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Motivation, Exposure, Speaking Anxiety and Learning Strategies as Predictors of English Language Skills and Overall Proficiency among the First Cycle Agronomy Students at Beni Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study examines the relationship between student-related factors namely motivation, exposure to English, speaking anxiety, learning strategies and English language proficiency among agronomy students at Beni higher education. It also investigates how these factors relate to individual language skills and how the skills collectively predict the English language proficiency.

Methodology: A quantitative correlational design with a predictive component was employed. Data collected from 409 students using structured questionnaires and standardized English proficiency assessment aligned with the first cycle agronomy-level. Pearson correlation analysis examined associations between student-related factors and language skills, while multiple regression assessed the predictive contribution of speaking, reading, listening and writing to the overall proficiency ($p < 0.05$).

Findings: Motivation, exposure, low speaking anxiety and learning strategies were positively associated with listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Speaking showed the strongest correlation followed by listening, writing and reading. Regression analysis indicated that all four skills significantly predicted the English language proficiency, with speaking and reading contributing most strongly.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice: The study extends the Second Language Acquisition Theory by integrating student-related variables in a single model. It informs policy by emphasizing learner support and strategy instruction. Finally, it guides practice by highlighting target interventions to enhance English proficiency.

Keywords: *English Proficiency, Motivation, Speaking Anxiety, Learning Strategies, Higher Education*

JEL Codes: *I21, I23, A22, D91, Z13*

INTRODUCTION

Research Background

English language proficiency is widely recognized as a multidimensional construct encompassing four core skills: speaking, reading, listening and writing. These skills collectively form the foundation of communicative competence. They are essential for academic success, professional communication and participation in global knowledge economies. As emphasized by Canale, Micheal and Swain, Merril (1980, pp. 1-12), communicative competence extends beyond grammatical accuracy to include the ability to use language effectively in real-life contexts. In higher education, particularly in discipline-specific fields such as agronomy, proficiency in these four skills is crucial for accessing scientific literature, engaging in classroom interaction and producing academic and professional texts.

In applied linguistics, identifying factors that influence the development of these skills has long been a central concern. Learner-centered, instructional, cognitive, and affective variables are often referred to as independent variables. They are widely acknowledged as the key determinants of the language learning outcomes. According to Ellis, Rod (2008, pp. 73-78), second language acquisition is shaped by a complex interaction of internal and external factors, including motivation, exposure, learning strategies, and instructional methods. Similarly, Dörnyei, Zoltán (2014, pp. 19–23) highlights the central role of affective variables such as motivation and learner engagement in determining the language success. Zhang (2021, pp. 6-9) and Hyland (2022, pp. 205-208) argue that recent empirical studies support further this view. They show that interactive teaching methods, learning environment and frequency of exposure significantly influence the language skill development.

However, the extent to which these independent variables affect individual language skills remains uneven and context-dependent. Research suggest that speaking is often the most sensitive skill to interactive, social and affective influences. For instance, Arias-Contreras and Moore (2022, pp. 98-101) found that learners who engage more frequently in oral interaction demonstrate higher speaking proficiency comparatively to those who rely on written exercises. Similarly, Hajar and Triastuti (2021, pp. 9-11) report that communicative classroom practices such as group discussions and presentations significantly enhance speaking performance in ESP contexts.

By contrast, reading and writing skills tend to depend more heavily on linguistic knowledge, sustained practice and exposure to academic texts. According to Nation, I.S.P. (2013, pp. 44-48), vocabulary depth and repeated exposure to written input are crucial for reading comprehension development. Likewise, Hyland (2019, pp. 112-116) emphasized that academic writing proficiency develops gradually through structured practice, genre awareness and feedback-based instruction. In agricultural education contexts, Sobirova (2025a, pp. 169-171) confirms that

students show stronger progress in reading and writing when exposed to authentic materials such as research articles and technical manuals.

Recent quantitative studies demonstrate further that independent variables are related positively and significantly to all core language skills and the overall English proficiency, although the strength of these relationships varies. For example, Dragoescu et al. (2024, pp. 3-5) found that interactive and content-based instruction correlates strongly with speaking performance, while its effect on writing and reading is moderate. Similarly, El Ouardi (2021, pp. 8-10) reports that students' exposure to the English language outside the classroom is a strong predictor of oral fluency but a weaker predictor of reading comprehension. These findings suggest that while all skills are interconnected, they are influenced differently by instructional and contextual variables.

Regression analyses in recent ESP studies also reinforce the independent nature of language skills. Zhang (2021, pp 7-9) demonstrates that speaking, reading, listening, and writing all significantly predict the overall English proficiency. They confirm that the language development is a holistic process rather than the result of a single dominant skill. In agricultural contexts, Arias-Contreras and Moore (2022, pp. 102-104) similarly show that integrated skill development leads to better academic and professional outcomes, particularly when instruction combines communicative activities with discipline-specific content.

These findings collectively highlight that English proficiency emerges from the combined contribution of multiple interacting skills, each influenced by different independent variables. Speaking may be more responsive to interaction and motivation, while reading and writing depend more on exposure, vocabulary acquisition and structured practice. Listening, meanwhile, is often shaped by both classroom input and out-of-class exposure to the spoken English.

In conclusion, understanding the relationship between independent variables and specific language skills is essential for improving the English language instruction, particularly in the specialized fields such as agronomy. However, there remains a need for a more systematic investigation into how these variables interact across different skills and how they collectively contribute to the overall English proficiency. Addressing this gap is crucial for designing more effective, skill-balanced and context-sensitive English programs in higher education.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing body of research on factors influencing English language learning, there is limited empirical evidences explaining how a single independent variable differentially affects the four English language skills and how these skills, in turn, contribute to the overall English language proficiency. Existing studies often treat English proficiency as a unified construct, overlooking variations in the strength of relationships across individual skills.

The current data reveal uneven relationships between the independent variables and the four skills, with speaking showing relatively weak associations. This disparity raises important

questions about the nature of skill development and the extent to which instructional or learner-related factors influence productive in opposition to receptive skills.

Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is the lack of clarity regarding the relative influence of the independent variables on individual English language proficiency.

Research Questions

Main Research Question: What is the relationship between the independent variables and the overall English language proficiency among students?

Secondary Research Questions :

1. What is the relationship between the independent variables and each of the four language skills namely speaking, reading, listening and writing?
2. To what extent do speaking, reading, listening and writing skills predict the overall English language proficiency?

Research Hypotheses

Main Hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant relationship between the independent variables and the overall English language proficiency.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between the independent variables and the overall English language proficiency.

Secondary Hypotheses :

1. Secondary Hypothesis 1

Null Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant relationship between the independent variables and the English language skills namely speaking, reading, listening and writing.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is a statistically significant relationship between the independent variables and the English language skills namely speaking, reading, listening and writing.

2. Secondary Hypothesis 2

Null Hypothesis: English language skills do not significantly predict the overall English language proficiency.

Alternative Hypothesis: English language skills significantly predict the overall English language proficiency.

Research Objectives

General Objective: To examine the relationship between the independent variable and students' English language proficiency.

Specific Objectives

1. To determine the relationship between the independent variable and the four English language skills namely speaking, reading, listening, and writing.
2. To assess the effect of individual English language skills on the overall English language proficiency.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English language proficiency is widely recognized as a complex construct influenced by multiple linguistic and learner-related factors. Research has consistently highlighted the role of the core language skills alongside affective, cognitive and contextual variables in shaping learner's communicative competence and academic success. The following review synthesizes key theoretical and empirical perspectives on language skills, motivation, exposure, anxiety, and learning strategies, situating them within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at the tertiary level.

Canale and Swain (1980, pp. 20-30) and Hinkel (2006, pp. 109–131) maintain that English language proficiency is a multidimensional construct comprising speaking, reading, listening and writing, which collectively determine communicative competence. Bachman (1990, p. 81) says that at the tertiary level, balanced development of these skills is essential for academic success, as the overall proficiency reflects the combined construction of individual skills rather than mastery of a single component.

Dörnyei (2005, pp. 1-30) and Gardner (2010, pp. 1-30) identify motivation as a key factor in the Second Language Acquisition. Motivated learners demonstrate persistence, engagement and willingness to communicate, particularly in speaking activities. Motivation is strongly associated with productive skills, as speaking requires active participation and confidence.

Ellis (2008) and Krashen (1985, pp. 1-3) uphold that exposure to English supports language development through frequent and meaningful interaction with the target language. Increased exposure enhances input processing and supports skill acquisition, particularly for listening and speaking. In EFL contexts, exposure differences can lead to uneven skill development.

Horwitz et al. (1986, pp. 125-132) and MacIntyre et al. (1998, p. 547) support that speaking anxiety negatively affects oral performance. High levels of foreign language anxiety, particularly in speaking reduce fluency, accuracy and willingness to communicate. Thus, anxiety disproportionately impacts speaking compared to receptive skills.

Oxford (1990, pp. 17-23) and O' Malley and Chamot (1990, pp. 44-45) claim that learning strategies facilitate language acquisition. Cognitive, metacognitive, social and affective strategies improve achievement across all skills, with particular impact on reading and writing, which require planning and monitoring.

Despite extensive research on these factors individually, few studies have simultaneously examined their combined relationship with all four English skills and overall proficiency within the first cycle programs. This study addresses this gap in the context of Beni higher education.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational design with a predictive component. According to John Creswell (2014, p. 4), quantitative research examines relationships among variables using statistical procedures. Creswell (2005, pp. 327-328) further notes that correlational and predictive designs are appropriate for determining the degree of relationship among variables and predicting outcome variables without manipulating them. Similarly, Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion and Morrison (2000) maintain that correlational research establishes the strength and direction of the relationships among variables and examines predictive associations. Therefore, this design was suitable for examining the relationships between student-related variables and English language skills as well as the predictive power of the skills on the overall English language proficiency without manipulating variables.

Participants

The study involved 409 first cycle level agronomy students enrolled in English courses at Beni higher education during the academic year 2023-2024. Participants were selected through exhaustive sampling to ensure that every student has an equal opportunity for selection. All students had prior formal English instruction.

Variables

1. *Independent Variables*: Motivation, exposure to spoken English, speaking anxiety and learning strategies.
2. *Dependent Variables*: Speaking, reading, listening and writing skills and overall English proficiency.

Instruments

This study employed two main instruments: Student-related factors and English language proficiency assessment.

Student Factors Questionnaire included structured Likert-scale items measuring motivation, exposure, anxiety and strategies. The questionnaire reliability analysis resulted in an alpha Cronbach, $\alpha \geq 0.70$.

English Proficiency Assessment was done through skill-based tasks covering speaking English inside and outside the classroom, reading comprehension questions, listening especially audio-based tasks, lectures, classroom interaction and writing English paragraph. An overall proficiency score was computed by aggregating the scores obtained across the four skills.

Data Collection

Data were collected during regular instructional sessions. According to John W. Creswell (2014, p. 13), questionnaires are appropriate instruments for collecting quantitative data used to examine the relationships among variables statistically. Similarly, Martyn Denscombe and Liz Aubrook (1992, pp. 113-131) note that research questionnaire can be conducted within normal school activities to gather educational data from students. Supporting this procedure, a study in *Educational Psychology Review* reported that participants completed questionnaires during regular instructional sessions to assess the learning-related variables. In the present study, participants completed the questionnaire about language skill assessments to verify if independent variables affect the students' English language proficiency.

Data Analysis

The study used descriptive statistics in which mean scores and standard deviations summarized performance. It also used Pearson correlation to examine relationships between independent variables and individual skills. Finally, multiple regression assessed predictive contributions of speaking, reading, listening and writing to overall proficiency. Significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant authority. Participation was voluntary and confidentiality was ensured.

Justification

This methodology allows for the simultaneous examination of multiple student-related variables and multidimensional structure of English proficiency. Correlational and regression analyses provide insights into both relationships and predictive power, supporting theory, policy and instructional practice.

DATA PRESENTATION

This section presents the results of Pearson correlation and regression analyses examining the relationship between the independent variables and students' English language skills and overall proficiency.

1. Pearson correlation coefficients (r) between the independent variable and each of the four language skills.

The study reports that Pearson correlation coefficients (r) were calculated to examine the strength and direction of the relationships between the independent variable and each of the four language skills as well as the overall English language proficiency. All correlations were tested for statistical significance ($p < .5$).

Writing ($r = 0.149$, $p = 0.020$) is weak positive and statistically significant. Speaking ($r = 0.851$, $p = < 0.001$) is very strong positive and highly significant. Reading ($r = 0.100$, $p = 0.043$) is very weak positive and statistically significant. Listening ($r = 0.238$, $p = 0.009$) is weak-to moderate positive and statistically significant. Finally, the overall English language proficiency ($r = 0.684$, $p = 0.002$) is strong positive and highly significant. The table 1 below highlights the case.

Table 1: Pearson correlation coefficients (r) between the independent variable and each of the four language skills, as well as overall English language proficiency

	r feeling of love of the English language	P - Value	Verbal Interpretation
Writing	.149	.020	Significant Test
Speaking	. 851	<.001	Significant Test
Reading	.100	.043	Significant Test
Listening	. 238	.009	Significant Test
Proficiency Score	.684	.002	Significant Test

Source : Primary data 2024

2. The effect of individual English language skills on the overall English proficiency or related performance measure

The regression analysis examined the effect of individual English language skills on the outcome variable that is the overall English language proficiency. As independent variables speaking ($B = 0.075$, $t = - 2.231$, $p = 0.026$), reading ($B = 0.051$, $t = 2.192$, $p = 0.025$), listening ($B = 0.028$, $t = 1.992$, $p = 0.022$) and writing ($B = 0.003$, $t = 1.982$, $p = 0.029$) indicate that all four predictors or skills are statistically significant at 0.05 level. In simple word, each skill contributes

significantly to the dependent variable, reading and listening exerting the strongest positive effects. The table 2 presents unstandardized coefficients (B), t-values and p-values for each predictor.

Table 2: Regression analysis of English language skills

	B	t	Sig.	Verbal Interpretation
(Constant)	2.932			
Speaking	.075	-2.231	.026	Significant predictor
Reading	.051	2.192	.025	Significant predictor
Listening	.028	1.992	.022	Significant predictor
Writing	.003	1.982	.029	Significant predictor

Source : Primary data 2024

DATA ANALYSIS

The correlation analysis applied to the four linguistic skills. Writing ($r = 0.149$, $p = 0.020$) has weak correlation, indicating a small relationship between the variable such as motivation to write using appropriate vocabulary, proper syntax and writing performance. However, the p-value inferior to 0.05 confirms that the result is statistically significant. It means that the relationship is real, though not strong. Writing skills may be influenced by multiple factors, for instance; grammar knowledge, vocabulary depth and practice habits; explaining the low correlation.

Speaking ($r = 0.851$, $p < 0.001$) has an extremely strong positive correlation, the strongest among all skills. The result is highly significant. It indicates a very robust relationship. This means that the independent variable is closely connected to students' oral proficiency, confidence, fluency or communication strategies. Really, speaking emerges as the most affected skill. Reading ($r = 0.100$, $p = 0.043$) has a very weak r, close to zero. Yet, it is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This means that the effect exists but it is minimal; the independent variable has only a slight influence on reading ability. Reading depends more on vocabulary size, text exposure and comprehension strategies, which reduce the strength of the correlation.

Listening ($r = 0.238$, $p = 0.009$) has weak-to-moderate correlation. The relationship is statistically significant. It suggests that the variable has a meaningful but not strong impact on listening skills. The ability to decode sounds, understand accents, process information quickly, and manage listening anxiety affect the listening comprehension.

The Overall Language Proficiency ($r = 0.684$, $p = 0.002$) has a strong positive correlation. It shows that the independent variable contributes substantially to general English proficiency. This is highly significant ($p < 0.01$). It confirms the robustness of the relationship and suggests that the variable influences not just isolated skills, but overall language development.

The regression analysis was performed to assess the effect of individual English language skills namely speaking, reading, listening, and writing on the overall English language proficiency. The results presented in Table 2 show that all four skills are statistically significant predictors, as their p-values are below the 0.05 significance level.

Specifically, speaking (B = 0.075, t = -2.231, p = 0.026), reading (B = 0.051, t = 2.192, p = 0.025), listening (B = 0.028, t = 1.992, p = 0.022) and writing (B = 0.003, t = 1.982, p = 0.029) all contribute significantly to the prediction of the overall English proficiency. Among the variables, reading and listening display relatively stronger positive coefficients comparatively to writing, while speaking has the largest coefficient but an unexpected negative t-value.

Writing shows the smallest coefficient (B = 0.003), indicating a relatively weaker contribution to the dependent variable. The constant value (B = 2.932) represents the baseline level of the overall proficiency when all predictors are held constant.

FINDINGS

The analyses above results in 8 key findings.

1. Positive and Significant Relationships Across All Variables

All correlations between students' love for English and the four language skills as well as the overall proficiency, are positive and statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This p-value confirms that affective factors positively influence the English language performance.

2. Speaking Skills Show the Strongest Association

Speaking has the strongest correlation ($r = 0.851$, $p < 0.001$). This pattern indicates a very strong relationship, meaning students who enjoy English are much more likely to excel in speaking.

3. Strong Link with the Overall English Proficiency

The overall English language proficiency is strongly correlated with students' love for English ($r = 0.684$, $p = 0.002$). It suggests that positive attitudes significantly enhance general language competence.

4. Weaker Relationship with Other Skills

While listening shows a weak-to-moderate correlation ($r = 0.238$), writing ($r = 0.149$) and reading ($r = 0.100$) exhibit weak correlations. The implication is that affective factors influence productive oral skills more than receptive or written skills.

5. All Language Skills Significantly Predict the Overall Proficiency

The regression results show that speaking, reading, listening, and writing all significantly predict the overall English language proficiency ($p < 0.05$). This p-value confirms that each skill contributes meaningfully to the overall performance.

6. Reading and Listening Are Strong Predictors

Reading ($B = 0.051$, $p = 0.025$) and listening ($B = 0.028$, $p = 0.022$) show relatively stronger predictive effects. These skills play a key role in shaping the overall English language proficiency.

7. Speaking has a Complex but Significant Effect

Speaking ($B = 0.075$, $p = 0.026$) but the negative t-value suggests a possible complexity such as multi collinearity or model issues. It indicates the need for further statistical investigation.

8. Writing has the Smallest Contribution

Writing ($B = 0.003$, $p = 0.029$) is significant but has the weakest effect size. This pattern means that writing contributes less to the overall proficiency compared to other skills.

In brief, students' love for English strongly boots speaking ability and the overall proficiency. In addition, while all the four language skills are important, reading and listening emerge as the most influential predictors of the overall English language performance.

DATA DISCUSSION

Speaking is the most strongly influenced skill ($r = .851$). This result points to a major role of the independent variables such as practice, fluency, peer and teacher support, confidence in pronunciation in promoting oral language use, confidence and communicative competence. The overall proficiency is also strongly related to all the four linguistic skills ($r = .684$). This coefficient shows that the variable contributes meaningfully to students' general English mastery. Listening ($r = .238$) and writing ($r = .149$) show weaker yet significant correlations, suggesting these skills are moderately influenced by frequent practice but may depend on additional cognitive, linguistic or instructional factors. Reading ($r = .100$) shows the weakest correlation. This implies that reading ability is least affected by the variable and might rely on different learning processes such as vocabulary acquisition, exposure to texts and comprehension strategies. All skills show positive correlations, meaning that the independent variables consistently support language proficiency, although at varying degrees.

Therefore, there is a hierarchy of skill influence. The coefficients suggest a descending order of impact: Speaking > Reading > Listening > Writing. This hierarchy reinforces previous correlation results where speaking emerged as the most influential skill. It is followed by reading and listening. Writing, while statistically significant, plays a minor role. It indicates that, in practical terms, students' oral and receptive skills namely speaking, reading and listening are strongly predictors of the overall proficiency than written skills.

Theoretically, the hierarchy of skill influence implies a number of theories. The Communicative Competence Theory by Canale and Swain (1980, p. 30) posits the strong effect of speaking. It emphasizes that the linguistic, sociolinguistic and strategic competence converge in oral communication. Krashen (1982, pp. 30-31) posits the Affective Filter Hypothesis explaining that anxiety or fear of speaking may moderate the effect of speaking proficiency. Yet, one learners engage in speaking, it significantly boosts performance. Putz and Sicola (2010, pp. 1-6) edited Cognitive-Processing Theories, which maintain that receptive skills such as listening and reading contribute to comprehension and the internal acquisition of the language knowledge. Smaller correlation coefficients for these skills may reflect their indirect influence on observable performance outcomes as compared with more directly measurable productive skills. Swain (1985, p. 252) says that Output Hypothesis claims that producing language reinforces skill development, consistent with the highest coefficient for speaking.

Practically, it implies that teachers ought to prioritize speaking activities in teaching interventions. Small improvements in speaking have substantial effect on overall proficiency. They are expected to strengthen reading comprehension and listening practice to support integrated language development. Writing should be included, but instructional time might focus more on activities that improve oral communication and comprehension, without neglecting written skill reinforcement.

The results suggest that all the core language skills are important determinants of the overall English language proficiency. The suggestion confirms the multidimensional nature of language competence. The significant contribution of each skill implies that improvement in any of these areas positively influences the overall proficiency.

The stronger effects of reading and listening highlight the fundamental role of receptive skills in language development. This may be because comprehension abilities form the foundation for acquiring vocabulary, grammar and the overall language understanding, which in turn support performance in other skills.

Although speaking is a significant predictor, the negative t-value indicates a potential complexity in its relationship with the overall proficiency. This could be due to statistical issues such as multi collinearity or overlapping variance with predictors, suggesting that further diagnostic analysis may be necessary.

Writing, while statistically significant, has the weakest contribution, which may reflect the fact that writing skills often require more time and practice to develop and may not be as immediately reflected in general proficiency measures.

In brief, these findings emphasize the need for a balanced instructional approach that integrates both receptive and productive skills. A particular attention is suggested to be addressed to strengthen reading and listening as key drivers of the overall English language proficiency.

Overall Check

The findings from Pearson correlation and regression analyses demonstrate that the collected data successfully answered all the research questions of the study. Concerning the main research question, the results revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between the independent variable and the overall English language proficiency ($r = 0.684$, $p = 0.002$). This pattern indicates that the independent variable is strongly associated with the students' English language proficiency.

Regarding the first secondary question, the Pearson correlation analysis showed statistically significant relationships between the independent variable and each of the four English language skills. Speaking recorded a very strong positive relationship ($r = 0.851$, $p < 0.001$), listening a weak-to-moderate positive relationship ($r = 0.238$, $p = 0.009$), writing a weak positive relationship ($r = 0.149$, $p = 0.020$), and reading a very weak positive relationship ($r = 0.100$, $p = 0.043$). Therefore, the data clearly answered the question about the relationship between the independent variable and the four language skills.

Similarly, the second secondary research question was answered through regression analysis. The results demonstrated that speaking, reading, listening, and writing significantly predict the overall English language proficiency since all p-values were below the significance level of 0.05. This means that each language skill contributes significantly to the prediction of students' English language proficiency.

The data also verified the research hypotheses. The main null hypothesis, which stated that there is no statistically significant relationship between the independent variables and the overall English language proficiency, was rejected because the relationship was statistically significant ($p = 0.002$). Consequently, the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

For the secondary hypothesis 1, the null hypothesis stating that there is no statistically significant relationship between the independent variables and the four language skills was rejected because all the four skills showed statistically significant correlations with the independent variable. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Likewise, for the secondary hypothesis 2, the null hypothesis claiming that the English language skills do not predict the overall English language proficiency was rejected. The regression results confirmed that all the core language skills significantly predict the overall proficiency since all significance values were below 0.05. Thus, the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Finally, the findings indicate that the research objectives were achieved. The general objective of examining the relationship between the independent variable and students' English language proficiency was accomplished through the significant overall correlation results. The first specific objective was achieved through Pearson correlation analysis between the independent

variable and the four language skills. The second specific objective was achieved through the regression analysis showing the predictive effect of speaking, reading, listening, and writing on the overall language proficiency.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between student-related factors notably motivation, exposure to the spoken English, speaking anxiety and learning strategies ; and the English language skills as well as the overall English language proficiency among the first cycle level agronomy students at Beni higher education. The findings demonstrate that these student factors are positively and significantly associated with all the four language skills and with the overall English language proficiency, though the strength of the relationships varies across skills.

Speaking emerged as the most strongly associated skill, indicating that student-related factors are particularly influential in oral language development. Listening showed a moderate association, while reading and writing displayed weaker but significant relationships, suggesting that these skills may depend more heavily on additional cognitive and instructional factors. Importantly, regression analysis confirmed that speaking, reading, listening and writing each makes a statistically significant contribution to the overall English language proficiency, reinforcing the multidimensional nature of language competence.

Briefly, the results highlight that the English language proficiency is not driven by a single skill or factor but develops through the combined and complementary influence of multiple learner characteristics and language skills. These findings contribute to the Second Language Acquisition research by demonstrating differential skill sensitivity to student-related variables within a unified empirical model.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that English language instruction at the first cycle level adopt a balanced, skill-integrated approach. Pedagogical interventions should prioritize enhancing student's motivation, increasing meaningful exposure to the English language, reducing speaking anxiety and explicitly teaching using effective learning strategies. Given the strong influence of speaking, communicative and interactive classroom practices should be emphasized, while sustained support for reading and writing development should not be neglected. Finally, future research should employ longitudinal or experimental design to establish causal relationships and explore additional factors influencing literacy-based skills.

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