

Readiness in Language and Communication Components of Alternative Learning System Senior High School

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated how prepared Alternative Learning System (ALS) Senior High School learners and teachers are in using contextualized Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELC)-based learning materials for the Language and Communication component. The research was grounded in the need to improve functional literacy, communication skills, and instructional quality in alternative education programs under Republic Act No. 11510. A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was employed, allowing quantitative and qualitative data to be collected and analyzed at the same time. The study involved all 45 officially enrolled ALS learners, 13 ALS teachers, and 4 school administrators at Jacinto P. Elpa National High School, the only secondary institution offering ALS SHS in the Tandag City Division. Survey questionnaires were used to gather quantitative data, which were analyzed through descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis, while qualitative insights were used to provide contextual interpretation. Findings showed that learners reported high levels of language and communication proficiency ($M = 4.317$, strongly agree) and strong access to digital language resources. Teachers were also assessed as highly prepared to use MELC-based materials, with overall mean ratings of 4.55 from teachers, 4.75 from administrators, and 4.47 from learners. Correlation analysis indicated that demographic variables such as sex, age, language spoken, and learner category did not significantly influence perceptions of teacher readiness. However, learner language proficiency and access to learning resources were strongly and significantly related to perceived readiness ($p = 0.000$). These results suggest that improving access to learning resources and strengthening language foundations are essential for the success of ALS programs, alongside ongoing teacher training and resource development.

Keywords: Alternative Learning System, MELC-based instruction, language and communication readiness, teacher readiness, mixed methods research

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of ALS Senior High School under Republic Act No. 11510 requires instructional approaches that address the diverse needs of out-of-school youth and adult learners. Language and communication competencies remain foundational because they influence learners' ability to participate effectively in academic, social, and workplace contexts. Despite policy support, ALS implementers frequently encounter challenges related to learner readiness, instructional resources, and contextualization of curriculum materials.

Existing literature suggests that adult and nontraditional learners often experience gaps in academic literacy and communication skills. At the same time, teacher readiness is a critical factor influencing learning outcomes. This study therefore investigates learner readiness and teacher readiness in the utilization of contextualized MELC-based materials, focusing on the Language and Communication component.

Research Question and Hypothesis:

The study examined whether learner demographic and functional characteristics are associated with perceived teacher readiness. The null hypothesis stated that no significant relationship exists between learner characteristics and perceived teacher readiness.

Theoretical Framework

This investigation is structurally anchored on three complementary theoretical frameworks: Social Constructivism, Constructivist Learning Theory, and Change Management Theory. Lev Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivism posits that cognitive growth and linguistic mastery are mediated products of social interaction, dialogue, and collaborative task execution. For adult learners with fragmented educational paths, language is best developed through communicative encounters. This framework underscores the value of group discussions, peer interactions, and real-life performance tasks to scaffold reading, writing, and speaking competencies within alternative environments.

Jerome Bruner's (1961) Constructivist Learning Theory underscores that learning is an active process where individuals build new concepts upon prior knowledge. This approach highlights the teacher's role as an instructional facilitator who connects abstract core competencies with the immediate real-world experiences and community contexts of the learners. In an ALS landscape, this justifies why teaching readiness must include material localization to make language acquisition meaningful.

John Kotter's (1996) Change Management Theory explains how organizational actors navigate structural transitions. The integration of a competency-aligned, MELC-based curriculum requires structural adjustments from facilitators, administrators, and non-formal enrollees. This transition relies on systemic support from DepEd's Bureau of Alternative Education (BAE) to implement policies, standards, and capacity-building workflows.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design embedded within a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach. The descriptive method was used to determine the demographic profile of ALS learners (including self-perceived proficiency and resource accessibility) and to evaluate the teachers' level of readiness in utilizing contextualized MELC-based learner materials. Concurrently, the correlational method assessed whether significant relationships existed between the learners' profile characteristics and the perceived level of teacher readiness, drawing data simultaneously to provide a comprehensive analysis.

Research Locale and Respondents

The investigation was conducted at the Senior High School department of Jacinto P. Elpa National High School, located in Telaje, Tandag City, Surigao del Sur, Philippines. This campus acts as the designated Community Learning Center (CLC) for the area's secondary alternative stream. Due to the specialized nature of the population, total population sampling was implemented. The final research universe (N=62) comprised three targeted sets of respondents: 45 officially enrolled Grade 11 and Grade 12 ALS learners who passed the Junior High School A&E test, 13 ALS teachers representing multiple subject areas (as language competencies are integrated across disciplines), and 4 school administrators, which included the School Principal, two Assistant School Principals, and the Senior High School Chairman.

Research Instruments and Data Analysis

Data collection relied on contextualized survey questionnaires that underwent content validation by five experts in alternative education and language instruction. Part I gathered learner profile metrics based on sex, age, native language, and socioeconomic learner categories outlined under Republic Act No. 11510. It included a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree) measuring self-perceived language proficiency and frequency of resource access. Part II evaluated teacher readiness through 15 standardized core items based on MELC-based instructional planning, delivery, and contextualization. This instrument was administered concurrently to learners, teachers (self-assessment), and administrators to ensure triangulation. Quantitative data analysis was completed using frequency counts, percentages, and weighted means for descriptive profiling, while the relationship hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients at a 95% confidence interval ($\alpha = 0.05$).

RESULTS

Demographic Profile of ALS Learners

The demographic baseline of the 45 surveyed ALS Senior High School learners is structured across sex, age, native language, and socio-cultural categories as defined under Republic Act No. 11510. The frequency and percentage distributions are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of ALS SHS Learners

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents (N = 45)

Profile Variable	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	14	31
Female	31	69
Total	45	100
Age Bracket		
15–25 years old	18	40
26–35 years old	19	42
36–45 years old	8	18
Total	45	100
Language Spoken		
English	1	2
Tagalog/Filipino	10	22
Cebuano/Bisaya	8	18
Tandaganon	23	51
Jaon-jaon/Waya-waya	3	7
Total	45	100
Learner Categories (RA 11510)		
Indigenous Peoples	12	27
Teenage Mothers	7	16
Children in Conflict with the Law	1	2
Learners in Emergency Situations	4	9
Other Marginalized Sectors	21	47
Total	45	100

The data indicate that the cohort is predominantly female (69%). The age distribution shows a high concentration of mature adult learners, with the 26–35 age bracket forming the largest group (42%), followed closely by the 15–25 youth segment (40%). In terms of native language distribution, Tandaganon is the primary mother tongue spoken by more than half of the enrollees (51%), with Tagalog/Filipino (22%) and Cebuano/Bisaya (18%) serving as secondary languages. Socio-culturally, the population represents a marginalized demographic, consisting primarily of general marginalized sectors (47%) and Indigenous Peoples (27%) native to the region.

Learner Self-Perceived Language Proficiency and Resource Access

The non-formal enrollees evaluated their personal linguistic proficiency in English and Filipino alongside their regular access patterns to core learning resources. The summary of these self-assessments is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Learner Perceptions on Proficiency and Resource Accessibility

Linguistic and Resource Indicators	Mean	Adjectival Rating
Language and Communication Proficiency		
1. Understanding instructions in English/Filipino	4.38	Strongly Agree

2. Expressing ideas clearly during class	4.22	Strongly Agree
3. Reading and understanding diverse texts	4.31	Strongly Agree
4. Writing simple paragraphs to explain thoughts	4.24	Strongly Agree
5. Confidence communicating with facilitators	4.40	Strongly Agree
Overall Proficiency Mean	4.317	Strongly Agree
Access to Language Resources		
1. Access via mobile devices and internet	4.49	Always
2. Utilizing social media platforms	4.49	Always
3. Using localized physical handouts at CLC	4.12	Often
4. Reading traditional home print materials	4.00	Often
Overall Resource Access Mean	4.275	Always

The overall weighted mean of 4.317 indicates that the learners have a high level of self-perceived proficiency, expressing confidence in their baseline receptive and expressive skills. Resource accessibility metrics yield an overall mean of 4.275, highlighting digital devices and social media platforms as the primary channels for language material engagement ($M = 4.49$). Traditional printed resources received lower relative scores.

Triangulated Levels of Teacher Readiness

To evaluate teacher readiness in utilizing contextualized MELC-based learner materials, assessments were collected from teachers, school administrators, and learners across 15 operational items. The triangulated scores are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Triangulated Mean Ratings on Teacher Readiness

Table 3. Operational Readiness of Respondents by Group

Operational Readiness Items	Teachers	Administrators	Learners
1. Confidence in MELC lesson design	4.69	4.50	4.49
2. Familiarity with core communication goals	4.54	4.75	4.49
3. Selecting materials fitting student needs	4.54	4.75	4.38
4. Contextualizing generic modules locally	4.54	4.75	4.40
5. Integrating MELC packets in class delivery	4.46	4.50	4.51
6. Designing original competency exercises	4.46	5.00	4.44
7. Using benchmarks to assess development	4.54	5.00	4.56
8. Modifying or adapting content dynamically	4.46	4.25	4.49
9. Guiding self-directed learning paths	4.38	5.00	4.47
10. Evaluating social relevance of content	4.38	4.75	4.51
11. Navigating printed and digital formats	4.69	4.50	4.44
12. Aligning objectives with MELC standards	4.85	5.00	4.58
13. Collaborating for module localization	4.46	4.75	4.47
14. Proactively sourcing backup materials	4.69	5.00	4.38
15. Absolute confidence in language delivery	4.54	4.75	4.49
Overall Group Mean	4.55	4.75	4.47

Interpretation: All mean scores correspond to a "Strongly Agree" rating.

The triangulated results reveal a high level of perceived teacher readiness across all three respondent groups. Administrators provided the highest baseline evaluation ($M = 4.75$), including perfect scores ($M = 5.00$) for alignment, exercise design, assessment, and independent learning guidance. Teachers reported high self-efficacy ($M = 4.55$), particularly regarding curriculum alignment ($M = 4.85$). Learners confirmed this instructional readiness with a consistent overall evaluation ($M = 4.47$).

Inferential Analysis

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analyses were executed to test the null hypothesis, pairing independent learner profile factors against the combined perception of teacher instructional readiness. Table 4 highlights the statistical outcomes.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix: Learner Profiles vs. Perceived Teacher Readiness

Paired Profile Variables	r-value	p-value	Statistical Decision
Sex vs. Teacher Readiness	0.209	0.168	Fail to Reject Ho
Age vs. Teacher Readiness	0.159	0.296	Fail to Reject Ho
Language Spoken vs. Teacher Readiness	0.019	0.902	Fail to Reject Ho
Learner Category vs. Teacher Readiness	0.079	0.605	Fail to Reject Ho
Language Proficiency vs. Teacher Readiness	0.668	0.000*	Reject Ho
Resource Access vs. Teacher Readiness	0.702	0.000*	Reject Ho

Note: *Significant at $p < 0.05$ [cite: 18, 19, 20].

The inferential values show that standard demographic traits—such as sex ($p = 0.168$), age ($p = 0.296$), native language ($p = 0.902$), and learner category ($p = 0.605$)—show no statistically significant relationship with teacher readiness. However, functional variables show a significant relationship: self-perceived language proficiency ($r = 0.668$, $p = 0.000$) and access to language resources ($r = 0.702$, $p = 0.000$) are highly significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis for these functional dimensions.

DISCUSSION

The demographic profile of ALS Senior High School learners highlights the diverse socio-educational circumstances that characterize participants in alternative education programs. The predominance of female learners and the substantial representation of adults aged 26 to 45 suggest that ALS continues to serve as a second-chance educational pathway for individuals whose formal schooling was interrupted by socioeconomic, familial, or employment-related responsibilities. This finding is consistent with the mandate of Republic Act No. 11510, which institutionalizes ALS as an inclusive mechanism for providing educational opportunities to out-of-school youth and adults. The predominance of Tandaganon as the learners' native language further emphasizes the importance of contextualized and culturally responsive instruction. Consistent with constructivist principles, language learning becomes more meaningful when instructional materials are connected to learners' linguistic backgrounds and lived experiences (Bruner, 1961).

The high self-perceived language proficiency score ($M = 4.317$) suggests that learners possess confidence in their communication abilities. However, self-reported competence may not always correspond with actual language performance. Previous research has emphasized the importance of complementing self-assessment measures with objective evaluations of literacy and language skills to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of learner readiness (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Consequently, while learners demonstrate positive perceptions of their communication abilities, additional instructional support in academic reading, writing, and critical comprehension may still be necessary. The strong reliance on mobile devices and digital platforms ($M = 4.49$) further reflects the growing role of technology in facilitating access to learning resources. UNESCO (2022) recognizes digital technologies as important tools for expanding educational access and supporting lifelong learning, particularly among adult and nontraditional learners.

The consistently high readiness ratings reported by teachers, administrators, and learners indicate a strong level of instructional preparedness in utilizing contextualized MELC-based materials. These findings suggest that ALS teachers demonstrate the capacity to adapt learning resources, align instruction with curriculum standards, and respond to the diverse needs of learners. Such adaptability reflects the facilitator role emphasized in constructivist learning theory, wherein teachers scaffold learning experiences and connect new knowledge to learners' prior experiences (Bruner, 1961). Moreover, the results align with the goals of the Department of

Education's ALS framework, which emphasizes contextualization, learner-centered instruction, and flexible delivery mechanisms to address the needs of marginalized populations (Department of Education, 2021).

The inferential analysis revealed that demographic characteristics such as age, sex, language spoken, and learner category were not significantly associated with perceived teacher readiness. In contrast, language proficiency ($r = .668$, $p < .001$) and resource access ($r = .702$, $p < .001$) demonstrated significant positive relationships with readiness perceptions. These findings support Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivist Theory, which posits that learning is influenced by the interaction between individuals and the tools, resources, and social environments available to them. Learners with stronger language foundations and greater access to educational resources may be better positioned to engage with instructional activities, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of teacher facilitation. The findings underscore the importance of strengthening both learner competencies and resource availability to maximize the impact of ALS instruction, particularly in contexts where face-to-face learning opportunities are limited.

CONCLUSION

This study provides an empirical assessment of language and communication readiness within the non-formal senior high school framework. The findings indicate that while the learner population at Jacinto P. Elpa National High School is demographically and linguistically diverse, these background differences do not significantly hinder instructional delivery. Learners express a high level of confidence in their communication abilities and demonstrate strong engagement with digital tools and social media environments, which serve as primary channels for language practice.

The data show a high level of readiness among ALS instructors, validated through triangulated ratings from teachers, students, and school administrators. Facilitators demonstrate instructional resourcefulness by aligning lessons with core competencies and adapting material to address the constraints of once-a-week face-to-face sessions.

The inferential analysis indicates that instructional readiness is shaped more by functional factors than general student demographics. A student's linguistic baseline and resource access are significantly related to instructional outcomes. This demonstrates that instructional readiness operates interactively; the availability of digital tools and baseline student preparation are vital for maximizing the effectiveness of a localized, competency-based curriculum.

Based on these findings, the following actions are recommended:

1. DepEd and the Bureau of Alternative Education (BAE) should develop interactive, mobile-friendly digital language modules and localized online learning tasks to support independent study outside weekly CLC hours.
2. Alternative school facilitators should implement targeted workshops focusing on structured writing, formal academic grammar, and inferential reading comprehension to bridge the gap between student confidence and technical proficiency needs.
3. School administrators should provide continuous professional development focused on material localization and curriculum delivery, helping teachers maintain high instructional readiness.
4. The division should establish a shared digital repository of contextualized language exercises, lesson plans, and assessment tools created by local teachers to address the lack of specialized materials.
5. Subsequent studies should implement longitudinal designs and objective language assessments to complement self-reported proficiency measures across a broader range of regional learning centers.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The authors affirm that no conflicts of interest existed in relation to this study. The research was conducted with full adherence to principles of honesty, integrity, and academic ethics. All data and results were utilized exclusively for academic and research purposes.

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