspectives.

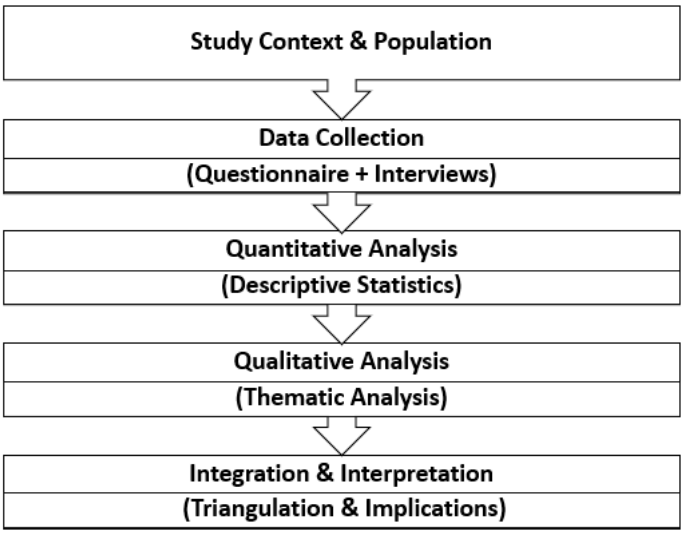

Figure 1. Research Design

The study population consists of undergraduate students enrolled in philosophy-related courses within non-philosophy programs at the Faculty of Languages and Translation, University of Zawia. A purposive sampling strategy is employed to ensure the inclusion of students from different academic years and language specializations. Data are collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to 250 students (191 females and 59 males), featuring Likert-scale items addressing learning experiences, expectations, perceived relevance, and challenges associated with philosophy courses. To complement the survey data, semi-structured interviews are conducted with a smaller group of students (20 students) selected from the questionnaire respondents, allowing for deeper exploration of attitudes, motivations, and difficulties that cannot be fully captured through quantitative

measures alone. Data collection was conducted at the University of Zawia, faculty of Languages and Translation over 2 months during the academic year 2024-2025.

Quantitative data are analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify trends and patterns in students' responses, while qualitative interview data are subjected to thematic analysis following systematic coding and categorization procedures. The integration of findings occurs at the interpretation stage, where quantitative results are triangulated with qualitative themes to enhance validity and analytical rigor. Ethical considerations are carefully observed throughout the research process, including informed consent, voluntary participation, and assurance of anonymity and confidentiality. By combining multiple data sources and analytical approaches, the methodology is designed to provide a robust and context-sensitive account of philosophy teaching in a non-philosophy major context within Libyan higher education.

Result and Discussion

Students' Learning Experiences in Philosophy Classes

This subsection examines students' classroom experiences in philosophy courses at the Faculty of Languages and Translation, University of Zawia, with particular attention to engagement, motivation, clarity of instruction, participation, and confidence in expressing philosophical ideas. The quantitative results presented in Figure 1 and Table 1 indicate that students generally perceive philosophy as intellectually stimulating, while simultaneously experiencing it as considerably more difficult than their other university courses. This dual perception reflects a pattern commonly reported in studies of philosophy teaching for non-specialist students, where intellectual challenge coexists with pedagogical strain (Schönwetter et al., 2002; Lewis & Sutcliffe, 2016).

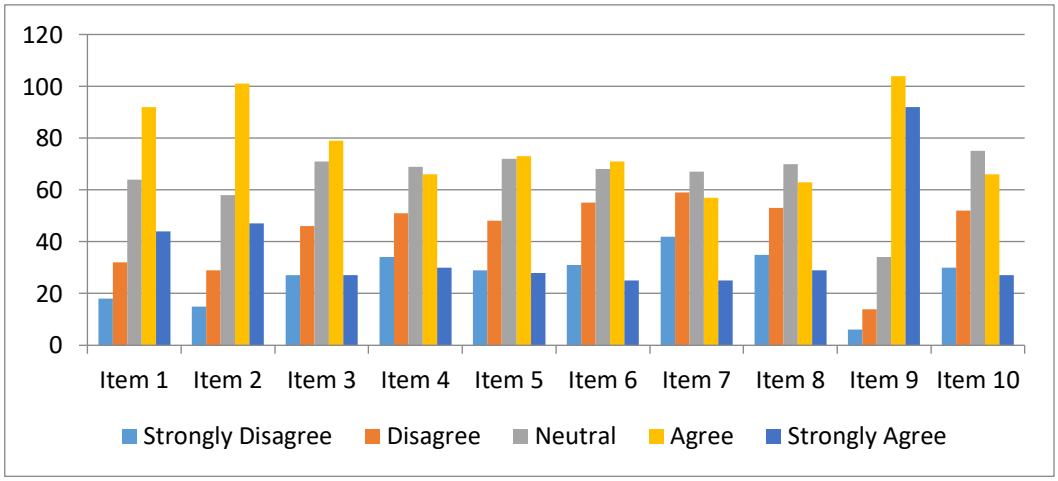

Figure 2. Students' Experiences of Studying Philosophy (N = 250)

Table 1. Mean and SD Scores of Students' Learning Experience Items

	Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	I found the philosophy course intellectually stimulating.	3.42	0.89	High
2.	The philosophy course helped me think more deeply about ideas and concepts.	3.55	0.91	High
3.	The course content was clearly explained by the instructor.	3.02	1.03	Moderate
4.	I felt motivated to participate in philosophy classes.	2.88	1.07	Moderate
5.	Philosophy lectures encouraged discussion and dialogue.	3.11	0.98	Moderate
6.	The teaching methods used in philosophy classes were engaging.	2.94	1.01	Moderate
7.	The pace of the philosophy course was appropriate for non-philosophy students.	2.63	1.10	Moderate–Low
8.	I felt confident expressing my opinions during philosophy classes.	2.85	1.05	Moderate
9.	The philosophy course was more difficult than my other courses.	4.12	0.76	High
10.	Overall, my experience studying philosophy at the university was positive.	2.97	1.02	Moderate

As shown in Table 1, items related to cognitive stimulation received relatively high mean scores. Students agreed that philosophy encouraged deeper thinking (M = 3.55, SD = 0.91) and found the subject intellectually stimulating (M = 3.42, SD = 0.89). These findings suggest that philosophy fulfills its intended role as a discipline that promotes reflection, analysis, and conceptual inquiry, even when taught outside its traditional disciplinary boundaries (Pulungan et al., 2025; Masuwd, 2025). Interview data support this interpretation, as several students described philosophy as a subject that "opens new ways of thinking" and "forces the mind to question familiar ideas." Such responses align with the broader educational literature emphasizing philosophy's contribution to higher-order thinking skills and intellectual autonomy (Paul & Elder, 2014; Abdulghani et al, 2025).

Despite this positive intellectual appraisal, students reported only moderate levels of motivation, participation, and confidence in classroom interaction. Mean scores for motivation to participate (M = 2.88, SD = 1.07), engagement with teaching methods (M = 2.94, SD = 1.01), and confidence in expressing opinions (M = 2.85, SD =

1.05) remained within the moderate range. Interview narratives reveal that this hesitation is closely linked to the perceived abstractness of philosophical concepts and the unfamiliar terminology used in lectures and course readings. Several students indicated that they often understood the general idea of a topic but struggled to articulate their thoughts in class, particularly when discussions relied heavily on theoretical language or Western philosophical traditions that felt distant from their academic background in languages and translation.

Issues related to instructional clarity and pacing further illuminate this experience. Although students moderately agreed that course content was explained clearly (M = 3.02, SD = 1.03), the pace of instruction received one of the lowest mean scores in this section (M = 2.63, SD = 1.10). Interviewed students frequently remarked that philosophical topics were introduced too quickly, with limited time allocated for explanation, discussion, or application. This finding echoes previous research suggesting that philosophy courses designed for non-specialists require careful scaffolding and contextualization in order to prevent cognitive overload and disengagement (Brookfield, 2017; Hajijah et al 2025; Kasheem A. et al., 2025).

The most pronounced result in this subsection concerns students' perception of difficulty. Item 14, which measured whether philosophy was more difficult than other courses, yielded a high mean score (M = 4.12, SD = 0.76), indicating strong agreement among students. Interview data reinforce this result, as many participants described philosophy as "the hardest course" in their program, not necessarily because of workload, but due to its abstract reasoning, conceptual density, and assessment style. This perception of difficulty, while not inherently negative, becomes pedagogically problematic when not accompanied by sufficient instructional support. As Dunne (2025) argues, philosophical difficulty should be productive rather than alienating, especially for students whose primary disciplinary identity lies elsewhere.

Taken together, these findings highlight a clear gap between the intellectual promise of philosophy and its pedagogical accessibility within a non-philosophy major context. While students recognize the value of philosophical inquiry, their learning experiences are shaped by moderate engagement, limited confidence, and a strong sense of challenge. In the Libyan higher education context, where curriculum reform increasingly emphasizes relevance, student-centered learning, and skill development (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2025), these results underscore the need to rethink how philosophy is taught to non-specialists. Adopting dialogical, applied, and context-sensitive teaching strategies may help transform philosophy from a subject perceived as intimidating into one experienced as intellectually demanding yet accessible and meaningful.

Expectations versus Reality of Philosophy Learning

This subsection examines the alignment between students' initial expectations of philosophy courses and their actual learning experiences within the Faculty of Languages and Translation at the University of Zawia. Understanding this relationship is essential, as expectations significantly influence student motivation, engagement, and satisfaction with learning outcomes (Biggs & Tang, 2011). The quantitative results presented in Figure 2 and Table 2 reveal that students entered philosophy courses with relatively high expectations, particularly regarding the development of critical thinking skills, ethical understanding, and interactive teaching methods. However, these expectations were only partially met, resulting in a noticeable gap between anticipated and experienced learning.

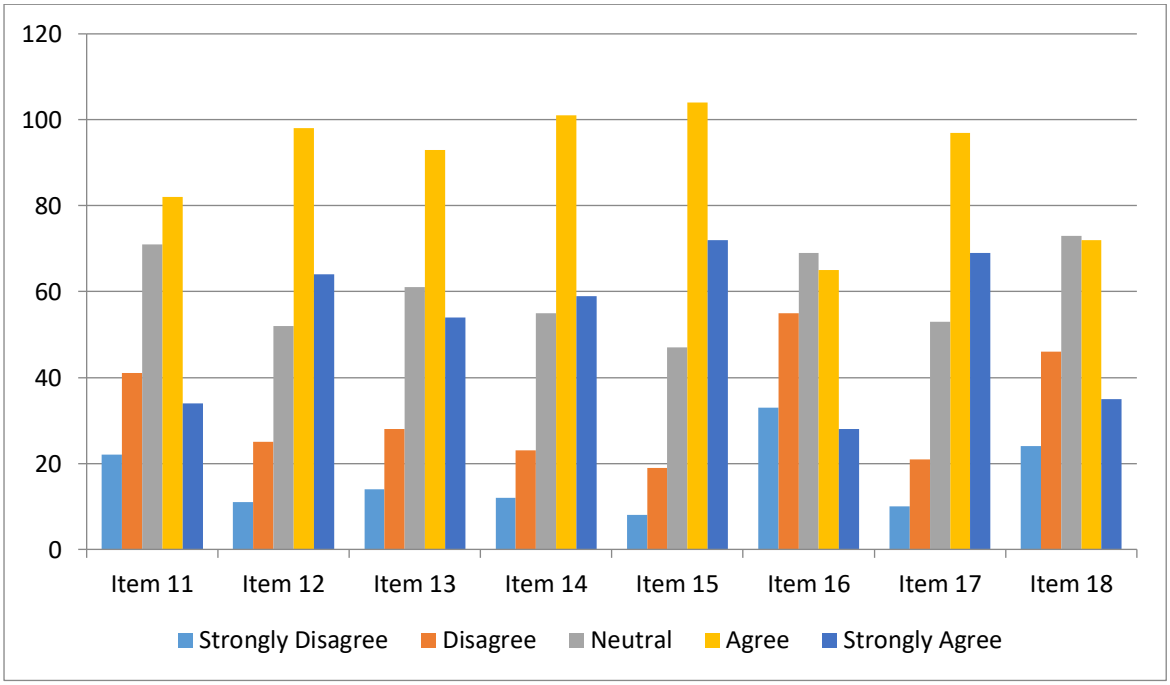

Figure 3. Students' Expectations of Philosophy Courses (N = 250)

Table 2. Mean and SD Scores of Students' Expectations

	Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	I expected philosophy courses to be relevant to my field of study.	3.36	0.94	Moderate
2.	I expected philosophy courses to improve my critical thinking skills.	3.71	0.88	High
3.	I expected philosophy courses to focus on practical and real-life issues.	3.48	0.91	High
4.	I expected philosophy courses to be taught using interactive methods.	3.62	0.85	High

5.	I expected philosophy to help me understand ethical and moral issues.	3.89	0.80	High
6.	My expectations of the philosophy course were met.	2.74	1.06	Moderate–Low
7.	I expected philosophy courses to be connected to Libyan social and cultural contexts.	3.67	0.83	High
8.	I expected philosophy to support my academic writing and argumentation skills.	3.29	0.97	Moderate

As shown in Table 2, students strongly expected philosophy to enhance their critical thinking abilities (M = 3.71, SD = 0.88) and deepen their understanding of ethical and moral issues (M = 3.89, SD = 0.80). High mean scores were also recorded for expectations related to interactive teaching approaches (M = 3.62, SD = 0.85) and practical engagement with real-life issues (M = 3.48, SD = 0.91). These findings suggest that students perceived philosophy as a subject with the potential to offer transferable cognitive and ethical competencies relevant across disciplines. Interview data corroborate this interpretation, as many participants reported enrolling in philosophy courses with the belief that the subject would help them "think more logically," "understand values," and "discuss ideas freely."

Despite these high expectations, students' perceptions of whether such expectations were fulfilled were notably lower. Item 21, which measured the extent to which students felt their expectations had been met, yielded a moderate–low mean score (M = 2.74, SD = 1.06). Interviewed students frequently expressed disappointment when philosophy courses relied heavily on theoretical exposition without sufficient practical application or explicit links to their specialization in languages and translation. Several participants remarked that while the course content was "important" or "interesting in theory," it often lacked examples drawn from linguistic practice, translation ethics, or culturally relevant communicative contexts. This perceived disconnect contributed to a sense that philosophy, although valuable in principle, remained distant from students' immediate academic concerns.

The expectation that philosophy courses would be contextualized within Libyan social and cultural realities also received a high mean score (M = 3.67, SD = 0.83). However, interview narratives suggest that this expectation was inconsistently fulfilled. Some students noted limited engagement with local ethical issues, cultural debates, or professional dilemmas relevant to language use and translation in Libyan society. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that students in non-Western contexts often struggle to relate philosophy curricula dominated by Western canonical texts to their lived experiences, unless deliberate contextualization strategies

are employed (Alouzi, 2024; Kasheem, M. et al., 2025; Alrumayh et al., 2025; Abrahem & Baroud, 2025).

Importantly, the mismatch between expectations and reality does not appear to reflect a rejection of philosophy as a discipline. Rather, both survey and interview data indicate that students remain positively disposed toward philosophy's intellectual aims, while expressing dissatisfaction with how these aims are operationalized in teaching practice. This interpretation is consistent with constructive alignment theory, which emphasizes the need for coherence between learning objectives, teaching methods, and assessment practices (Biggs & Tang, 2011). When philosophy courses promise critical and ethical development but deliver predominantly abstract content through lecture-centered approaches, students may perceive a breach of pedagogical expectations, even if they value the subject itself.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings highlight the importance of expectation-aligned curriculum design in non-philosophy major contexts. Philosophy courses taught to language and translation students may benefit from explicitly linking philosophical inquiry to issues such as meaning, interpretation, discourse ethics, intercultural communication, and professional responsibility. Experiential learning strategies, including case studies, debates, and applied ethical scenarios, may help bridge the gap between what students expect philosophy to offer and what they actually experience in the classroom (Shalghoum et al., 2025; Solihah et al., 2025; Primarni et al., 2025; Husin et al., 2025). Within the Libyan higher education context, aligning philosophy instruction with institutional goals related to relevance and graduate competencies may enhance both student satisfaction and learning outcomes.

Perceived Relevance of Philosophy to Language and Translation Studies

This subsection examines students' perceptions of the relevance of philosophy to their academic specialization in language and translation studies, as well as to their anticipated professional trajectories. Perceived relevance is a critical determinant of student engagement and meaningful learning, particularly in interdisciplinary and service courses where disciplinary boundaries may not be immediately apparent to learners (Becher & Trowler, 2001). The quantitative findings presented in Figure 3 and Table 3 indicate that while students highly value philosophy's contribution to ethical awareness, civic responsibility, and general intellectual development, they perceive its direct applicability to language and translation studies as only moderate.

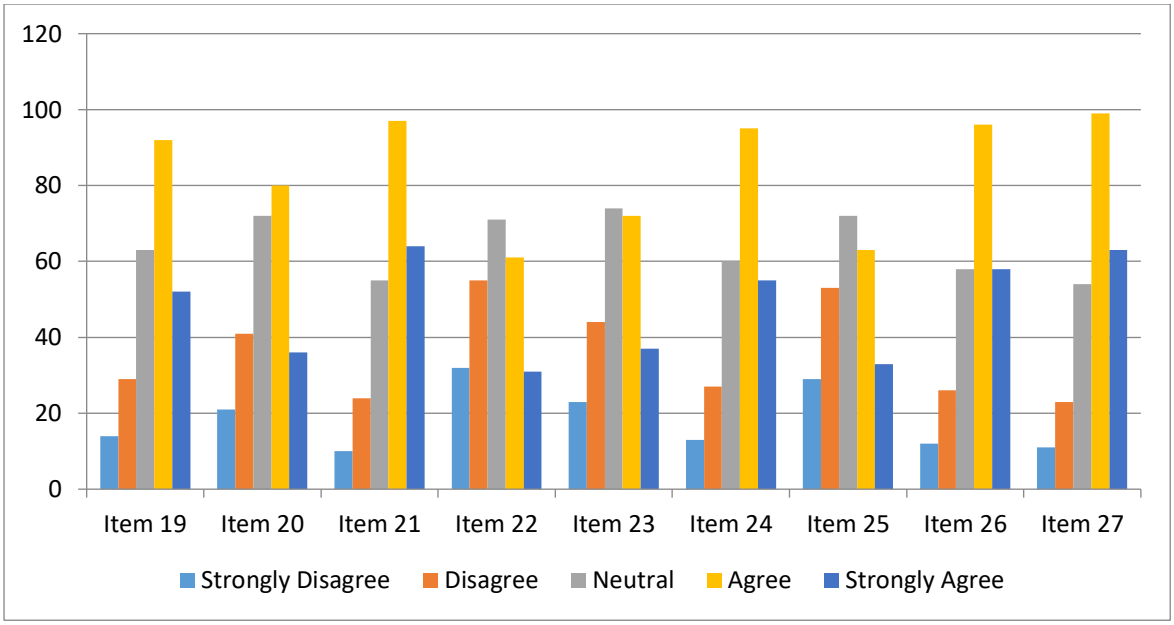

Figure 4. Perceived Relevance of Philosophy (N = 250)

Table 3. Mean and SD Scores of Students' Perceived Relevance of Philosophy (N = 250)

	Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	Studying philosophy has improved my critical thinking abilities.	3.44	0.92	High
2.	Philosophy has helped me analyze texts more effectively.	3.21	0.95	Moderate
3.	Philosophy has enhanced my understanding of ethics and values.	3.68	0.87	High
4.	Philosophy is relevant to my specialization in languages or translation.	2.89	1.04	Moderate
5.	Philosophy helps me understand different cultural perspectives.	3.33	0.96	Moderate
6.	Philosophy contributes to my personal intellectual development.	3.59	0.90	High
7.	Philosophy will be useful in my future career.	2.94	1.01	Moderate
8.	Philosophy supports responsible citizenship and social awareness.	3.47	0.88	High
9.	Philosophy is important for university students regardless of their major.	3.62	0.85	High

As shown in Table 3, students expressed strong agreement that philosophy enhanced their ethical awareness (M = 3.68, SD = 0.87) and supported personal

intellectual development (M = 3.59, SD = 0.90). Similarly, high mean scores were recorded for items related to responsible citizenship (M = 3.47, SD = 0.88) and the importance of philosophy for university students regardless of major (M = 3.62, SD = 0.85). Interview data reinforce these findings, as many students described philosophy as "important for understanding values," "useful for thinking about society," and "necessary for educated people." These perceptions align with established views in higher education literature that regard philosophy as a cornerstone of liberal education, contributing to moral reasoning and reflective citizenship (Biesta, 2009).

In contrast, items assessing the disciplinary relevance of philosophy to language and translation studies received lower mean scores. Students reported only moderate agreement that philosophy improved their ability to analyze texts (M = 3.21, SD = 0.95), supported understanding of cultural perspectives (M = 3.33, SD = 0.96), or was directly relevant to their specialization (M = 2.89, SD = 1.04). Interviewed students frequently articulated difficulty in identifying concrete links between philosophical theories and applied linguistic tasks such as translation practice, textual analysis, or language pedagogy. Several participants noted that philosophy "felt separate from translation," particularly when course content focused on abstract metaphysical or epistemological debates without explicit reference to language, meaning, or interpretation.

This perceived disconnect is not uncommon in interdisciplinary education, where relevance is often assumed rather than explicitly constructed (Repko & Szostak, 2020). From the students' perspective, the absence of clear connections between philosophy and their disciplinary practices limited their ability to transfer philosophical insights into academic or professional contexts. Interview narratives suggest that students were more receptive when philosophical discussions touched on ethics of translation, interpretation of meaning, or cultural relativism, indicating that relevance increases when philosophical content is embedded within disciplinary examples. This observation is consistent with translation studies scholarship emphasizing the philosophical dimensions of translation, particularly in relation to meaning, ethics, and intercultural communication (Pym, 2023).

Perceptions of philosophy's usefulness for future careers also remained moderate (M = 2.94, SD = 1.01). Interview participants often acknowledged that philosophy might be beneficial "in general," but struggled to articulate its concrete value in professional roles such as translators, teachers, or language specialists. This finding highlights a key challenge for philosophy teaching in non-philosophy majors: unless connections to employability skills, such as ethical decision-making, critical evaluation of texts, and intercultural sensitivity, are made explicit, students may undervalue philosophy's practical contributions (Barnett, 2011).

Taken together, these results suggest that philosophy's relevance in the Faculty of Languages and Translation is perceived primarily at a general intellectual and ethical level rather than at a disciplinary or professional level. This pattern underscores

the need for pedagogical approaches that deliberately integrate philosophical inquiry with language-related content. Interdisciplinary curriculum design, the use of discipline-specific case studies, and assessment tasks that require philosophical reflection on translation and language practices may help students recognize philosophy as a meaningful component of their academic formation. As interdisciplinary education scholars argue, relevance does not emerge automatically from curricular inclusion but must be actively produced through coherent design and instructional intentionality (Repko & Szostak, 2020; Biggs & Tang, 2011).

Challenges and Sources of Difficulty in Studying Philosophy

This subsection addresses the challenges students encounter when studying philosophy as non-philosophy majors, drawing on the strongest quantitative results of the study and rich qualitative interview data. As presented in Figure 4 and Table 4, students expressed a high level of consensus regarding the difficulty of philosophy courses, particularly in relation to abstraction, cognitive demand, emotional strain, and the perceived need for simplification. These findings highlight difficulty as a central theme shaping students' experiences of philosophy at the University of Zawia.

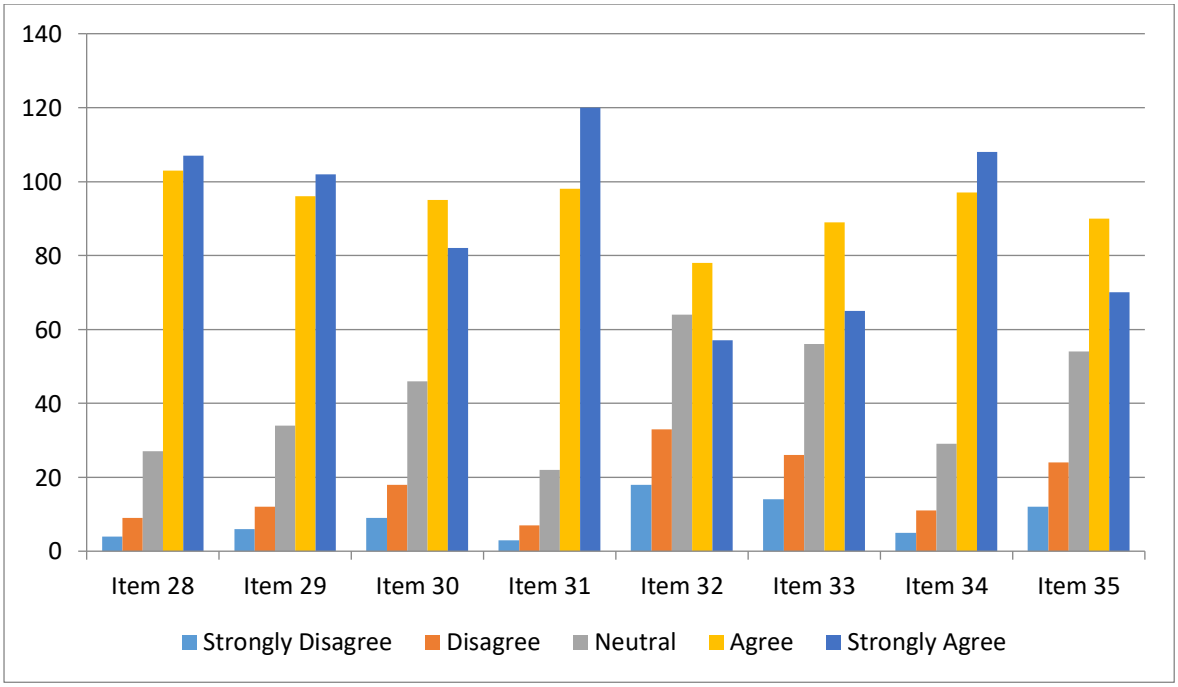

Figure 5. Challenges in Studying Philosophy (N = 250)

Table 4. Mean and SD Scores for the Challenges

	Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	Philosophical concepts are too abstract for non-philosophy students.	4.18	0.71	High
2.	The language used in philosophy texts is difficult to understand.	4.05	0.78	High
3.	I struggle to relate philosophy topics to my field of study.	3.87	0.82	High
4.	Philosophy courses require more effort than I expected.	4.22	0.69	Very High
5.	Assessment methods in philosophy courses are unclear.	3.41	0.96	High
6.	I feel anxious when studying philosophy.	3.76	0.88	High
7.	Philosophy courses should be simplified for non-specialist students.	4.09	0.75	High
8.	Limited class time affects my understanding of philosophy topics.	3.68	0.90	High

Quantitative results reveal very high mean scores for items related to abstraction and effort. Students strongly agreed that philosophical concepts are too abstract for non-specialists (M = 4.18, SD = 0.71) and that philosophy requires more effort than expected (M = 4.22, SD = 0.69). High agreement was also recorded for difficulty of language (M = 4.05, SD = 0.78) and the need to simplify philosophy courses for non-philosophy students (M = 4.09, SD = 0.75). Interview data vividly illustrate these challenges, with students frequently describing philosophical texts as "dense," "confusing," and "full of unfamiliar terms." Many participants reported spending significant time memorizing concepts without fully understanding them, particularly when instruction relied heavily on lectures and textbook explanations.

Beyond cognitive difficulty, the data also reveal an affective dimension to students' struggles. High mean scores for anxiety when studying philosophy (M = 3.76, SD = 0.88) suggest that emotional responses play a significant role in shaping students' engagement with the subject. Interviewed students often associated philosophy with fear of misunderstanding, low confidence in assessment performance, and uncertainty about evaluation criteria. Such findings resonate with educational research emphasizing the interaction between cognition and emotion in learning, particularly in intellectually demanding subjects (Illeris, 2018).

From a theoretical perspective, these challenges can be interpreted through constructivist and experiential learning frameworks. Constructivist theory emphasizes that learners actively construct knowledge by connecting new information to prior

understanding (Vygotsky, 1978). For non-philosophy majors, limited prior exposure to philosophical reasoning may hinder this process, especially when instruction does not adequately scaffold complex concepts. Similarly, experiential learning theory argues that abstract conceptualization must be grounded in concrete experience and reflective practice in order to be meaningful (Kolb et al., 2014). When philosophy is taught without sufficient opportunities for application, discussion, and contextualization, difficulty may become counterproductive rather than intellectually stimulating.

Importantly, students' calls for simplification should not be interpreted as a desire to reduce intellectual rigor. Interview responses suggest that students seek clearer explanations, relevant examples, and transparent assessment criteria rather than an easier curriculum. This distinction is crucial, as it points to pedagogical adaptation rather than content dilution as the primary solution. In the Libyan higher education context, where student-cantered learning is increasingly emphasized, these findings underscore the need for teaching strategies that transform philosophical difficulty into a productive learning challenge rather than a barrier to understanding.

Teaching Methods, Assessment, and Learning Environment

This subsection analyzes students' evaluations of teaching strategies, classroom interaction, assessment practices, and the overall learning environment in philosophy courses. As presented inFigure 5 and Table 5, students reported moderate satisfaction across most teaching-related items, with consistently lower scores for instructional adaptation to students' academic backgrounds.

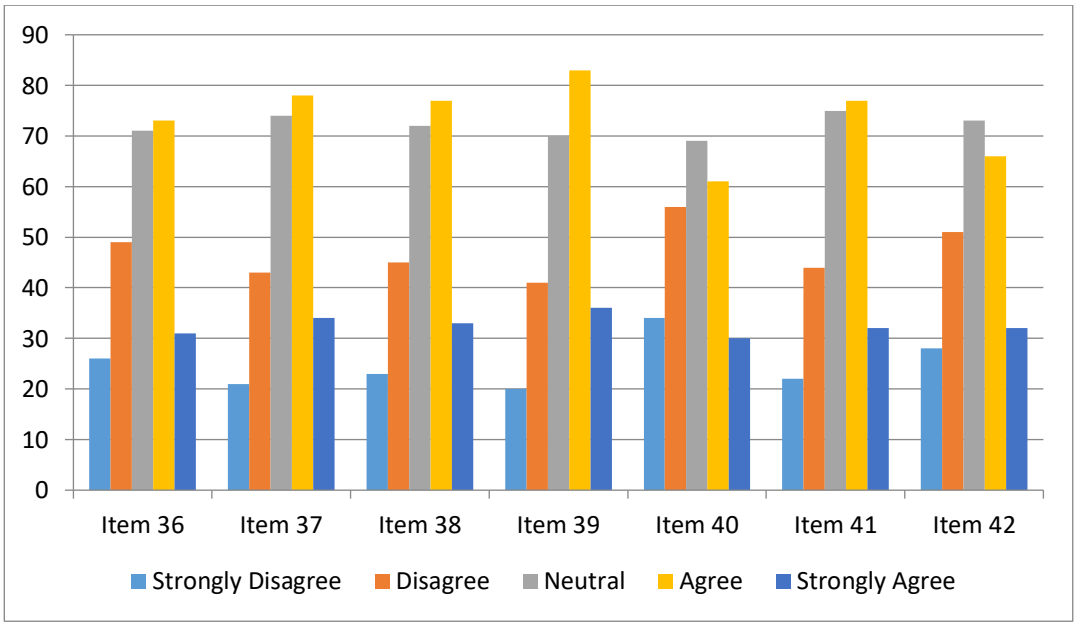

Figure 6. Teaching Methods and Learning Environment (N = 250)

Table 5. Mean and SD Scores of Teaching Methods and Learning Environment

	Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	The instructor connects philosophical ideas to real-life examples.	3.02	1.01	Moderate
2.	Philosophy classes encourage open discussion and respectful debate.	3.19	0.97	Moderate
3.	Group discussions help me understand philosophy better.	3.11	0.99	Moderate
4.	Case studies and examples make philosophy easier to understand.	3.24	0.95	Moderate
5.	The instructor considers students' academic backgrounds when teaching philosophy.	2.78	1.06	Moderate–Low
6.	The learning environment in philosophy classes is supportive.	3.15	0.98	Moderate
7.	Technology (slides, videos, online materials) supports my learning in philosophy.	2.91	1.03	Moderate

Mean scores for discussion, debate, and interactive learning ranged from M = 3.11 to M = 3.24, indicating that students perceived some opportunities for engagement, albeit insufficiently developed. Interview participants repeatedly emphasized their preference for discussion-based teaching, real-life examples, and applied case studies, particularly those connected to language use, ethical communication, or translation practice. These preferences align with research advocating dialogical and student-centered approaches in philosophy education (Brookfield, 2017).

The lowest mean score in this section was recorded for the item measuring consideration of students' academic backgrounds (M = 2.78, SD = 1.06). Interview data suggest that students often felt philosophy instruction assumed prior familiarity with philosophical thinking, thereby overlooking the specific needs of non-specialists. This perceived lack of adaptation extended to assessment practices, which students described as heavily theoretical and focused on memorization rather than understanding or application.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings highlight a misalignment between teaching methods and learner profiles. Best practices in teaching philosophy to non-specialists emphasize the importance of contextualized examples, formative assessment, and inclusive classroom dialogue that values students' disciplinary perspectives (Paisun & Masuwd, 2024; Paul & Elder, 2014; Wiresti et al., 2025). Within

the Faculty of Languages and Translation, adopting learner-centered instructional design may enhance both comprehension and engagement by situating philosophy within familiar academic and professional contexts.

Student Suggestions for Improving Philosophy Courses

This subsection synthesizes students' recommendations for improving philosophy courses taught within non-philosophy programs at the Faculty of Languages and Translation, University of Zawia. Drawing primarily on qualitative interview data and open-ended questionnaire responses, the findings reveal that students' criticisms of philosophy instruction are accompanied by constructive and pedagogically informed suggestions. Rather than rejecting philosophy as irrelevant or unnecessary, students consistently articulated a willingness to engage more deeply with philosophical learning when instructional barriers related to abstraction, contextual disconnection, and assessment design are reduced which can help them in their life.

A dominant theme across the interviews concerns the simplification and mediation of philosophical texts and concepts. Students frequently expressed difficulty with dense terminology, unfamiliar theoretical traditions, and translated philosophical texts that lacked explanatory support. Several participants suggested the use of simplified introductory readings, glossaries of key concepts, and guided explanations before engaging with primary philosophical texts. This finding aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of building new knowledge upon learners' prior understanding and cognitive readiness (Vygotsky, 1978). From this perspective, simplification is not understood as intellectual dilution but as pedagogical scaffolding that enables meaningful engagement with complex ideas. This simplification would help in understanding other dicipilnes especially those related to *Ulum Al Quran, Tafsir, figh, and Islamic law* (Alsaeh et al., 2025; Alrumayh et al., 2025; Aini et al., 2025; Ayad et al., 2025).

A second prominent recommendation relates to contextualizing philosophy within Libyan society and students' lived experiences. Interview participants repeatedly noted that philosophical discussions became more engaging when linked to local ethical dilemmas, cultural practices, social change, or contemporary issues relevant to Libyan life. Students suggested incorporating examples related to education, media discourse, language use, and professional ethics in translation. Such contextualization resonates with Freire's (2020) argument that meaningful learning occurs when abstract knowledge is connected to learners' social reality. In the Libyan higher education context, where universities are increasingly tasked with fostering civic awareness and social responsibility, philosophy courses may serve as valuable spaces for reflective engagement—provided that content is culturally and socially grounded.

Students also emphasized the need to explicitly link philosophy to language and translation practice. Many interviewees reported difficulty seeing how philosophical theories related to their academic specialization, despite recognizing philosophy's general intellectual value. Suggested strategies included discussing philosophical perspectives on meaning, interpretation, ethics of translation, and intercultural communication, as well as analyzing philosophical texts as linguistic and discursive artifacts. This recommendation reflects broader debates in interdisciplinary education, which argue that relevance must be intentionally constructed rather than assumed (Barnett, 2011; Pym, 2023; Elihami et al., 2024). When philosophy is framed as a resource for understanding language, meaning, and ethical responsibility, its disciplinary boundaries become more permeable and accessible to non-specialist students.

Another recurring theme concerns assessment diversification and transparency. Students expressed dissatisfaction with assessment methods that relied heavily on theoretical examinations emphasizing memorization or abstract exposition. Instead, they recommended alternative forms of assessment, such as reflective essays, short response papers, group presentations, debates, and applied case analyses. These suggestions align with experiential learning theory, which advocates assessment practices that value reflection, application, and active experimentation alongside conceptual understanding (Kolb et al., 2014; Masuwd, 2025). Interview data suggest that students feel more confident and motivated when assessment tasks allow them to articulate philosophical ideas in relation to real-world contexts and their disciplinary interests.

Taken together, these student suggestions carry important pedagogical implications. They indicate that the challenges identified in earlier sections—such as perceived difficulty, anxiety, and limited relevance which are not inherent to philosophy itself, but rather to how philosophy is taught and assessed within non-philosophy major contexts (Masuwd et al., 2024). Students' recommendations point toward a learner-cantered approach that emphasizes scaffolding, contextual relevance, interdisciplinary integration, and varied assessment strategies. Such an approach is consistent with contemporary models of quality teaching in higher education, which prioritize alignment between learning objectives, instructional methods, and student needs (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Setiawan et al., 2023; Maati et al., 2025).

Within the institutional context of the University of Zawia, these findings suggest that curriculum designers and instructors may benefit from rethinking the role of philosophy courses within the Faculty of Languages and Translation. By responding to students' articulated needs and expectations, philosophy instruction can be repositioned as a supportive and enriching component of interdisciplinary education rather than a peripheral or intimidating requirement. Ultimately, students' suggestions demonstrate that when instructional barriers are reduced and relevance is

made explicit, philosophy has the potential to function as a meaningful and transformative element of university learning in the Libyan context.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine how philosophy is experienced, perceived, and evaluated by students enrolled in non-philosophy major programs at the University of Zawia, with particular emphasis on the Faculty of Languages and Translation. The findings demonstrate that philosophy occupies an ambivalent position within students' academic experiences: it is widely respected for its intellectual and ethical contributions, yet simultaneously regarded as one of the most challenging and demanding courses in the curriculum. Students consistently acknowledged philosophy's role in fostering critical thinking, ethical awareness, and intellectual reflection, confirming its enduring educational value within higher education.

However, the study also revealed a persistent gap between students' expectations and their actual learning experiences. While students entered philosophy courses anticipating practical relevance, contextualized content, and interactive learning, these expectations were only partially fulfilled. Quantitative and qualitative evidence converged to show that difficulties related to abstraction, philosophical terminology, instructional pace, and assessment practices limited students' engagement and confidence. Importantly, these challenges did not result in rejection of philosophy as a discipline; rather, they highlighted the need for pedagogical adaptation when philosophy is taught outside its traditional disciplinary context.

By triangulating survey data with interview narratives, the study contributes empirically grounded insights into philosophy teaching in Libyan higher education—a context that remains underrepresented in international scholarship. The findings underscore the importance of aligning philosophical instruction with students' academic backgrounds, institutional goals, and socio-cultural realities. When taught in ways that emphasize relevance, application, and dialogue, philosophy has the potential to play a transformative role in interdisciplinary university education in Libya.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted in a single institution (the University of Zawia) and within one faculty context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other Libyan universities or different disciplinary settings. Second, the quantitative evidence relied on self-reported questionnaire responses, which may be influenced by social desirability or students' immediate course impressions rather than long-term learning impact. Third, although interviews enriched the analysis, the qualitative sample (n = 20) remains relatively small and may not capture the full diversity of student experiences across all academic years and language departments. Finally, the cross-sectional nature of the design

means that the study cannot determine how students' perceptions change over time or after specific pedagogical interventions.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that philosophy courses in Libyan universities be redesigned to incorporate simplified and scaffolded content, culturally and socially relevant examples, explicit connections to students' academic specializations, and diversified assessment methods that emphasize application and reflection. Such reforms would enhance accessibility without diminishing philosophical rigor, thereby enabling philosophy to fulfill its educational role within interdisciplinary and general education frameworks in Libyan higher education.

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