

English Language Proficiency of Language Studies Students: Basis for a Language Instructional Plan

Patricia B. Enoc

Faculty of the Graduate School Cagayan State University-Andrews Campus Tuguegarao City, Cagayan
Degree Doctor of Philosophy in Education Major in English Language

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the English language proficiency of Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies (ABELS) students at Cagayan State University–Carig Campus during the First Semester of S.Y. 2025–2026, using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) B1(Intermediate) as the basis for evaluation. Specifically, it determined the respondents' proficiency across the four macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and examined differences and relationships with selected demographic variables such as sex, language used at home, social media exposure, year level, parents' monthly income, and academic performance.

The study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were gathered through an adopted and contextualized CEFR-aligned test (EF SET), while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with selected respondents. Descriptive and inferential statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson correlation) were used for quantitative analysis, while thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data.

Findings revealed that respondents demonstrated an overall C1 (Advanced) level of proficiency, although performance varied across macro-skills. Students showed stronger competence in receptive skills, particularly reading and writing, while listening was satisfactory. However, speaking emerged as the most problematic skill, reflecting difficulties in fluency, vocabulary use, and grammatical accuracy in spontaneous communication. Furthermore, year level showed a significant difference in proficiency, suggesting that increased academic exposure contributes to language development, while social media exposure showed no significant relationship with proficiency.

Qualitative findings supported these results, highlighting challenges such as speaking anxiety, lack of confidence, and limited vocabulary. Based on these findings, the study proposed a CEFR-aligned instructional plan focusing on improving speaking skills while sustaining strengths in other macro-skills.

These findings imply the need for curriculum and instructional enhancements that prioritize communicative and speaking-centered activities, confidence-building strategies, and CEFR-aligned interventions to address productive skill gaps while sustaining students' strengths in other macro-skills.

Keywords: English language proficiency, CEFR, macro-skills, speaking anxiety, instructional plan

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The ability to communicate effectively in English is widely regarded as one of the most essential competencies in modern education, as it directly influences learners' academic success and professional readiness. In today's globalized society, English proficiency is no longer optional but a necessary skill that enables individuals to compete, collaborate, and succeed in various fields. English is widely recognized as a global language and serves

as a primary medium of communication across academic, professional, and social domains (Rose et al., 2021). Its role in facilitating knowledge exchange, international collaboration, and workforce readiness has made English proficiency a fundamental skill in the 21st century (Chan, 2021; Lekpetch & Foley, 2022). In educational settings, English proficiency encompasses learners' ability to comprehend, interpret, and express ideas effectively across the four macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). These competencies are essential not only for academic success but also for active participation in a globalized society. However, despite its importance, many learners continue to experience difficulties in achieving functional proficiency, particularly in applying language skills in authentic communicative contexts.

Globally, concerns regarding students' English proficiency persist, especially in relation to their ability to comprehend texts, articulate ideas clearly, and engage in higher-order thinking tasks. Studies indicate that learners often struggle with limited vocabulary, weak reading comprehension, poor listening skills, and a lack of confidence in speaking (Bora & Mohapatra, 2024). These challenges hinder their academic performance and restrict their capacity to process and produce knowledge effectively.

In response, educational systems have increasingly adopted standardized frameworks such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) to ensure consistent assessment and development of language proficiency. The CEFR provides a structured classification of proficiency levels, offering a common basis for curriculum design, instruction, and evaluation. Nevertheless, despite its widespread adoption, gaps remain in translating these standards into effective classroom practices that directly address learners' specific difficulties. In developing contexts, the problem is further compounded by inconsistencies in the implementation of standardized frameworks and limitations in instructional and assessment practices. Factors such as inadequate resources, reliance on non-standardized testing instruments, and insufficient teacher training contribute to inaccurate measurement of students' actual proficiency levels (Khan & Javed, 2025). As a result, learners' language difficulties are often not properly identified or addressed, leading to persistent gaps in skill development. These systemic issues highlight the need for context-sensitive assessment approaches that not only align with global standards but also respond to the specific learning needs of students.

In the Philippines, English functions as a second official language and remains a primary medium of instruction, particularly in higher education and technical fields. Despite this advantage, recent reports indicate a decline in English proficiency among Filipino learners. The 2024 EF English Proficiency Index ranked the Philippines 22nd globally, reflecting a downward trend in performance (Manuel et al., 2025). This decline is further supported by findings from national and international assessments. For instance, results from the 2022 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) revealed that many Filipino students failed to meet minimum proficiency levels in reading literacy, demonstrating difficulties in comprehension, interpretation, and critical analysis (Haw & King, 2023). These findings suggest that students struggle not only with basic language skills but also with applying these skills in academic and real-world contexts.

At the institutional level, these challenges are reflected in the continued use of locally developed assessment tools that often lack alignment with international standards. Such practices result in inconsistencies in evaluating students' proficiency and limit the ability to accurately diagnose their strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, learners' performance is influenced by various demographic and socio-economic factors, including language exposure, educational background, and access to learning resources (De Vera, 2025). At the local level, similar challenges in English language proficiency are evident among students in state universities and colleges, particularly in regions where English is not commonly used in daily communication. In institutions such as Cagayan State University, students often rely on their first language in both academic and social interactions, limiting their exposure to and practice of English. This situation contributes to difficulties in developing the four macro-skills, especially in speaking and listening, where real-time communication is required. Classroom observations further suggest that students exhibit hesitation, limited vocabulary use, and challenges in comprehension, which may affect their overall academic performance. These local conditions reinforce the need to examine students' proficiency within a specific institutional context to better understand their actual language abilities and learning needs.

Despite these existing studies and frameworks, there remains a lack of localized and empirical evidence that accurately assesses students' English language proficiency using standardized frameworks such as the CEFR,

particularly in specific academic programs. Moreover, limited studies have examined how demographic and socio-economic factors influence learners' proficiency across the four macro-skills within a localized institutional context. Addressing these gaps, the present study aims to assess the English language proficiency of ABELS students using the CEFR framework, utilizing an assessment aligned at the B1 (Intermediate) level. It particularly focuses on the four macro-skills and selected demographic and socio-economic variables. Specifically, it seeks to identify students' proficiency levels, determine areas of difficulty, and examine factors that may contribute to variations in performance. By doing so, the study intends to provide a more accurate and contextualized understanding of learners' language abilities, which can serve as a basis for developing a language instructional plan.

CONCEPTUAL/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was anchored on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, an internationally recognized framework that classifies language proficiency from A1 (Beginner) to C2 (Proficient). The CEFR provides descriptive benchmarks of language ability based on what learners can perform in real-life communicative contexts. Its emphasis on communicative competence through the four macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) made it suitable for assessing the English language performance of ABELS students. The study utilized a CEFR-aligned assessment, the EF Standard English Test at the B1 (Intermediate) level, establishing a structured and comparable basis for interpreting students' performance.

Using the contextualized EF SET, the study determined students' proficiency level across the four macro-skills based on raw scores, which were computed and interpreted using mean values. These results were then aligned with CEFR descriptors to classify performance levels and identify specific areas needing improvement. To provide a broader understanding of language performance, the study examined demographic factors, including personal variables (sex, language used at home, and social media exposure) and academic and socio-economic variables (year level, parents' income, and academic performance). These served as independent variables influencing English language performance (dependent variable), while CEFR descriptor levels functioned as an intervening variable that guided the interpretation of results.

The study was further guided by key theoretical perspectives. Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasized the role of social interaction in language development, particularly through the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which explains how learners improve with appropriate support and interaction. This supported the inclusion of interviews with respondents classified under lower CEFR levels (e.g., A1 and A2) to better understand their learning contexts and challenges. Additionally, Jim Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis highlighted the influence of the first language on second language acquisition, justifying the inclusion of "language used at home" as a relevant variable affecting English language development.

Moreover, the study was supported by legal and institutional mandates in the Philippines, including Republic Act No. 10533, CHED Memorandum Order No. 20, Series of 2013, and DepEd Order No. 74, Series of 2009. These policies emphasize the development of communicative competence, the promotion of multilingual education, and the alignment of assessment practices with internationally recognized frameworks such as the CEFR, thereby reinforcing the relevance of the present study.

Through a mixed-methods approach, the study analyzed differences in English language performance based on demographic profiles and examined relationships among the four macro-skills. Quantitative data, analyzed using mean scores and inferential statistics, provided measurable evidence of students' performance levels, while qualitative data from interviews with respondents classified under lower CEFR levels (e.g., A1 and A2) offered deeper insights into their learning challenges and experiences. These findings served as the basis for the development of an Instructional Language Plan. The proposed interventions were designed to be data-driven and responsive to the identified needs of the learners.

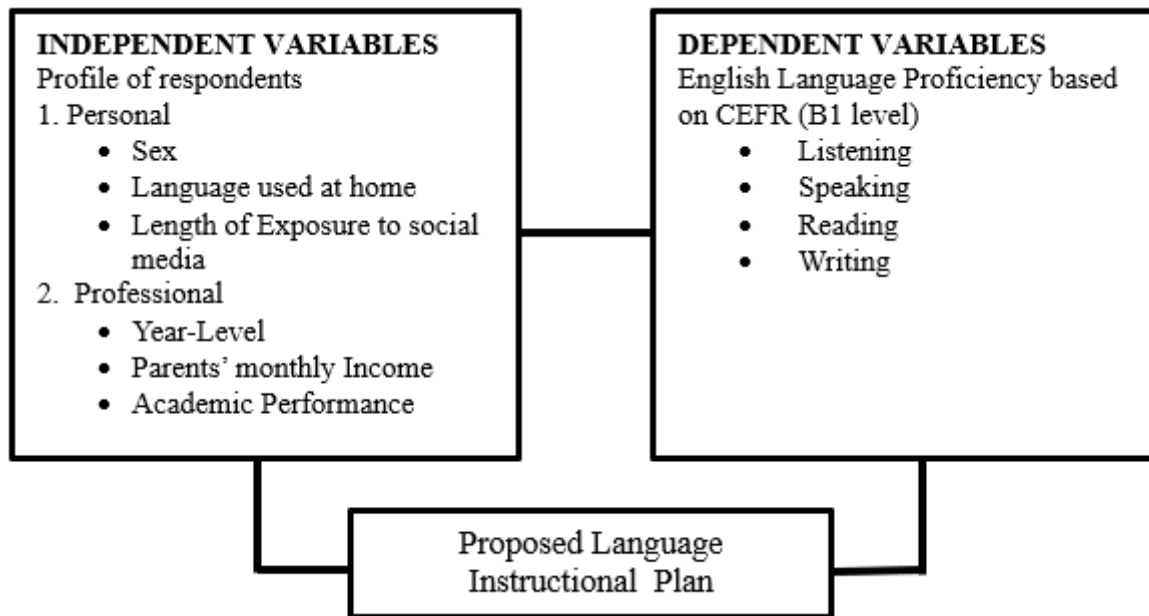


Figure 1. Conceptual Paradigm of the Study

Statement of the Problem

Generally, the study aimed to assess the English language proficiency of Bachelor of Arts in Language Studies students at the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Cagayan State University–Carig Campus, during the First Semester of S.Y. 2025–2026, based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Specifically, it sought to answer the following:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:

1.1 Personal

1.1.1 Sex

1.1.2 Language used at Home

1.1.3 Length of Exposure to Social Media

1.2 Professional

1.2.1 Year-Level

1.2.2 Parents' monthly income

1.2.3 Academic performance (GWA)

2. What is the English proficiency level of ABELS students along the four macro skills based on the CEFR framework?

2.1 Listening

2.2 Speaking

2.3 Reading

2.4 Writing

3. Is there a significant difference in the English language proficiency levels of the respondents when grouped according to their demographic profile?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the English language proficiency level in the different macro-skills of the respondents in terms of Length of Exposure to social media and Academic Performance (GWA)?
5. What challenges do the participants encounter in their English Language Proficiency along the four macro skills?
6. What language instructional plan can be proposed to address the English Language Proficiency challenges of the participants?

Hypotheses of the Study

The study was guided by the following hypo theses.

Ho1: There is no significant difference in English Proficiency Level in four micro skills of the respondents in terms of demographic profile.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between English Proficiency Level in four micro skills of the respondents in terms of Length of Exposure to social media and Academic Performance of the students (GWA).

Significance of the Study

This study highlights the importance of English language proficiency for academic success of ABELS students and will benefit key stakeholders. It will provide CSU–Carig administrators with data for improving curriculum and language policies, assist teachers in refining instruction and assessment, and help students identify and address proficiency gaps. The findings will also support instructional language planners in developing responsive programs and contribute to existing research, serving as a useful reference for future studies.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of relevant literature and studies emphasizing the significance of English language proficiency, with a particular focus on language studies. The discussion is thematically organized to ensure clarity and logical flow, encompassing six key areas: (1) the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR); (2) English language proficiency across the four macro-skills; (3) English Language Proficiency in the Philippines: An Overview; (4) Influence of Demographic Variables on English Proficiency; (5) Challenges Affecting English Language Proficiency; and (6) Instructional and Curricular Implications.

This thematic approach provides a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of English proficiency and its interplay with both academic and socio-demographic factors.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

Goal 4 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasizes that every individual has the right to quality education, which is essential in fostering inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development (United Nations, 2021). However, access to quality education remains uneven, particularly among disadvantaged groups such as learners from rural areas, ethnic minorities, and individuals with disabilities. In response to the growing need for standardized and inclusive educational systems, many countries have adopted the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as a guiding tool for improving language education and aligning it with global standards.

The CEFR, developed by the Council of Europe and first published in 2001, is a globally recognized framework used to describe and assess language proficiency. It categorizes learners into six levels (A1 (Beginner), A2 (Elementary), B1 (Intermediate), B2 (Upper Intermediate), C1 (Advanced), and C2 (Proficient)) based on their competencies in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Council of Europe, 2001). These levels provide a clear and systematic progression that supports both teaching and learning. The framework also serves as a common basis for aligning curriculum objectives, instructional practices, and assessment systems across diverse educational contexts. To remain responsive to evolving language use, the CEFR Companion Volume (2018) further expanded the framework by incorporating descriptors for mediation, plurilingual and pluricultural competence, online interaction, phonological control, and multimodal communication.

The global adoption of the CEFR has significantly influenced the development of English language curricula, resulting in increased alignment of textbooks, assessments, and teaching methodologies with international standards. Zakaria & Md Yunus (2020) observed a shift from locally developed curricula toward CEFR-aligned systems, particularly in middle-income countries. This trend is especially evident in Southeast Asian nations (ASEAN), where educational reforms increasingly integrate CEFR principles to enhance the quality and comparability of language education. However, despite its growing adoption, research on CEFR implementation within the ASEAN context remains limited. This suggests a need to further explore how the framework can be effectively adapted to local educational settings while maintaining its global standards.

While the CEFR promotes standardization and comparability, scholars emphasize the importance of contextualizing its implementation. Thomas & Quinlan (2022) argued that the framework should move beyond a one-size-fits-all approach, as it may inadvertently reflect Anglo-Saxon cultural norms that do not fully align with the linguistic and cultural realities of non-English-speaking regions. Effective implementation, therefore, requires sensitivity to learners' backgrounds, experiences, and local contexts. Additionally, Alih et al. (2021), Nawai and Said (2020), and Sahib and Stapa (2021) highlighted that successful adoption of the CEFR depends not only on curriculum alignment but also on addressing the needs, perceptions, and emotional responses of both teachers and learners. This includes examining how teaching materials, instructional strategies, and assessment practices either support or hinder the practical application of the framework.

Empirical studies further demonstrate the adaptability and effectiveness of the CEFR across different educational systems. Hatakeyama (2024) reported that the integration of CEFR standards in Japan's national English examinations improved consistency and transparency in assessing communicative competence. Similarly, Yu et al. (2022) found that Taiwan's adoption of CEFR-aligned assessments in university entrance examinations helped align national language standards with international benchmarks. These findings highlight the framework's potential to enhance the quality and credibility of language education on a global scale.

Its structured proficiency levels provide a transparent and standardized measure of language competence, enabling learners to access academic, professional, and social opportunities across linguistic and cultural boundaries. By reducing inconsistencies in language assessment and facilitating the recognition of qualifications, the CEFR helps minimize barriers to mobility and participation, particularly for learners from underprivileged backgrounds.

Overall, the CEFR serves as a comprehensive and adaptable framework that supports the development of English language proficiency in a globalized world. However, its successful implementation requires a balanced approach that integrates international standards with local cultural and educational contexts. Continued research, particularly in underrepresented regions such as ASEAN, is essential to ensure that CEFR-aligned curricula are not only globally relevant but also contextually meaningful, inclusive, and responsive to the diverse needs of learners.

English Proficiency across Four Macro Skills

The four macro skills in learning explore the significance of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the process of language acquisition and effective communication (Ponce & Valsecchi, 2021)

Listening Proficiency

Listening is widely regarded as the first macro skill that learners develop and serves as the foundation for effective communication. It involves the ability to understand spoken language, including recognizing phonetic features, intonation, and contextual cues. As a receptive skill, listening plays a critical role in language acquisition, as it supports the development of vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, and cognitive processing. Research has shown that extensive listening practice significantly enhances learners' overall language competence (Syukur, 2024).

Despite its importance, listening is often perceived as the most challenging language skill among learners. Alzamil (2021) identified listening as a foundational yet difficult skill, with learners experiencing challenges related to speech rate, pronunciation, nervousness, limited vocabulary, and lack of background knowledge. These difficulties hinder comprehension and reduce learners' confidence in processing spoken language. However, the study also revealed that students generally maintain positive attitudes toward improving their listening skills. Understanding both the challenges and attitudes of learners is essential, as it enables teachers to design more responsive and effective instructional strategies.

In classroom settings, listening requires high levels of concentration and sustained attention, making it cognitively demanding for learners. Susilowati (2019) emphasized that listening tasks, which often involve processing dialogues and monologues, can be stressful and may even trigger anxiety. When learners are not aware of the specific difficulties they encounter during listening tasks, their motivation to learn may decrease, and anxiety levels may increase. This highlights the importance of helping students recognize and address their listening challenges to sustain engagement and progress.

Several studies have examined the specific factors contributing to listening difficulties. Yilmaz & Yavuz (2015) found that learners frequently encounter problems related to phonetics, which are often linked to their listening strategies. Their study also categorized listening difficulties into factors associated with teachers, learners' strategies, and psychological aspects. Similarly, Yahmun et al. (2020) reported that the speed and length of audio materials significantly affect learners' comprehension. These findings indicate that both linguistic and instructional factors contribute to the complexity of listening tasks.

Vocabulary limitation is consistently identified as a major barrier to listening comprehension. Learners often struggle to retain information, recognize familiar words in spoken form, and interpret intended meanings. As noted by Goh (as cited in Yilmaz & Yavuz, 2015), common listening difficulties include forgetting what has been heard, understanding literal meanings without grasping intended messages, failing to recognize known words, and losing focus while processing ongoing speech. Maulidiyah (2017) further emphasized that limited vocabulary significantly interferes with comprehension, underscoring the importance of vocabulary development in improving listening proficiency.

Pedagogically, various strategies can be employed to enhance listening skills. Alzamil (2021) suggested that active listening can be developed through the use of audio recordings, podcasts, and interactive dialogues. These activities encourage learners to identify key information, determine main ideas, and interpret speakers' intentions. Moreover, incorporating authentic listening materials that reflect real-life contexts enables learners to develop practical communication skills. Nafisah (2019) also proposed the use of innovative teaching techniques based on classroom experience, emphasizing the need for teachers to adopt varied and effective approaches to improve students' listening performance.

Empirical evidence further highlights the need to strengthen learners' listening abilities. Tamayo (2019) found that most respondents demonstrated only an average level of listening proficiency, indicating limited listening capability. This limitation may negatively affect academic performance if not addressed. Consequently, the study recommended the implementation of targeted intervention programs and regular practice activities to enhance students' listening competence.

Overall, listening proficiency remains a complex yet essential component of language learning. While it serves as the foundation for developing other language skills, it is also one of the most challenging areas for learners

due to cognitive, linguistic, and affective factors. Addressing these challenges requires a combination of effective instructional strategies, increased exposure to authentic listening materials, and continuous vocabulary development. Such efforts are necessary to support learners in improving their listening skills and achieving overall language proficiency.

Speaking Proficiency

Speaking is a dynamic macro skill that enables individuals to convey thoughts, emotions, and intentions through verbal communication. It requires not only linguistic competence but also confidence, fluency, and the ability to interact meaningfully with others. Effective speaking involves a combination of skills, including accurate pronunciation, appropriate vocabulary use, and grammatical correctness. Through spoken communication, learners are able to articulate their understanding and actively participate in discourse, making speaking an essential component of language proficiency (Nair & Yunus, 2021).

In the modern global context, proficiency in English speaking is not only an academic requirement but also a practical necessity. Usarova & Mirzakarimova (2022) emphasized that knowledge of English provides individuals with broader opportunities in education, employment, and social interaction. As such, developing speaking proficiency has become a priority in language education. To support this, various instructional strategies have been employed, including role-playing, debates, and group discussions. These approaches encourage learners to practice spontaneous speech in both formal and informal contexts, thereby reducing anxiety and enhancing communicative competence. Additionally, the integration of technology, such as language exchange platforms, offers learners authentic opportunities to interact with native speakers and improve their speaking skills (Mishra & Singh, 2021).

Despite its importance, speaking remains one of the most challenging skills for language learners. Sandigan (2018) found that students, even after approximately ten years of English instruction, continued to struggle with oral competence, both linguistically and sociolinguistically. This suggests that prolonged exposure to the language does not necessarily guarantee proficiency, particularly when opportunities for meaningful communication are limited. Consequently, educational institutions are encouraged to implement measures that ensure students develop sufficient speaking skills to effectively engage with academic content delivered in English.

Speaking proficiency is also critical in academic and professional settings, where effective communication is essential. Rofi'i (2019) highlighted that strong speaking skills are necessary for workplace communication, particularly in educational environments. However, several studies indicate that many learners, especially at the tertiary level, exhibit low levels of speaking proficiency. Jiwandono (2021) reported that a significant proportion of freshmen in an English Education program demonstrated limited speaking ability due to insufficient practice and their beginner-level status. Similarly, Humaira (2023) identified challenges such as traditional learning practices and limited opportunities for oral communication, which hinder speaking development. Supporting these findings, Dang (2022) and Uyen (2023) observed that learners commonly struggle with pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, all of which are essential components of effective speaking.

In the Philippine context, additional factors influence learners' speaking proficiency. Rivera (2023) found that students encountered difficulties in oral communication tasks and struggled to use English as a medium of communication, largely due to linguistic limitations. Separa (2020) further noted that psycho-social factors, such as fear of making mistakes and lack of confidence, significantly affect students' performance in speaking tasks. Moreover, Sandigan (2018) emphasized that effective oral production requires the integration of grammar, vocabulary, and rhetorical skills, alongside an understanding of social and cultural contexts that shape communication.

Affective factors, particularly anxiety and self-confidence, also play a crucial role in speaking performance. Lo (2018) found that second language speakers experience similar levels of stress in speaking situations. Kelsen (2019) categorized sources of public speaking anxiety into four key factors: positive mindset, physical symptoms, preparation anxiety, and performance anxiety. Understanding these sources of anxiety is essential,

as it allows educators to design instructional approaches that foster a supportive learning environment and enhance students' self-efficacy (LeFebvre & Allen, 2018).

Furthermore, learners' motivation and self-perception significantly influence their speaking ability. Leong and Ahmadi (2017) revealed that learners with low self-esteem, low motivation, and high levels of apprehension tend to experience greater difficulty in developing speaking skills, even when they possess adequate linguistic knowledge. This indicates that speaking proficiency is not solely dependent on language competence but is also shaped by psychological and emotional factors.

Overall, speaking proficiency is a multifaceted skill that requires the integration of linguistic knowledge, communicative competence, and affective readiness. While it is essential for academic success and real-world communication, many learners continue to face challenges due to limited practice opportunities, linguistic barriers, and psychological factors. Addressing these challenges requires the implementation of interactive and learner-centered instructional strategies, increased opportunities for authentic communication, and the creation of supportive environments that reduce anxiety and build learners' confidence in using the language.

Reading Proficiency

Reading is a fundamental human activity that enables individuals to access information, expand their knowledge, stimulate imagination, and develop empathy. It equips learners with the skills necessary to navigate complex ideas and engage meaningfully with the world. As such, reading is widely regarded as one of the most essential skills for academic success and personal development (National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2017). In higher education, reading proficiency is particularly critical, as students are expected to comprehend complex texts, analyze information, and synthesize knowledge across disciplines (Harrison, 2018). However, recent studies indicate that many higher education students struggle with reading proficiency, which may negatively affect their academic performance and overall success (Arenson & Carapezza, 2019).

In the Philippine context, reading proficiency among college students has become a growing concern. Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (2019) revealed that only 61.6% of Filipino college students are proficient in reading, highlighting a significant gap in literacy skills. This issue is alarming because reading proficiency is closely linked to academic achievement and employability (NAEP, 2017). On a global scale, the situation becomes even more concerning. The Philippines' participation in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) revealed that Filipino students ranked among the lowest in reading proficiency worldwide (Haw, 2021). These findings underscore the urgent need to strengthen reading instruction and support systems within the country.

Several factors contribute to low reading proficiency among students. Deluao (2022) emphasized that learners' entry-level reading comprehension significantly influences their overall performance. In particular, students from geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas, such as those in Davao del Sur and Davao Occidental, often experience limited access to educational resources, including internet connectivity and exposure to various forms of media. This lack of exposure restricts their opportunities to develop vocabulary, comprehension, and critical thinking skills. Conversely, students who are exposed to diverse media, such as films and audio-visual materials, tend to demonstrate improved receptive and communicative abilities, which contribute to better reading comprehension.

To assess reading proficiency, tools such as the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) are commonly used to evaluate students' reading levels and identify areas for improvement. Espinosa and Allen (2023), in their study "*Reading Proficiency Level of College Students in the Philippines*," found that a significant number of college students exhibit low reading proficiency. This deficiency limits their ability to comprehend complex texts, extract relevant information, and critically analyze academic materials. Consequently, understanding these challenges is essential for developing targeted interventions that can enhance students' reading abilities and support their academic success.

The importance of reading proficiency extends beyond academic contexts into the workplace. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2019), employers highly value graduates who possess

strong reading and writing skills, as these are essential for effective communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Similarly, findings from NAEP (2019) revealed that only 35% of Grade 12 students in the United States were proficient in reading, indicating that reading challenges are not limited to the Philippine context but are also evident globally. These trends highlight the need for sustained efforts in improving reading skills across educational levels.

Reading proficiency is a multifaceted skill that involves several interrelated components. Duke and Cartwright (2021) emphasized that early development of reading skills is crucial, as deficiencies in any component such as vocabulary, comprehension, or fluency can hinder overall reading development. Among these components, vocabulary knowledge plays a central role. Nation (2020) identified vocabulary as a key predictor of reading success, as it enables learners to understand and interpret texts effectively. Similarly, Stahl and Nagy (2019) defined vocabulary as the set of words necessary for communication and comprehension, while Duke and Pearson (2020) highlighted its significant contribution to reading comprehension. Learners with a strong vocabulary base are better equipped to engage with complex texts and derive meaning more efficiently.

Another essential component of reading proficiency is fluency, which refers to the ability to read accurately, quickly, and with appropriate expression. Fluency serves as a bridge between word recognition and comprehension, allowing readers to focus on meaning rather than decoding individual words (Wolf & Katzir-Cohen, 2021). Santos (2021) further explained that fluency involves not only speed but also expressive reading that reflects understanding. Effective strategies for developing fluency include repeated reading, which Rasinski (2019) identified as a highly effective approach for improving reading smoothness and comprehension. Additionally, Pikulski and Chard (2020) emphasized the importance of combining phonics instruction with fluency practice, as decoding skills support accurate and efficient reading. Kuhn and Schwanenflugel (2020) also recommended partner reading as a strategy that provides immediate feedback and reinforces fluent reading behaviors.

Overall, reading proficiency is a critical skill that underpins academic success, professional competence, and lifelong learning. Despite its importance, many students continue to face challenges due to limited resources, insufficient exposure to language, and gaps in foundational skills such as vocabulary and fluency. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive and targeted interventions, including improved instructional practices, increased access to diverse reading materials, and the integration of supportive learning environments. Strengthening reading proficiency is essential to ensure that learners can effectively engage with academic content and succeed in both educational and professional contexts.

Writing Proficiency

Writing proficiency is a complex cognitive process that enables language learners to organize and express ideas coherently. It requires mastery of grammar, syntax, and rhetorical conventions, all of which are essential for academic and professional success (Graham & Harris, 2016). Writing also reflects learners' overall language proficiency and cognitive development, as it integrates multiple linguistic and higher-order thinking skills. As a productive skill, writing demands the ability to generate, structure, and refine ideas in a clear and meaningful manner.

The development of writing proficiency is closely influenced by learners' exposure to language input and their engagement with other macro skills. Reading and speaking, in particular, contribute significantly to vocabulary development and discourse competence, which are necessary for effective writing. This interconnectedness highlights that writing does not develop in isolation but is shaped by a learner's overall communicative experience. As emphasized by Singca (2024), the four macro skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) serve as the foundation for effective communication, reinforcing the need for integrated language instruction.

Various instructional approaches have been identified as effective in enhancing writing proficiency. Structured writing tasks, free writing activities, and collaborative writing exercises encourage learners to actively engage in the writing process and improve the quality of their compositions (Kessler et al., 2012). These approaches allow students to practice organizing their thoughts, experimenting with language, and refining their writing through interaction with peers. In addition, feedback plays a crucial role in writing development. Both teacher

feedback and automated feedback systems have been shown to significantly improve students' revision skills and overall writing performance (Z. Zhang & Hyland, 2018), as they provide learners with guidance on how to enhance clarity, coherence, and accuracy.

Strategy-based instruction further supports writing development by promoting self-regulated learning. Tran and Ma (2025) found that learners who employ strategies such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating their writing demonstrate improved outcomes. These strategies help learners become more independent and reflective writers. Moreover, the integration of technology, including online writing platforms and collaborative tools, provides opportunities for authentic writing practice and peer interaction. Such tools enable learners to engage in real-world communication tasks, thereby strengthening their communicative competence.

Despite its importance, writing is often regarded as one of the most difficult skills to master, particularly for learners of a second or foreign language. Huy (2015) described writing as a means of transmitting thoughts and ideas to others, emphasizing its essential role in communication. However, many students tend to undervalue writing and devote limited time and effort to its development. Dwivedi and Chakravarthy (2015) noted that writing in a second language can be a challenging and demanding experience, especially for learners whose native language differs significantly from the target language. These learners often struggle with composing even simple texts due to difficulties in grammar, vocabulary, and organization.

Furthermore, writing is considered the most complex among the four macro skills because it requires the integration of multiple linguistic components and cognitive processes. Although it is often introduced as the final skill in language learning, it cannot be neglected, as it is essential for academic tasks and real-life communication. As noted by Neville (1988, as cited in Dwivedi & Chakravarthy, 2015), the ability to write clearly and logically using appropriate language and style is crucial not only for academic success but also for functioning effectively in adult life.

Writing is fundamentally a communicative act that involves conveying a message to an intended audience. Reid (1994, as cited in Dwivedi & Chakravarthy, 2015) emphasized that successful writing depends on the writer's ability to establish a shared understanding with the reader. This requires awareness of the audience and the purpose of the writing task. Without this awareness, communication may fail, as the intended message may not be effectively conveyed. Learners, particularly those in the early stages of language acquisition, often struggle with this aspect as they are still developing their linguistic knowledge and writing skills. Additionally, even teachers may require guidance in effectively teaching writing, highlighting the need for continuous professional development in this area.

Overall, writing proficiency is a multifaceted and essential skill that plays a critical role in language learning and communication. Its development requires not only mastery of linguistic elements but also the integration of cognitive, social, and instructional factors. Addressing the challenges associated with writing demands the use of effective teaching strategies, consistent feedback, and opportunities for meaningful practice. By fostering these elements, educators can support learners in becoming competent and confident writers in both academic and real-world contexts.

English Language Proficiency in the Philippines

The Philippines has long been regarded as one of the largest English-speaking nations in the world, a distinction rooted in its historical and educational development. Following the end of the Philippine-American War in 1902, the American colonial government institutionalized English as the primary language of instruction, governance, and commerce. This policy established a strong foundation for English usage across various domains of Philippine society. At present, English remains constitutionally recognized as one of the country's official languages and continues to function as a key medium of instruction in education (Cabigon, 2015). It is also widely used in business, science, technology, government, and international communication, positioning the Philippines as a competitive participant in the global economy.

In addition, the country has gained recognition as a major destination for English as a Second Language (ESL) learning. With approximately two-thirds of the population considered fluent in English (Mariñas, 2021), the

Philippines has developed a reputation for producing English-speaking graduates and professionals. This widespread use of English has contributed significantly to industries such as business process outsourcing (BPO), tourism, and international services, where effective communication in English is essential.

However, despite this strong foundation, recent data suggest a gradual decline in English language proficiency among Filipinos. According to the EF English Proficiency Index, which ranks countries based on their English proficiency levels, the Philippines has experienced notable fluctuations and an overall downward trend in recent years. The country's ranking dropped from 14th place in 2018 to 20th in 2019, and further declined to 27th in 2020. Although there was some improvement in 2021, with the Philippines rising to 18th place, this ranking still falls short of its previous standing at 13th place in 2016 (Santos et al., 2022). These shifts indicate concerns regarding the consistency and sustainability of English proficiency levels in the country.

Further evidence of this decline can be seen in international proficiency benchmarks. A report cited by GMA News and PhilStar Global in 2018, based on a study conducted by Hopkins International Partners (the official Philippine representative of the Test of English for International Communication or TOEIC), revealed that the average English proficiency of Filipino college graduates was lower than expected. Specifically, the average TOEIC score of Filipino graduates was 631.4, which falls below the required proficiency levels for certain occupations abroad. For instance, taxi drivers in Dubai are expected to achieve a TOEIC score of at least 650, while business process outsourcing agents are required to reach a score of 850. This comparison highlights a significant gap between the expected and actual proficiency levels of Filipino graduates, raising concerns about their readiness for global employment.

Similarly, another report by Andrew King, country director for the Philippines of IPD Education an Australian organization that provides English language testing services indicated that the average IELTS scores of Filipino test-takers were lower than expected, particularly given their educational background (Morallo, 2018). This finding suggests that even individuals who have completed formal education may not possess the level of English proficiency required for academic or professional purposes in international contexts. Such results reinforce the perception that English language standards in the Philippines may be declining.

Several factors may contribute to this observed decline in proficiency. These may include inconsistencies in language instruction, reduced emphasis on English in certain educational policies, and the increasing influence of local languages and informal communication styles, particularly in digital and social media contexts. Additionally, disparities in access to quality education and learning resources, especially in rural and underserved areas, may further widen the proficiency gap among learners.

Overall, while the Philippines continues to maintain its reputation as an English-speaking nation, emerging evidence points to a gradual decline in proficiency levels that warrants attention. This situation underscores the need for strengthened language policies, improved instructional practices, and targeted interventions to ensure that Filipino learners develop and maintain the level of English proficiency required for academic success and global competitiveness.

Influence of Demographic Variables on English Proficiency

Demographic variables such as sex, year level, home language, socio-economic status (SES), and parental education exert a significant influence on learners' English language acquisition. Recent studies continue to affirm that these factors shape not only learners' exposure to the language but also their attitudes, motivation, and opportunities to use English in meaningful contexts. Rather than functioning independently, these variables interact dynamically, creating conditions that may either facilitate or hinder language development (Luo et al., 2025; Li & Tong, 2025).

Sex has been identified as a factor that can influence patterns of language performance. Empirical studies suggest that females often outperform males in verbal and written tasks, which may be attributed to a combination of socialization processes, cognitive development, and learning behaviors (Reilly et al., 2018). More recent research supports this trend, indicating that female students tend to demonstrate stronger performance in reading comprehension and writing tasks due to higher engagement in language-related activities and more consistent

study habits (Martínez & López, 2022; Chen et al., 2023). From a developmental perspective, females are also observed to acquire language skills earlier than males, which may provide them with a foundational advantage in communication-related tasks (Haas, 2018). However, these differences are not universal and may vary depending on instructional context and cultural influences.

Year level is another important variable that contributes to differences in language proficiency. As learners progress through their academic journey, they are exposed to increasingly complex language tasks that promote the development of advanced vocabulary, more sophisticated grammatical structures, and higher-order thinking skills. Alcantara (2021) noted that sustained academic engagement enhances students' ability to write analytically and communicate effectively. Supporting this, recent studies have shown that higher-year students tend to exhibit improved proficiency due to cumulative exposure to academic discourse and structured language instruction (Garcia & Flores, 2023; Nguyen & Hamid, 2024). Moreover, regular participation in classroom activities such as presentations, discussions, and collaborative tasks strengthens listening and speaking skills, thereby contributing to overall communicative competence.

The language used at home also plays a crucial role in shaping learners' linguistic foundations. In multilingual contexts like the Philippines, students are often exposed to multiple languages, which can enhance cognitive flexibility and metalinguistic awareness. However, when English is not regularly used in the home environment, learners may have limited opportunities to practice and internalize the language. Santos and David (2019) highlighted that reliance on Filipino or regional dialects in daily communication may slow the development of English grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. More recent findings reinforce this, indicating that consistent exposure to English at home significantly predicts higher proficiency levels, particularly in reading and listening skills (Dizon, 2022; Bernardo & Madrunio, 2023). Consequently, learners with greater exposure to English at home tend to demonstrate stronger proficiency across both receptive and productive language domains.

Socio-economic status (SES) and parental education remain among the most influential predictors of language proficiency outcomes. Learners from higher socio-economic backgrounds typically have greater access to educational resources such as books, digital tools, private tutoring, and enrichment programs, all of which contribute to language development (Singh et al., 2023; Tan et al., 2023). Recent large-scale studies further confirm that SES significantly predicts students' performance in standardized English assessments, with disparities becoming more evident in developing countries (OECD, 2022; World Bank, 2024). In addition, parents with higher levels of education are more likely to engage in literacy-related activities and provide academic support, thereby fostering a language-rich environment that promotes early language acquisition (Cheng & Wu, 2023). In contrast, learners from low-income backgrounds often face multiple challenges, including limited access to learning materials, overcrowded classrooms, and fewer opportunities for individualized instruction. These constraints can significantly hinder their ability to develop English proficiency.

Importantly, these demographic variables do not operate in isolation but interact in complex ways that can either amplify advantages or exacerbate barriers. For example, a first-year student from a low-income household where English is not commonly spoken may encounter compounded difficulties in language learning compared to a fourth-year student from a middle-class, bilingual family with access to educational resources and support. Recent interdisciplinary studies highlight that the intersection of SES, home language, and educational exposure creates cumulative effects on learners' language outcomes (Hart et al., 2024; Luo et al., 2025; Li & Tong, 2025). These findings emphasize the need to examine demographic variables holistically rather than as separate predictors.

Recognizing the interplay of these variables is essential for designing effective and equitable language instruction. Recent educational research emphasizes the importance of inclusive pedagogical approaches that are responsive to learners' socio-cultural and economic contexts (UNESCO, 2023). Educators must adopt differentiated and context-sensitive strategies that account for learners' diverse backgrounds and starting points. Aligning instructional practices with frameworks such as the CEFR can further support this effort by providing structured benchmarks for language development while allowing flexibility in addressing individual learner needs. Ultimately, understanding the role of demographic variables enables the development of targeted interventions that promote inclusive education and maximize learners' potential in acquiring English proficiency.

Challenges Affecting English Language Proficiency

English language proficiency is shaped by a complex interaction of affective, environmental, instructional, and socio-economic factors, particularly in multilingual contexts such as the Philippines. One of the most significant influences is learners' emotional state. According to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), variables such as anxiety, low self-confidence, and lack of motivation can hinder language acquisition by blocking the processing of linguistic input. In classroom settings, this is often reflected in learners' fear of making mistakes, reluctance to participate, and reduced engagement in communicative activities. These affective barriers limit students' opportunities to practice the language, thereby slowing the development of their proficiency.

Motivation and attitude further play a critical role in shaping learners' success in acquiring English. Pangket (2019), in the study *"Oral English Proficiency: Factors Affecting the Learners' Development,"* identified motivation, along with vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar, as key factors influencing learners' proficiency. The study revealed that lack of interest, insufficient vocabulary, and limited training can demotivate learners in studying English. Similarly, Castro (2018) confirmed that students with more positive attitudes toward learning English tend to be more motivated, which in turn enhances their academic achievement. Supporting this, Alaga (2016) emphasized that motivation is a crucial component in second language acquisition, particularly among Filipino learners. When motivation is low, learners are less likely to engage actively in the learning process, which may result in poor language acquisition. Gaerlan (2016) further found that less successful Filipino ESL learners often lack the motivation to use or learn English, as they do not perceive it as relevant to their future, leading to minimal effort in developing their language skills.

In addition to affective factors, socio-economic conditions significantly influence language learning outcomes. Learners from low-income backgrounds frequently experience limited access to educational resources such as books, digital tools, and enrichment opportunities, which are essential for language development (Singh et al., 2023). This challenge is further intensified in households where English is rarely used, particularly in rural settings, thereby restricting learners' exposure to authentic language input necessary for vocabulary growth and communicative competence (Singh et al., 2022). However, studies suggest that beyond financial capacity, the level of parental involvement plays a more decisive role in learners' academic success. Obansa (2021) noted that academic achievement is more strongly influenced by the extent of family support and engagement in a child's education than by financial status alone. This is supported by Sharon Wolf (2021), who emphasized that parental involvement positively affects students' motivation, behavior, and academic performance. Parental involvement, defined as the active participation of parents in their children's schooling (Bartolome, Mamat, & Masnan, 2017), has been shown to significantly enhance student development. Furthermore, Fontanilla (2016) highlighted that family, particularly parents, serves as a primary source of motivation for Filipino students learning English.

Instructional practices also contribute to persistent proficiency gaps among learners. Although communicative and task-based approaches are widely recognized as effective in developing language skills, traditional methods such as grammar-translation remain prevalent in many educational contexts (Haan & Gallagher, 2021). This mismatch often results in learners having strong theoretical knowledge of English but lacking the ability to use the language effectively in real-life communication. Additionally, the way instructional strategies are implemented influences student motivation and engagement. Pangket (2019) found that certain classroom activities, such as group work and role-play, do not always motivate students when they are not meaningfully designed or appropriately facilitated. Moreover, when teachers select topics that are too easy or fail to challenge students, learners may lose interest, which can hinder the development of their language skills.

Empirical evidence from other contexts further supports the existence of these challenges. A study conducted by Nithid et al. (2022) revealed that first-year students in Thailand experienced difficulties in English learning, particularly in listening and speaking. The study also found that learners needed improvement in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, indicating that foundational language components remain a common challenge across different learning environments. These findings suggest that difficulties in mastering the macro skills are not unique to a single context but are shared by learners in various educational settings.

Importantly, these factors do not operate independently but interact in ways that can either facilitate or hinder language acquisition. For instance, a learner from a low socio-economic background with limited exposure to

English and high levels of anxiety is more likely to experience compounded difficulties in developing proficiency. Similarly, a lack of parental support combined with ineffective instructional practices may further reduce learners' motivation and engagement. This interplay of factors highlights the need for a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by learners.

Overall, the literature suggests that addressing these challenges requires a holistic and context-sensitive approach. Effective language instruction should not only incorporate appropriate teaching strategies but also foster a supportive learning environment, enhance learners' motivation, and increase exposure to authentic language use. Additionally, strengthening parental involvement and ensuring equitable access to learning resources are essential in supporting learners' English language development. These insights underscore the importance of designing targeted and responsive instructional interventions that address the diverse needs of learners and ultimately improve their English language proficiency.

Instructional and Curricular Implications of CEFR

Standardized benchmarks such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) play a crucial role in shaping language instruction and curriculum design in tertiary education. By providing clearly defined proficiency levels and descriptors, the CEFR ensures a consistent and transparent assessment of learners' communicative competence. This alignment allows educators to design instruction that is not only academically relevant but also responsive to real-world academic and professional demands (Council of Europe, 2020). In this way, the CEFR bridges the gap between classroom learning and practical language use, ensuring that students develop skills applicable beyond the educational setting.

One of the key contributions of the CEFR is its ability to support objective and data-driven assessment. CEFR-aligned diagnostic tools enable educators to measure learners' proficiency across the four macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in a systematic manner. This approach reduces reliance on subjective judgments and replaces them with standardized criteria that yield reliable and comparable results (Fulcher, 2018). As a result, teachers gain a clearer understanding of learners' strengths and weaknesses, which is essential for effective instructional planning. In mixed-ability classrooms, this data becomes particularly valuable, as it allows educators to implement differentiated instruction tailored to varying proficiency levels (Richards, 2017).

The use of explicit CEFR descriptors also enhances learners' metacognitive awareness and promotes greater autonomy in the learning process. For instance, clearly articulated performance criteria at levels such as B1 enable students to understand what is expected of them and to monitor their own progress. Little (2017) emphasized that such transparency empowers learners to take an active role in their language development. This aligns with the principles of self-regulated learning, where students set goals, evaluate their performance, and adjust their strategies accordingly. The Council of Europe (2020) further highlighted that fostering learner autonomy is essential for achieving sustained improvements in language proficiency.

From a curricular perspective, the CEFR encourages the integration of authentic, task-based activities that reflect real-life communication. Language programs are expected to incorporate tasks such as presentations, group discussions, and collaborative problem-solving, which mirror the communicative demands of academic and professional environments. Basturkmen (2019) noted that such task-based approaches are particularly relevant in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts, where language instruction is closely tied to learners' future careers. Hyland (2019) further emphasized that integrating workplace-oriented communication tasks enhances learners' employability by equipping them with practical and transferable language skills.

Another significant implication of CEFR implementation is its ability to highlight imbalances in learners' language profiles. For example, diagnostic results often reveal that students perform better in receptive skills (reading and listening) than in productive skills (speaking and writing). Identifying these gaps allows educators to design targeted interventions that focus on areas requiring improvement. Fulcher (2018) pointed out that such data-driven insights enable more precise instructional adjustments, while Richards (2017) noted that profile-based teaching strategies can lead to measurable improvements in overall language outcomes. This targeted approach ensures that instruction is both efficient and responsive to learners' specific needs.

To effectively operationalize these principles in instructional planning, this study adopts the Backward Design model, which begins with clearly defined CEFR-aligned learning outcomes, followed by the development of appropriate assessment tasks, and finally the selection of targeted instructional activities. This approach ensures alignment among objectives, assessment, and instruction, thereby promoting coherence and intentionality in the teaching process. By starting with the desired learning outcomes based on CEFR descriptors (e.g., B1 proficiency), educators can design assessments that accurately measure communicative competence and develop learning activities that directly support these goals.

Furthermore, the instructional plan integrates Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches to enhance the effectiveness of CEFR-based instruction. CLIL enables students to learn language through meaningful content related to their field of study, thereby increasing relevance and engagement. This is particularly important for ABELS students, as it situates language learning within authentic disciplinary contexts. On the other hand, CLT emphasizes interaction, real-life communication, and learner participation, ensuring that students actively use the language in meaningful situations rather than merely acquiring theoretical knowledge. The combination of CLIL and CLT supports the development of both linguistic competence and communicative proficiency, aligning closely with the action-oriented approach of the CEFR.

However, the successful implementation of CEFR-aligned curricula is not without challenges. One of the most significant barriers is insufficient teacher training. Hamid et al. (2025) highlighted that limited understanding of CEFR principles and practices among educators can hinder effective implementation. Without adequate training, teachers may struggle to interpret CEFR descriptors, design aligned assessments, or apply appropriate instructional strategies. This limitation can ultimately affect students' opportunities to develop communicative competence, particularly within regional contexts such as the ASEAN community, where English proficiency plays a vital role in mobility and collaboration.

Overall, the CEFR has profound instructional and curricular implications for language education. It promotes standardized yet flexible approaches to teaching and assessment, supports learner autonomy, and encourages the integration of real-world communication tasks. The use of the Backward Design framework, combined with CLIL and CLT approaches, ensures that instruction is aligned, meaningful, and context-responsive. At the same time, it underscores the importance of teacher preparedness and continuous professional development. To fully realize the benefits of the CEFR, educational institutions must invest in capacity-building initiatives, ensure alignment between curriculum and assessment, and adopt context-sensitive approaches that address the diverse needs of learners.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods research design, consisting of a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase. This approach allowed the researcher to gather both numerical data and in-depth explanations for a more comprehensive understanding of ABELS students' English language proficiency.

In the first phase, a descriptive-correlational approach was used to determine the students' proficiency levels across the four macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) based on the CEFR. It also examined the significant differences in English proficiency across the demographic profile of the respondents, including sex, language used at home, social media exposure, year level, parents' monthly income, and academic performance. Further, the relationship between English proficiency and selected variables (social media exposure and academic performance) was also examined. This approach was appropriate for educational research as it allowed the identification of patterns, existing conditions, and statistically significant relationships without manipulating variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Qahtani, 2016).

In the second phase, the qualitative component was conducted after the analysis of the quantitative results to provide deeper explanations of the findings. Structured interview was administered to selected students who got low-proficiency level (A1-A2) to explore their language learning experiences, difficulties, and underlying factors

affecting their performance in the four macro-skills. This phase aimed to explain the “why” behind the quantitative results by capturing students’ perspectives and lived experiences. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns.

Finally, the results from both phases were integrated during the interpretation stage to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the students’ English language proficiency. The qualitative findings were used to support and explain the quantitative results and served as the basis for developing a data-driven instructional language plan tailored to the needs of the learners.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Cagayan State University–Carig Campus, specifically within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, located in Tuguegarao City. The College offers a wide range of undergraduate programs in the humanities and social sciences, including AB Economics, AB English Language Studies (ABELS), AB Communication, AB Political Science, BS Guidance and Counseling, BS Industrial and Commercial Communication, BS Psychology, Bachelor in Human Services, and BS Development Communication. These programs emphasize communication, critical thinking, and language proficiency, making the college a suitable setting for studies related to English language competence.

The selection of this locale was based on its relevance to the objectives of the study. As an academic institution where English is used as a primary medium of instruction, the campus provides an appropriate environment for assessing students’ English language proficiency. In particular, ABELS students are expected to demonstrate a higher level of language competence, as their program focuses on the study and application of the English language in various professional and academic contexts. This makes them an ideal group for examining proficiency levels using internationally recognized frameworks such as the CEFR.

Furthermore, the need to conduct the study in this locale stems from the limited availability of localized, empirical data on students’ English proficiency within the university. While institutional assessments are regularly administered, there is a lack of standardized evaluation aligned with global benchmarks. Conducting the study in this setting allows for the identification of specific strengths and gaps in students’ language skills, which may not be fully captured by existing assessment practices.

The findings derived from this locale are expected to provide relevant insights for curriculum enhancement and instructional planning within the College. By focusing on a specific academic unit, the study ensures that the results are contextually grounded and directly applicable to the development of targeted interventions, particularly in the form of instructional materials and language support programs tailored to students’ needs.

Respondents and Sampling Techniques

The target population consisted of 125 students enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies (ABELS) program at Cagayan State University–Carig Campus for the First Semester of Academic Year 2025–2026. These students were distributed across year levels, and all were selected to participate in assessments of their English reading and writing skills.

Year Level	N	Sample
First-Year	36	28
Second-Year	44	31
Third-Year	31	21
Fourth-Year	14	11
Total	125	91

The study employed stratified random sampling to ensure representation across the four macro-skills of language proficiency. The sample size was determined using Slovin’s formula with a 5% margin of error, which yielded a required sample of 95 respondents from a population of 125 students. However, during data collection, only 91 students were available to participate in the study. Since the obtained sample closely approximates the

computed requirement and still represents the majority of the population, it was considered sufficient for statistical analysis and interpretation of results.

Research Instruments

The study employed methodological triangulation using three instruments: a researcher-made demographic questionnaire, an adapted standardized English proficiency test (EF SET), and a structured interview. This combination of quantitative and qualitative methods strengthened the validity, reliability, and depth of the findings, as supported by Creswell & Creswell (2018), who emphasized that triangulation enhances the comprehensiveness of research outcomes by integrating multiple data sources.

A researcher-made questionnaire was administered to collect demographic data such as sex, year level, language used at home, social media exposure, parents' monthly income, and academic performance. These variables were systematically analyzed to identify possible differences and relationships in students' English proficiency across groups, thereby providing contextual understanding of the factors influencing language performance.

Students' English proficiency was assessed using the adopted and contextualized EF Standard English Test under the B1 (Intermediate) level. This globally recognized, CEFR-aligned test developed by EF SET evaluates the four macro-skills: reading (20 minutes), writing (35 minutes), listening (20 minutes), and speaking (15 minutes). The test is designed to measure learners' communicative competence and typically reports results on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages global scale, ranging from A1 (Beginner) to C2 (Proficient). The EF SET has been validated through international research, supporting its credibility as a measure of English language proficiency.

Due to limited internet connectivity and restricted access to computer-based testing facilities, the EF SET was adapted into a paper-based format for this study. While its adaptive testing feature was not retained, the core structure, content organization, and item types were preserved to maintain alignment with standardized testing principles. Standardized administration procedures were strictly followed, including fixed time allocations and the use of high-quality audio-recorded materials for the listening section, to ensure consistency, fairness, and reliability across all respondents.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the productive skills assessment, language experts were involved in the evaluation process. These experts assessed the students' speaking proficiency using standardized rating criteria based on the CEFR framework, focusing on fluency, coherence, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary range, and pronunciation. Similarly, they evaluated the students' written outputs using CEFR-based writing rubrics, ensuring objectivity, consistency, and inter-rater reliability in scoring. The use of multiple raters minimized individual bias and enhanced the credibility of the assessment results.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected students who got low-proficiency level across the four macro-skills. The interview guide was validated by language experts prior to administration to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the objectives of the study. These interviews explored the students' language learning experiences, perceived difficulties, and suggestions for improving English instruction.

All interview responses were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis, wherein data were coded, categorized, and organized into recurring themes. The qualitative findings were then integrated with the quantitative results to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' English proficiency and to support the development of a data-driven Instructional Language Plan.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher first secured the necessary approvals from the Campus Executive Officer, the Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the Chair of the ABELS program before the implementation of the study. Upon approval, the researcher coordinated with the target participants and scheduled the data collection activities in consideration of their class availability to minimize disruption to academic activities.

Before the administration of the instruments, a short orientation was conducted to inform the respondents about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and their rights as participants. These included voluntary participation, confidentiality of responses, anonymity of data, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. This orientation ensured ethical compliance and provided a standardized understanding of the testing procedures.

After the orientation, the data collection instruments were administered in a structured and sequential manner. The demographic questionnaire was given first to gather essential background information, including sex, language used at home, length of exposure to social media, year level, parents' monthly income, and General Weighted Average (GWA). This was followed by the English language proficiency assessment, which covered the four macro-skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The reading test was administered first, with a time allotment of 20 minutes consisting of 30 multiple-choice items designed to measure reading comprehension skills such as identifying main ideas, supporting details, and contextual meaning. This was followed by the writing test, where respondents were given 35 minutes to complete three essay-type tasks. The written outputs were evaluated by three language experts using CEFR-based rubrics to ensure inter-rater consistency, objectivity, and reliability of scoring.

On the second scheduled day, the listening test was administered in a controlled, quiet, and closed-room environment to ensure uniform testing conditions. Audio-recorded materials were played for 20 minutes, and respondents answered comprehension questions based on the input. This standardized administration ensured that all participants were exposed to identical listening stimuli under consistent conditions.

On the third scheduled day, the speaking test was conducted individually. Each respondent was given 15 minutes to respond to structured oral prompts designed to elicit spontaneous speech. Their responses were evaluated independently by three language experts using a CEFR-aligned speaking rubric to ensure objectivity, consistency, and inter-rater reliability in scoring.

Since the assessment was administered in a paper-based format, all responses were recorded and scored manually. Unlike standardized computer-based assessments such as the EF SET, which utilize Item Response Theory (IRT) and scaled scores (0–100) to determine proficiency levels, this study employed raw scores due to the limited number of test items and the paper-based nature of the assessment. Consequently, an equal interval interpretation of raw scores was applied in analyzing the results.

After the completion of the quantitative phase, a semi-structured interview was conducted with selected students who got low-proficiency level across the four macro-skills. This allowed the researcher to gather in-depth insights into students' English language learning experiences, challenges, and difficulties.

All data collected from the demographic questionnaire, proficiency tests, and interviews were systematically organized, encoded, and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and emerging themes.

Data Analysis

The data gathered in this study were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including frequency, mean, t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson correlation, were utilized to analyze the quantitative data to comprehensively assess the English language proficiency of Bachelor of Arts in Language Studies (ABELS) students at the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Cagayan State University–Carig Campus.

Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages were utilized to present the respondents' profile. The variables were categorized into personal characteristics, namely sex, language used at home, and length of exposure to social media, and professional characteristics, including year level, parents' monthly income, and General Weighted Average (GWA). These data were organized in tabular form to clearly describe the distribution of respondents across categories. The profile variables were also used as grouping factors in examining differences in English language proficiency.

The students' essays from the writing assessment were evaluated by three language experts using a CEFR-based rubric aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages descriptors. The individual ratings were computed, and the mean score was obtained to determine the overall writing performance. Similarly, the speaking assessment was conducted and rated by two language experts using CEFR-based speaking rubrics, and the mean score was computed to obtain the overall speaking performance. These procedures ensured inter-rater consistency and reliability of scoring.

Since the assessment was administered in a paper-based format, only the raw scores obtained by the respondents were utilized for the listening and reading components. These scores were derived directly from the number of correct responses and served as the primary basis for evaluating students' performance. Unlike standardized computer-based assessments, which employ Item Response Theory (IRT) and scaled scoring systems ranging from 0 to 100 to determine proficiency levels per skill, this study did not adopt such scaling procedures.

Instead, an equal interval interpretation of the average score was applied to ensure a systematic and consistent classification of performance. The score ranges were categorized as follows:

Listening and Reading

Score Range	Level
1–6	Poor
7–12	Fair
13–18	Satisfactory
19–24	Very Satisfactory
25–30	Excellent

Speaking and Writing

Score Range	Level
1–4	Poor
5–8	Fair
9–12	Satisfactory
13–16	Very Satisfactory
17–20	Excellent

The obtained scores were then categorized using CEFR-aligned rubrics based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages to determine the proficiency level of each macro-skill.

CEFR	EF SET
Pre-A1	0-20
A1 Beginner	21-30
A2 Elementary	31-40
B1 Intermediate	41-50
B2 Upper Intermediate	51-60
C1 Advanced	61-70
C1 Proficient	71-100

This approach enabled the researcher to maintain alignment with internationally recognized standards while adapting the assessment to the practical constraints of a paper-based testing format.

Furthermore, an overall English language proficiency level was derived by computing the average of the four macro-skill scores—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This composite score provided a balanced representation of both receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing), ensuring that the overall interpretation reflected the respondents' comprehensive language ability rather than performance in a single domain.

Inferential statistical techniques were applied to determine whether significant differences existed in English language proficiency when respondents were grouped according to their profile variables. An independent samples t-test was used for variables with two categories, such as sex, while one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed for variables with more than two categories, including year level, language used at home, parents' monthly income, length of exposure to social media, and GWA categories. All statistical tests were conducted at a 0.05 level of significance.

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to examine the relationships between selected variables, particularly length of exposure to social media and academic performance (GWA), and the respondents' proficiency across the four macro-skills. This analysis determined the strength and direction of relationships and identified whether these variables were associated with variations in English language proficiency.

For the qualitative component, semi-structured interview responses from respondents classified under lower CEFR levels (e.g., A1 and A2) were analyzed using thematic analysis. The responses were transcribed, coded, and categorized into emerging themes that reflected common language learning challenges. These included difficulties across the four macro-skills, affective barriers such as anxiety and lack of confidence, as well as environmental and instructional constraints. The emerging themes were further validated by three language experts to ensure credibility, accuracy, and consistency of interpretation. The qualitative findings provided deeper contextual insights into the quantitative results.

Finally, the results from both quantitative and qualitative analyses were triangulated to ensure validity and consistency. This integrated interpretation provided a comprehensive understanding of the respondents' English language proficiency and served as the basis for the development of a proposed Instructional Language Plan aimed at addressing identified gaps and improving macro-skill performance through targeted and evidence-based interventions.

Ethical Consideration

The study strictly adhered to ethical standards in the conduct of educational research to ensure the protection, privacy, and rights of all respondents. Before data collection, all respondents were provided with a clear explanation of the study's objectives, procedures, and their roles as respondents. A written informed consent form was distributed, and only students who voluntarily agreed to participate and signed the form were included in the study. All information gathered from respondents was treated with strict confidentiality.

Personal identifiers were removed from data files and replaced with codes to ensure anonymity. The researcher stored the data in secure, password-protected digital folders, with access limited to authorized personnel only.

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Students were informed of their right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any time without fear of penalty or negative academic consequences. The study did not pose any physical, emotional, or psychological harm to the respondents. The English language proficiency exam and demographic questionnaires were administered in a safe and supportive environment, ensuring that no participant was subjected to undue pressure or stress.

All data collected were used solely for academic research purposes, particularly as a basis for the. Findings were reported in aggregate form, ensuring that no individual respondent could be identified in any publication or presentation of the results.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Sex	Female	74	81.3
Sex	Male	17	18.7
Sex Total		91	100
Language	Ibanag	3	3.30

Language	Ilocano	43	47.25
Language	Ytawes	3	3.30
Language	English	0	0
Language	Tagalog	42	46.15
Language Total		91	100
Social Media Exposure	0–2 hours	13	14.29
Social Media Exposure	3–5 hours	38	41.76
Social Media Exposure	6 hours and above	40	43.96
Social Media Total		91	100
Year Level	First	28	30.8
Year Level	Second	31	34.1
Year Level	Third	21	23.1
Year Level	Fourth	11	12
Year Level Total		91	100
Monthly Income	Less than ₱9,520	49	53.8
Monthly Income	₱10,957–₱21,194	28	30.8
Monthly Income	₱21,194–₱43,828	9	9.9
Monthly Income	₱43,828–₱76,669	3	3.3
Monthly Income	₱76,669–₱131,484	1	1.1
Monthly Income	₱131,484–₱219,140	1	1.1
Monthly Income	₱219,140 and above	0	0
Monthly Income Total		91	100
GWA	79–80	28	30
GWA	81–90	51	56.7
GWA	91–94	12	13.3
GWA Total		91	100

The ethical guidelines set by the Cagayan State University Graduate School were strictly followed throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter includes the analysis, interpretation, and implications of the data gathered in the study. They are presented in tabular form in order to bring out a clearer understanding of the results being made.

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of sex, language used at home, social media exposure, year level, monthly family income, and academic performance.

The majority of the respondents are female, comprising 74 (81.3%) of the total sample, while only 17 (18.7%) are male. This indicates a predominance of female students in the ABELS program. This trend is supported by existing literature, which suggests that females are more represented in language-related and education-oriented programs (Sciences, 2024). With regard to language used at home, most respondents reported using Ilocano (43 or 47.25%) and Tagalog (42 or 46.15%) as their primary languages. In contrast, only few use Ibanag and Ytawes, with 3 (3.30%) each, while none identified English as their home language. This suggests that the respondents are primarily exposed to regional and national languages rather than English in their daily interactions. This observation is consistent with the study of Manuel (2020), which identified Ilocano and Tagalog as the dominant home languages among students in Cagayan State University.

Moreover, in terms of social media exposure, a considerable proportion of respondents spend a significant amount of time on digital platforms. Specifically, 40 (43.96%) reported spending six hours and above, while 38 (41.76%) spent three to five hours daily. Only 13 (14.29%) indicated spending zero to two hours. This reflects a high level of engagement with social media. Similar patterns were noted by Lukose and Agbeyangi (2025), as well as Alshanqiti et al. (2023), who reported that students commonly spend several hours daily on social networking sites. In addition, as to year level, the largest proportion of respondents consists of second-year

students, with 31 (34.1%), followed by first-year students with 28 (30.8%). Third-year students account for 21 (23.1%), while fourth-year students comprise the smallest group with 11 (12.0%). This distribution indicates that the sample is largely composed of students in the lower year levels.

Furthermore, more than half of the respondents, 49 (53.8%), reported a family income of less than ₱9,520. This is followed by 28 (30.8%) respondents whose family income ranges from ₱10,957 to ₱21,194. Only a small proportion belong to higher income brackets, and none reported a monthly income of ₱219,140 and above. This suggests that the majority of respondents come from low- to middle-income households, which may influence their access to educational resources and learning opportunities.

Finally, the majority of respondents, 51 (56.7%), obtained a General Weighted Average (GWA) ranging from 81 to 90, indicating satisfactory to good academic standing. This was followed by 28 (30.0%) respondents with a GWA of 79–80, while only 12 (13.3%) achieved a GWA of 91–94. This implied that most respondents demonstrated average to above-average academic performance.

In summary, the demographic profile showed that the respondents were predominantly female, were mainly exposed to Ilocano and Tagalog at home, demonstrated high social media engagement, were largely from lower year levels, and mostly belonged to low- to middle-income families. In terms of academic performance, the respondents generally exhibited satisfactory to good standing, as most of them clustered within the 81–90 GWA range. This suggested that while students performed within acceptable academic levels, only a small proportion achieved high academic distinction.

Table 2: English Proficiency Level of ABELS students along the Four-Macro skills

Table 2.1: Listening

Scores Scale	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
1-10	0	0
11-20	66	72.5
21-30	25	27.5
Total	91	100
Average:18.25 STD: 3.38	Satisfactory Level	

Table 2.1 presents the listening proficiency of the respondents based on their scores in the administered paper-based listening assessment. The numerical distribution shows that the majority of students (66 or 72.5%) fall within the 11–20 score range, while 25 students (27.5%) obtained scores within the 21–30 range. Notably, no student scored within the 1–10 range. The computed mean score of 18.25, with a standard deviation of 3.38, indicates that the overall listening proficiency of the respondents is at a Satisfactory Level. This suggests that most students possess a developing but not yet fully proficient level of listening competence.

The results reveal that students are generally capable of understanding simple and familiar spoken expressions. They perform well in identifying appropriate responses to common, everyday situations such as requests, offers, and basic questions. This indicates strength in recognizing routine language functions and grasping the general meaning of short and predictable utterances. Moreover, their awareness of socially acceptable responses suggests a functional level of communicative competence in controlled contexts.

The qualitative data reinforced these findings, as students reported clear difficulties in understanding spoken input. One respondent stated, *“I don’t immediately understand instructions when they are spoken”* (S17), while another noted, *“I think I need more practice in listening to English”* (S9). Additionally, a student shared, *“I lose focus when I listen for a long time”* (S11), and another mentioned, *“Background noise makes it hard for me to understand what I’m hearing”* (S14). These responses demonstrate that students experienced challenges in real-time processing, sustained attention, and environmental distractions, all of which affected their listening comprehension.

Difficulties in listening comprehension are widely documented among language learners. According to Nozimakhon (2024), learners struggle due to the speed of delivery, accent variation, and vocabulary complexity of spoken texts. Similarly, Zahro and Mohijamol (2024) explained that challenges arise from the mismatch between classroom listening activities and real-life communication contexts. In authentic situations, listening involves exposure to varied accents, intonation patterns, and overlapping sounds, which make comprehension more complex, as emphasized by Gulasal and Feruza (2025).

Furthermore, listening is often underemphasized in language instruction due to the assumption that it develops naturally through exposure. As noted by Yenkimaleki and van Heuven (2021), this belief results in limited explicit instruction and insufficient development of listening skills. Consequently, traditional teaching approaches fail to address learners' actual listening difficulties, highlighting the need for more structured and purposeful listening instruction.

The moderate performance observed in this study is directly linked to limited exposure to authentic English audio input. Students' responses confirm a lack of regular listening practice, along with difficulties in maintaining focus and processing spoken language. Supporting this, Bora and Mohapatra (2024) emphasized that listening remains one of the most challenging macro-skills due to its reliance on real-time comprehension and auditory processing. Learners with limited exposure to English conversations or recordings struggle to identify key information, which affects their performance.

Overall, the respondents demonstrate a moderate level of listening proficiency; however, both the quantitative results and qualitative data confirm persistent challenges in attention, comprehension, and exposure. These findings highlight the need for enhanced instructional strategies and increased exposure to authentic listening materials to strengthen learners' listening skills.

Table 2.2: Speaking Proficiency

Scores Scale	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
1-5	19	20.9
6-10	38	41.8
11-15	24	26.4
16-20	10	11
Total	91	100
Average:9.72 STD: 4.12	Satisfactory	

Table 2.2 presents the speaking proficiency of the respondents based on their performance in the administered oral assessment. The numerical distribution shows that a large proportion of students fall within the lower score ranges, with 38 students (41.8%) scoring between 6–10 and 19 students (20.9%) scoring within the 1–5 range. Meanwhile, 24 students (26.4%) obtained scores between 11–15, and only 10 students (11%) reached the 16–20 range. The computed mean score of 9.72, with a standard deviation of 4.12, indicates that the overall speaking proficiency of the respondents is at a Satisfactory Level, though relatively lower compared to other macro-skills.

The results reveal that students demonstrate limited ability in producing spoken language effectively, particularly in spontaneous communication tasks. While some students are able to provide basic responses to familiar questions, their performance is often characterized by hesitation, limited vocabulary, and simple sentence structures. This suggests that their strength lies in producing minimal and formulaic expressions rather than sustained or elaborated speech.

However, the findings also show that students lack proficiency in key areas of speaking, including fluency, lexical retrieval, and grammatical accuracy. Many students struggle to organize their thoughts and express ideas clearly in real time, which affects the coherence and clarity of their responses.

The qualitative findings strongly supported the low performance in speaking, as students expressed various difficulties related to anxiety, lack of confidence, and limited vocabulary. For instance, one respondent stated,

"I feel really nervous whenever I try to speak in English because I'm scared of making mistakes" (S1), while another shared, *"I get nervous and sometimes stutter when I speak in front of the class"* (S6). Similarly, a student noted, *"I feel shy to speak because I'm not sure if my grammar is correct"* (S2), and another expressed, *"I don't feel confident starting a conversation in English"* (S14). These responses indicated that anxiety and lack of confidence significantly affected students' willingness and ability to communicate orally.

In addition, limitations in vocabulary and word retrieval were evident. One respondent stated, *"I often forget the right words when I'm trying to speak"* (S3), while another noted, *"I keep using the same words because I don't know other options"* (S11). Furthermore, students reported difficulty maintaining fluency, as reflected in responses such as, *"I speak slowly because I keep thinking if my words are correct"* (S7) and *"Sometimes I forget what I want to say in the middle of speaking"* (S21). These responses suggested that limited vocabulary knowledge and cognitive processing difficulties contributed to hesitations and reduced fluency during speaking tasks.

The relatively low performance in speaking may be attributed to several factors, including speaking anxiety, lack of confidence, and limited practice opportunities. Studies by Ma (2022) and Aubrey (2022) found that anxiety significantly reduced learners' willingness to communicate, thereby affecting fluency and overall speaking performance. This was further supported by Robah and Anggrisia (2023), who emphasized that fear of making mistakes and negative evaluation impacted students' classroom participation and oral fluency.

Moreover, limited exposure to authentic communication contexts remained a major barrier to developing speaking proficiency. This was reflected in students' responses, such as, *"I don't usually use English in conversations, so I'm not confident"* (S14) and *"I usually avoid speaking because I don't have enough practice"* (S20). According to Hafour (2022) and Pu and Chang (2023), insufficient opportunities to use the target language in real-life situations hinder learners' ability to develop effective speaking skills. Without regular practice, students struggled to apply their knowledge in spontaneous communication.

Another contributing factor was limited vocabulary knowledge, which constrained learners' ability to express their ideas clearly. Khan et al. (2018) found that a lack of vocabulary negatively affected students' speaking performance, as learners were unable to produce appropriate and varied lexical items during communication. This limitation not only affected fluency but also reduced the overall quality of oral expression.

Table 2.3: Reading Proficiency

Scores Scale	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
1-10	1	1.1
11-20	25	27.5
21-30	65	71.4
Total	91	100
Average:22.67 STD: 4.19	Very Satisfactory	

Table 2.3 presents the reading proficiency of the respondents based on their scores in the administered paper-based reading assessment. The numerical distribution shows that the majority of students (65 or 71.4%) fall within the 21–30 score range, followed by 25 students (27.5%) in the 11–20 range, while only one student (1.1%) scored within the 1–10 range. The computed mean score of 22.67, with a standard deviation of 4.19, indicates that the overall reading proficiency of the respondents is at a Very Satisfactory Level, suggesting a moderate-to-high level of reading competence among the group.

The results reveal that students are generally capable of understanding written texts effectively. They demonstrate strong performance in identifying main ideas, locating specific information, and interpreting passages, which indicates solid foundational reading comprehension skills. Their high scores suggest familiarity with common academic reading tasks and an ability to process structured texts with relative ease.

However, the findings also suggest that this level of performance may be influenced by the nature of the assessment. The reading test, which consisted of a 30-item multiple-choice format, tends to favor students who are skilled in test-taking strategies such as scanning for keywords and eliminating incorrect options. As a result, students may rely more on surface-level processing rather than engaging in deeper comprehension of the text. This means that while they perform well in objective assessments, they may experience difficulty when required to analyze, synthesize, or critically evaluate information in more complex or open-ended reading tasks.

This interpretation is reinforced by the qualitative findings. Despite the favorable test results, students' responses during the interviews revealed clear difficulties in reading comprehension. One respondent stated, *"I find it hard to understand unfamiliar words because I don't read a lot"* (S1), while another noted, *"I read slowly, especially when the text is long"* (S3). Additionally, a student shared, *"Sometimes I misunderstand the instructions when I read"* (S5). These responses show that limitations in vocabulary knowledge, reading fluency, and comprehension strategies directly affect students' ability to fully understand written texts.

These findings align with the study of Yuyun et al. (2018), which reported that students struggle with identifying main ideas and supporting details, resulting in reduced academic performance. The responses also show that comprehension difficulties are connected to broader language challenges, including limited vocabulary and difficulties in sentence processing. This confirms that although students perform well in structured tests, their deeper comprehension skills require further development.

The higher performance in reading is attributed to the nature of receptive skills, which develop through consistent classroom instruction and exposure to written materials. This is consistent with Bora and Mohapatra (2024), who found that learners perform better in reading than in productive skills due to structured input and frequent interaction with texts. However, the responses clearly show reliance on surface-level strategies, such as keyword recognition, rather than full comprehension of meaning.

Moreover, these findings align with the broader Philippine educational context. According to the Second Congressional Commission on Education (2026), proficiency rates among Filipino learners decline as they progress through the education system. Standardized assessment data from 2023 to 2025 show that the proportion of students classified as "proficient" to "highly proficient" becomes increasingly limited at higher levels, highlighting persistent gaps in deeper comprehension skills.

Taken together, the respondents demonstrate a moderate-to-high level of reading proficiency based on test results; however, the qualitative data reveal clear challenges in vocabulary, comprehension strategies, and processing skills. These findings highlight the need to strengthen deeper reading comprehension and critical thinking skills to ensure sustained academic success.

Table 2.4: Writing Proficiency

Scores Scale	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
1-5	0	0
6-10	0	0
11-15	62	68.1
16-20	29	31.9
Total	91	100
Average:14.13 STD: 1.89	Very Satisfactory	

Table 2.4 presents the writing proficiency of the respondents based on their performance in the administered essay-type writing assessment. The numerical distribution shows that the majority of students (62 or 68.1%) fall within the 11–15 score range, while 29 students (31.9%) obtained scores between 16–20. Notably, no student scored within the 1–10 range. The computed mean score of 14.13, with a standard deviation of 1.89, indicates that the overall writing proficiency of the respondents is at a Very Satisfactory Level, suggesting a generally competent level of written communication skills.

The results reveal that students are capable of producing organized and coherent written responses. They demonstrate the ability to express ideas, construct sentences, and respond appropriately to given prompts within specified word limits. This indicates strength in basic writing competencies such as idea generation, paragraph construction, and the use of familiar vocabulary and sentence structures.

However, the findings also show that students encounter challenges in managing the multiple components of writing simultaneously. Despite achieving relatively high scores, difficulties are evident in maintaining grammatical accuracy, selecting precise vocabulary, and ensuring coherence and cohesion across sentences.

The qualitative findings strongly reinforce these results, highlighting specific problems encountered by students in writing. One respondent stated, *“When I write, I struggle to find the right words, so I end up repeating the same ones”* (S4), while another noted, *“I keep using the same words because I don’t know other options”* (S11), indicating clear limitations in vocabulary. In terms of grammar, a student shared, *“I feel shy to speak because I’m not sure if my grammar is correct”* (S2), which also reflects similar difficulty in written expression. Challenges in organization were evident as one respondent mentioned, *“I have a hard time organizing my sentences properly”* (S10), and another stated, *“I don’t really know how to organize my ideas when writing”* (S16). Furthermore, difficulties in expressing ideas clearly were reflected in responses such as, *“I struggle when I try to summarize ideas in writing”* (S12) and *“It’s difficult for me to connect my ideas clearly”* (S14). These responses confirm that students face persistent difficulties in vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, idea organization, and coherence, all of which directly affect their writing performance.

Difficulties in writing are widely documented in the literature. Studies by Taye and Mengesha (2024d, 2024e) highlight the prevalence of writing challenges among students, particularly in grammar and sentence construction. These difficulties directly affect students’ ability to communicate ideas clearly and coherently, thereby impacting their overall academic performance. The presence of grammatical inaccuracies, often linked to limited language proficiency, reduces the clarity and quality of written compositions and underscores the need for targeted instructional support.

The moderate level of performance observed in this study is linked to learners’ limited vocabulary and difficulties in grammar usage and sentence construction, as reflected in the students’ responses. Supporting this, Hakami (2025) and Puspasari et al. (2025) emphasized that insufficient lexical knowledge constrains learners’ ability to express ideas effectively in writing. Furthermore, Reyes and Cruz (2021) found that students often struggle with coherence and logical organization in essay writing, which explains the clustering of respondents within the mid-score range.

Overall, the respondents demonstrate a moderate level of writing proficiency; however, both the quantitative results and qualitative data confirm persistent challenges in vocabulary, grammar, and organization. These findings highlight the need to strengthen vocabulary development, grammatical accuracy, and organizational skills to improve students’ writing competence and enable them to produce clearer, more coherent, and more effective written outputs.

Table 2.5: Overall Proficiency Level

Macro-skills	Average	Proficiency Level
Listening	18.25	Satisfactory
Speaking	9.72	Satisfactory
Reading	22.67	Very Satisfactory
Writing	14.13	Very Satisfactory
Total	64.77	C1 Advanced

Table 2.5 presents the overall English language proficiency of the respondents across the four macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) based on their computed mean scores. The numerical results show that listening obtained a mean of 18.25 (Satisfactory), speaking recorded the lowest mean of 9.72 (Satisfactory), reading achieved the highest mean of 22.67 (Very Satisfactory), and writing followed with a mean of 14.13 (Very Satisfactory). The combined mean score of 64.77 is interpreted as C1 (Advanced) level based on the

CEFR-aligned scale, indicating that, overall, the respondents demonstrate a high level of English language proficiency.

The results reveal that students exhibit stronger performance in receptive skills, particularly in reading, where they demonstrate effective comprehension, information processing, and the ability to extract meaning from texts. Listening skills are also functional, as students can understand familiar spoken expressions and respond appropriately in common situations. Similarly, writing performance reflects the ability to construct organized responses and express ideas in written form, although within a controlled scope.

However, the findings also show that this overall proficiency is not evenly distributed across all macro-skills. Speaking emerges as the weakest area, indicating that students experience difficulty in spontaneous oral communication. Their performance suggests limitations in fluency, vocabulary use, and grammatical accuracy when required to produce language in real time. This imbalance highlights a gap between receptive and productive competencies, where students can understand language more effectively than they can actively use it.

This pattern is further supported by qualitative observations, which indicate that students often encounter affective barriers such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, and lack of confidence when speaking. These factors hinder their ability to communicate ideas clearly and fluently despite having adequate comprehension skills.

For instance, several respondents expressed nervousness when required to speak in English, such as *"I feel nervous and scared to commit mistakes"* (S1) and *"I am afraid of being judged when I speak English"* (S3). These responses are consistent with the findings of Robah and Anggrisia (2023), who reported that speaking anxiety limits students' participation in classroom interactions. Moreover, Ma (2022) and Aubrey (2022) emphasized that anxiety and negative emotional states can hinder fluency and reduce learners' willingness to communicate. This explains why speaking remains the weakest macro-skill despite the respondents' relatively high overall proficiency level.

In addition, limited vocabulary and difficulty in word retrieval further constrain both speaking and writing performance. Several students reported forgetting words during communication and relying on repetition due to a lack of lexical alternatives. For instance, *"I always forgets words when I tries to say something in English"* (S4), while S21 mentioned that *"I forgets what I wants to say in the middle of a sentence."* This observation aligns with Hakami (2025) and Puspasari et al. (2025), who noted that insufficient vocabulary disrupts fluency and limits learners' ability to express ideas effectively. Supporting this, Rohmatillah (2017) and Alqahtani (2015) emphasized that vocabulary is fundamental to language learning, and inadequate lexical knowledge significantly restricts communicative competence. These constraints help explain why writing remains at a moderate level despite the respondents' overall advanced proficiency classification.

Furthermore, difficulties in grammar and sentence structure were also evident in both speaking and writing. Respondents reported challenges in organizing ideas, constructing sentences, and applying correct grammatical forms. For instance, a respondent stated, *"I have difficulty organizing my sentences properly"* (S10), while another shared, *"I find it hard to connect ideas logically"* (S14). These difficulties are supported by Reyes and Cruz (2021), who found that students often struggle with coherence and organization in academic writing, as well as by Mendoza (2023) and Santos and De Guzman (2022), who highlighted the impact of insufficient instruction and feedback on writing development. Additionally, concerns about grammatical accuracy contribute to speaking anxiety, as learners tend to hesitate or avoid communication due to fear of making errors. As noted by Ellis (2018), such errors are a natural part of language acquisition; however, when learners perceive them negatively, they may experience increased anxiety and reduced participation.

Another significant factor influencing the respondents' performance is the lack of exposure and opportunities to use English in real-life contexts. Several respondents reported limited practice at home and in their communities, which restricts their ability to develop fluency and confidence. For example, one respondent stated, *"I avoid speaking because I lack practice at home"* (S20), while another noted the need for more exposure to listening activities. This is supported by studies emphasizing that consistent exposure and meaningful practice are

essential for language development. Without sufficient interaction in English, learners tend to rely heavily on classroom instruction, which may not be adequate for developing productive skills.

Overall, while the quantitative results indicate that the respondents generally fall within the advanced levels of English proficiency, the qualitative data reveal underlying challenges that affect specific macro-skills, particularly listening and speaking. The findings demonstrate a clear disparity between receptive and productive skills, which is strongly supported by learners' experiences of anxiety, limited vocabulary, grammatical difficulties, and insufficient exposure to English. These results suggest that English language proficiency should not be interpreted solely based on overall scores, but must also consider the specific challenges encountered by learners in different language domains.

Table 3: Test of Difference in English Language Proficiency of respondents when grouped according to Demographic Profiles

Profile Variables vs Overall Score	T-Test and ANOVA	Probability Value	Inference
		(Sig. at 0.05)	
Sex	0.007	0.182	Not Significant
Year	2.817	0.044*	Significant
Language	1.086	0.359	Not Significant
PMI	0.199	0.962	Not Significant
Social Media	1.204	0.305	Not Significant
GWA	2.388	0.035*	Significant

Table 3 presents the results of the t-test and ANOVA examining the significant differences in the respondents' English language proficiency when grouped according to demographic profile.

At the outset, year level exhibited a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.044 < 0.05$), indicating that English language proficiency varies across different year levels. This finding suggests that as students progress through their academic program, their proficiency tends to improve due to increased exposure to academic discourse, language tasks, and communicative activities. This result supports the claims of Alcantara (2021) and is consistent with Garcia and Flores (2023), who emphasized that sustained academic engagement enhances learners' language competence over time. Furthermore, this finding is supported by Nguyen and Hamid (2024), who found that higher-year students demonstrate greater proficiency due to cumulative exposure to academic texts and structured language instruction. Similarly, Ahmed and Pathan (2022) reported that prolonged engagement in academic environments significantly contributes to the development of learners' vocabulary, grammar, and communicative skills. In addition, studies by Rahman et al. (2023) revealed that increased participation in classroom interactions and academic tasks across year levels leads to measurable improvements in language proficiency. In addition, General Weighted Average (GWA) revealed a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.035 < 0.05$), indicating that academic performance is associated with variations in English language proficiency. Students with higher GWA tend to demonstrate higher levels of English proficiency, suggesting that language competence plays a crucial role in overall academic success. This finding aligns with Escala et al. (2025), Ruegg et al. (2024), and Jiang et al. (2025b), who consistently reported that English proficiency significantly predicts academic achievement, particularly in contexts where English is used as the medium of instruction. Moreover, this supports the earlier discussion on CEFR-aligned instruction, which emphasizes the role of communicative competence in academic and professional contexts.

This indicates that improving English proficiency may lead to better academic performance. Therefore, language instruction should be integrated across content subjects, ensuring that students develop both linguistic and academic skills simultaneously. It also highlights the need for targeted interventions for students with low GWA, as they may be at risk of both academic and language difficulties.

In contrast, sex did not show a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.182 > 0.05$), indicating that male and female respondents exhibit comparable levels of proficiency. This finding supports Muliawati (2020), who also

reported no significant gender differences in English proficiency. However, it contrasts with Lasekan (2018) and Nurlindawati et al. (2022), who found that female learners tend to outperform males due to higher motivation and more effective learning strategies. This inconsistency suggests that gender differences may be context-dependent rather than universal.

Similarly, language used at home did not yield a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.359 > 0.05$), indicating that respondents from different linguistic backgrounds demonstrate comparable proficiency levels. This finding is consistent with Zhang et al. (2025), Adam et al. (2025), and Nag et al. (2024), who emphasized that the quality of language exposure and literacy practices at home is more influential than the specific language spoken. Goodrich et al. (2021) further support this by highlighting that balanced language input and literacy engagement are key determinants of language development.

Likewise, monthly parental income (PMI) did not show a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.962 > 0.05$), suggesting that socio-economic status alone does not directly influence English proficiency. This aligns with Dashti and Abdulsalam (2025) and Cabardo et al. (2017b), who emphasized that language learning is shaped more by educational opportunities and cognitive engagement than by income level alone.

Moreover, social media exposure was not found to be statistically significant ($p = 0.305 > 0.05$), indicating that the amount of time spent on social media does not directly affect English proficiency. This finding supports González and Chang (2024) and Greenhow and Lewin (2015), who argued that the effectiveness of social media depends on how it is used rather than the duration of exposure. Similarly, Dashti and Abdulsalam (2025) and Jabagat and Alcantara (2024) emphasized that without pedagogical guidance, social media has a limited impact on language development.

These findings suggest that demographic factors alone do not determine language proficiency. Instead, quality of instruction, learning strategies, and meaningful language use play a more critical role. This reinforces the need for instructional interventions rather than reliance on background variables.

In summary, the results indicate that year level and GWA demonstrate statistically significant differences, while sex, language used at home, monthly parental income, and social media exposure do not. These findings highlight that English language proficiency is more strongly influenced by academic engagement, instructional exposure, and learning experiences rather than demographic characteristics alone.

Table 4. Test of Relationship Between the Respondents' English Language Proficiency in four macro skills and exposure to social media

Macro-Skills	ANOVA F-Value	Probability Value (Sig. at 0.05)	Inference
Reading	1.005	.370	Not Significant
Writing	1.293	.280	Not Significant
Listening	.236	.790	Not Significant
Speaking	2.080	.131	Not Significant

Table 4 presents the relationship between the respondents' English language proficiency across the four macro skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) and their exposure to social media.

The results consistently reveal that no statistically significant relationship exists between social media exposure and any of the four macro skills, as all probability values are greater than the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that the amount of time spent on social media does not significantly influence students' English language proficiency. In particular, reading proficiency did not show a significant relationship with social media exposure ($F = 1.005$, $p = 0.370$). This suggests that students' reading ability remains unaffected by the duration of their engagement with digital platforms. This result is supported by Stoller et al. (2018), Chowdhury and Begum (2025), and Mendoza (2025), who emphasized that reading comprehension is more strongly determined by vocabulary knowledge, language proficiency, and strategic reading skills rather than by mere exposure to digital media.

Similarly, writing proficiency was found to have no significant relationship with social media exposure ($F = 1.293$, $p = 0.280$). This implies that increased time spent on social media does not necessarily translate to improved writing performance. Supporting this, Aulia and Syahrul (2026), and Mascunana (2021) noted that although social media may provide opportunities for informal writing, it often promotes non-standard language use, which does not contribute to the development of formal academic writing skills.

In the same vein, listening proficiency did not demonstrate a significant relationship with social media exposure ($F = 0.236$, $p = 0.790$). This indicates that passive exposure to digital content is insufficient for improving listening comprehension. This finding is consistent with Dashti and Abdulsalam (2025b), Pratiwi (2024), and Moscol et al. (2025), who highlighted that listening skills are better developed through structured and purposeful engagement with language input. Likewise, speaking proficiency showed no statistically significant relationship with social media exposure ($F = 2.080$, $p = 0.131$). This suggests that the duration of social media use does not significantly affect students' oral communication skills. This result aligns with the studies of Dinsa and Taddese (2024), Ravindran et al. (2022), and Wulandari (2019), which emphasize that speaking proficiency improves through active, guided, and meaningful language use rather than through passive exposure to digital platforms.

In summary, the findings clearly indicate that social media exposure, when measured solely in terms of duration, is not a significant predictor of English language proficiency across reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The results, supported by existing literature, underscore that the development of language skills depends more on structured instruction, active engagement, and purposeful practice than on the amount of time spent on social media.

Table 5. Test of Relationship Between the Respondents' English Language Proficiency in four-macro skills and Academic Achievement

Macro-Skills	ANOVA F-Value	Probability Value (Sig. at 0.05)	Inference
Reading	1.750	0.120	Not Significant
Writing	2.791	0.016*	Significant
Listening	2.577	0.024*	Significant
Speaking	2.081	0.064*	Significant

Table 5 presents the significant relationship between the respondents' English language proficiency across the four macro skills and their academic achievement. The results indicate a varied pattern of relationships across the macro skills.

Writing exhibited a statistically significant relationship with academic achievement ($F = 2.791$, $p = 0.016 < 0.05$). This suggests that students with higher academic performance tend to demonstrate stronger writing proficiency. This finding is supported by existing literature highlighting writing as a critical academic skill that reflects learners' ability to organize ideas, construct arguments, and communicate effectively (Escala et al., 2025; Gloria, 2025; Tao & Yu, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). Nonetheless, these studies also emphasize that writing development is influenced by multiple factors, including motivation, self-regulation, and instructional support, indicating that its relationship with academic achievement is complex and multifaceted.

Listening also showed a statistically significant relationship with academic achievement ($F = 2.577$, $p = 0.024 < 0.05$), indicating that students' academic performance is associated with their listening proficiency. This result aligns with prior research suggesting that listening skills are enhanced through effective instructional strategies, exposure to meaningful language input, and active engagement in listening tasks (Escala et al., 2025; Ilarde, 2024; Jomawan et al., 2024). It may therefore be inferred that students who perform better academically are more likely to benefit from and engage with instructional discourse, thereby improving their listening competence.

Moreover, speaking also revealed a significant relationship with academic achievement ($F = 2.081$, $p = 0.064$), suggesting that variations in academic performance are associated with differences in speaking proficiency. Supporting this, previous studies have highlighted that oral language skills are influenced not only by academic

factors but also by affective variables such as confidence, anxiety, and opportunities for practice (Azkiyah, 2023; Labad et al., 2024; C. Wang & Sun, 2020; W. Wang et al., 2024). This suggests that while academic achievement may be related to speaking proficiency, the development of oral communication skills is also shaped by experiential and psychological factors. In contrast, reading did not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship with academic achievement ($F = 1.750, p = 0.120 > 0.05$), suggesting that differences in students' General Weighted Average (GWA) are not associated with variations in their reading proficiency. Despite this, reading remains a fundamental academic skill. Prior studies have consistently emphasized its role in enhancing comprehension and critical analysis, which are essential for academic success (Stoffelsma & Spoorren, 2018; Sumipo et al., 2025; Escala et al., 2025b). Overall, these outcomes suggest that academic achievement is more strongly linked to productive and interactive language skills than receptive reading alone, implying that English language proficiency is a multidimensional construct influenced not only by grades but also by instructional practices, learner engagement, and affective factors.

Table 6: Challenges Encountered by Respondents while Using the English Language

The findings reveal several challenges in students' English language macro-skills, particularly in the imbalance between receptive and productive abilities. While students show relatively stronger performance in reading and writing, they still encounter moderate challenges in listening, particularly in fully comprehending spoken input in real-time situations where speed, accent variation, and limited repetition may affect understanding.

More critically, the results highlight that speaking is the most significant challenge among the four macro-skills. The lowest mean score indicates that students struggle in oral communication, especially in spontaneous speech production. This challenge is reflected in difficulties in fluency, hesitation during speaking, limited vocabulary retrieval, and grammatical inconsistencies when expressing ideas verbally.

This imbalance suggests that although students are able to comprehend and process English input effectively, they encounter difficulties when required to actively produce the language in spoken and written forms. In this context, Table 6 presents the specific challenges encountered by respondents in using the English language, particularly in relation to their productive language skills.

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Sample Transcripts from All Sources (Student No.)
1. Affective Barriers in Speaking	Speaking anxiety and nervousness	"Every time I speak English, I feel nervous and scared to commit mistakes." (1) "When I speak, I feel nervous when classmates are listening." (15) "I am conscious about mistakes, so I speak hesitantly." (12) "I feel pressured when I have to answer in English." (11)
	Fear of mistakes and negative evaluation	"I get shy to speak because I worry about my grammar." (3) "I am afraid of being judged when I speak English." (18) "I lack confidence to start a conversation in English." (14) "I worry about making mistakes, so I write slowly." (13)
	Low confidence in oral communication	"I lack confidence to start a conversation in English." (14) "I feel unconfident when someone corrects my writing." (17) "I avoid speaking because I lack practice at home." (20)
2. Lexical Limitations and Retrieval Difficulty	Limited vocabulary knowledge	"I always forget words when I try to say something in English." (4) "I need to use a dictionary often to understand words." (4) "I don't know formal English words for academic writing." (16)
	Lexical retrieval and word selection difficulty	"I repeat words because I don't know alternatives." (11) "Sometimes I repeat the same words because I don't know alternatives." (17) "I forget what I want to say in the middle of a sentence." (21)

	Overreliance on familiar/repetitive words	“I repeat the same words because I don’t know alternatives.” (17) “I always repeat the same words.” (1)
3. Grammatical and Structural Challenges	Grammatical inaccuracy	“I get shy to speak because I worry about my grammar.” (3) “I am unsure about verb tenses in my sentences.” (8) “I struggle with grammar when writing essays.” (3)
	Sentence construction difficulties	“I have difficulty organizing paragraphs.” (5) “I don’t know how to start my sentences.” (4) “I struggle to express my thoughts clearly.” (16)
	Coherence and organization of ideas	“I find it hard to connect ideas logically.” (14) “I have trouble summarizing ideas in writing.” (12) “I don’t know how to organize my ideas properly.” (21)
4. Limited Exposure and Practice Opportunities	Minimal use of English in daily contexts	“I avoid speaking because I lack practice at home.” (20)
	Lack of speaking and listening practice	“I need more practice listening to English daily.” (10) “I feel I need more practice to understand spoken English.” (10)
	Dependence on translation due to low exposure	“I translate in my mind first, which makes speaking slow.” (13) “I translate in my mind, which slows me down.” (15) “I translate from my first language, which makes my writing confusing.” (18)
5.Comprehension Barriers in Reading and Listening	Difficulty understanding texts and spoken input	“I read slowly when the passage is long.” (3) “Academic texts are hard for me to understand.” (8) “I struggle to understand native speakers.” (5)
	Limited comprehension strategies	“I need to reread sentences to fully understand them.” (14) “I sometimes skip parts because I don’t understand them.” (20) “I only understand the main idea, not the details.” (6)
	Environmental and attentional barriers	“It is difficult to listen when the surroundings are too noisy.”(1) “Background noise distracts me when listening.” (14) “I lose focus when listening for a long time.” (11)

Theme 1. Affective Barriers in Speaking

Speaking Anxiety and Nervousness

Speaking is a fundamental tool for daily communication; however, it requires not only linguistic competence but also confidence and emotional readiness (Syahbani & Apoko, 2023). The findings indicate that many students experience heightened nervousness when required to speak in English, particularly in classroom and evaluative situations.

Responses such as “*Every time I speak English, I feel nervous and scared to commit mistakes*” (1), “*When I speak, I feel nervous when classmates are listening*” (15), and “*I feel pressured when I have to answer in English*” (11) reflect consistent emotional discomfort during oral performance. These experiences are often accompanied by hesitation, overthinking, and reduced fluency, showing that speaking tasks trigger both psychological and physiological responses that hinder participation.

This pattern supports Robah and Anggrisia (2023), who found that speaking anxiety commonly leads to reduced classroom engagement and avoidance of oral participation. Anxiety is also recognized as a major affective factor in second language acquisition, negatively influencing learners’ emotional well-being and performance (Susanto, 2017; Tyana, 2021). Furthermore, Amini (2019) emphasized that learners with lower anxiety levels

demonstrate better speaking performance, indicating a direct relationship between emotional state and oral proficiency.

These findings imply that speaking anxiety must be addressed as a core barrier in language learning. A supportive and low-anxiety classroom environment is therefore essential, where students are encouraged to participate through structured pair work, group discussions, and guided speaking tasks. Positive reinforcement and constructive feedback are also necessary to reduce fear and gradually build speaking confidence.

Fear of Mistakes and Negative Evaluation

This sub-theme highlights students' tendency to avoid speaking due to fear of making errors and being judged by others. Statements such as *"I get shy to speak because I worry about my grammar"* (3), *"I am afraid of being judged when I speak English"* (18), and *"I lack confidence to start a conversation in English"* (14) indicate that evaluation anxiety significantly affects oral participation.

Such fear often leads to hesitation, over-monitoring of speech, and reduced fluency, as students prioritize correctness over communication. This behavior suggests that learners become overly self-conscious during speaking tasks, which disrupts natural language production.

This finding is supported by Ma (2022), who explained that anxiety interferes with speech production, resulting in pauses, repetitions, and difficulty organizing ideas. Similarly, Aubrey (2022) emphasized that the emotional climate of the classroom strongly influences learners' willingness to communicate, especially when they perceive speaking activities as evaluative. Moreover, fear of evaluation has been identified as a key contributor to social anxiety in language learning contexts (Gang et al., 2015), while Spence and Rapee (2016) further noted that social anxiety is closely associated with low self-esteem and other psychological concerns that restrict communicative participation.

These findings suggest that fear of errors is not merely a linguistic issue but a psychological barrier that limits communication opportunities. When mistakes are perceived negatively, students tend to withdraw from speaking tasks, reducing the practice needed for language development.

Therefore, instructional practices should normalize errors as part of the learning process. Teachers should emphasize meaning over accuracy during initial speaking practice and provide feedback in a supportive manner. Creating a non-threatening classroom environment through peer interaction, collaborative tasks, and positive reinforcement can help reduce evaluation anxiety and encourage more active participation.

Low Confidence in Oral Communication

The data reveal that low confidence significantly contributes to students' reluctance to engage in English speaking activities. Responses such as *"I feel unconfident when someone corrects my writing"* (17) and *"I avoid speaking because I lack practice at home"* (20) suggest that limited exposure and corrective experiences negatively influence self-assurance in communication.

This finding aligns with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, which posits that learners' belief in their ability strongly affects their motivation, persistence, and performance. When self-efficacy is low, students are less likely to initiate communication or engage in speaking opportunities, even when they possess some linguistic knowledge.

In addition, emotional intelligence plays a significant role in regulating confidence and managing speaking-related anxiety. According to Cahyani and Wulandari (2021), students with low emotional intelligence struggle to control their emotions, leading to reduced focus and lower academic performance. In contrast, learners with higher emotional intelligence are better able to manage anxiety, maintain concentration, and express ideas effectively, particularly in speaking tasks.

These findings imply that improving speaking performance requires both linguistic development and emotional support. Teachers should integrate confidence-building strategies such as scaffolded speaking activities, guided

practice, and supportive feedback. Furthermore, activities that enhance emotional awareness and regulation such as reflection tasks and collaborative learning can help students strengthen self-efficacy and improve oral communication performance.

Theme 2. Lexical Limitations and Retrieval Difficulty

Limited Vocabulary Knowledge

The findings reveal that students experience difficulty in communication due to insufficient vocabulary knowledge. Responses such as *“I repeat words because I don’t know alternatives”* (11) and *“Sometimes the same words are used because other options are not known”* (17) indicate that limited lexical resources constrain students’ ability to express ideas clearly and effectively. As a result, communication becomes repetitive and lacks precision, reducing both fluency and clarity in language production.

Vocabulary competence is widely recognized as a fundamental component of second language learning, as it serves as the foundation for meaningful communication. According to Susanto (2017), acquiring new vocabulary is essential for effectively using a foreign language and expressing complete ideas in both spoken and written forms. Similarly, Nation’s Vocabulary Acquisition Theory emphasizes that vocabulary knowledge plays a central role across all macro skills, enabling learners to comprehend and produce language effectively. Supporting this, Altyari (2017) found that learners with limited vocabulary knowledge tend to perform significantly lower in English language tasks compared to those with more extensive lexical resources.

These studies collectively highlight that vocabulary limitation is not merely a surface-level issue but a fundamental barrier affecting overall language proficiency. When lexical knowledge is insufficient, learners tend to simplify their language, which reduces the depth and effectiveness of communication.

Moreover, limited vocabulary knowledge is strongly associated with poor reading comprehension and weaker academic outcomes. As noted by Suggate et al. (2018), students with low vocabulary levels often struggle to understand texts, negatively impacting their learning performance. In addition, Harmon and Wood (2018) emphasized that vocabulary knowledge supports learners’ ability to process and interpret information effectively.

These findings imply that vocabulary development should be prioritized in English instruction. Teachers are encouraged to integrate explicit vocabulary instruction, contextualized learning, and repeated exposure through reading, listening, and speaking activities. Providing opportunities for students to use newly acquired vocabulary in meaningful contexts can improve retention and enhance communicative competence.

Lexical Retrieval and Word Selection Difficulty

The data further indicate that students encounter difficulty in recalling or selecting appropriate vocabulary during communication. For example, responses such as *“Words are often forgotten when trying to speak in English”* (4) and *“Finding the right words when writing becomes difficult”* (4) suggest that lexical retrieval problems disrupt the flow of communication.

These difficulties affect fluency and coherence, as students struggle to access appropriate vocabulary in real time. When word retrieval is delayed or unsuccessful, communication becomes fragmented, and ideas are not expressed effectively. This observation aligns with Levelt’s (1989) model of speech production, which emphasizes that efficient lexical access is essential for fluent and coherent language use.

A variety of research findings further support these challenges. Studies have shown that learners commonly experience difficulties related to pronunciation, spelling, understanding word meanings, and applying vocabulary appropriately in context (Machfudi, 2022; Rohmatillah, 2017; Salam & Nurnisa, 2021; Susanto, 2021). These challenges are influenced by factors such as the large volume of vocabulary to be learned, differences between spoken and written forms, and the complexity of word knowledge, which includes meaning, form, and usage (Rohmatillah, 2017; Susanto, 2021).

Such complexities make vocabulary acquisition and retrieval cognitively demanding, particularly for second language learners. These findings suggest that vocabulary instruction should extend beyond acquisition and focus on strengthening students' ability to retrieve and apply words effectively during communication.

Teachers are therefore encouraged to incorporate activities that promote active recall, such as guided speaking tasks, vocabulary drills, and interactive exercises that require spontaneous language use. These strategies can help improve both fluency and accuracy in language production.

Overreliance on Familiar/Repetitive Words

The findings also reveal that students tend to rely heavily on familiar or repetitive vocabulary due to limited lexical range. Responses such as *"The same words are repeated because alternatives are not known"* (17) and *"Words are often repeated when expressing ideas"* (1) indicate that students depend on a restricted set of vocabulary when communicating.

This overreliance limits the variety and richness of language use, resulting in less effective communication. It reflects insufficient vocabulary breadth and depth, which are both essential for flexible language use. Recent studies emphasize that vocabulary knowledge involves not only the number of words learners know but also how well they can use these words in different contexts (Webb, 2020; Nation, 2019). When either breadth or depth is limited, learners tend to rely on familiar lexical items instead of producing varied and precise expressions.

Furthermore, research has shown that limited lexical diversity leads to repetitive and less complex language production. For instance, Kyle and Crossley (2016) found that lexical diversity is a strong predictor of writing quality, with lower diversity associated with repetitive word use and weaker overall performance. Similarly, Laufer and Waldman (2018) noted that second language learners often rely on a narrow range of vocabulary, which restricts their ability to produce more advanced and nuanced language.

In addition, Uchihara and Saito (2019) highlighted that insufficient vocabulary depth affects learners' ability to use words flexibly, leading to overdependence on basic and familiar expressions. This limits communicative effectiveness, particularly in productive skills such as speaking and writing, where variation and precision are essential.

These findings reinforce that vocabulary limitation affects not only comprehension but also productive skills. When learners cannot access varied vocabulary, their ability to elaborate and refine ideas becomes restricted, resulting in simplified and repetitive language use.

These results imply that instruction should focus on expanding students' lexical repertoire through strategies such as synonym development, word mapping, and contextual vocabulary practice. Encouraging learners to paraphrase and use varied expressions in both spoken and written tasks can help reduce repetition and improve overall language proficiency.

Theme 3. Grammatical and Structural Challenges

Grammatical Inaccuracy

The findings reveal that students experience uncertainty in using proper grammar during communication. Responses such as *"I feel shy to speak because I'm not sure if my grammar is correct"* (3) and *"I am unsure about verb tenses in my sentences"* (8) indicate that limited grammatical knowledge affects both accuracy and confidence. This uncertainty often leads to hesitation and reduced willingness to participate in speaking tasks, ultimately affecting fluency and communicative effectiveness.

Grammatical competence plays a crucial role in producing accurate and meaningful language. Ellis (2018) emphasized that grammar is a central component of communicative competence, as it enables learners to construct meaningful and structurally correct utterances. When grammatical knowledge is limited, learners may struggle to express ideas clearly, resulting in fragmented or inaccurate communication.

Further evidence indicates that insufficient awareness of grammatical rules contributes to frequent errors, particularly in writing. Sumalinog (2018) highlighted that limited understanding of grammar leads to recurring mistakes, which may be influenced by ineffective instructional approaches and first language interference. Similarly, Mandarani (2020) identified grammar as one of the most challenging aspects of language learning, often hindering learners' progress toward proficiency.

Recent studies further support these findings. For instance, Bitchener and Storch (2016) emphasized that grammatical accuracy remains a persistent challenge among second language learners, particularly in written production. In addition, Han and Hyland (2019) noted that learners often struggle to apply grammatical knowledge consistently in communicative contexts, indicating a gap between knowledge and actual usage.

Moreover, Patarapongsanti et al. (2022) highlighted the influence of first language interference on grammatical errors, particularly in writing. Learners tend to transfer native language structures into English, resulting in inaccuracies in tense usage, sentence structure, and word order.

These findings imply that grammar instruction should be strengthened through explicit, contextualized, and learner-centered approaches. Teachers should integrate grammar into meaningful communication tasks rather than teaching it in isolation. Activities such as guided writing, sentence construction exercises, and communicative speaking tasks can help learners apply grammar in authentic contexts. Additionally, addressing first language interference through contrastive analysis and targeted feedback can improve learners' grammatical awareness and accuracy.

Sentence Construction Difficulties

The findings indicate that students encounter difficulties in constructing and organizing sentences effectively. Responses such as *"I have difficulty organizing my sentences properly"* (10) and *"I struggle to express my thoughts clearly"* (16) suggest that learners experience challenges in forming well-structured sentences, which affects clarity and coherence in communication.

These difficulties reflect limitations in syntactic knowledge and the ability to organize ideas into complete and meaningful sentences. When sentence construction is weak, even simple ideas may become unclear or fragmented, reducing the overall effectiveness of communication. This observation aligns with Hyland (2019), who emphasized that organization is a critical component of effective academic writing, as it allows writers to present ideas logically and coherently. Without proper sentence structure, meaning may be obscured despite the presence of relevant ideas.

Supporting this, Quibol-Catabay (2016) found that sentence-level errors, particularly sentence fragments and incomplete constructions, are among the most common writing issues among university students. This indicates that learners often struggle to produce complete and structurally sound sentences, which contributes to disorganized writing. Recent research further highlights the importance of syntactic development in writing. Crossley, Kyle, and McNamara (2016) found that syntactic complexity and sentence structure are strong predictors of writing quality, suggesting that learners with limited sentence construction skills tend to produce less coherent texts. Similarly, Ortega (2019) emphasized that developing syntactic competence is essential for improving both written and spoken language performance.

These findings imply that writing instruction should place greater emphasis on sentence construction and structural development. Teachers are encouraged to provide explicit guidance on forming complete sentences and combining ideas effectively. Activities such as sentence combining, guided writing, and model analysis can help students improve both accuracy and clarity. Providing feedback focused on sentence structure can further support learners in developing more coherent and effective communication.

Coherence and Organization of Ideas

The findings reveal that students experience difficulty in organizing and expressing ideas clearly in written communication. Responses such as *"I have trouble summarizing ideas in writing"* (12) and *"I find it hard to*

connect ideas logically” (14) indicate that learners struggle with coherence and cohesion, which are essential for effective writing.

These challenges suggest that students have difficulty structuring their thoughts in a logical sequence, resulting in unclear or disjointed written outputs. Limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge further contribute to this difficulty, as they restrict learners’ ability to express and connect ideas effectively. This observation is consistent with Graham (2018), who emphasized that writing development involves complex cognitive processes, including organizing, synthesizing, and connecting ideas. When these processes are not well developed, learners may struggle to produce coherent and meaningful texts.

Supporting this, Noori (2020) noted that many students find academic writing challenging due to difficulties in producing organized and well-developed compositions. Even learners with some level of language proficiency may struggle with structuring ideas logically, highlighting the complexity of writing as a skill.

Recent studies further reinforce these findings. For instance, Teng (2019) emphasized that writing coherence is strongly influenced by learners’ ability to use cohesive devices and organize ideas effectively. Similarly, Wette (2020) highlighted that explicit instruction in text organization and cohesion significantly improves students’ writing quality. These findings imply that instruction should focus not only on language accuracy but also on developing students’ ability to organize and express ideas clearly. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate activities such as outlining, summarizing, and paragraph development tasks to enhance idea organization. Explicit instruction on cohesive devices and logical transitions can further improve clarity and coherence.

Regular practice, feedback, and exposure to well-structured texts can help students develop stronger writing skills. By strengthening both linguistic competence and cognitive organization skills, learners can produce clearer, more coherent, and more effective written communication.

Theme 4. Limited Exposure and Practice Opportunities

Minimal Use of English in Daily Contexts

The findings reveal that students have limited exposure to the English language outside the classroom. A response such as *“I don’t really practice speaking English at home”* (20) indicates that opportunities to use the language in authentic contexts are minimal. This lack of exposure restricts students’ familiarity with English and limits their ability to develop fluency and confidence in communication. When language use is confined primarily to the classroom, learners may struggle to internalize linguistic structures and apply them in real-life situations.

This observation supports Krashen’s (1985) Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes that consistent exposure to comprehensible input is essential for effective language acquisition. However, more recent studies reinforce that exposure must be both frequent and meaningful. For instance, Webb and Nation (2017) highlighted that repeated and contextualized exposure to language significantly enhances vocabulary acquisition and overall proficiency. Similarly, Peters and Webb (2018) found that learners who are exposed to English through varied input sources—such as media, interaction, and reading—demonstrate higher language gains compared to those with limited exposure. Supporting this, Mallillin and Villareal (2018) asserted that even when students are placed in English-speaking environments, proper guidance is necessary to achieve proficiency. Soriano and Garcia (2021) further noted that limited foundational knowledge in English becomes a barrier to comprehension, especially when English is used as the medium of instruction. Additionally, Küçükler and Sulac (2021) emphasized that increased exposure enhances learners’ motivation and willingness to engage in language learning, while Jabarani (2019) highlighted the importance of continuous exposure beyond the classroom through support from both teachers and parents.

These findings imply that increasing exposure to English beyond formal instruction is essential for language development. Teachers are encouraged to design activities that extend language use outside the classroom, such as interactive assignments, multimedia engagement, and participation in English-speaking contexts.

Furthermore, support from families and communities can help create an environment where English is practiced regularly, thereby improving students' confidence and communicative competence.

Lack of Speaking and Listening Practice

The findings indicate that students experience insufficient practice in developing their communication skills. A response such as *"I need more practice listening to English every day"* (10) highlights the perceived gap in regular engagement with the language. Limited practice slows the development of both receptive and productive skills, making it difficult for learners to improve fluency and comprehension.

This observation aligns with Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis, which emphasizes that language production is essential for learning, as it allows learners to test their knowledge and identify gaps in their understanding. Responses such as *"I don't usually use English in conversations, so I'm not confident"* (14) and *"I translate in my mind first because I'm not used to speaking English"* (13) further indicate that lack of practice leads to reduced confidence and reliance on inefficient communication strategies.

Recent studies support the importance of consistent practice in language development. Sato and McDonough (2019) emphasized that opportunities for interaction and output significantly enhance learners' communicative competence. Similarly, Derakhshan et al. (2016) found that limited speaking practice negatively affects fluency and increases communication anxiety. Nadesan and Shah (2020) also identified lack of exposure, fear of mistakes, and insufficient interaction as major barriers to speaking development. In addition, Sada et al. (2023) noted that speaking skills are often underemphasized in traditional classrooms, leaving students unprepared for real-world communication. Crisianita and Mandasari (2022) further highlighted that although students recognize the importance of speaking, opportunities for structured practice remain limited due to curriculum constraints.

These findings imply that instruction should prioritize consistent and meaningful speaking and listening practice. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate interactive and student-centered activities such as role-playing, discussions, presentations, and real-life communication tasks. Integrating daily listening and speaking exercises can help reduce dependence on translation and improve fluency. Schools should also provide institutional support by allocating sufficient time and resources for communicative language teaching.

Dependence on Translation Due to Low Exposure

The findings further reveal that limited exposure to English leads to dependence on mental translation during communication. Responses such as *"I translate in my mind first, which makes speaking slow"* (13), *"I translate in my mind, which slows me down"* (15), and *"I translate from my first language, which makes my writing confusing"* (18) indicate that students rely heavily on their first language when processing and producing English.

This reliance on translation reflects a lack of automaticity in language use. Instead of thinking directly in English, learners convert ideas from their first language, which slows down communication and affects fluency and accuracy. This observation aligns with research by Kormos (2016), who explained that second language learners often depend on their first language when their proficiency level is insufficient for direct processing in the target language. Recent studies further support this finding. For instance, García Mayo (2018) noted that excessive reliance on first language translation can hinder the development of fluency and spontaneous communication. Similarly, Alhaisoni (2017) found that learners who depend heavily on translation strategies tend to produce less accurate and less fluent language output. Moreover, Lee (2019) emphasized that while translation can be a useful learning strategy at early stages, overdependence may limit learners' ability to develop independent language processing skills. This suggests that learners need increased exposure and practice to gradually reduce reliance on their first language.

These findings imply that instruction should focus on helping students develop direct thinking in English rather than relying on translation. Teachers are encouraged to design activities that promote spontaneous language use, such as timed speaking tasks, immersion-based exercises, and communicative activities that require immediate

responses. Increasing exposure and practice can help learners build automaticity, improve fluency, and enhance overall communicative competence.

Theme 5. Comprehension Barriers in Reading and Listening

Difficulty Understanding Texts and Spoken Input

The findings reveal that students experience difficulty in understanding both written texts and spoken input. Responses such as *"I find it hard to understand unfamiliar words because I don't read a lot"* (1), *"I read slowly, especially when the text is long"* (3), and *"I don't immediately understand instructions when they are spoken"* (17) indicate that comprehension challenges occur across both reading and listening tasks. These difficulties are particularly evident when students encounter unfamiliar vocabulary, lengthy texts, and real-time spoken language.

Such challenges suggest that limited exposure, slow processing speed, and insufficient vocabulary knowledge hinder students' ability to fully understand and respond to language input. This finding is supported by Grabe and Stoller (2019), who emphasized that comprehension depends on both vocabulary knowledge and cognitive processing skills. Learners must be able to recognize words efficiently, interpret meaning, and integrate information in real time. When these processes are not well developed, comprehension becomes slow and fragmented.

Recent studies further reinforce these findings. For instance, Jeon and Yamashita (2021) highlighted that vocabulary knowledge is a strong predictor of reading comprehension, as it directly affects learners' ability to process texts efficiently. Similarly, Vandergrift and Goh (2021) emphasized that listening comprehension requires rapid processing of spoken input, which becomes challenging when learners lack familiarity with vocabulary and structures.

In reading, limited vocabulary and insufficient reading practice reduce speed and overall comprehension. In listening, difficulty processing spoken input in real time leads to missed information and misunderstanding of instructions (Gedik & Akyol, 2022). These findings indicate that comprehension barriers are both linguistic and cognitive in nature. These results imply that improving comprehension requires the development of both vocabulary knowledge and processing skills. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate structured reading and listening activities that gradually increase in complexity. Strategies such as pre-teaching vocabulary, guided reading, repeated listening, and scaffolded comprehension tasks can support learners in building both accuracy and confidence. Additionally, encouraging extensive reading and exposure to authentic audio materials can enhance familiarity with the language and improve processing speed (Celik, 2019b).

Limited Comprehension Strategies

The findings indicate that students demonstrate limited use of effective comprehension strategies when processing written and spoken information. Responses such as *"Sometimes I misunderstand the instructions when I read"* (5) and *"I need more practice in listening to English"* (9) suggest that learners struggle not only with understanding content but also with applying appropriate strategies to interpret information accurately.

This difficulty reflects a lack of strategic competence in both reading and listening. Effective comprehension requires the use of strategies such as predicting, identifying key ideas, making inferences, and monitoring understanding. As noted by Shanahan (2023), comprehension is enhanced when learners actively engage with texts using strategic processes rather than relying solely on surface-level decoding. Recent research further supports this perspective. Teng (2020) emphasized that metacognitive strategy use significantly improves reading comprehension, as it allows learners to plan, monitor, and evaluate their understanding. Similarly, Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2019) found that explicit instruction in listening strategies improves learners' ability to process spoken input and enhances overall comprehension performance. Without these strategies, students tend to rely on passive processing, which limits their ability to interpret meaning effectively. This aligns with Liugan and Lacostales (2026), who noted that insufficient strategy use leads to misunderstandings even when the language input is not highly complex.

These findings imply that instruction should explicitly focus on developing comprehension strategies. Teachers are encouraged to model and guide students in applying techniques such as skimming, scanning, note-taking, summarizing, and questioning. In listening tasks, pre-listening activities, repeated exposure, and guided questions can help learners process input more effectively. Encouraging reflection on comprehension can also promote metacognitive awareness, enabling students to become more independent and strategic learners.

Environmental and Attentional Barriers

The findings further reveal that both environmental and cognitive factors affect students' comprehension. Responses such as *"I lose focus when I listen for a long time"* (11) and *"Background noise makes it hard to understand what I'm hearing"* (14) indicate that attention and environmental conditions play a significant role in listening comprehension.

These responses suggest that students experience difficulty sustaining attention during extended listening tasks and are easily affected by external distractions. When attention decreases or when the environment is not conducive to learning, important information may be missed, resulting in incomplete or inaccurate understanding. This finding is consistent with Wang (2025), who emphasized that listening comprehension depends heavily on attentional control and favorable listening conditions. Effective comprehension requires sustained attention, active monitoring, and the ability to filter irrelevant stimuli. When these cognitive processes are disrupted, comprehension breakdowns occur, particularly in real-time listening where repetition may be limited. Similarly, Goh (2023) highlighted that attentional capacity plays a crucial role in listening performance, as learners must process incoming information quickly while maintaining focus. Environmental factors such as noise further increase cognitive load, making comprehension more difficult.

These findings imply that improving comprehension requires addressing both cognitive and environmental barriers. Teachers are encouraged to design shorter, focused listening tasks that align with students' attention span and gradually increase task length. Providing structured listening activities with clear objectives, repetition, and guided questions can help maintain engagement (Qilicheva, 2025).

In addition, minimizing classroom distractions and using clear, high-quality audio materials can improve listening conditions. Encouraging students to develop active listening habits, such as note-taking and identifying key points, can further strengthen attention and comprehension. By addressing both internal and external factors, learners can improve their ability to process and understand spoken language more effectively.

Proposed Language Instructional Plan

Enhancing the English Language Proficiency of ABELS Students through CEFR-Based Instructional Plan

Program Title: CEFR-Based Instructional Language Plan for ABELS Students

Rationale

Based on the findings, ABELS students obtained an overall C1 level in the B1-type proficiency examination, indicating strong performance in reading. However, results revealed an imbalance across macro-skills, as students demonstrated comparatively weaker performance in speaking and listening. This suggests that while learners possess adequate comprehension skills, they still encounter difficulty in processing spoken input and expressing ideas accurately, fluently, and confidently, particularly in real-time communication.

Qualitative findings further support this, highlighting challenges such as speaking anxiety, fear of errors, limited vocabulary, grammatical difficulties, and difficulty understanding spoken language in authentic contexts. These issues were most evident in speaking and listening tasks, where students showed hesitation, reduced comprehension of audio input, and limited ability to respond appropriately.

To address these gaps, the instructional plan is guided by Backward Design, which emphasizes clearly defined learning outcomes aligned with CEFR standards. It also integrates Content and Language Integrated Learning

(CLIL) to provide meaningful, context-based language exposure, and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to promote interaction, listening comprehension, and real-life communication.

Through this integrated approach, the plan provides structured and interactive learning experiences that focus on strengthening speaking and listening skills, building confidence, enhancing vocabulary and grammatical accuracy, and increasing exposure to authentic language use. Ultimately, it aims to develop balanced communicative competence among ABELS students in alignment with CEFR-based proficiency standards.

General Objective

To enhance the English language proficiency of ABELS students by strengthening their speaking and listening skills, while sustaining their competence in reading and writing, through a CEFR-aligned and outcomes-based instructional plan.

Specific Objectives

At the end of the 10-session Instructional Plan, students will be able to:

- participate in spoken interactions with reduced anxiety and improved engagement;
- use communication strategies to sustain and manage interaction effectively;
- deliver an organized oral presentation with clear ideas and appropriate language use;
- apply a broader range of vocabulary in speaking and writing tasks;
- construct grammatically accurate sentences in guided and independent activities; and
- produce a coherent academic essay using appropriate structure, grammar, and cohesion.

Target Beneficiaries

- ABELS students, particularly those within A2–B1 levels, with emphasis on students demonstrating difficulties in speaking and writing.

Program Duration

- 10 weeks
- 1 hour and 30 minutes per session

Instructional Design Framework

Stage	Description
Stage 1: Desired Results	CEFR-aligned communicative competence
Stage 2: Evidence of Learning	Performance-based assessments
Stage 3: Learning Plan	Task-based, interactive activities

Instructional Module Matrix

Time Frame	Learning Content	Intended Learning Outcomes	Assessment	Teaching and Learning Activities	Modality
Session 1	Building Communicative Confidence -Basic interaction strategies (turn-taking, responding) -Expressing personal ideas and opinions	-Participate in short spoken interactions. -Express ideas in continuous speech. -Engage in pair and group discussions.	-Observation checklist on participation in interactions (turn-taking, responsiveness) -Speaking performance rubric for fluency and	Discussion Interaction activities -Conversation Activity 1: “Pass the Talk: Real-Life Chat Chain” -Informal Discussion Activity 2: “Campus Decision Makers: Talk, Debate, Decide	Face to Face

			clarity during activities. -Peer and teacher feedback on group discussions	-Obtaining goods & services Activity 3: “Service Negotiation Challenge”	
Session 2	Communication Strategies -Paraphrasing and circumlocution -Repair strategies -Use of fillers and discourse markers -Managing communication breakdowns	-Use strategies to sustain communication -Repair communication breakdowns -Maintain fluency despite limitations	-Performance-based assessment using role-play tasks -Checklist on use of communication strategies (paraphrasing, fillers, repair) -Reflection sheet on how students managed communication breakdowns	Discussion Interaction Activities -Information Exchange Activity 1: “Information Gap Activity” -Problem Solving & Opinion Exchange Activity 2: “Real Talk Challenge: Campus & Everyday Life Conversations” - Group Debate and Argument Building Activity 3: “Discourse Marker Debate”	Face to Face
Session 3	Academic Speaking and Interaction -Argumentation and reasoning -Asking and answering questions -Turn-taking and managing discussions -Discourse markers in speaking	-Present ideas with supporting arguments -Engage in discussions effectively -Demonstrate turn-taking skills	-Oral performance rubric (argumentation, clarity, turn-taking) -Group discussion evaluation -Teacher observation of participation and use of discourse markers	Discussion Production -Giving Information Activity 1: “Helping a Tourist Around Town” -Using Telecommunication Activity 2: “Phone Call Task: Get the Information” -Obtaining Goods and Services Activity 3: “Service Negotiation: Get the Best Deal”	Face to Face
Session 4	Vocabulary for Effective Expression -Academic vocabulary (high-frequency academic words) -Synonyms and antonyms -Paraphrasing techniques -Avoiding repetition in communication	-Use 15–20 new vocabulary words -Paraphrase ideas effectively -Demonstrate lexical variety	-Vocabulary usage checklist (range and accuracy) -Written outputs (diary, essay, email) evaluated using rubric -Short quiz on synonyms, antonyms, and paraphrasing	Discussion Productive -Creative Writing Activity 1: “My Day, My Story” (Creative Diary Writing) -Essay Writing Interaction	Face to Face

				Activity 2: “My Opinion: Pros and Cons” Correspondence Activity 3: “Professional Email Exchange: Write with Purpose”	
Session 5	Grammar in Context -Complex and compound sentence structures -Common grammatical errors -Sentence clarity and variation -Grammar in spoken vs written discourse	-Construct complex sentences with 80% accuracy -Apply grammar in communication -Revise sentences for clarity	-Grammar accuracy rubric in written outputs -Editing and revision tasks -Short formative quiz on sentence structures	Discussion Interactive -Notes, Messages and Forms Activity 1: “Leave a Message & Fill the Form” Correspondence Activity 2: “Scholarship Application Letter” Production -Written Report Activity 3: “Internship Progress Report Writing”	Face to Face
Session 6	Academic Writing Skills -Essay structure (introduction, body, conclusion) -Thesis statement and topic sentences -Cohesion and coherence -Linking devices and transitions	-Write structured essays -Use cohesive devices -Improve grammar and vocabulary in writing	-Essay rubric (organization, cohesion, grammar, vocabulary) -Paragraph writing evaluation -Peer review and teacher feedback on drafts	Discussion Production -Paragraph Writing Activity 1: “My Favorite Place” -Essay Writing Activity 2: “Opinion Essay: School or Work Topic”	Face to Face

				- Extended Essay Writing Activity 3: “Problem: Solution Essay: Workplace or Academic Issue”	
Session 7-8	Improving Listening Skills Through Practical Exposure -Everyday English comprehension -Guided audio listening practice -Reduced reliance on translation	-Understand basic everyday English expressions -Follow simple guided audio materials -Comprehend meaning without relying heavily on translation	-Listening comprehension tests based on audio materials -Task-based assessment (identifying key details, following instructions) -Checklist on ability to understand without translation	Discussion Receptive -Listening to Audio media Activity 1 “Tune In and Catch it” -Listening to announcement and Instruction Activity 2 “Listen and Act” -Listening as a member of a live audience Activity 3 “Listen Like a Pro”	
Session 9	Listening in Authentic Communication Contexts -Workplace listening scenarios -Understanding speaker purpose and context -Comprehension of multimedia audio inputs	-Identify key information from 5–7 minute spoken presentations -Comprehend real-life spoken communication tasks -Demonstrate awareness of speaker intent and audience context during listening activities	-Note-taking and comprehension tasks from presentations -Listening rubric (identifying key information and speaker intent) -Performance in discussion of interpreted audio content	Discussion Receptive -Listening to Audio media Activity 1 “ Listen and Identify!” -Listening as a member of a live audience Activity 2 “Follow the Talk” -Understanding Conversation Between other speakers Activity 3 “ Connect and Interpret”	Face to Face
Session 10	Enhancing Reading Comprehension Skills -Understanding written texts in academic and everyday contexts -Basic reading comprehension strategies	-Identify the main idea and key details in written texts -Apply basic reading comprehension strategies (e.g., scanning and skimming)	-Reading comprehension tests (main idea and details) -Worksheet-based tasks (skimming and scanning) -Rubric-based evaluation of reading for instruction and information	Receptive -Reading as a leisure activity Activity 1 “Read and Discover!” -Reading for Information Activity 2 “Read and Extract” -Reading for Instruction Activity 3 “Decode the Instructions!”	

Teaching-Learning Strategies

Aligned with the identified gaps in productive skills particularly in speaking and writing and the challenges related to anxiety, limited vocabulary, and grammatical difficulties, the program integrates the following strategies:

- Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) – to promote meaningful interaction, improve speaking fluency, and reduce students' anxiety through real-life communication tasks
- Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) – to provide purposeful and context-driven activities that enhance students' ability to use language in authentic situations
- Affective Filter Reduction Strategies – to address fear of errors, low confidence, and speaking anxiety by creating a supportive and low-pressure learning environment
- Scaffolded Instruction – to gradually build students' competence in grammar, vocabulary, and sentence construction through guided support

Learning Resources

- CEFR-based rubrics
- Assessment materials
- Speaking prompts and dialogue scripts
- Vocabulary lists and grammar guides
- Audio Visual and recordings

Assessment and Evaluation

A. Formative Assessment

- Speaking practice (low-stakes, confidence-based)
- Vocabulary exercises
- Draft writing with feedback
- Listening comprehension checks (short audio tasks, guided questions)
- Reading activities (skimming, scanning, and short text analysis)

B. Summative Assessment

- Speaking performance (fluency + confidence)
- Writing portfolio (organization + grammar + vocabulary)
- Listening tests (comprehension of audio materials and real-life inputs)
- Reading tests (identification of main ideas, details, and text interpretation)

C. Performance Indicators

- 70% of students improve at least one CEFR level

- Reduced speaking anxiety (observed participation increase)
- Improved vocabulary usage and grammatical accuracy
- Improved listening comprehension of spoken texts and instructions
- Enhanced reading comprehension (ability to identify main ideas and key details)
- Increased engagement in English communication

Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Activity	Time Frame	Person Responsible	Means of Verification
Initial Assessment	Session 1	Instructor	Test results, baseline data
Module Implementation	Sessions 2–9	Instructor	Outputs, attendance
Progress Monitoring	Mid Session	Instructor	Checklists, observation notes
Post-Assessment	Session 10	Instructor	Test results
Program Evaluation	End of Program	Instructor/Coordinator	Evaluation report

Expected Outcomes

1. Improved speaking confidence and reduced anxiety
2. Increased vocabulary range and word retrieval ability
3. Better grammar accuracy and sentence organization
4. Enhanced writing coherence and clarity
5. Improved listening comprehension of spoken texts, instructions, and real-life communication
6. Strengthened reading comprehension, including identifying main ideas and key details
7. More balanced development across all macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The findings of the study indicate that the respondents demonstrate an overall C1 (Advanced) level of English language proficiency; however, this proficiency is unevenly distributed across the four macro-skills. Students show stronger competence in receptive skills, particularly reading, alongside satisfactory performance in listening and relatively strong writing ability. In contrast, speaking emerges as the most problematic skill, revealing difficulties in fluency, vocabulary use, and grammatical accuracy during spontaneous communication, thereby highlighting a gap between comprehension and production. Furthermore, the analysis reveals that year level significantly influences proficiency, suggesting that increased academic exposure contributes to language development, while social media exposure shows no significant relationship with proficiency across all macro-skills. These findings imply the need for targeted instructional interventions that prioritize the development of speaking skills while sustaining strengths in reading, writing, and listening to achieve a more balanced and functional communicative competence among learners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Implementation of a CEFR-Based Instructional Language Plan.

Higher education institutions, particularly ABELS program coordinators, may adopt a structured CEFR-aligned instructional plan that ensures balanced development across all macro-skills. Given the identified gap between receptive and productive skills, the plan should prioritize speaking while sustaining students’ strengths in reading and writing and reinforcing listening comprehension through guided exposure.

2. Strengthening Speaking Instruction.

English language instructors should intensify speaking-focused instruction through interactive and communicative activities such as role-playing, group discussions, debates, and oral presentations. These activities should specifically address students' difficulties in fluency, vocabulary use, and grammatical accuracy, while also reducing anxiety and building confidence in spontaneous communication.

3. Enhancement of Writing Skills.

Although writing performance is relatively strong, teachers should further enhance students' skills through process-based writing instruction, including drafting, revising, and feedback. Emphasis should be placed on improving coherence, organization, and grammatical precision to align with advanced-level expectations.

4. Integration of Communicative and Task-Based Approaches.

Instructors should employ communicative and task-based language teaching strategies that simulate real-life communication contexts. These approaches will help bridge the gap between comprehension and production by allowing students to actively use language in meaningful and authentic situations.

5. Strengthening Listening and Reading Instruction.

While students demonstrate competence in receptive skills, structured activities should still be implemented to deepen listening and reading comprehension. This includes exposure to authentic audio materials, lectures, and varied texts that develop higher-order skills such as identifying main ideas, recognizing arguments, and interpreting meaning beyond the surface level.

6. Provision of Language Support Programs.

The college administration should establish supplementary programs such as speaking clinics, writing workshops, listening labs, tutorial sessions, and peer mentoring. These programs will provide targeted support, particularly for students who struggle with productive skills, especially speaking.

7. Continuous Assessment and Monitoring.

Academic departments should conduct regular and systematic assessments using CEFR-aligned tools to monitor students' progress across all macro-skills. Continuous evaluation will help identify specific areas of difficulty and ensure appropriate instructional adjustments.

8. Faculty Development.

The institution should provide professional development programs for instructors focusing on CEFR-based instruction, communicative teaching strategies, and innovative assessment practices to effectively address students' diverse language needs.

9. Future Research.

Future researchers should investigate other factors influencing English language proficiency, such as motivation, learning strategies, classroom environment, and affective variables like anxiety. Expanding the scope to include a larger and more diverse population may also provide more comprehensive insights for improving language instruction.

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