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Research Article

Challenges in Purposive Communication and Macro Skills of Students

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the communication challenges and macro skill proficiency of third-year Purposive Communication students at the Bicol State College of Applied Sciences and Technology (BISCAST) during the first semester of SY 2024–2025. Using a descriptive-comparative-correlational design, data were collected from 152 students across four programs through using IELTS mock tests and researcher-made questionnaires. Findings revealed that students struggled most with understanding main ideas and inferencing, followed by critical thinking, lexical resource and vocabulary, reading strategies, and grammatical range accuracy. All macro skills were all at developing levels except viewing, which found to be in Good level; revealing listening to be the weakest and viewing as the strongest. There were significant performance differences found across paired macro skills with listening varying significantly among other macro skills and across paired programs with Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering [BSCE] students performing the strongest and Bachelor of Engineering Technology Major in Mechanical Automotive Engineering Technology [BET-MAET] performing the weakest. The study found a significant correlation of about 47.9% variance showing that students who faced greater communicative challenges are also likely to have lower macro skill proficiency. Strategies employed in reading, critical thinking, and grammatical skills proved to have moderate effects on majority of the macro skills but proved to have very weak influence on reading, interestingly as it is also the least influenced skill. This study was grounded in theories of communicative competence, constructivism, and task-based learning where results showcased the need for student-centered teaching mixing strategic reading techniques, critical thinking, and efficient grammar and vocabulary in real-life communication situations.

Keywords: *Purposive communication, Challenges, Macro skills, Proficiency level, Technical college*

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Background

In these modern times, possessing efficient communication skills has become handy for academic feat, professional growth, and active participation in a variety of cultural contexts. Philippine higher education institutions have provided solutions to these requisites by requiring Purposive Communication as a mandatory subject in the Philippine General Education Curriculum. This gen-ed subject focuses on customized, audience-sensitive, and goal-oriented communication while developing students' skill levels in the five macro skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing. These macro skills are the fundamentals of communicative proficiency and are helpful to prepare graduates or future professionals for the intricate language and different cultural circumstances they will face in both local and global settings.

Despite this move, studies and academic reports continue to reveal problems in students' communicative proficiency. Many Filipino learners go through challenges in achieving mastery in these areas, which then affects academic performance and may negatively affect worthiness in pursuing international opportunities. This problem has been confirmed by recent national and global assessments namely the EF English Proficiency Index, TOEIC, IELTS, PISA, TIMSS, SEA-PLM, and National Achievement Test. All these have documented a deterioration in the English proficiency of Filipino students in the recent years. In response, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), through policies such as CMO No. 20, s. 2013 (CHED, 2022) and CMO No. 59, s. 1996 (CHED, 1996), stresses the importance of communication skills as fundamental to higher education and professional readiness. These memoranda classify Purposive Communication as a required general education subject with a purpose of cultivating proper communication across different contexts and a variety of audiences, with special emphasis on the five macro skills.

Given these, the need to examine and fortify communication competence is especially noticeable at the Bicol State College of Applied Sciences and Technology (BISCAST), a higher education institution geared toward technical and applied fields. Previous studies have showed that many students demonstrate poor to mediocre proficiency in oral fluency, problems in reading comprehension, and obvious deficits in grammar and vocabulary. These limitations hinder students' capacity to express complex ideas and engage effectively in academic and professional discourse. Faculty likewise regularly send informal feedback regarding these recurring weaknesses in communication skills specifically across different academic courses ultimately warranting the need for methodical assessment and customized instructional solutions.

To address these challenges, the study adopted the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) as an internationally recognized standard for English communication proficiency. IELTS measures listening, reading, speaking, and writing—domains that closely align and support the objectives of Purposive Communication. By using IELTS-based standards as reference tool, this study sought to give a globally calibrated lens through which macro skill development can be measured and improved. This also supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on Quality Education, particularly Target 4.4, which advocates for growing the number of young people equipped with applicable skills for employment, decent job, as well as entrepreneurship. The study of Diano et al. (2023) further upholds that embedding global benchmarks into Philippine higher education is undeniably vital for future graduates to meet international expectations and requirement.

Overall, the main goal of this study was to examine communication challenges and inspect instructional activities in Purposive Communication. Specifically, the study sought to: (1) determine the challenges of students in communication; (2) assess the level of macro skills of students along listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing; (3) ascertain the significant differences in the level of macro skills of students across different programs; (4) ascertain the relationship between the communication challenges and level of macro skills of students; (5) identify the extent to which the challenges influence the level of macro skill of students; and (6) provide recommendation for

intervention and strategies to enhance the level of macro skills of students.

The findings of this study shall aid with instructional refinement, curricular improvement, and policy reforms. Students may use the results to better understand their communication skills; educators can polish their approaches to fill in learning gaps; academic institutions and curriculum developers may use the results as a reference to design evidence-based communication efficiency interventions; and CHED policy makers can also make use of the study's perceptions to fortify quality of communication abilities of learners nationwide. Similarly, employers and industry partners may benefit from graduates who are equipped with stronger, globally-competitive communication, while future researchers may build upon this study through comparative or longitudinal studies of macro skill development in technical and applied technological studies. Finally, this study addresses an important need to help solve the problems in purposive communication by meeting the communicative demands of modern scholastic, specialized, and intercultural surroundings. Through the use of an IELTS-referenced framework, the study backs the development of communication instruction that is both internationally aligned and locally responsive, fostering the growth of globally competent Filipino communicators.

Methods

This study has used a descriptive–comparative–correlational research design, which was determined accurate for examining students' challenges in Purposive Communication and their proficiency levels across the five macro skills—listening, reading, speaking, writing, and viewing.

Descriptive

The descriptive component of the study was used to identify specific communication challenges experienced by students and to determine their corresponding macro skill levels using IELTS-based assessment materials and standardized performance indicators. The data for this part of the study was statistically treated using weighted mean, standard deviation, and proficiency level.

This was done to determine the severity of the challenges students face in terms of their communication skills as well as the level of the macro skills of students.

Comparative

The comparative component sought to determine whether significant differences existed between paired macro skill proficiencies and paired academic programs namely Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering [BSCE], Bachelor of Engineering Technology in Electrical Engineering Technology [BET-EET], Bachelor in Drafting Technology [BDT], Bachelor of Engineering Technology Major in Mechanical Automotive Engineering Technology [BET-MAET], in which results revealed variations in macro skill performance across these different programs. The data for this part of the study was statistically treated using Tukey Honesty Difference (HSD) Post-Hoc Test and One-Way Analysis of Variance.

Correlational

Finally, the correlational part of the study examined the relationship between the communication challenges and the level of macro skills of students and the extent to which these challenges influence the students' proficiency in each macro skill. The data for this part of the study was statistically treated using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) and Coefficient of Determination (R^2).

Result and Discussion

Challenges of Students in Purposive Communication

Table 1 presents the assessment revealing that students struggled most with understanding main ideas and inferencing (M = 1.73, SD = 0.74) and critical thinking (M = 1.94, SD = 1.68), while performing relatively better in lexical resource/vocabulary (M = 6.63, SD = 0.58) and grammatical range/accuracy (M = 6.38, SD = 0.70). Reading strategies also emerged as a challenge (M = 6.38, SD = 1.77). Standard deviations showed relatively uniform performance within skills but wide variation overall (SD = 2.53).

Table 1. Challenges in Communication

Aspects.	Ite	S	Mean	Interpretation
Understanding Main Ideas/Inferencing	3	0.74	1.73	Most Evident
Lexical Resource/Vocabulary	9	0.58	6.63	Least Evident
Reading Strategies (Identifying Key Words/ Skimming/Scanning/Word Forms)	10	1.77	6.28	Less Evident
Critical Thinking	5	1.68	1.94	Highly Evident
Grammatical Range and Accuracy	9	0.70	6.38	Less Evident
Overall	**3**	**2.53**	**23.7**	

Note: Means that range from 6.41-6.99+ are interpreted as Least Evident, means from 5.21-6.40 are interpreted as Less Evident, means from 3.81-5.20 are interpreted as Moderately Evident, 2.41-3.80 are interpreted as Evident, means from 1.71-2.40 are interpreted as Highly Evident, and means from 1.00-1.70 are interpreted as Most Evident

The findings illustrate that while students generally possess relatively better competencies in lexical resource and vocabulary use and grammatical range and accuracy, they experienced the greatest difficulties in higher-order cognitive skills, particularly with understanding main ideas and inferencing, as well as critical thinking. The high variability in critical thinking scores implies uneven development of analytical and evaluative abilities, representing that some students are well-equipped while others are significantly lagging behind. Meanwhile, the consistently poor performance in understanding main ideas and inferencing suggests prevalent problems in comprehension. Furthermore, the considerable challenges related to reading strategies reflected considerable concerns with comprehension. The overall high standard deviation across all programs further emphasized performance disparities among students from different programs, revealing uneven proficiencies related to their linguistic practices and exposure. Lastly, the study also found that although students have fairly acceptable vocabulary and grammar, they still struggle with higher-order comprehension and critical thinking.

This reflects earlier researches (Barrot, 2016; Bora, 2023; Doce et al., 2024; Dimaano & Hương, 2019) proving that basic language knowledge does not guarantee effective communicative abilities. Students also encountered challenges in identifying main ideas and moving beyond literal understanding, consistent with Casimero et al. (2024), Din (2020), Wati (2024), Ho (2022), Mantra et al. (2020), and Francisco (2023). The students' partial but limited use of skimming and scanning reflects findings by Syukur and Prasetyo (2024) and Ngo (2024), while their relative strength in vocabulary and grammar aligns with Magaba (2023) and Alghammas (2020). To summarize, the results support the bigger accord that linguistic proficiency alone is insufficient, necessitating integrative, task-based, and cognitively engaging training (Barrot, 2016; Mapalad & Bautista, 2022). Grounded in Communicative Competence, Constructivist, and Task-Based Learning theories, the findings stress the importance of authentic, guided learning activities.

Macro Skills of Students

Table 2 shows that Listening had the lowest mean (6.17, SD = 1.21), followed by Writing (6.57, SD = 0.80), Reading (6.59, SD = 1.31), and Speaking (6.91). Viewing revealed to have the highest mean of 7.46. The overall standard deviation (SD) is 5.11.

Table 2. Level of Macro Skills of Students

Macro Skills.	Band Score (Max)	SD	Mean	Interpretation
Listening	9	1.21	6.17	Developing
Speaking	9	0.67	6.91	Developing
Reading	9	1.31	6.59	Developing
Viewing	9	1.11	7.16	Good
Writing	9	0.80	6.57	Developing
Total	**45**	5.11	33.39	Developing

Note: Scores from 8.5–9.0 (band 9) are rated Proficient, scores ranging from 7.5–8.4 (band 8) are rated Very Good, scores ranging from 6.5–7.4 (band 7) are rated Good, and scores of 5.5–6.4 (band 6) are rated Developing

The results show varying performances of students across the five macro skills with an overall standard deviation of 5.11, which suggests a moderate to high degree of variability in proficiency across different academic programs. Viewing emerged as the strongest skill, rated as Good, signifying a relative strength in interpreting and analyzing visual information and multimedia content. In contrast, the remaining four skills were all rated at Developing levels, demonstrating poorer performance. Listening was the weakest skill, suggesting significant problems in auditory comprehension. This was closely followed by Speaking, showing some progress toward better proficiency. Reading was also at a developing level with noticeable variability in comprehension, while Writing remained steady but still behind other areas.

These findings reinforced the studies concluding that communication proficiency is complex and interdependent, requiring a unified, contextualized, and learner-centered instruction (Barrot, 2016; Singca, 2024; Campos, 2023). The developing level in speaking mirrored the recurrent challenges identified by Espiritu (2024) and Yuh and Kaewurai (2021), who reported that anxiety, lack of authentic speaking exposure, and teacher-centered practices hinder oral fluency and confidence. Similarly, Labicane (2021) and Bozdogan and Kasap (2019) also then observed that communicative competence often lacks emphasis in technical and professional programs—an issue that is may be evident in BISCAST, where English functions more as an academic requirement than a practical communication tool.

The students' developing proficiency in listening supported the findings of Syukur and Prasetyo (2024), who noted that listening is underemphasized positing that comprehension problems may be rotted from limited processing of auditory reception. Rull et al. (2020) and Doce et al. (2024) likewise noted that BISCAST students showed moderate oral fluency and persistent grammatical weaknesses— patterns that resonated with the present findings. Reading performance also fell within the developing range, consistent with Dimaano and Hương (2019) and Abid et al. (2023), who found that students often struggle with both literal and inferential comprehension due to weak reading habits and study skills. This also suggested that students need more structured practice in strategic reading and critical analysis, as emphasized by Din (2020) and Gunasekaran et al. (2021). Writing proficiency likewise remained a developing area, confirming the global and local trends emphasized by Magaba (2023), Alghammas (2020), and Baybay (2022), who attributed writing challenges to first-language interference, limited practice, and grammatical inaccuracy. The results also supported the studies of Ngo (2024) and Alma et al. (2024), who documented low writing proficiency among Filipino students and advocated for ESP- oriented approaches to strengthen academic and workplace communication. In contrast, students' relatively strong performance in viewing supports Barrot's (2016) expanded macro-skill framework and Santos and Paglinawan (2023), who emphasized the value of multimodal literacy in improving comprehension and engagement.

Differences in the Level of Macro Skills of Students

Table 3 shows the Tukey Honest Significant Difference (HSD) test conducted to determine if there were significant differences on the level of macro skills of students across skills and across academic programs. Results revealed f-stat value for macro skills was 5.025, exceeding the f-critical value of 3.259 and for programs, the f-stat value is 13.205, which also exceeds the f-critical value of 3.490. Both were done at 0.05 significance level.

Table 3. Differences in the level of Macro Skills of Students

Source of Variation	f-stat	f-crit	Interpretation
Macro Skills	5.025	3.259	Significant
Programs	13.2 05	3.490	Significant

Given that both tests exceeded the critical value, for macro skills, it revealed that differences between various paired macro skills of students (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Viewing, and Writing) were statistically significant. In terms of paired programs, it also revealed that the performances of students from different academic programs had significant differences. These values meant that students did not perform uniformly across the five macro skills, as some skills were more developed than others. This also suggested variations in how students obtain and apply listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing competencies, further illustrating unequal proficiency among these areas. Similarly, significant differences across programs proved that students' communication performance vary among academic programs, which may likely be associated to current curricular emphasis, instructional approaches, and practical language exposure. Overall, these findings suggest that while students are generally developing in their overall communicative skills, targeted interventions per skill and per program are necessary to ensure balanced proficiency and effective communication competence across all areas.

Differences in Paired Macro Skills of Students

Table 4 shows that paired comparisons among the macro skills generated values exceeding the Tukey critical value. The comparisons between Listening and Speaking had Tukey statistical value of 15.84, Listening and Reading at 8.14, Listening and Viewing at 16.02, and Listening and Writing at 11.07, all recording the highest values. Other comparisons include Speaking and Reading at 8.7, Speaking and Viewing at 0.18, Speaking and Writing at 4.91, Reading and Viewing at 8.88, Reading and Writing at 3.79, and Viewing and Writing at 5.09.

Table 4. Differences in Paired Macro Skills of Students

Paired Macro Skills.	Tukey Critical Value	Tukey Statistic Value	Interpretation
Listening - Speaking	3.66	15.84	Significant
Listening - Reading	3.66	8.14	Significant
Listening - Viewing	3.66	16.02	Significant
Listening - Writing	3.66	11.07	Significant
Speaking - Reading	3.66	8.7	Significant
Speaking - Viewing	3.66	0.18	Not Significant
Speaking - Writing	3.66	4.91	Significant
Reading - Viewing	3.66	8.88	Significant
Reading - Writing	3.66	3.79	Significant
Viewing - Writing	3.66	5.09	Significant

The results reveal that all except one of the paired comparisons generated values that exceeded the Tukey critical value, thus, indicating statistically significant differences in student performance across these paired areas. Notably, the comparisons between Listening and

other skills—Speaking, Reading, Viewing, and Writing all demonstrated substantial differences. Similarly, significant differences were observed between Speaking and Reading, Speaking and Writing, Reading and Viewing, Reading and Writing, and Viewing and Writing. Interestingly, Speaking and Viewing were observed to have no significant difference.

The comparison between Listening and the other macro skills showed the greatest variations, indicating that listening is the most problematic skill for majority of the students. Significant differences were also found between Speaking and Reading, Speaking and Writing, and among Reading and Viewing, Reading and Writing, and Viewing and Writing. These imply that students' macro skills are not equally developed and that students' performances significantly vary across all paired skill combinations. These interpretations highlight the uneven communication indicators among students. In contrast, the comparison between Speaking and Viewing showed no statistically significant difference, suggesting comparable aptitude of students in these two areas, possibly due to overlapping communicative processes involved in both skills. Overall, it can be concluded that students' proficiency across macro skills is imbalanced, with listening requiring the greatest instructional focus.

These findings support previous studies such as those of Alma et al. (2024), Baybay (2022), and Convicto et al. (2025), who posited that students commonly struggle with reading and writing compared to other macro skills. The significant differences found across disciplines bring into line with Barrot's (2016) claim that different macro skills develop unequally and needs combined but focused teaching, while Al-Seghayer (2021) warned that too much consolidation of these skills without clear and specific objectives may cause disproportionate results—echoing the inequalities revealed in this study. Furthermore, the results support the findings of Hiluano et al. (2025) and Abiera et al. (2025), who found that reading comprehension and writing proficiency were weaker than other skills among tertiary students that necessitates targeting these specific skills. Overall, the statistical evidence reinforces the literature of the uneven development of macro skills among students and the necessity for customized, context-specific in Purposive Communication to promote balanced communicative competence.

Differences in Macro Skills in Paired Programs

Table 5 shows the Tukey Critical Value is 3.66 for all paired programs. The Tukey Statistic Values are as follows: BSCE–BET (MAET) = 22.7, BSCE–BDT = 14.34, BSCE–BET (EET) = 17.41, BDT–BET (EET) = 3.07, BDT–BET (MAET) = 8.36, and BET (EET)–BET (MAET) = 5.29.

Table 5. Differences in Paired Programs

Paired Programs	Tukey Critical Value	Tukey Statistic Value	Interpretation
BSCE - BET (MAET)	3.66	22.7	Significant
BSCE - BDT	3.66	14.34	Significant
BSCE - BET(EET)	3.66	17.41	Significant
BDT - BET (EET)	3.66	3.07	Not Significant
BDT - BET (MAET)	3.66	8.36	Significant
BET (EET) - BET (MAET)	3.66	5.29	Significant

The values indicate that significant differences in macro skills were found among paired programs. The pairs BSCE–BET-(MAET), BSCE–BDT, and BSCE–BET-(EET) all resulted to high Tukey statistic values exceeding the critical value. This specifies that the macro skill levels between BSCE and the rest of the other programs differ considerably. Significant differences were also confirmed between BDT–BET-(MAET) and between BET-EET–BET-(MAET). Interestingly, BDT and BET- (EET) did not exceed the Tukey statistic value, hence, these two programs shared the most similarity in terms of macro skill performance.

The results also reveal that BSCE students consistently outperformed students from the other programs. This may be attributed to the program's robust focus on analytical tasks, problem-solving, and communicative chores imbedded into technical and design-oriented coursework, thereby, collectively improving overall macro skill development. In contrast, the BDT and BET-(EET) were confirmed to have no significant difference, suggesting comparable abilities in their macro skill proficiency. This may be linked to the similar configuration of their curricula, which both focus on practical and technical skill applications rather than rigorous written or oral communication requirements.

Overall, the significant differences across programs—except between BDT and BET-(EET)— suggest that communication competence is shaped by each program's disciplinary focus and communicative exposure and demands. This conclusion aligns with Roshid and Kankaanranta (2023) and Del Rosario (2025), who established relevance of the impact of ESP-based instruction and curriculum alignment on language proficiency outcomes. In this study, distinctions among BISCAST students show that program-specific exposure influences overall communication abilities, with technical fields prioritizing functional writing and education programs emphasizing oral and academic discourse, supporting Dalipi (2024) and Ngo (2024) on the value of holistic, practical learning.

Relationship Between Challenges and Macro Skills of Students

Table 6 illustrates the overall correlation between challenges and macro skills with an r-value of 0.692 and a p-value of 0.000. For individual challenges, understanding main ideas and inferencing showed correlations with viewing with an r-value of 0.370, writing at 0.331, speaking at 0.243, listening at 0.292, and reading at 0.139. In terms of lexical resource and vocabulary, correlations were observed with speaking with an r-value of 0.379, listening at 0.357, writing at 0.318, viewing at 0.276, and reading at 0.107. For reading strategies (identifying key words, skimming, scanning, and word forms) correlations were found with listening yielding an r-value of 0.541, speaking at 0.517, writing at 0.496, viewing at 0.449, and reading at 0.286. In terms of critical thinking, correlations included speaking with an r-value of 0.455, writing at 0.451, viewing at 0.448, listening at 0.431, and reading at 0.213. Finally, for grammatical range and accuracy, correlations were observed with viewing with an r-value of 0.542, speaking at 0.510, listening at 0.465, writing at 0.450, and reading at 0.234.

Table 6. Relationship Between Challenges and Macro Skills of Students

Challenges	Macro Skill	r-value	Interpretation	p-value	Interpretation
Understanding Main Ideas/ Inferencing	Listening	0.292	N/A	0.149	Not Significant
	Speaking	0.243	Low	< 0.001	Significant
	Reading	0.139	Very Low	< 0.001	Significant
	Viewing	0.370	Low	< 0.001	Significant
	Writing	0.331	Low	< 0.001	Significant
Lexical Resource/ Vocabulary	Listening	0.357	Low	< 0.001	Significant
	Speaking	0.379	Low	< 0.001	Significant
	Reading	0.107	Very Low	< 0.001	Significant
	Viewing	0.276	Low	0.009	Significant
	Writing	0.318	Low	0.009	Significant

Reading Strategies (Identifying Key Words/Skimming/Scanning/ Word Form)	Listening	0.541	N/A	0.171	Not Significant
	Speaking	0.517	Moderate	0.001	Significant
	Reading	0.286	Low	< 0.001	Significant
	Viewing	0.449	Moderate	< 0.001	Significant
	Writing	0.496	Moderate	< 0.001	Significant
Critical Thinking	Listening	0.431	Moderate	< 0.001	Significant
	Speaking	0.455	Moderate	< 0.001	Significant
	Reading	0.213	Low	< 0.001	Significant
	Viewing	0.448	Moderate	< 0.001	Significant
	Writing	0.451	Moderate	< 0.001	Significant
Grammatical Range and Accuracy	Listening	0.465	Moderate	< 0.001	Significant
	Speaking	0.510	N/A	0.613	Not Significant
	Reading	0.234	Low	< 0.001	Significant
	Viewing	0.542	Moderate	< 0.001	Significant
	Writing	0.450	Moderate	< 0.001	Significant
Overall		0.692	High	0.000	Significant

Note: A correlation value of 1.0 indicates a perfect correlation. Values from 0.80–0.98 show a very high correlation, 0.60–0.79 a high correlation, 0.40–0.59 a moderate correlation, and 0.20–0.39 a low correlation. Meanwhile, 0.01–0.19 reflects a very low correlation, and 0.00 denotes no correlation.

The overall correlation between communication challenges and macro skills was high and statistically significant, indicating a strong relationship between these two variables. When examined by individual challenges, varying correlation patterns occurred. Understanding main ideas and inferencing showed low but significant correlations with all macro skills except reading with very low yet significant, showing a very low disconnect of students' skills in understanding main ideas and inferencing to their reading skills. This simply means that students are not able to apply these higher- order cognitive process into their reading performance.

Lexical resource and vocabulary demonstrated that this area has a significant but generally low associations on most language skills. It contributes to listening, speaking, viewing, and writing, with correlations ranging from low to moderate, indicating that a stronger lexicon and vocabulary support comprehension and production across these modalities. However, its association to reading performance again is very low, suggesting that vocabulary alone is insufficient to account for reading success. Despite these variations in severity, all correlations are statistically significant confirming that vocabulary remains a foundational component of language proficiency, particularly for tasks that require oral production, writing, and multimodal comprehension.

In analyzing how the reading strategies (identifying key words, skimming, scanning, and use of word forms), the results indicate that these strategies significantly affect most areas, though their impact varies. It shows a moderate and significant relationship with speaking, viewing, and writing, suggesting that learners who effectively apply reading strategies are better able to comprehend and produce language in both oral and written forms. Its contribution to reading performance is low but still significant, indicating a smaller yet meaningful role in text comprehension. Interestingly, reading strategies do not significantly predict listening performance, highlighting that these skills are more contributory for tasks that involve active reading, production, or visual processing versus purely auditory comprehension.

Students' challenges in critical thinking all had significant relationship to all macro skills except reading to which it has a low association. This higher-order cognitive ability of students shows a moderate positive impact on listening, speaking, viewing, and writing, meaning learners with stronger critical thinking skills can analyze information, make inferences, and present ideas more coherently. In contrast, its relationship with reading is again low, indicating that reading comprehension relies more on other factors.

Lastly, grammatical range and accuracy, the correlations were significant and exhibited moderate associations on most language skills. Specifically, it contributes moderately to listening, reading, viewing, and writing performance, implying that learners with a stronger grasp of grammar are better able to understand and produce language accurately. However, its effect on speaking is not statistically significant, suggesting that grammar alone may not reliably predict oral performance in this sample. Furthermore, this suggests that grammatical competence is a vital component of language proficiency, particularly for receptive and written tasks, but its role in spoken communication may depend on additional factors such as fluency or vocabulary.

In conclusion, the results show that students who have considerable challenges with communication tasks are also likely to possess inferior proficiency in macro skills, signifying an interdependent association between communicative competence and language aptitude. The strong association between lexical resource, vocabulary, and proficiencies in speaking and listening indicates that limited vocabulary may hinder students' ability to express and comprehend ideas spontaneously. The weak correlations of understanding main ideas and inferencing and reading strategies with reading imply that students may not be effectively applying higher-order comprehension during reading tasks.

Lastly, the consistent finding that reading shows the weakest relationship with other language challenges suggests that students' reading abilities may develop in isolation from other macro skills, possibly due to inadequate and ineffective application of reading and comprehension strategies.

The results align with previous findings on grammar, coherence, and vocabulary (Yuh & Kaewurai, 2021; Magaba, 2023). Inferencing and understanding main ideas were significantly associated with viewing and writing, supporting Barrot (2016) and Alghammas (2020) on integrated, task-based instruction. Vocabulary correlated most with speaking and listening, echoing Labicane (2021) and Mapalad & Bautista (2022) on its role in oral fluency and anxiety. Reading strategies were more linked to writing and viewing, reinforcing Ngo et al. (2024) on the cross-modal relevance of reading subskills.

Extent of Influence of Challenges on the Macro Skills of Students

Table 7 presents that the overall correlation coefficient was r = 0.692, indicating a strong and statistically significant relationship, with 47.9% of the variance in macro skill performance explained by the identified challenges. For understanding main ideas and inferencing, reading yielded an r^2-value of 0.019, listening at 0.085, speaking at 0.059, viewing at 0.137, and writing at 0.110. For lexical resource and vocabulary, the corresponding r^2-value for listening was at 0.127, speaking at 0.143, reading at 0.011, viewing at 0.076, and writing at 0.101. With reading strategies, the coefficients showed listening with an r^2-value of 0.292, speaking at 0.268, viewing at 0.202, writing at 0.246, and reading at 0.082. For critical thinking, listening yielded an r^2-value of 0.186, speaking at 0.207, viewing at 0.200, writing at 0.203, and reading at 0.045. Lastly, grammatical range and accuracy yielded r^2-value coefficients for speaking at 0.260, listening at 0.216, viewing at 0.294, writing at 0.202, and reading at 0.055.

Table 7. Extent of Influence of Challenges in the Macro Skills of Students

Challenges	Macro Skill	r-value	r^2-value	Interpretation
Understanding Main Ideas/Inferencing	Listening	0.292	0.085	Low
	Speaking	0.243	0.059	Low
	Reading	0.139	0.019	Very Low
	Viewing	0.370	0.137	Low
	Writing	0.331	0.110	Low
Lexical Resource/Vocabulary	Listening	0.357	0.127	Low
	Speaking	0.379	0.143	Low
	Reading	0.107	0.011	Very Low
	Viewing	0.276	0.076	Low
	Writing	0.318	0.101	Low
Reading Strategies (Identifying Key Words/ Skimming/ Scanning/Word Forms)	Listening	0.541	0.292	Moderate
	Speaking	0.517	0.268	Moderate
	Reading	0.286	0.082	Low
	Viewing	0.449	0.202	Moderate
	Writing	0.496	0.246	Moderate
Critical Thinking	Listening	0.431	0.186	Moderate
	Speaking	0.455	0.207	Moderate
	Reading	0.213	0.045	Very Low
	Viewing	0.448	0.200	Moderate
	Writing	0.451	0.203	Moderate
Grammatical Range and Accuracy	Listening	0.465	0.216	Moderate
	Speaking	0.510	0.260	Moderate
	Reading	0.234	0.055	Low
	Viewing	0.542	0.294	Moderate
	Writing	0.450	0.202	Moderate
Overall		0.692	0.479	Strong Influence

Note: The table shows the extent of influence based on correlation ranges. A very strong influence falls between 0.82 and 1.00, while a strong influence ranges from 0.41 to 0.81. A moderate influence is observed between 0.17 and 0.48, a low influence between 0.05 and 0.16, and a very low influence from 0.00 to 0.04.

Among the specific challenges, students' understanding main ideas and inferencing showed low influence on all macro skills except reading on an even very low influence. This means that while they somehow contribute to comprehension and production, the impact remains very limited. Notably, students' current skills in these areas had a very low influence on reading suggesting that inferencing skills alone do not substantially improve text comprehension.

In terms of students' challenges in lexical resource and vocabulary, the results again revealed to have low influence on all macro skills except a very low influence on reading. These results signify that although lexical resource and vocabulary is a fundamental component of language proficiency, its role in shaping students' macro skills—particularly in reading—appears to be very limited within the context of this study. Furthermore, this implies that additional linguistic or cognitive factors may have played a more substantial role in influencing students' macro skill development.

In terms of reading strategies, the findings illustrate to have a moderate influence on most skills and again, showing a low influence on reading skills. These results meant that students' challenges in this area impact a wide range of communication skills, suggesting that learners benefit noticeably from strategic processing skills when performing tasks related to understanding spoken texts (listening), expressing ideas (speaking), interpreting visuals (viewing), and composing written outputs (writing). Strangely, their effect on reading

itself is low, indicating there is a disconnect between students' awareness of effective reading strategies and reading skills and students are not able to utilize them in pulling off reading tasks.

Students' challenges in critical thinking all had moderate influences on all macro skills except reading to which it has a low influence on. These suggest that this higher-order cognitive skill plays a moderately considerable part in overall language competence, meaning students are better able to make sense, analyze, and produce language across different modes. In contrast, its low effect on students' reading performance imply that students may not be consistently applying critical thinking to reading activities and lacks emphasis on deeper engagement with texts and maybe overly focused on surface- level comprehension

Finally, grammatical range and accuracy were shown to have moderate influences on all macro skills except on reading at low influence. This means that grammatical skills of students remain a key component of language competence particularly in effectively interpreting and conveying information across different modes of communication. However, its weaker link with receptive skills like reading indicates that comprehension may rely more on meaning construction than on grammatical precision.

These results regarding influence align with previous studies stressing the inconsistent development of macro skills and the complex nature of language acquisition. The strong overall correlation between communication challenges and macro skill performance supports the findings of Paz (2021), who argued that a single course like Purposive Communication is insufficient to ensure comprehensive skill mastery. The minimal influence of inferencing and vocabulary challenges echoes Alma et al. (2024) and Hiluano et al. (2025), who both observed persistent weaknesses in reading and writing, particularly in comprehension and technical expression. Meanwhile, the moderate influence of reading strategies and critical thinking reflects Barrot's (2016) and Singca's (2024) emphasis on employing higher-order thinking and task-based strategies to strengthen language. The findings on grammatical range and accuracy correspond with Baybay (2022) and Ahmed (2024), who highlighted the need for customized interventions in grammar and communicative practice to boost writing and speaking abilities of learners. Collectively, these underpin the argument of Mapalad and Bautista (2022) and Arias-Contreras and Moore (2022) that contextualized, skill-specific, and experiential activities are crucial to address the variety of linguistic difficulties and achieve efficient macro skill proficiency.

Conclusions

1. Based on the findings, students demonstrated moderately adequate vocabulary and grammatical competence but they continue to struggle with higher-order cognitive skills, in particular understanding main ideas, making inferences, and critical thinking. These persistent weaknesses suggest that linguistic proficiency alone is insufficient to ensure effective communication skills, especially with comprehension. The considerable performance gaps, especially in reading, reveal uneven skill development across programs. Furthermore, this highlights that learners remain at a surface level of understanding, lacking the analytical and evaluative abilities required for deeper interpretation.
2. Among the five macro skills, viewing emerged as students' strongest skill, implying the effectiveness of multimodal learning methods. Listening, in contrast, was the weakest skill, suggesting remarkable difficulties in auditory reception and comprehension. Speaking, reading, and writing also remained at developing levels, reflecting partial proficiency, warranting need for further enhancement. The variability in performance across the macro skills also suggests unequal macro skill developments, with some learners performing considerably better than others. Overall, the results affirm that English language acquisition is multidimensional and interdependent, requiring comprehensive and student-centered approaches.
3. The results of the study revealed significant differences across different academic programs and between paired macro skills of

students. While some skills are more developed, others need more instructional support, and program-specific factors such as curriculum design, teaching strategies, entry standards, language exposure, and assessment practices significantly influence proficiency levels. Programs with more interactive, English-intensive, and task-based instruction tend to foster stronger communicative skills, whereas content-heavy or lecture-driven curricula offer fewer opportunities for authentic language use. Overall, the results uphold that communication skills do not develop homogeneously but depend on pedagogical context and learner engagement.

4. Difficulties in understanding main ideas and inferencing were mostly linked to viewing and writing, implying that these higher-order skills are better activated in visual and written contexts than in auditory or textual comprehension. Vocabulary and lexical resources were strongly tied to speaking and listening, highlighting the role of word knowledge in oral fluency and comprehension. Meanwhile, reading strategies correlated more with other skills than with reading itself, suggesting that students may apply these subskills inconsistently across modalities. Critical thinking and grammatical range and accuracy also showed moderate relationships with most macro skills, but remained weakly associated with reading, emphasizing that comprehension may rely more on meaning construction than form. These findings imply that reading is the least integrated skill in students' overall communication competence.
5. While comprehension skills such as understanding main ideas and inferencing showed limited influence, this implies that understanding meaning alone does not ensure overall proficiency without the support of contextual and strategic application. Conversely, reading strategies and critical thinking demonstrated moderate and consistent influence across skills, highlighting their central role in enhancing comprehension, analysis, and expression. Grammar showed a stronger relationship with productive skills like speaking and writing, reinforcing its importance in accurate and coherent language output, while its weaker link with receptive skills like reading suggested that comprehension relies more on meaning construction than grammatical precision. Reading, again, emerged as the least influenced skill, indicating a substantial gap between strategy use and actual comprehension. Overall, these findings suggest that communicative competence is multidimensional and requires a balance of linguistic, cognitive, and strategic components.

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