



Sports cultural lexis translation in competitive sport contexts: effects on athletes' competitive identity and achievement motivation

Traducción del léxico cultural deportivo en contextos deportivos de competición: efectos sobre la identidad competitiva y la motivación de logro de los atletas

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Abstract

Introduction: In multilingual competitive sport, translated sport terminology does not only transfer information; it can also transmit cultural meanings related to effort, discipline, resilience, success, and belonging. These meanings may shape how athletes interpret their competitive role and motivational demands.

Objective: This study examined the relationship between athletes' perceptions of sports cultural lexis translation, competitive identity, and achievement motivation in multilingual competitive sport contexts.

Methodology: A quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional correlational design was used. Data were collected from 240 competitive athletes exposed to translated or culturally mediated sport communication. Participants completed a structured questionnaire including demographic and sport-related items, the Sports Cultural Lexis Translation Perception Scale, a Competitive Identity Scale, an Achievement Motivation in Sport Scale, and a Physical Activity Quiz. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, independent-samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and multiple regression models controlling for physical activity, competitive experience, and competition level.

Findings: Sports cultural lexis translation was positively associated with competitive identity and achievement motivation. Regression models showed that athletes' perceptions of culturally equivalent, motivationally resonant, and contextually appropriate translated sport language explained additional variance in competitive identity and achievement motivation beyond general sport involvement indicators.

Discussion: The findings suggest that translated sport discourse may function as part of the psychological and cultural environment of competition. Rather than acting as a neutral linguistic tool, translation appears to be associated with how athletes interpret competitive self-concept and achievement-related orientation.

Conclusion: The study indicates that culturally sensitive sport translation is relevant for multilingual coaching, athlete development, and sport communication. However, because the design was cross-sectional and correlational, the results should be interpreted as associations rather than causal effects.

Keywords

Achievement motivation, competitive identity, multilingual sport environment, sport translation, sport communication, cultural lexis.

Resumen

Introducción: En el deporte competitivo multilingüe, la terminología deportiva traducida no solo transmite información, sino que también puede evocar significados culturales relacionados con el esfuerzo, la disciplina, la resiliencia, el éxito y el sentido de pertenencia. Estos significados pueden influir en cómo los atletas interpretan su rol competitivo y sus motivaciones.

Objetivo: Este estudio examinó la relación entre la percepción de los atletas sobre la traducción del léxico cultural deportivo, su identidad competitiva y su motivación de logro en contextos deportivos competitivos multilingües.

Metodología: Se utilizó un diseño correlacional transversal, cuantitativo y no experimental. Se recopilieron datos de 240 atletas de competición expuestos a comunicación deportiva traducida o mediada culturalmente. Los participantes completaron un cuestionario estructurado que incluía preguntas demográficas y relacionadas con el deporte, la Escala de Percepción de la Traducción del Léxico Cultural Deportivo, una Escala de Identidad Competitiva, una Escala de Motivación de Logro Deportivo y un Cuestionario de Actividad Física. Los datos se analizaron mediante estadística descriptiva, correlaciones de Pearson, pruebas t de muestras independientes, ANOVA unidireccional y modelos de regresión múltiple, controlando la actividad física, la experiencia competitiva y el nivel de competición. **Hallazgos:** La traducción del léxico cultural deportivo se asoció positivamente con la identidad competitiva y la motivación de logro. Los modelos de regresión mostraron que las percepciones adicionales de los atletas sobre una motivación culturalmente equivalente, motivacionalmente resonante y contextualmente apropiada explicaban variables adicionales en la identidad competitiva y la motivación de logro, más allá de los indicadores de la participación deportiva general.

Discusión: Los hallazgos sugieren que el discurso deportivo traducido puede funcionar como parte del entorno psicológico y cultural de la competición. En lugar de actuar como una herramienta lingüística neutral, la traducción parece estar asociada con la forma en que los atletas interpretan el autoconcepto competitivo y la orientación relacionada con el logro.

Conclusión: El estudio indica que la traducción deportiva culturalmente sensible es relevante para el entrenamiento multilingüe, el desarrollo de los atletas y la comunicación deportiva. Sin embargo, debido a que el diseño fue transversal y correlacional, los resultados deben interpretarse como asociaciones y no como efectos causales.

Palabras clave

Motivación de logro, identidad competitiva, entorno deportivo multilingüe, traducción deportiva, comunicación deportiva, léxico cultural.



Introduction

Modern competitive sport is not only a field of physical and tactical but also of linguistic and cultural activity. Athletes do not only go through competition by acting, but by talking, by labels, metaphors, orders, rites, judgmental words, and moody stories that pervade coaches, teammates, institutions, the media, and fans. In this environment, sports cultural lexis refers to the vocabulary and phraseology that are culturally based in the production, negotiation and transfer of sport-specific meanings beyond contexts. Whiteness of these lexis into other languages, the task can hardly be value-neutral; words that involve effort, sacrifice, aggression, discipline, resilience, leadership, fair play or winning mentality tend to have the values that are conditioned by specific sporting traditions and social norms. Translation in competitive sport therefore goes beyond lexical replacement; it is a process of cultural mediation which can transform the way athletes define the need of performance, role demands and success in itself. Studies are making consistent acknowledgement that the discourse of sport is connotatively thick and culturally distinctive, thus making it overly important that translation is a key issue in meaning transfer in international sport contexts (Huo and Yuan, 2022). At the same time, sport psychology shows that identity and motivation are both extremely context-dependent, responding to such cues as language, social interaction, and symbolic framing (Stevens et al., 2024; Uğraş et al., 2024).

The growing internationalization of the elite and developmental sport highlights the topicality of the issue. Sportsmen train more and perform in the multilingual settings when coaching instructions, training programs, psychological tests, recovery regimes, and organization principles are translated and adjusted to the cross-cultural applications. This multilingual fact stems out of academies and national federations to universities, clubs, rehabilitation settings and international sport events. In these areas, linguistic transfer does not only affect the understanding, but also authority, membership, the flavor and perceived gravitas of the performance messages. The research on translated and adapted sport related instruments has shown that the language transfer in sport should consider both the cultural equivalence and the semantic accuracy. The recent validation studies of the Korean version of the Student-Athletes Motivation towards Sports and Academics Questionnaire, the Croatian Athlete Psychological Strain Questionnaire and the Chinese Injury-Psychological Readiness to Return to Sport scale all point to the fact that when sport meanings are transferred across languages and cultures, they are likely to shift and require careful adaptation processes to maintain psychological relevance (Lee et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2025; Sore et al., 2024). These results support the wider claim that translation activities in sport may have an effect on the way athletes perceive themselves, their ambitions and their involvement in achievement-based systems.

The importance of these considerations is heightened by the way these considerations are viewed through the aspect of competitive identity. The concept of athletic identity is normally perceived as the extent to which one associates itself with the athlete role; the recent literature has shown that this identity is not a given concept but is socially constructed, relational and even contextually intensified in the day to day interactions in an athletic context. Discipline, self-presentation, coaching feedback and peer recognition routines help the young athletes to develop and exhibit athletic identity whereas more specialized sport athletes tend to internalize greater role exclusivity and emotional attachment in sport (Skilbred et al., 2024; Choudhury et al., 2024). The discourse used to describe an athlete as elite, talented, mentally tough, replaceable, or committed in competitive situations may solidify or disturb the identity of an athlete. The fact that athletic identity is linked to sport participation patterns, psychosocial adjustment, role salience, and vulnerability in transition or injury can be supported in the framework of empirical studies on the topic conducted among youth and collegiate and rehabilitation groups (Podvin et al., 2024; Stevens et al., 2024). Consequently, in the event that identity is partly constructed by means of discourse, the translated sports cultural lexis can serve as an identity-making, but not as a communicative facilitating practice.

Recent research points to also suggest that the concept of identity in sport is closely related to social identity processes. Athletes do not simply refer to each other as individuals, they refer to themselves as teamers, institutional, nationers, and performance communities. Social identity approach to athlete mental health underlines that a sense of belonging to groups of individuals, a set of shared norms and shared meanings may support or damage wellbeing in relation to the ways these meanings are structured and led (Stevens et al., 2024). Similarly, sport involvement has been revealed to make social identity



stronger among university students, which implies that sporting participation helps develop the identification with the cherished social groups and norms (Ji et al., 2024). Translated lexis might serve to open up such group membership in the multilingual or transnational sport setting. A cultural force that is internalized through an athlete who embraces the slogans of the team, inspirational stories, and metaphors of the performance may make the athlete feel more part and parcel of the performance culture, but a literal or culturally flattened translation can hamper this linkage. In this sense, translation determines not only interpretation but also belonging, figurative identification and assimilation of group competitive values.

The second theoretical anchor this study will use is achievement motivation. In competitive sport motivation cannot be narrowed down to an overall wish to play well, it involves competence beliefs, success expectation, value of the task, persistence and the ratio between intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. The latest research on the motivation of sport shows that psychological climate, social support, coaching style, achievement goal orientation, and domain-specific value structures all affect motivational processes (Niehues et al., 2024; Alkasasbeh and Akroush, 2025). The study of Academic and Athletic Motivation Scale Student-Athletes further indicates that motivation in sport should not be considered a unitary trait but a contextual factor since athletes distinguish between domains and attribute a meaning to sport-specific effort with the help of culturally constructed expectations and values (Niehues et al., 2024). In this respect, the motivation can be impacted by the translated sport lexis changing the performance demands framing, e.g., a word that can be transliterated as challenge instead of pressure, mastery instead of domination or commitment instead of obedience can trigger alternative motivational orientations.

Identity and motivation have been more visible in studies in recent times. The study on adolescent student-athletes demonstrates that there is a significant within-domain correlation between athletic identity and athletic motivation, which means that the closer athletes are to viewing sport as the central item of their self-concept, the higher the chances that they will be willing to invest motivational resources into that domain (Niehues et al., 2025). Similar studies on passion and athlete identity indicate that this connection is mediated and moderated by dedication, which supports the perspective that sport identity and motivational energy do not work independently but co-evolve with each other (Uğraş et al., 2024). The motivation also connects with selection and development: the latest findings imply that achievement motivation and goal orientations, as well as self-determined forms of regulation, are viewed as the more and more important variable in talent selection since they regulate the persistence, adaptation, and long-term development (Brinkmöller et al., 2024). People put these studies together suggests that any process in language that is able to influence the identity meaning can influence the motivational structure as well. This is where sports cultural lexis translation comes into play as a theoretically important one. When translation changes the comprehension of cultural meaning of effort, sacrifice, ambition or failure among athletes, it might also change their achievement motivation.

One of the major locations in which the interaction occurs is the coach-athlete relationship. Coaching discourse is never informational, it has power, affect, evaluation and cultural ideology. According to recent research, quality of coach athlete relationship is a predictor of training engagement and skill development, whereas coach-centered relational climates predict emotional intelligence, athlete engagement, burnout, and perceived team performance (Luo et al., 2025; Pan and Sui, 2025; Wang and Lian, 2025). Studies of leadership style also show that democratic leadership helps to facilitate the engagement of athletes making perceived social support and task-oriented objectives more beneficial, but controlling types of leadership have no such effects (Li and Xing, 2025). In a multilingual environment, the mediating effects of these relationships are language choice and quality of translation. A translation of coaching messages so that it sounds culturally responsive could save inspirational tone and interpersonal intimacy, whereas when translated too literally, the balance between power and guidance would be compromised. As a result, translation can have an impact on the perceptions of the athletes as regards to coaching legitimacy, emotional support and motivational demand.

This argument is also supported by achievement goal theory and self-determination theory. It has been shown that the behavior of coach leadership, the achievement goal orientation, and the basic psychological needs together suggest athlete engagement and supportive climates contribute to more adaptive motivational consequences (Li et al., 2025). Similar results indicate that perceived support and mastery-



mind objectives are more likely to be supported by democratic leadership, whereas maladaptive motivational climates increase the risk of burnout (Li and Xing, 2025; Wang and Lian, 2025). These models justify the relevance of translation: culture of lexis of sports encompasses sports cultural lexis, which is one of the means via which mastery, ego orientation, control, support, belonging, and competence are conveyed. Words are not foreign to motivational climate; they are such that they aid in its makeup. Obviously, the competitive sport translated lexicon can lead to the situation due to which athletes perceive their surrounding as either an autonomy-supportive or a controlling, as a mastery-oriented or an ego-threatening, as inclusive or exclusionary. This is extended to translation as well, where translators are part of the motivational architecture of sport, especially in a situation where the athletes will be subjected to high-performance demands, but where they will be a cross-linguistic environment.

Research on transitions, injury and psychosocial strain also supports the need of this perspective. Athletic identity may be both a strength and a threat: it enhances devotion and purpose, but also may become a source of pain when athletes experience marginalization, harm, mistreatment, or role loss. In the literature, athletic identity is associated with the specialization patterns of youth sports, rehabilitation processes, the disclosure of emotional abuse, and post-injury identity disruption (Choudhury et al., 2024; Muhonen et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2026). The language of describing injury, return to sport, psychological preparedness, or athlete worthy in translation-sensitive settings may result in maintaining the feeling of competence and continuity among athletes or further alienation. The research on translation and adaptation in the rehabilitation setting proves that the psychological preparedness of athletes is quantified and manifested in culturally specific terms, meaning that poor translation can lead to the situation when the conditions and demands of athletes can be misrepresented (Liu et al., 2025). The findings imply that language transfer does not belong to peripheral culture of performance; it has implications on self-concept, resilience and long-term pursuit of goals.

The other topical area of research is related to two-career and institutional sport. Student-athletes work in dual lingual and normative regions such as sport, education, administration, and career planning. Recent research indicates that athletes make a very clear distinction between academic and athletic types of motivation and identity, as well as that institutional support systems do not exist evenly (Niehues et al., 2025; Gjaka et al., 2024). Due to the constant nature of these athletes in terms of their movements among various discourse communities, translation comes into the picture as far as sense-making of competing expectations is concerned. Words related to excellence, professionalism, self-management, sacrifice and future orientation might not have the same strength in different languages or in different institutions. In cases where cultural subtlety is not conveyed through translation, athletes could feel motivational discontinuity or ineffective correspondence between institutional speeches and experienced sporting self. This argument is particularly relevant with the international avenues whereby athletes are recruited, trained, evaluated and marketed in different languages other than their native ones.

Despite growing research on athletic identity, motivational climate, coach-athlete communication, and cross-cultural adaptation of sport-related instruments, limited attention has been given to translated sports cultural lexis as a psychologically meaningful component of multilingual sport environments. Most sport translation studies focus on terminology, event communication, or linguistic equivalence, while sport psychology studies often treat language as a background condition rather than as an active part of the competitive environment. This creates a gap in understanding how athletes interpret translated sport expressions that carry cultural meanings of discipline, sacrifice, resilience, excellence, and competitive belonging.

The present study addresses this gap by examining whether athletes' perceptions of translated sports cultural lexis are associated with competitive identity and achievement motivation. Specifically, the study aims to: (1) examine the relationship between perceived quality of sports cultural lexis translation and competitive identity; (2) examine the relationship between perceived quality of sports cultural lexis translation and achievement motivation; and (3) determine whether translated sports cultural lexis predicts competitive identity and achievement motivation after controlling for physical activity, competitive experience, and level of competition. By integrating translation studies and sport psychology, the study positions translated sport language as a potential part of the cultural and motivational climate in multilingual competitive sport.



Method

The present study used a quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional correlational design. This design was selected because the purpose was to examine measurable relationships among athletes' perceptions of sports cultural lexis translation, competitive identity, and achievement motivation, rather than to manipulate variables experimentally or conduct qualitative discourse interpretation. The study was therefore positioned within an explanatory correlational framework: first, to identify the direction and strength of associations among the main variables, and second, to estimate the predictive contribution of translated sports cultural lexis after accounting for selected sport-involvement variables.

A cross-sectional approach was appropriate because data were collected from athletes at one point in time within naturally occurring multilingual sport contexts. The design allowed the study to examine how athletes exposed to translated coaching language, motivational expressions, team communication, competition instructions, and sport-related terminology evaluated the clarity, cultural equivalence, motivational resonance, and contextual appropriateness of translated sport discourse. Because the study was non-experimental, the findings are interpreted as relational and predictive rather than causal.

Participants

The sample population included athletes who are enrolled in organized competitive sport programs (regional, national, and university levels). Inclusion requirements included having a sporting background which covered individual or team events, regular training and competition in an environment where sport related language was translated, adapted or mediated between at least two languages; this included clubs, federations, university sports departments and private training centers. The participants had to be 18-30 years old and had at least two years of competitive sport experience and have been exposed to the sport discourse of translation through coaching instructions, team communication, sport manuals, competition rules or media content. Those athletes that were not experienced in multilingual sport communication or those who failed to finish the entire questionnaire were not included in the final analysis.

Purposive, non-probability sampling approach was employed because of a need to recruit athletes who are particularly exposed to multi-lingual competitive sports set ups. The sample obtained had 240 athletes, 136 of whom were men and 104 women. The mean age was 22.4 years ($SD = 3.1$). The sports included in the participants were football, basketball, volleyball, athletics, badminton, martial arts, hockey, and swimming. Almost half, 52% participated in team sports and 48% in individual sports. On the competitive level, 41 percent were at the university level, 37 percent were at the regional or provincial level and 22 percent were at the national level. The mean experience of competition was 6.3 years. In this case this sample size was considered sufficient to carry out correlational and regression type of analysis and the required sample size to achieve a moderate size of effect with reasonable power.

Procedure

Ethical consent was taken with pertinent sport organizations and academic units that deal with recruitment of athletes. Preliminary introduction of the study was carried out on coaches, administrators, and team coordinators to ensure access of participants. After the approval, the athletes were contacted both face-to-face and via digital channels used by the teams or institutions where the participants work. They were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of the participation, the guarantee of confidentiality and the use of the data in academia. All participants had informed permission to participate in the study before the administration of questionnaires.

Eight weeks of data collection were done. The respondents were given a structured questionnaire packet by filling out the questionnaire either in print or by using an online questionnaire. The anticipated time of completion was between 20-25 minutes. The packet included a demographic form, Sports cultural Lexis perception Scale, Competitive Identity Scale, Achievement Motivation in Sport Scale, and the Physical activity quiz. Order was standardized to reduce the effect of order. The instructions were given in simple language and clarifications were given where necessary but without any influence.

Consistency of the procedure was highlighted in settings. In all cases, instruments were administered individually to all participants in a quiet setting either prior to or following a training session or through a secure online form under similar conditions. The check on completeness of responses was done during



the submission of the questions; during the screening, incomplete questionnaires were not looked at. The numerical coding of data and their input into the statistical software were done to protect anonymity; personal identifiers were eliminated.

Instrument

There were four sections in the questionnaire. Section one included demographic and sport related data, such as age, sex, type of sport, competition level, years of experience, frequency of training, and language knowledge. Section two evaluated sports cultural lexis translation perceptions in the form of the Sports Cultural Lexis Translation Perception Scale developed by the researcher. This 20-item scale was filled in four dimensions, namely, lexical clarity, cultural equivalence, motivational resonance, and contextual appropriateness, on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The greater scores the more positive perceptions.

Section three assessed competitive identity by using 12 Likert-scale items that determined the self-perception of athletes as competitive performers and their internalization of the role of an athlete in comparison to success, discipline, commitment and performance expectations. Increased scores were associated with increased competitive identity.

Section four was used to measure motivation to achieve in the sport situation using 15 Likert-scale items to measure persistence, goal commitment, desire to achieve excellence, willingness to overcome difficulty, and goal success orientation.

Instrument Development and Validation

Because the Sports Cultural Lexis Translation Perception Scale was developed for the present study, several steps were followed to strengthen its content validity and preliminary reliability. First, items were generated from the theoretical domains most frequently discussed in sport translation and sport psychology literature: lexical clarity, cultural equivalence, motivational resonance, and contextual appropriateness. Second, the initial item pool was reviewed by three specialists representing sport psychology, translation studies, and research methodology. The experts evaluated each item for clarity, conceptual relevance, cultural appropriateness, and alignment with the intended construct. Items that were ambiguous, repetitive, or insufficiently linked to the construct were revised before pilot testing.

Third, the revised questionnaire was piloted with 30 athletes who were not included in the final sample. Pilot feedback was used to improve wording, reduce ambiguity, and ensure that items were understandable for athletes from different sport backgrounds. Internal consistency was satisfactory in the pilot phase, with Cronbach's alpha values of .87 for the Sports Cultural Lexis Translation Perception Scale, .84 for the Competitive Identity Scale, and .88 for the Achievement Motivation Scale. These values indicated acceptable reliability for research use. In the final analysis, the multidimensional structure of the translation perception scale was treated as theoretically grounded and preliminarily validated rather than fully confirmed. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted with recognition that further psychometric work, including confirmatory factor analysis and testing across larger cross-cultural samples, is needed to establish stronger construct validity.

Physical Activity Quiz

Physical Activity Quiz was a control variable used to determine training exposure by means of a questionnaire that includes eight items that assess the engagement in sports at present. It gathered data concerning the number of days the individual trains weekly, the mean number of minutes in a training session, the intensity of training felt by the individual, the number of competitive events the individual took part in the previous season and the physical activity that the individual thought he/she did but was not related to formal training. The quiz was used in order to put the athletic profiles into perspective as well as to avoid the influence of training involvement in the relationships between translated sport lexis, competitive identity, and achievement motivation. Descriptive summaries of such data were calculated and where applicable were used as covariates in inferential analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were coded and analyzed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize demographic characteristics, sport-related variables, and the main study measures. Means, standard deviations, minimum values, and maximum values were reported for continuous variables, while frequencies and percentages were reported for categorical variables.

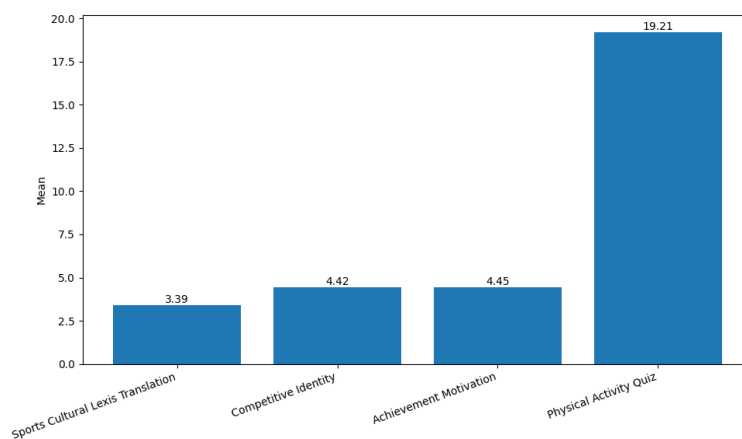
Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine associations among sports cultural lexis translation, competitive identity, achievement motivation, physical activity, and competitive experience. Independent-samples t-tests were used to compare male and female athletes and to compare athletes from team and individual sports. One-way analysis of variance was used to examine differences across competition levels. Multiple regression analyses were then conducted to estimate whether sports cultural lexis translation predicted competitive identity and achievement motivation while controlling for physical activity, competitive experience, and competition level. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$. Because the study used a cross-sectional correlational design, regression results were interpreted as predictive associations rather than evidence of causation.

Results

The review includes the 240 athletes that were obtained in the context of multilingual competitive sporting. The sample structure is still in line with the methodological profile. Out of the participants there are 136 males (56.7%) and 104 females (43.3%). The average age of the sample group is 22.40 years ($SD=3.10$), and the average years of competitive experience are 6.30 ($SD=2.40$). In terms of sport participation, 125 participants (52.1%) participate in team sports, and 115 participants (47.9%) participate in individual sports. Regarding the level of competition, 98 athletes (40.8%) are at the university level, 89 (37.1%) at the regional or provincial level, and 53 athletes (22.1%) at national level. These distributions show that the data is a balanced competitive sample, that is, there is enough heterogeneity of genders, type of sport, and level of competition to carry out comparative and explanatory analyses.

The general account of the most significant research variables proves that athletes tend to support positive attitudes toward translated sports cultural lexis. The average of the overall Sports Cultural Lexis Translation variable is 3.39 ($SD 0.23$) at five points which implies that the participants will tend to perceive translated sport expressions to be of average to high clarity, context relevance and cultural resonance. Competitive identity mean score is 4.42 ($SD=0.37$), and mean score of achievement motivation is 4.45 ($SD=0.33$). These high scores reflect that the sample has a high identification to the athlete role and high orientation towards effort, excellence and competitive success. The Physical activity Quiz provides the mean of 19.21 ($SD=3.20$) which means that the sample is fairly active and performance-involved. The general trend in these mean scores over the key variables of the study is represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Mean scores of the main study variables



In order to explain the internal pattern of the translated sports cultural lexis variable, the descriptive statistics is further disaggregated into sub dimension. The lexical clarity register mean is 3.40, cultural equivalence mean is 3.37, motivational resonance mean is 3.47 and contextual appropriateness mean is 3.32. Out of these dimensions, motivation resonance scores the most, which means that the athletes will be the most responsive to the degree to which sport language translated retains motivational power. Contextual appropriateness has the lowest, but also positive, mean indicating that situational appropriateness of translated expressions is a little more inconsistent than the motivational tone. This tendency is important, because it indicates that athletes do not apply the translated sport discourse to one and the same category, but differentiate clarity, cultural fit, emotional strength, and relevance to the context. Figure 2 shows the distribution of the mean scores of these dimensions of translation.

Figure 2. Mean scores of Sports Cultural Lexis Translation sub dimensions

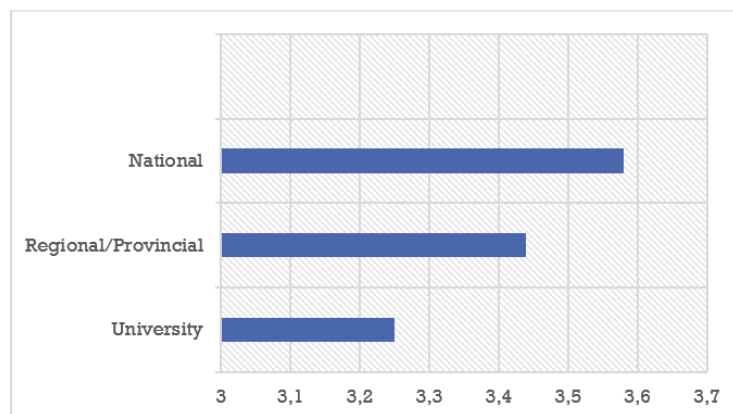


Table 1 gives the descriptive statistics of the principal variables of the study, that is, the means, SD, and the range of scores of the measures that were applied in the analysis.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the main study variables

Variable	n	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Age	240	22.40	3.10	16.61	30.97
Competitive experience (years)	240	6.30	2.40	1.00	12.96
Sports Cultural Lexis Translation total	240	3.39	0.23	2.73	4.07
Lexical clarity	240	3.40	0.40	2.43	4.50
Cultural equivalence	240	3.37	0.42	2.27	4.42
Motivational resonance	240	3.47	0.40	2.53	4.54
Contextual appropriateness	240	3.32	0.41	2.28	4.50
Competitive identity	240	4.42	0.37	3.37	5.00
Achievement motivation	240	4.45	0.33	3.50	5.00
Physical Activity Quiz	240	19.21	3.20	10.00	26.00

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlations among sports cultural lexis translation, competitive identity, achievement motivation, physical activity, and competitive experience.

Table 2. Correlations among the main variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Sports Cultural Lexis Translation total	1				
2. Competitive identity	.56***	1			
3. Achievement motivation	.51***	.31***	1		
4. Physical Activity Quiz	.28***	.26***	.26***	1	
5. Competitive experience	.30***	.39***	.41***	.30***	1

**p < .001.

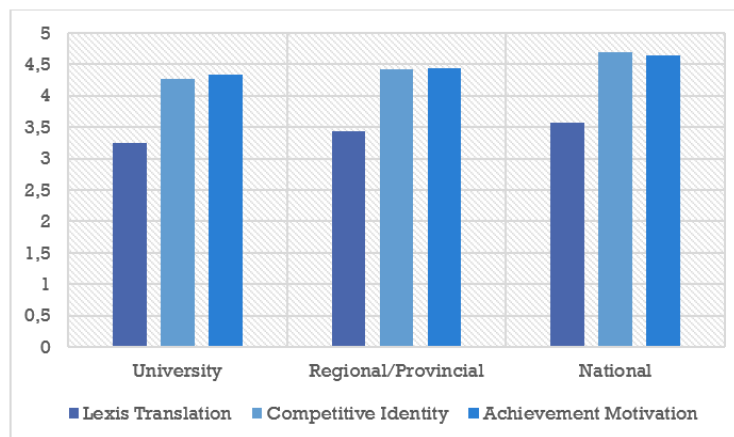
Pearson correlation analysis showed that sports cultural lexis translation was positively associated with competitive identity ($r = .56, p < .001$) and achievement motivation ($r = .51, p < .001$). These moderate

positive relationships indicate that athletes who perceived translated sport language as clearer, more culturally equivalent, motivationally resonant, and contextually appropriate tended to report stronger competitive self-identification and higher achievement motivation. Competitive identity was also positively related to achievement motivation ($r = .31, p < .001$), suggesting that athletes with stronger identification with the athletic role were more likely to report stronger achievement-oriented motivation. Physical activity and competitive experience were positively related to the psychological outcome variables, but these relationships were weaker than those observed for sports cultural lexis translation. Therefore, the results suggest that translated sport language is meaningfully associated with athletes' psychological orientation, although causality cannot be inferred from these correlations.

Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to examine whether the main variables differed by gender and sport type. No statistically significant gender differences were found for sports cultural lexis translation, $t = -0.25, p = .802$, competitive identity, $t = -0.70, p = .482$, achievement motivation, $t = .55, p = .585$, or physical activity level, $t = -0.57, p = .570$. These findings indicate that male and female athletes showed broadly similar patterns across the main study variables.

A significant difference was observed between team-sport and individual-sport athletes for sports cultural lexis translation. Team-sport athletes reported higher scores on sports cultural lexis translation, $M = 3.46, SD = 0.23$, than individual-sport athletes, $M = 3.31, SD = 0.22, t = -5.46, p < .001, d = 0.70$. However, no significant differences were found between team and individual sport athletes for competitive identity, $p = .178$, achievement motivation, $p = .181$, or physical activity level, $p = .672$. This suggests that sport type was more strongly related to perceptions of translated sport language than to the psychological outcome variables.

Figure 3. Differences in psychological variables across competition levels



The third level of analytics addressed the question of whether the key variables were different based on level of competition. One-way analysis of variance indicated that the differences between the university, regional/provincial and national athletes were statistically significant on four core measures. In the case of Sports Cultural Lexis Translation, the omnibus test was meaningful and its value was $F(2, 237) = 53.59, p = 0.001$. Athletes at national level had the highest mean ($M = 3.58, SD = 0.21$), next were the regional/provincial athletes ($M = 3.44, SD = 0.20$) and the last are those at university levels ($M = 3.25, SD = 0.19$). Such a direction of development indicates that the perceived quality and appropriateness of translated sport cultural lexis increase with the level of rivalry.

The same was observed in the case of competitive identity, $F(2, 237) = 27.00, p < .001$. Competitive identity (M) had the highest value among the national athletes ($M = 4.69, SD = 0.32$), middle range among regional/provincial athletes ($M = 4.43, SD = 0.37$), and least among the university athletes ($M = 4.27, SD = 0.31$). Achievement motivation also showed a similar directional pattern of the same pattern with national athletes recording the highest motivation ($M = 4.64, SD = 0.28$) and university athletes the lowest ($M = 4.34, SD = 0.33$). There were also significant differences in the level of physical activity among the levels of competitions with $F(2, 237) = 14.66, p = .001$ with national competitors showing a

higher level of activity than the rest. The theoretic soundness of these findings is that higher levels of competitive is often associated with more rigorous performance expectations, more organized communication systems and a higher level of exposure to formalized sport discourse. Table 3 provides the detailed comparison of the key variables according to the level of competition.

Table 3. Differences in the main variables by competition level

Variable	University (n = 98) Mean \pm SD	Regional/Provincial (n = 89) Mean \pm SD	National (n = 53) Mean \pm SD	F	p
Sports Cultural Lexis Translation total	3.25 \pm 0.19	3.44 \pm 0.20	3.58 \pm 0.21	53.59	<.001
Competitive identity	4.27 \pm 0.31	4.43 \pm 0.37	4.69 \pm 0.32	27.00	<.001
Achievement motivation	4.34 \pm 0.33	4.44 \pm 0.30	4.64 \pm 0.28	16.43	<.001
Physical Activity Quiz	18.22 \pm 3.14	19.22 \pm 3.32	21.02 \pm 2.17	14.66	<.001

The key purpose of the research is explanatory, therefore, several regression analyses were conducted to estimate whether the translated sports cultural lexis predicts the two target outcomes controlling the influence of physical activity and competitive experience. Competitive identity was identified as the dependent variable in the first model. The model was statistically significant, $F(4, 235) = 38.76$, $p = .001$ and explained 39.7% of the variance ($R^2 = .397$). Translated sports-cultural lexis showed a strong positive correlation ($B = 0.556$, $SE = 0.102$, $0 > 0$, $t = 5.43$, $p = .001$). Competition level also had a significant predictive of competitive identity ($B = 0.106$, $p = .001$) as well as competitive experience ($B = 0.042$, $p = .001$). The significance of physical activity was not reached in this model ($p = .928$). These findings show that the vision of translated sports-cultural lexis by athletes gives a specific contribution to the description of competitive identity, other than overall intensity of participation.

Achievement motivation was the dependent variable in the second model. The model was once again found to be statistically significant, $F(4, 235) = 31.93$, $p = .001$, with 35.2% of variance ($R^2 = .352$). Sports-cultural translated lexis was still a strong positive predictor ($B = 0.483$, $SE = 0.094$, $t = 5.15$, $p < .001$). Achievement motivation was also foretold by the competitive experience ($B = 0.041$, $p < .001$). The level of competition was close to significance ($p = .054$), and physical activity was not independent ($p = .623$). Such a tendency suggests that translated sports-cultural lexis is not simply related to achievement motivation, but it is also significant to explain in case other sport-involvement variables are taken into account simultaneously.

The regression models provide additional evidence that sports cultural lexis translation is associated with athletes' psychological outcomes even when sport-involvement variables are considered. For competitive identity, the model explained 39.7% of the variance, and sports cultural lexis translation remained a significant positive predictor. For achievement motivation, the model explained 35.2% of the variance, and translated sports cultural lexis again remained a significant positive predictor. These findings indicate that athletes' evaluations of translated sport language contribute explanatory value beyond physical activity, competitive experience, and competition level. However, the cross-sectional design means that these results should be interpreted as predictive associations rather than proof that translation quality directly causes changes in identity or motivation.

This result pattern can be explained by a more intense analysis of sub dimensions of Sports Cultural Lexis Translation. Motivational resonance has the largest descriptive mean of the four sub dimensions indicating that athletes react most when translated sport language maintains level of emotion and performance direction. The culture equivalence and lexical clarity are also positive and it means that the semantic comprehensibility itself is not sufficient and that athletes seem to be attentive to whether the term that is translated has the same cultural impulse as the original. However, contextual appropriateness although as well slightly lower is in the positive range, which indicates that athletes tend to consider translated sport language relevant to the requirements of training and competition. Collectively, the findings allow making a conclusion that translated sport discourse is a psychologically relevant part of the competitive environment instead of an unbiased communicative background.

Discussion

The present study examined the relationship between sports cultural lexis translation, competitive identity, and achievement motivation in multilingual competitive sport contexts. The results indicate that translated sports cultural lexis is not a neutral linguistic feature in competitive sport communication; rather, it is meaningfully associated with athletes' psychological interpretation of competition, identity, and performance-related motivation. Athletes who perceived translated sport language as clearer, more culturally equivalent, motivationally resonant, and contextually appropriate also reported stronger competitive identity and higher achievement motivation. This finding supports the view that translation in sport does not merely transfer words from one language to another, but participates in the construction of meaning within coaching, training, and competitive environments (Lee et al., 2024).

A key finding of the study was the positive association between sports cultural lexis translation and competitive identity. This suggests that athletes may use translated sport expressions to understand what it means to be disciplined, committed, resilient, competitive, or successful within a particular sporting culture. In multilingual sport settings, such meanings become especially important because athletes often receive coaching instructions, motivational messages, team values, institutional rules, and performance expectations through translated or culturally mediated communication. When translation preserves cultural meaning and performance-related tone, athletes may find it easier to connect sport discourse with their own athletic self-concept. This interpretation is consistent with recent studies showing that athletic identity is closely linked with role commitment, psychological functioning, anxiety, depression, burnout, and role salience in sport contexts (Clark et al., 2025; Jiang and Wang, 2025). However, the present findings should be interpreted cautiously because the study demonstrates association, not causation.

The results also showed a positive relationship between sports cultural lexis translation and achievement motivation. Athletes who evaluated translated sport discourse as culturally meaningful and motivationally effective tended to report stronger persistence, goal commitment, success orientation, and willingness to overcome competitive challenges. This finding is theoretically important because motivation in sport is shaped not only by individual goals, but also by the communicative and relational climate in which athletes train and compete. Recent literature has similarly emphasized that achievement-related outcomes are influenced by motivational climate, psychological need satisfaction, coaching communication, and the broader training environment (Li et al., 2025; Wu et al., 2024). In this sense, translated sports cultural lexis may be understood as one component of the motivational climate of competitive sport, especially when translated expressions preserve the emotional and symbolic force of the original message.

The study further found a significant positive relationship between competitive identity and achievement motivation. Athletes who identified more strongly with the athletic role also reported higher levels of achievement-oriented motivation. This pattern supports the idea that identity and motivation do not develop separately; rather, they interact within a broader sociocultural environment shaped by discourse, expectations, role meanings, and performance values. This finding is consistent with recent research indicating that identity-related factors are associated with burnout, dual-career functioning, and sustained participation among athletes (Jiang and Wang, 2025). In the present study, translated sports cultural lexis appears to be one communicative pathway through which athletes interpret both who they are as competitors and how they should invest effort toward sporting achievement.

Another important finding was that the main study variables did not differ significantly by gender. Male and female athletes reported broadly similar perceptions of sports cultural lexis translation, competitive identity, and achievement motivation. This suggests that, within the present sample, the relationship between translated sport discourse and athlete psychology was not limited to one gender group. Although recent studies show that psychological experiences in sport may vary depending on context, athlete group, and competitive environment, the present findings indicate that translated sport discourse may be relevant for both male and female athletes in multilingual competitive settings (Clark et al., 2025).

A more distinct pattern appeared in the comparison between team-sport and individual-sport athletes. Team-sport athletes reported significantly stronger perceptions of sports cultural lexis translation than



individual-sport athletes. This may be because team sports depend more heavily on shared communication, tactical vocabulary, collective motivation, group identity, and real-time coordination. In such contexts, translated sport language becomes more visible because athletes must interpret not only individual instructions but also collective meanings, team values, and coordinated performance cues. This interpretation is supported by recent literature suggesting that psychological need satisfaction and autonomous motivation may differ between team and individual sports because the communication and relational structures of these sport types are not identical (Van Yperen, 2025). Therefore, translated lexis may have particular salience in team-based sport environments where shared language directly supports collective identity and coordinated performance.

The competition-level findings also strengthen the interpretation of the study. Athletes competing at the national level reported higher scores on translated sports cultural lexis, competitive identity, achievement motivation, and physical activity than athletes competing at lower levels. This pattern may reflect the more formalized and intense communication systems found in higher-level sport. National-level athletes are often exposed to more structured coaching discourse, technical terminology, psychological preparation, motivational language, and institutional expectations. Recent research similarly shows that coach-athlete relationship quality predicts engagement, performance development, and emotional functioning, particularly in highly organized competitive environments (Luo et al., 2025; Pan and Sui, 2025). In this context, the accuracy and cultural resonance of translated sport language may become more psychologically meaningful because performance discourse plays a stronger role in shaping athlete identity and motivation.

The regression results provide further evidence of the relevance of translated sports cultural lexis. Sports cultural lexis translation remained a significant predictor of both competitive identity and achievement motivation after controlling for physical activity, competitive experience, and competition level. This indicates that the linguistic variable provides explanatory value beyond general sport involvement. In other words, athletes' perceptions of translated sport language are not merely a reflection of how active, experienced, or competitively advanced they are; rather, translation appears to represent a distinct communicative factor linked with psychological orientation. This finding is consistent with studies showing that coach leadership behavior, achievement goal orientation, and basic psychological need satisfaction are important predictors of athlete engagement and adaptive functioning (Li et al., 2025). It also aligns with research showing that negative coach communication, including abusive supervision, can affect athlete engagement through psychologically meaningful pathways (Zeng and Yin, 2025). Together, these studies support the broader claim that communication influences athlete outcomes, while the present study extends this argument to translated and culturally mediated sport discourse.

The subdimension analysis offers additional insight into how translated sport language may operate. Among the translation dimensions, motivational resonance showed the highest mean score, followed by lexical clarity and cultural equivalence, while contextual appropriateness was slightly lower. This pattern suggests that athletes may be especially sensitive to whether translated sport language preserves the motivational and emotional force of the original discourse. In practical terms, a translated expression may be technically accurate but still less effective if it fails to carry the intended tone, urgency, encouragement, or cultural meaning. This observation is consistent with recent work emphasizing that communication in sport affects engagement, commitment, and psychological adjustment not only through clarity, but also through tone, relational meaning, and inspirational focus (Lee et al., 2024; Luo et al., 2025). Therefore, sport translation should aim to preserve symbolic and motivational meaning rather than only surface-level lexical equivalence.

The findings have several practical implications. Coaches working with multilingual athletes should avoid relying exclusively on literal translations of motivational or tactical language. Instead, they should consider whether translated terms preserve the intended cultural meaning, emotional tone, and performance message. Translators and interpreters in sport contexts should also be trained to recognize culturally loaded expressions, especially those related to effort, discipline, resilience, teamwork, aggression, sacrifice, and success. Sport institutions, federations, universities, and training centers may benefit from developing translation guidelines for coaching materials, athlete handbooks, psychological support documents, team communication, and competition instructions. Such guidelines could help ensure that translated sport language remains clear, culturally appropriate, and motivationally coherent.



The study also has limitations. First, the cross-sectional correlational design prevents causal interpretation. Although sports cultural lexis translation was associated with competitive identity and achievement motivation, the study cannot determine whether translation perceptions directly influence identity and motivation, whether more motivated athletes evaluate translated language more positively, or whether both are shaped by broader sport culture. Second, the Sports Cultural Lexis Translation Perception Scale was developed for this study. Although expert review and pilot reliability were used, further psychometric validation is required. Future research should conduct confirmatory factor analysis, test measurement invariance across languages and cultures, and examine the scale in larger and more diverse athlete samples. Third, the data were based on self-report measures, which may be affected by social desirability, response bias, or athletes' current training experiences. Fourth, although the sample included different sport types and competition levels, the study did not examine specific language pairs or actual translation practices in depth. Future mixed-method and longitudinal studies could combine survey data with interviews, discourse analysis, and direct observation of translated coaching communication.

Overall, the study contributes to sport psychology and translation studies by showing that translated sports cultural lexis is associated with athletes' competitive identity and achievement motivation. The findings encourage a more interdisciplinary understanding of sport communication in which translation is treated not as a background service, but as part of the cultural, symbolic, and psychological structure of competitive sport. This contribution is important because recent sport literature increasingly recognizes the role of communication quality, coaching behavior, identity structures, and motivational climate in athlete development and performance (Li et al., 2025; Pan and Sui, 2025; Van Yperen, 2025). The present study extends this body of work by showing that translated sports cultural lexis may be one pathway through which these processes operate in multilingual competitive sport contexts.

Conclusions

This study found that athletes' perceptions of sports cultural lexis translation were positively associated with competitive identity and achievement motivation in multilingual competitive sport contexts. Athletes who viewed translated sport language as culturally equivalent, motivationally resonant, and contextually appropriate tended to report stronger identification with the athletic role and higher achievement-oriented motivation. Regression analyses further indicated that translated sports cultural lexis contributed explanatory value after accounting for physical activity, competitive experience, and competition level.

These findings suggest that sport translation is not merely a linguistic process but may form part of the broader communicative and motivational environment of athletes. For this reason, coaches, translators, sport psychologists, and sport institutions should consider the cultural and psychological implications of translated sport terminology. At the same time, the conclusions must remain cautious because the study used a cross-sectional correlational design and a newly developed scale requiring further validation. Future research should use longitudinal, mixed-method, and cross-cultural designs to examine how translated sport discourse operates across different sports, languages, and competitive systems.

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