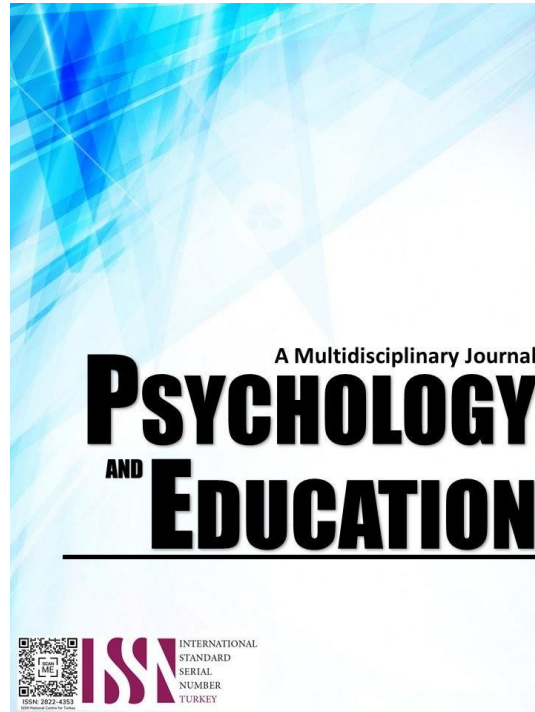


EXPLORING THE MULTIFACETED CHALLENGES OF LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN A PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION IN GUMACA, QUEZON



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Exploring the Multifaceted Challenges of Learning English as a Second Language in a Private Educational Institution in Gumaca, Quezon

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to explore the multifaceted challenges faced by junior high school students in learning English as a second language in a private educational institution. The respondents' profiles were examined as well as the challenges they encountered in learning English in terms of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, sentence structure, and the four macro skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. To reach the researchers' aim, a survey was conducted among 80 students using a survey questionnaire made by the researcher which was formatted using the Likert Scale. The findings revealed that students were greatly challenged with vocabulary acquisition and least challenged with pronunciation. There were no significant differences in challenges based on sex, age, and the way of utilizing the English language at home, but grade level and socioeconomic background did influence reported challenges. The study recommends needs assessments, professional development for teachers, and creating an English-rich environment at home.

Keywords: *english as a second language, linguistic domains, macro skills, multifaceted challenges*

Introduction

Article XIV Section 7 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution emphasizes the importance of quality education and designates both Filipino and English as official languages for communication and instruction. However, learning English can be challenging for Filipino students, as it is not their native language. This leads to challenges among learners. According to Alharbi (2021), the term 'struggling language learner' refers to students attempting, but failing, to master the English language in an academic setting. According to Olan (2021), proficiency in English is crucial for global communication, academic success, and socioeconomic advancement. This proficiency significantly impacts personal and professional development in the Philippines, offering wider educational and employment opportunities and facilitating cross-cultural interactions. Educational institutions, many of which use English as the medium of instruction, play a vital role in developing linguistic competence. They face different challenges in providing English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (RA 10533) reformed the educational system, covering kindergarten through high school, with English designated as the primary medium of instruction for specific subjects, except for Filipino language subjects, which are taught in Filipino.

The researcher observed that the junior high school students at Eastern Quezon College Inc. face complex challenges in learning English as a Second Language (ESL). These challenges extend beyond basic language acquisition and are influenced by varying levels of prior exposure and instruction in English. The challenges encompass grammar, vocabulary acquisition, spelling, pronunciation, sentence structure, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They particularly struggle with constructing grammatically correct sentences, accurate pronunciation, limited vocabulary, applying English grammar rules, and correct spelling. It conforms to the findings of the study of Moses and Mohamad (2019). The study recommends targeted strategies like scaffolding for sentence construction, audio-visual aids for pronunciation, and vocabulary-building activities. It emphasizes the interconnected nature of these challenges and advocates for a holistic approach for maximum effectiveness. Additionally, some students struggle with fluency in expressing themselves and comprehending complex English texts, potentially impacting academic performance. Writing in English is challenging for many, requiring proficiency in multiple areas. Some students also face difficulties in speaking confidently and comprehending while listening to spoken English at a natural pace, affecting their ability to participate in discussions and follow instructions. Johnson, Khan, and Martinez (2021) identify challenges in ESL learning specifically in the four macro skills. Listening difficulties include processing spoken language and contextual comprehension, necessitating diverse exposure and interactive exercises. Speaking proficiency is impeded by pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm, which can be addressed through activities like discussions, role-playing, and drills, along with feedback and self-assessment. Reading challenges encompass vocabulary, syntax, and cultural references, with recommended strategies like skimming, scanning, inferencing, and extensive reading. Writing difficulties involve grammar, coherence, and organization, which can be improved through structured exercises, feedback, and revision. The study underscores the interdependence of these language skills and promotes a learner-centered approach. Parungao (2023) noted that despite the Philippines being ranked 20th out of 113 countries and second among 23 Asian nations in English proficiency, most Filipino students still struggle with the language. There is a common belief that students from private institutions are highly proficient in English, but the researcher observed that this is not always the case.

The abovementioned observations prompted the researcher to thoroughly investigate the multifaceted challenges faced by learners in acquiring English as a second language at Eastern Quezon College Inc. It sought to shed light on these challenges to provide valuable insights for targeted interventions and strategies to enhance the quality of ESL education. The investigation focused on various linguistic domains, including sentence structure, pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, grammatical comprehension, spelling

conventions, written and spoken fluency, as well as reading and listening comprehension proficiency. Additionally, the study intended to assess if there were notable differences in perceived challenges based on learner profiles.

This study provided a complex and novel body of knowledge that transcended the realm of mere language acquisition. Each aspect of linguistic proficiency emerged as a critical juncture in the educational process. Furthermore, as this study delved into the multifaceted challenges of learning English, it sought to determine whether distinct profiles resulted in different perceptions of these challenges.

Research Questions

This study identified the challenges encountered by the junior high school students of Eastern Quezon College Inc. in learning the English language as a second language. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1. sex;
 - 1.2. age;
 - 1.3. grade level;
 - 1.4. socioeconomic status; and
 - 1.5. way of practicing utilizing the English language at home?
2. What are the challenges faced by students in learning English as a second language in terms of:
 - 2.1. grammar;
 - 2.2. vocabulary acquisition;
 - 2.3. spelling;
 - 2.4. pronunciation;
 - 2.5. sentence structure;
 - 2.6. listening;
 - 2.7. speaking;
 - 2.8. reading; and
 - 2.9. writing?
3. Is there any significant difference in the perceived challenges of learning English as a second language when respondents are grouped according to profile?

Methodology

Research Design

The study used the descriptive method of research to explore the multifaceted challenges of learning English as a second language in terms of the five linguistics domains and four macro skills. Descriptive research is a conclusive quantitative research method that is used to test specific hypotheses and describe characteristics or functions (Fluet, 2021). Descriptive research aims to accurately and systematically describe a population, situation, or phenomenon (McCombes, 2019).

The descriptive research method is essential for understanding and addressing the diverse challenges faced by ESL learners across multiple linguistic domains and macro skills. By gaining crucial insights into these prevalent challenges, the researcher was able to recommend and/or tailor interventions to meet the specific needs of ESL learners.

Respondents

The researcher utilized proportionate random sampling to determine the respondents in the present study. The researcher selected eighty (80) junior high school students who were officially enrolled at Eastern Quezon College Inc. for the academic year 2023-2024. Proportionate random sampling, also known as stratified random sampling, was a probability sampling technique in which the population was first divided into smaller, more homogeneous subgroups called strata. Then, a random sample was drawn from each stratum in proportion to its size in the population. This ensured that the sample was representative of the entire population (Hayes, 2023).

Instrument

The researcher gathered the data by distributing survey questionnaires to the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part I included the profile of the respondents in terms of their age and sex. Part II consisted of the challenges that the Grade 10 students of Eastern Quezon College Inc. for the school year 2023-2024 encountered in terms of the five linguistics domains (grammar, vocabulary, spelling, sentence structure, and pronunciation) and four macro skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). This part of the questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale: 1 – Strong Disagree (SD), 2 – Disagree (D), 3 – Moderately Agree (MD), 4 – Agree (A), and 5 – Strongly Agree (SA). The questionnaire was validated by the experts in the field of research.

To test the internal consistency of the questionnaire, the researcher conducted a pilot testing using Cronbach's Alpha. A pilot testing was conducted at Western Tayabas High School situated at Barangay Maaliw Pitogo, Quezon – a private educational institution with

a total of 12 respondents. The Cronbach's alpha test was usually applied to test the consistency and stability of the questionnaires which measure latent variables. Although Cronbach's alpha test may be applied in situations other than questionnaire development or validation, there is limited literature on its application in such scenarios (Bujang, Omar, and Baharum, 2018). A Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 and above was considered an acceptable level of reliability (Taber, 2018). After conducting a pilot testing it resulted in 0.96 internal consistency which was verbally interpreted as excellent.

Procedure

Prior to the data gathering, the researcher sought approval from the school administration. After obtaining approval, the researcher coordinated with the junior high school advisers to determine an appropriate date and time for the survey distribution. Following that, the researcher prepared copies of a well-designed and comprehensible survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was tailored to the student's age group and grade level. In addition, the researcher prepared a consent form outlining the purpose of the research, data collection methods, and the students' right to withdraw at any time. The researcher personally distributed the survey questionnaire to the junior high school students in their classrooms on the specified date and time. The researcher gave a brief explanation of the research's purpose and provided assistance in completing the survey, as well as answering any questions the students had. After the students had finished providing their responses, the researcher proceeded to collect the completed survey questionnaires. The collected data was then thoroughly processed and analyzed. The researcher collected the questionnaires to tally the scores and enter the data into Microsoft Excel. This step was essential for generating descriptive statistics and testing the hypothesis. The researcher used the specified statistical treatment to ensure a thorough and accurate analysis of the collected data. The researcher compiled, organized, and communicated the findings to the school administration and junior high school advisers. This provided crucial insights into student needs, aiding informed decisions on curriculum and support.

Data Analysis

In this study, the researcher used statistical measures to treat the collected data. All the data was carefully read and examined for analysis. They were tallied and entered into a master list on the data collection sheet. The data was gathered through the questionnaires and was organized and interpreted using percentage, mean, and ranking methods.

Frequency and percentage were used to interpret the profile of the respondents of this study.

To test the significant difference of three or more means, the researcher used the Kruskal-Wallis for a non-parametric test.

Results and Discussion

This section deals with the analysis and interpretation of the data. All the data gathered were presented here in tabulated form with corresponding interpretations. The first part described the profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, grade level, socioeconomic status, and ways of utilizing the English language at home. The second part is the multifaceted challenges of learning English as a second language in a private educational institution.

Table 1. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents According to Sex*

<i>Sex</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Male	37	46	2
Female	43	54	1
Total	80	100	

The data presented in Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents according to sex. The results indicate that 46% or 37 of the respondents are male, while 54% or 43 are female. This suggests that there is a majority of female student respondents in the sample.

The data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) corroborates the findings from the sample. According to the PSA's 2024 report on high school enrollment in the Philippines, female students outnumber male students in junior high school. The most recent PSA data shows that there are 5,789,747 Junior High School students in the Philippines, with females accounting for 55.6% of the total enrollment and males accounting for 44.4%.

Regarding the locale of Gumaca, Quezon, this area may have its own unique factors that contribute to the gender disparity in high school enrollment. Firstly, the socioeconomic profile of Gumaca, Quezon is a rural municipality, and the socioeconomic status of families in the area may play a role in educational decisions. Families with limited resources may prioritize the education of female children, as they may be seen as more likely to contribute to the household income or provide care for family members.

Secondly, cultural norms and traditions in rural communities like Gumaca, Quezon may have more entrenched cultural norms and traditions that favor the education of female students over male students. This could be due to perceptions of gender roles or the perceived value of education for different genders.

The higher proportion of female students in both the sample and the national data, as well as the potential local factors in Gumaca,

Quezon, suggest that there may be underlying socioeconomic, cultural, and educational factors contributing to the gender disparity in high school enrollment. Policymakers and educators should consider these implications when developing strategies to promote equitable access and participation in education for all students, regardless of gender.

Some potential interventions may include conducting further research to understand the specific drivers of the gender disparity in Gumaca, Quezon and similar rural areas. Additionally, implementing targeted programs and policies to improve access to education for male students, such as scholarships, mentorship programs, or outreach initiatives, can be beneficial. Addressing cultural and social norms that may disadvantage male students through community-based awareness campaigns and educational initiatives is also crucial. Lastly, investing in the expansion and improvement of educational infrastructure and resources to ensure equal opportunities for both male and female students is essential.

By addressing the underlying factors and implementing evidence-based solutions, policymakers and educators can work towards achieving greater gender equity in high school enrollment and education outcomes in the Philippines, including in the Gumaca, Quezon area.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents According to Age

<i>Age</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>	<i>Rank</i>
11 years old	0	0	5
12-13 years old	30	38	2
14-15 years old	43	54	1
16-17 years old	7	9	3
18-19 years old	0	0	5
20 and above years old	0	0	5
Total	80	100	

Table 2 presents the frequency and percentage distribution according to age. Among student respondents, those aged 14-15 years old gained the highest frequency and percentage distribution with a total of 43 student respondents which constitutes 54% of the respondents. Conversely, respondents aged 16-17 years old show the lowest rankings. Moreover, there are no respondents whose ages are 11, 18-19, and 20 and above years old.

According to UNICEF (2022), the prevalence of 14-15-year-old students in high schools aligns with the typical age range for students in secondary. This demographic dominance can be attributed to several key factors. Firstly, the grade level structure of the Philippine education system, which follows a 12-year basic education program, sees high school typically spanning four years. Consequently, students aged 14-15 often find themselves in grades 9 or 10, leading to a notable concentration of individuals within this age bracket in high schools. Secondly, the age at which students enter high school, typically at 14 or 15 years old, following the completion of elementary education, contributes significantly to this trend. This age of entry into high school further reinforces the prevalence of 14-15-year-olds within the student population. Lastly, broader demographic patterns, including the age distribution of the general population in the Philippines, such as birth rates and population growth, may also play a role in shaping the majority representation of students within this age group in high schools. Together, these factors underscore the significance of the 14-15 age range within the high school demographic landscape.

The predominance of 14-15-year-old students in the sample, aligning with national trends, suggests that the education system in Gumaca, Quezon is effectively serving the typical age range for secondary education. However, the absence of respondents in the older age groups (16-17, 18-19, and 20 and above) may indicate potential challenges or barriers faced by these students in accessing or completing high school education.

To address this, policymakers and educators in Gumaca, Quezon should consider investigating the reasons for the low representation of older students, such as dropout rates, barriers to enrollment, or alternative educational pathways. Implementing targeted interventions to support older students in completing their high school education, such as flexible scheduling, catch-up programs, or counseling services, is essential. Additionally, analyzing the availability and accessibility of high schools in the Gumaca, Quezon area will help ensure that all students, regardless of age, have equal opportunities to access secondary education. Collaborating with community stakeholders to understand the local demographic trends and their impact on high school enrollment patterns is crucial. Developing strategies to promote and maintain high retention rates, particularly for older students, will ensure a more balanced age distribution in the high school student population.

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents According to Grade Level

<i>Grade Level</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Grade 7	20	25	2.5
Grade 8	20	25	2.5
Grade 9	20	25	2.5
Grade 10	20	25	2.5
Total	80	100	

Table 3 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to grade level. The student respondents were evenly distributed, with each grade level comprising 20 respondents.

Spiralytics (2024) examined the enrollment trends in the Philippines which had revealed a consistent distribution of students across grades 7-10, indicating a stable enrollment pattern within junior high school levels. This balance in enrollment was attributed to various factors, including education reform initiatives aimed at enhancing access to and the quality of education in these grades. The implementation of the K-12 Basic Education Program, which extended the basic education cycle and included two additional years of senior high school, had likely contributed to a more equitable distribution of students across these grade levels. This balance had implications for resource allocation and class sizes, as schools had to allocate resources effectively to accommodate relatively equal numbers of students across grade levels. Furthermore, it underscored the importance of cohesive curriculum design and implementation to address the diverse learning needs of students at different stages of their junior high school education. Transition programs and support mechanisms were also crucial to assisting students in navigating academic and social changes as they progressed through grades 7-10, facilitating smooth transitions and uninterrupted learning experiences.

The even distribution of student respondents across the four grade levels at Eastern Quezon College Inc. suggests that the school has successfully implemented strategies to maintain a balanced enrollment pattern in its junior high school program. This balanced enrollment has several positive implications for the institution and its students. It allows for efficient resource allocation, ensuring equitable access to educational resources such as teaching staff, classroom spaces, and learning materials. The optimal class sizes resulting from balanced enrollment promote effective teaching and learning, allowing for more personalized attention and support for each student. Additionally, the even distribution of students facilitates the development and implementation of a coherent curriculum that addresses the evolving learning needs of students as they progress through the junior high school program. The school's ability to maintain a balanced enrollment also suggests the presence of effective transition programs and support mechanisms that help students navigate the academic and social changes as they move from one grade level to the next. Finally, the school's responsiveness to the K-12 Basic Education Program and its ability to maintain a balanced enrollment pattern indicate its adaptability to educational reforms and its commitment to providing quality education to its students.

Table 4. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents According to Socio-Economic Status*

<i>Grade Level</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Less than PHP 100,000	44	55	1
PHP 100,001-300,000	16	20	2
PHP 300,001-PHP 500,000	5	6	5
PHP 500,001-PHP 1,000,000	8	10	3
Above 1,000,000	7	9	4
Others	0	0	6
Total	80	100	

Table 4 shows that 44 out of 80 respondents (55%) fall within the lowest income bracket (less than PHP 100,000). Among student respondents, the lowest frequency was observed in those with a family annual income ranging from PHP 300,001 to PHP 500,000, constituting only 5 (6%) of the total.

According to Bai (2023), economic disparity in the Philippines is well documented, with a significant portion of families earning less than PHP 100,000 per year. This economic inequality has far-reaching consequences, particularly for access to education. Socioeconomic factors have a significant impact on educational opportunities, as lower-income families frequently face greater challenges in meeting educational expenses. For economically disadvantaged families, the cost of education, including tuition, transportation, and learning materials, can be prohibitively expensive. As a result, economic disparities exacerbate inequalities in educational access, limiting opportunities for people with lower incomes and perpetuating cycles of poverty. Addressing socioeconomic barriers to education is critical for promoting equal opportunity and social mobility in the Philippines.

Socioeconomic barriers to education are evident at Eastern Quezon College Inc., where a high proportion of students come from low-income families, suggesting that economic factors significantly shape educational access and opportunities. The cost of education, including tuition, transportation, and learning materials, can be prohibitively expensive for these families, limiting their ability to fully participate in the educational process. This economic disparity reflects the broader issue of inequality in educational opportunities in the Philippines, where students from lower-income families face additional challenges in accessing quality education, perpetuating cycles of poverty and social immobility. As a private and non-sectarian institution, Eastern Quezon College Inc. has the opportunity to address these socioeconomic barriers by implementing robust financial assistance programs such as scholarships, subsidies, or flexible payment options to ensure that students from low-income families have equal access to quality education. Beyond financial assistance, the school should explore strategies to provide comprehensive support services, including academic tutoring, counseling, and mentorship programs, to help economically disadvantaged students overcome non-financial challenges and succeed in their educational pursuits. Additionally, Eastern Quezon College Inc. can collaborate with local government agencies, non-profit organizations, and community groups to develop and implement targeted initiatives that address the specific needs of low-income students and their families, further addressing economic inequality in education.

Table 5. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents According to Ways of Utilizing the English Language at Home*

Grade Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
Reading English Books	31	39	2
Watching English movies/TV Shows	37	46	1
Speaking with family members in English	5	6	4
We do not use the English language at home	6	8	3
Others	1	1	5
Total	80	100	

Table 5 illustrates that 46% or 37 of the respondents reported watching English movies/TV shows as the most frequent way to practice using English at home. Conversely, speaking English with family members is the least frequent method, with only 6% or five respondents indicating this activity. Additionally, 1% or one of the student respondents has other ways of utilizing the English language at home, specifically, playing online games.

Mahbub (2023) underscored the increasing trend of media consumption among students, particularly in the form of watching movies and TV shows. Factors such as technological advancements, access to streaming platforms, and the popularity of English-language content contribute to the preference for watching English movies/TV shows at home. English movies/TV shows often provide entertainment value and relaxation, making them an appealing choice for leisure activities. The enjoyment derived from watching engaging narratives, following favorite actors, and immersing oneself in different genres can motivate students to choose this form of media consumption over other English language-related activities.

Leveraging media consumption for language learning, the high percentage of students who watch English movies and TV shows presents an opportunity for Eastern Quezon College Inc. to integrate this preference into the school's language learning strategies. The institution could incorporate film and television analysis, discussions, and language-focused activities into the curriculum, allowing students to actively engage with the English language through their preferred media. To address the low frequency of speaking English with family members, the school should consider initiatives to promote English use in the home environment, such as engaging parents and families in language-learning workshops, encouraging students to practice English with their family members, and implementing family-focused English language activities and events. While watching English movies and TV shows is popular, the school should also provide diverse language-learning opportunities, including more reading, writing, and conversational activities in the curriculum, to ensure well-rounded language development. Given the financial constraints faced by many students, the school should explore ways to provide equitable access to language-learning resources and technology, such as offering subsidized access to streaming platforms or providing language-learning materials and devices to students from low-income families. Collaboration with local organizations, community centers, and libraries can create shared spaces and resources for language learning and practice, including hosting language exchange programs, conversation clubs, or movie screenings that bring together students and the broader community. By understanding the students' language-learning preferences and patterns, as well as the socioeconomic factors impacting their educational experiences, Eastern Quezon College Inc. can develop a comprehensive and inclusive approach to promoting English language proficiency among its students. This holistic approach, combining curriculum integration, family engagement, and community partnerships, can help address the diverse needs of students and ultimately contribute to their academic and personal success.

Table 6. *Respondents' Assessment of the Challenges of Learning English as a Second Language in Terms of Grammar*

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
<i>In learning English I am challenged with/by...</i>			
applying English grammar rules (e.g. subject-verb agreement and pronoun-antecedent agreement).	3.74	Agree	2.5
differentiating between similar and related grammatical forms in English (e.g. when to use the past perfect tense and the past simple tense).	3.54	Agree	5
determining when and how to use definite (the) and indefinite (a, an) articles correctly.	3.63	Agree	4
mastering exceptions and irregularities in English grammar (e.g. see-saw-seen).	3.74	Agree	2.5
Using correct grammar in more complex sentences or writing.	3.83	Agree	1
Grand Mean	3.69	Agree	

Legend: "Strongly Disagree (1.0-1.80)", "Disagree (1.81-2.60)", "Moderately Agree (2.61-3.40)", "Agree (3.41-4.20)", "Strongly Agree (4.21-5.0)"

Table 6 illustrates the challenges of learning English as a second language in terms of grammar. Indicator number 5 obtained the highest mean, which is 3.83, corresponding to a verbal interpretation of "Agree". This suggests that the majority of the student respondents find it challenging to use correct grammar in more complex sentences or writing. Conversely, indicator number 2 obtained the lowest mean, which is 3.54 which is verbally interpreted as "Agree". This implies that they are least challenged in differentiating between similar and related grammatical forms in English (e.g., knowing when to use the past perfect tense versus the past simple tense). It also revealed that the grand mean is 3.57 which is verbally interpreted as "agree". This implies that junior high school students are challenged in learning English as a second language in terms of grammar.

The findings from the data suggest that junior high school students face significant challenges in learning English grammar, particularly in the areas of constructing grammatically accurate and complex sentences.

The high mean score for Indicator 5 indicates that students struggle with using correct grammar in more complex sentences or writing. This aligns with the findings of Imri (2017), who noted that many ESL learners have difficulty constructing grammatically accurate and complex sentences, especially when it comes to using advanced grammar structures, such as conditional sentences, relative clauses, or modal verbs.

The relatively lower mean score for Indicator 2 suggests that students are less challenged in differentiating between similar and related grammatical forms in English, such as the past perfect tense and the past simple tense. This could be due to the fact that these basic grammatical concepts may be more straightforward for the students to grasp, compared to the more complex grammar structures.

The grand mean of 3.57 indicates that junior high school students face significant overall challenges in learning English grammar as a second language. This is consistent with the findings of Jaelani and Zabidi (2020), who attributed these challenges to a variety of factors, including the students' developmental stage, linguistic differences, and the instructional methods employed in the classroom.

The findings from this analysis have important implications for the teaching and learning of English as a second language in junior high schools. Educators should focus on developing effective strategies and instructional methods to help students overcome specific challenges in learning English grammar, particularly in constructing grammatically accurate and complex sentences. This may involve providing targeted instruction and practice in advanced grammar structures, such as conditional sentences, relative clauses, and modal verbs. Additionally, implementing teaching methods that address the linguistic differences between English and the student's native languages and adapting instructional approaches to better suit the developmental stage and learning needs of junior high school students are essential.

Table 7. Respondents' Assessment of the Challenges of Learning English as a Second Language in Terms of Vocabulary

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
<i>In learning English I am challenged with/by...</i>			
learning and retaining new English words.	4.19	Agree	1
using a diverse range of vocabulary in my English conversations or writing.	3.73	Agree	2
remembering and using idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs in English (e.g. barking up the wrong tree).	3.54	Agree	5
learning and applying synonyms and antonyms in English.	3.71	Agree	3
understanding and utilizing specialized vocabulary related to specific fields or topics in English (e.g. biotechnology and genetic engineering).	3.64	Agree	4
Grand Mean	3.76	Agree	

Legend: "Strongly Disagree (1.0-1.80)", "Disagree (1.81-2.60)", "Moderately Agree (2.61-3.40)", "Agree (3.41-4.20)", "Strongly Agree (4.21-5.0)"

Table 7 presents the challenges encountered in acquiring English as a second language, particularly in terms of vocabulary acquisition. The first indicator garnered the highest mean of 4.19, indicative of a widespread sentiment of "Agree" among student respondents. This indicates a prevailing challenge in learning and retaining new English words. In contrast, the third indicator attained the lowest mean of 3.54, corresponding to a verbal interpretation of "Agree." This suggests that students perceive relatively least challenging remembering and using idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs in English (e.g. barking up the wrong tree). It has a grand mean of 3.76 which is verbally interpreted as "Agree". This alludes that junior high school students in a private educational institution are challenged in learning English specifically in the domain of vocabulary acquisition.

The findings from the data suggest that junior high school students face significant challenges in acquiring English vocabulary, particularly in learning and retaining new words.

The high mean score for the first indicator indicates that students struggle the most with learning and retaining new English words. This aligns with the claims of Surmanov et al. (2020), who states that vocabulary acquisition is a critical aspect of language learning, but factors such as limited exposure to English outside the classroom, instructional methods that may not adequately address vocabulary development, and individual learner characteristics can all impact students' ability to acquire and retain new vocabulary.

The relatively lower mean score for the third indicator suggests that students perceive remembering and using idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs in English as the relatively least challenging aspect. This could be due to the fact that these types of language expressions may be more context-dependent and require a deeper understanding of the language, which can be more challenging for students to develop.

The grand mean of 3.76 indicates that junior high school students in a private educational institution face significant overall challenges in learning English vocabulary. This corroborates the claims of Rosyada-As and Apoko (2023), who state that students struggle to grasp the meaning of new words, particularly those related to abstract concepts or lacking a direct translation in their native language, and that difficulties with pronunciation and spelling hinder their ability to recognize and use words correctly.

The findings of this study may have significant implications for teaching and learning English vocabulary in junior high schools. Educators may need to develop effective strategies and instructional methods to assist students in overcoming specific difficulties in learning and remembering new vocabulary. This could include increasing exposure to English vocabulary both inside and outside of the classroom to improve familiarity and retention, as well as implementing teaching methods that address difficulties with

understanding meaning, pronunciation, and spelling, such as visual aids, interactive activities, and contextual learning. It may also be beneficial to place a greater emphasis on idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs, which students perceive as less challenging. Adopting a comprehensive and diverse approach to vocabulary instruction to accommodate different learning styles, as well as considering the impact of student motivation and interest, may be critical for improving students' ability to acquire and retain new words.

Table 8. Respondents' Assessment on the Challenges of Learning English as a Second Language in Terms of Spelling

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
<i>In learning English I am challenged with/by...</i>			
remembering correct English spellings, including irregular words (e.g. in the word "receive" it is challenging to remember that it has "ei" instead of "ie").	3.81	Agree	1
applying spelling rules in English (e.g. knowing when to double the final consonant before adding a suffix, as in "running" or "stopped").	3.61	Agree	2
homophones or words that sound the same but have different spelling (e.g. there, their, and they're).	3.49	Agree	5
silent letters and unique spelling patterns in English (e.g. the "k" in the word "knock").	3.58	Agree	3
spelling words in which the pronunciation differs significantly from its spelling (e.g. bourgeoisie).	3.53	Agree	4
Grand Mean	3.60	Agree	

Legend: "Strongly Disagree (1.0-1.80)", "Disagree (1.81-2.60)", "Moderately Agree (2.61-3.40)", "Agree (3.41-4.20)", "Strongly Agree (4.21-5.0)"

Table 8 depicts the challenges encountered in learning English as a second language with regard to spelling. Indicator number 1 attained the highest mean of 3.81, corresponding to a verbal interpretation of "Agree." This indicates that the majority of student respondents find it difficult to recall correct English spellings, particularly for irregular words (e.g., in the word "receive," remembering "ei" instead of "ie" proves challenging). Conversely, indicator number 3 obtained the lowest mean of 3.49, also interpreted as "Agree." This implies that students perceive less difficulty in dealing with homophones or words that sound alike but have different spellings (e.g., there, their, and they're). It has a grand mean of 3.60 which is verbally interpreted as "Agree". This means that junior high school students are challenged in learning English, particularly in the domain of spelling.

The findings from the data suggest that junior high school students face significant challenges in learning English spelling, particularly in recalling correct spellings for irregular words.

The high mean score for the first indicator indicates that students struggle the most with remembering the correct spelling of irregular English words. This aligns with the findings of the study by Wang, Castles, and Nickels (2014), which states that irregular words pose a challenge for learners because they deviate from the typical phonetic patterns and spelling rules of the English language. As a result, individuals often struggle to remember and apply the correct spelling conventions for these words.

The relatively lower mean score for the third indicator suggests that students perceive dealing with homophones or words that sound alike but have different spellings (e.g., there, their, and they're) as the relatively least challenging aspect. This could be because these types of spelling differences may be more straightforward for students to understand and remember, as they are based on the meaning and grammatical function of the words rather than solely on the pronunciation.

The grand mean of 3.60 indicates that junior high school students in a private educational institution face significant overall challenges in learning English spelling. This corroborates the findings of the study by Gibreel and Babu (2018), which noted that a majority of junior high school students found English spelling challenging, with difficulties in memorizing irregular spellings, understanding silent letters, and applying phonetic rules consistently.

The findings from this analysis may have important implications for the teaching and learning of English spelling in junior high schools. Educators may need to develop effective strategies and instructional methods to help students overcome the specific challenges they face in learning and recalling correct English spellings. This may involve providing more explicit instruction and practice on irregular English spellings, using a variety of mnemonic devices, visual aids, and interactive activities to help students remember the correct spelling patterns. Additionally, addressing the challenges students face with silent letters and inconsistent phonetic rules through targeted lessons and exercises may be beneficial. Incorporating more opportunities for students to engage in context-based spelling activities, where they can apply their knowledge of spelling conventions to real-world writing tasks, may also be helpful. Encouraging students to develop a deeper understanding of the meaning and grammatical function of words may assist them in distinguishing and remembering the spelling of homophones and similar-sounding words. Finally, addressing the impact of student motivation and interest in learning English spelling is crucial, as some may find the subject particularly challenging or perceive it as less relevant to their language learning goals.

Table 9 depicts the challenges encountered in learning English as a second language with regard to pronunciation. Indicator number 1 attained the highest mean of 3.60, corresponding to a verbal interpretation of "Agree." This indicates that the majority of student respondents find it difficult to accurately pronounce English sounds and words, such as the "th" sound in words like "think" and "thought." Conversely, indicator number 4 obtained the lowest mean of 3.26, verbally interpreted as "Moderately Agree." This implies that students are least challenged in pronouncing English words with silent letters, such as "knife" and "knight." The grand mean of 3.41, verbally interpreted as "Agree," suggests that junior high school students in a private educational institution face challenges in

learning English as a second language in terms of pronunciation.

Table 9. Respondents' Assessment on the Challenges of Learning English as a Second Language in Terms of Pronunciation

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
<i>In learning English I am challenged with/by...</i>			
accurately pronouncing English sounds and words (e.g. pronouncing the "th" sound in words like "think" and "thought").	3.60	Agree	1
differentiating between similar-sounding words (e.g. "affect" and "effect.")	3.34	Moderately Agree	3
pronouncing English words with correct stress and intonation (e.g. the noun record "REH-cord" and the verb record "ree-CORD").	3.28	Moderately Agree	4
pronouncing English words with silent letters (e.g. knife and knight).	3.26	Moderately Agree	5
pronouncing English words with multiple rhotic sounds or 'r' sounds (e.g. rural).	3.58	Agree	2
Grand Mean	3.41	Agree	

Legend: "Strongly Disagree (1.0-1.80)", "Disagree (1.81-2.60)", "Moderately Agree (2.61-3.40)", "Agree (3.41-4.20)", "Strongly Agree (4.21-5.0)"

These findings align with the claims of Muhammed (2023), which state that non-native speakers often struggle with accurately producing English sounds due to several reasons. Firstly, there are phonemic differences between English and their native languages. English has a wide range of phonemes that may not exist or be distinguished in other languages. For example, the "th" sound, involving interdental fricatives, can be particularly challenging to produce as it is not commonly found in many non-native languages. The lack of exposure and familiarity with such sounds makes their accurate pronunciation difficult. Secondly, there are articulatory differences. The articulatory mechanisms required to produce certain English sounds may differ from those used in a non-native speaker's language. For instance, the "th" sound requires specific tongue and dental placement, which may be unfamiliar and challenging for non-native speakers to coordinate.

Additionally, non-native speakers may face perceptual challenges. They may struggle to hear and perceive the subtle differences between English sounds. This difficulty in perceiving distinctions can make it challenging for them to accurately reproduce the sounds when speaking. Differences in phonetic inventory and phonological rules between their native language and English contribute to these perceptual challenges. Lastly, non-native speakers may encounter difficulties with English phonotactic patterns. English has specific patterns of sound combinations and restrictions on sound placement within words. Non-native speakers may find it challenging to conform to these patterns, leading to mispronunciations or difficulty in producing certain words accurately.

The findings from this data have several implications for English language instruction and learning. Educators may focus on developing specialized pronunciation instruction, particularly targeting areas where students struggle the most, such as producing the "th" sound and pronouncing words with consonant clusters or diphthongs. Instructional approaches may emphasize developing students' phonemic awareness and their ability to perceive and distinguish between various sounds in English, which can help improve their pronunciation. Additionally, providing students with opportunities to practice the specific articulatory movements required for English sounds may help them become more comfortable and proficient in producing these sounds accurately. Increasing students' exposure to authentic English speech through activities like listening to native speakers or engaging in conversational practice may also help them become more accustomed to the nuances of English pronunciation. Finally, educators may provide individualized feedback and support to students, addressing their specific pronunciation challenges and helping them develop personalized strategies for improvement.

Table 10. Respondents' Assessment on the Challenges of Learning English as a Second Language in Terms of Sentence Structure

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
<i>In learning English I am challenged with/by...</i>			
understanding and utilizing different sentence structures in English (e.g. simple and complex structure).	3.65	Agree	1
constructing complex sentences in English (e.g. incorporating subordinate clauses into the main clause).	3.60	Agree	4.5
arranging words in proper order to construct a coherent English sentence (e.g. proper placement of subject, verb, and object).	3.63	Agree	3
differentiating between active and passive voice in English.	3.60	Agree	4.5
using appropriate verb tenses and participles in my English sentences is difficult for me.	3.64	Agree	2
Grand Mean	3.62	Agree	

Legend: "Strongly Disagree (1.0-1.80)", "Disagree (1.81-2.60)", "Moderately Agree (2.61-3.40)", "Agree (3.41-4.20)", "Strongly Agree (4.21-5.0)"

Table 10 illustrates the challenges of learning English as a second language in terms of sentence structure. Indicator number 1 obtained the highest mean, 3.65, corresponding to a verbal interpretation of "Agree." This suggests that the majority of student respondents find it challenging to understand and utilize different sentence structures in English, such as simple and complex structures. Conversely, indicators numbers 2 and 4 obtained the lowest mean of 3.60, which is also verbally interpreted as "Agree." This implies that students are least challenged in constructing complex sentences in English, such as incorporating subordinate clauses into the main clause, and differentiating between active and passive voice in English. The domain has a grand mean of 3.62, verbally interpreted as "Agree," indicating that junior high school students in a private educational institution face challenges in learning English, particularly in the domain of sentence structure.

These findings affirm the research of Shahzad and Sarwat (2024), which states that learning English sentence structure can indeed pose challenges for junior high school students, especially those learning English as a second language. Non-native English learners often encounter difficulties in comprehending and utilizing diverse sentence structures due to several factors. Firstly, differences in syntactic rules between English and their native language can lead to difficulties in understanding and producing appropriate sentence structures. Additionally, the discrepancy in word order variations, with English often following a subject-verb-object (SVO) order, may cause learners to transfer word order rules from their native language, resulting in erroneous constructions. Moreover, the complexity of English sentence structures, including subordinate and relative clauses, as well as conjunctions, presents further hurdles as learners require a deeper understanding of grammatical rules and syntactic relationships. Lastly, the presence of idiomatic expressions and collocations in English, which may not have direct translations, adds to the challenge of grasping nuanced sentence structures.

The findings of this study affirm the challenges that non-native English learners face in comprehending and utilizing diverse sentence structures. Several factors may contribute to these difficulties, including differences in syntactic rules between English and the learners' native language, discrepancies in word order variations, with English often following a subject-verb-object (SVO) order, and the complexity of English sentence structures, such as subordinate and relative clauses, as well as conjunctions. Additionally, the presence of idiomatic expressions and collocations in English, which may not have direct translations, may further complicate the learning process. These obstacles highlight the importance of targeted instruction and practice in mastering English sentence construction for non-native learners. Educators should focus on providing explicit grammar instruction, emphasizing the nuances of English sentence structure, and offering ample opportunities for students to apply their knowledge in practical, meaningful contexts.

Table 11. *Respondents' Assessment of the Challenges of Learning English as a Second Language in Terms of Listening*

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
<i>In learning English I am challenged with/by...</i>			
understanding spoken English, especially in fast-paced conversations with accents.	3.70	Agree	1
distinguishing between different accents or dialects in English.	3.43	Agree	4
following along with complex audio materials in English.	3.48	Agree	3
identifying specific details or nuances in spoken English.	3.59	Agree	2
keeping up with rapid lectures in English (e.g. the teacher speaks quickly and moves from one topic to another without much pause).	3.39	Moderately Agree	5
Grand Mean	3.52	Agree	

Legend: "Strongly Disagree (1.0-1.80)", "Disagree (1.81-2.60)", "Moderately Agree (2.61-3.40)", "Agree (3.41-4.20)", "Strongly Agree (4.21-5.0)"

Table 11 shows the challenges of learning English as a second language in terms of listening. Indicator number 1 obtained the highest mean of 3.70, corresponding to a verbal interpretation of "Agree." This implies that students are greatly challenged in understanding spoken English, especially in fast-paced conversations with various accents. On the other hand, indicator number 5 obtained the lowest mean of 3.39, which is verbally interpreted as "Moderately Agree." This suggests that students are least challenged in keeping up with rapid lectures in English, where the teacher speaks quickly and moves from one topic to another without much pause. The domain has a grand mean of 3.52, verbally interpreted as "Agree," indicating that junior high school students in a private educational institution face significant challenges in learning English, particularly in listening skill.

Similarly, a study by Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) revealed several challenges faced by students in learning English listening skills. One major challenge identified was the limited exposure to authentic spoken English. Johansen (2019) also found that understanding spoken English, particularly in fast-paced conversations with different accents, can be difficult for language learners for several reasons. Firstly, the significant phonological variation across English speakers globally leads to diverse accents, regional dialects, and speech patterns, complicating the deciphering of unfamiliar sounds. Additionally, native speakers frequently employ connected speech, blending words together and altering pronunciation, which can obscure individual words and overall comprehension. Furthermore, idiomatic expressions, colloquialisms, and slang commonly used in spoken English add another layer of complexity, requiring learners to grasp cultural nuances and context. The absence of visual cues in spoken communication, unlike written text, places greater reliance on auditory processing, making it harder for learners to interpret meaning. Lastly, limited exposure to authentic spoken English, particularly in real-world contexts, coupled with a lack of practice in navigating fast-paced conversations, further impedes learners' ability to understand and engage effectively.

The findings from this study, along with supporting research, suggest that the key challenges faced by students in learning English listening skills may include limited exposure to authentic spoken English, difficulty in comprehending diverse English accents and pronunciations, challenges in keeping up with the pace of spoken English, and struggles in understanding new vocabulary and idiomatic expressions in spoken English. To address these challenges, the following recommendations may be considered: increasing exposure to authentic spoken English through various media, such as movies, TV shows, podcasts, and conversations with native speakers; incorporating activities that focus on developing students' ability to comprehend different English accents and pronunciations, such as listening exercises with a variety of speakers; providing opportunities for students to practice listening to fast-paced conversations and lectures, gradually increasing the pace and complexity; integrating vocabulary-building exercises, including instruction on common idioms and expressions used in spoken English; and encouraging students to engage in regular listening practice while providing feedback to help them improve their comprehension skills. By addressing these challenges and implementing targeted strategies, students may enhance their English listening skills and improve their overall proficiency in the language.

Table 12. Respondents' Assessment on the Challenges of Learning English as a Second Language in Terms of Speaking

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
<i>In learning English I am challenged with/by...</i>			
expressing myself verbally in English, such as finding the right words or forming sentences.	3.83	Agree	1
speaking fluently and confidently in English.	3.51	Agree	5
pronouncing words and phrases correctly in English conversation (e.g. the word "entrepreneurship").	3.53	Agree	3
participating in English discussions or presentations because it makes me feel uneasy or nervous.	3.58	Agree	2
adjusting my speaking style to match different contexts or audiences in English (e.g. switching between a formal and informal speaking style).	3.61	Agree	4
Grand Mean	3.61	Agree	

Legend: "Strongly Disagree (1.0-1.80)", "Disagree (1.81-2.60)", "Moderately Agree (2.61-3.40)", "Agree (3.41-4.20)", "Strongly Agree (4.21-5.0)"

Table 12 shows the challenges of learning English as a second language in terms of speaking. Indicator number 1 obtained the highest mean, which is 3.83, corresponding to a verbal interpretation of "Agree". This suggests that the majority of the student respondents find it challenging to express themselves verbally in English, such as finding the right words or forming sentences. Conversely, indicator number 2 obtained the lowest mean, which got a mean of 3.51 which is verbally interpreted as "Agree". This implies that they are least challenged in speaking fluently and confidently in English. Learning to speak English fluently and confidently is often a significant challenge for ESL students in the Philippines. It has a grand mean of 3.61 which is verbally interpreted as "Agree". This means that junior high school students in a private educational institution are challenged in learning English specifically in the macro skills of speaking.

The findings of the study of Ork et al. (2024) revealed several challenges faced by the students in learning English speaking skills. One major challenge identified was a lack of speaking opportunities and practice. Many students reported limited opportunities to engage in meaningful and authentic English conversations both inside and outside the classroom. This resulted in a lack of fluency, hesitation, and difficulty expressing their thoughts and ideas in English. Additionally, According to Separa, Generales, and Medina (2020), verbal expression is a crucial aspect of language acquisition, yet ESL students encounter numerous challenges in finding suitable words and constructing coherent sentences in English. These hurdles stem from various factors, including limited vocabulary, grammatical constraints, cultural differences, anxiety, and lack of exposure to English-speaking environments. Limited vocabulary poses a significant challenge as students may struggle to accurately convey their thoughts due to a restricted range of words. Grammatical differences between English and their native language can lead to errors in sentence structure, hindering effective communication. Cultural disparities also play a role, as students may struggle with idiomatic expressions and social conventions unique to English. Additionally, anxiety and self-consciousness can inhibit verbal expression, with fear of judgment or embarrassment impacting confidence. Furthermore, insufficient exposure to English contexts and limited practice opportunities impede skill development. Addressing these factors through targeted language instruction and creating supportive learning environments is essential to fostering improved verbal expression among ESL students. Furthermore, according to Cadiz-Gabejan (2021) there several factors contribute to enhancing fluency and confidence in spoken English among students at Samar State University. Firstly, the institution adopts English as the primary medium of instruction, fostering an immersive language environment that exposes students to English consistently. This exposure aids in the development of listening and speaking skills, ultimately boosting fluency and confidence. Secondly, employing a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach emphasizes interactive and student-centered language learning, providing ample opportunities for practical application through activities like group discussions and presentations. Moreover, the institution integrates cultural relevance and contextualization into English language instruction, connecting language learning to Filipino culture and real-life situations to enhance student engagement and motivation. Additionally, a supportive learning environment is cultivated, where students feel comfortable taking risks and receiving constructive feedback from teachers, fostering confidence in their English-speaking abilities. Lastly, the integration of technology, such as multimedia resources and online platforms, supplements traditional teaching methods, offering students additional avenues for practicing and refining their speaking skills both inside and outside the classroom.

Table 13 illustrates the challenges of learning English as a second language in terms of reading. Indicator number 1 obtained the highest mean, which is 3.76, corresponding to a verbal interpretation of "Agree". This suggests that the majority of the student respondents find it challenging to understand complex texts, especially academic or specialized material (e.g. scientific articles). Conversely, indicators numbers 3 and 5 obtained the lowest means which both got a mean of 3.54 which are verbally interpreted as "Agree". This implies that they are least challenged in inferring meaning from context and in identifying nuances in language (e.g. metaphors and symbolisms) and adjusting to different genres or styles of writing (e.g., fiction vs. technical manuals). It has a grand mean of 3.62 which is verbally interpreted as "Agree". It means that junior high school students are challenged in learning English in terms of the macro skills of reading.

It was supported by a study conducted by Nurmallasari and Haryudin (2021), which revealed several challenges that students face when learning English reading skills. A key problem identified was a lack of vocabulary knowledge. Many students reported problems with unfamiliar words, which hampered their understanding of English texts. They expressed difficulty in determining word meanings from context and comprehending the nuances of English vocabulary.

Table 13. *Respondents' Assessment of the Challenges of Learning English as a Second Language in Terms of Reading*

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
<i>In learning English I am challenged with/by...</i>			
understanding complex texts, especially academic or specialized material (e.g. scientific articles).	3.76	Agree	1
identifying what reading style is appropriate in a particular reading material (e.g. skimming, scanning, or close reading).	3.71	Agree	2
inferring meaning from context and identifying nuances in language (e.g. metaphors and symbolisms).	3.54	Agree	4.5
maintaining a good reading speed, especially in exams or time-critical situations.	3.55	Agree	3
adapting to diverse formats of reading material, such as printed materials digital texts, or multimedia presentations.	3.54	Agree	4.5
Grand Mean	3.62	Agree	

Legend: "Strongly Disagree (1.0-1.80)", "Disagree (1.81-2.60)", "Moderately Agree (2.61-3.40)", "Agree (3.41-4.20)", "Strongly Agree (4.21-5.0)"

Moreover, in a study by Duc and Lan (2023), ESL learners face significant challenges in grasping complex texts, such as academic or specialized materials, due to a variety of factors. Limited vocabulary knowledge inhibits comprehension, as learners struggle with unfamiliar words, technical terms, and discipline-specific jargon commonly encountered in such texts. Additionally, complex sentence structures and syntactic patterns require advanced grammatical understanding, posing difficulties in parsing and interpreting intricate sentences. Furthermore, the specific discourse features and organizational patterns found in academic and specialized texts may be unfamiliar to ESL learners, hindering their ability to extract key information effectively. Moreover, assumptions regarding cultural and background knowledge within these texts can create additional barriers to comprehension, particularly in specialized domains. Addressing these factors through targeted language instruction and scaffolded support is crucial in enhancing ESL learners' comprehension of complex texts.

Table 14. *Respondents' Assessment on the Challenges of Learning English as a Second Language in Terms of Writing*

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
<i>In learning English I am challenged with/by...</i>			
expressing myself and my ideas through writing.	3.70	Agree	2
constructing coherent and organized written pieces in English.	3.34	Moderately Agree	5
mastering proper sentence and paragraph structure in English writing (e.g. use of run-on sentences).	3.54	Agree	3
using appropriate vocabulary and tone in my English writing because it requires extra effort from me specifically, in formal or academic compositions.	3.76	Agree	1
proofreading and editing my English writing for errors.	3.49	Agree	4
Grand Mean	3.57	Agree	

Legend: "Strongly Disagree (1.0-1.80)", "Disagree (1.81-2.60)", "Moderately Agree (2.61-3.40)", "Agree (3.41-4.20)", "Strongly Agree (4.21-5.0)"

Table 14 outlines the challenges faced by students learning English as a second language, particularly in speaking. Indicator number 4 received the highest mean score of 3.76, which is interpreted as "Agree." This suggests that a majority of student respondents find it particularly challenging to use appropriate vocabulary and tone in their English writing, as this requires significant effort, especially in formal or academic compositions. In contrast, indicator number 2 had the lowest mean score of 3.34, interpreted as "Moderately Agree." This indicates that students feel least challenged in constructing coherent and organized written pieces in English. The overall grand mean is 3.57, which is interpreted as "Agree," signifying that junior high school students in a private educational institution face challenges in learning English, specifically in writing.

A study by Delos Reyes, Tongko, and Chavez (2023) explored the specific challenges encountered by junior high school students in private educational institutions regarding English writing skills in the Philippines. The findings indicated that these students often have limited exposure to authentic English writing materials, which adversely affects their skill development. Furthermore, writing instruction tends to receive less emphasis compared to other language skills, resulting in inadequate practice and feedback. Vocabulary and grammar deficiencies also hinder students' ability to express ideas coherently. Many students struggle with confidence and motivation in English writing, which limits their willingness to experiment with different styles and structures.

Ibtisam (2015) noted that writing effectively in formal or academic contexts requires a high level of language proficiency, nuanced vocabulary usage, and an awareness of appropriate tones. ESL learners frequently encounter challenges due to their limited vocabulary knowledge, which impedes their ability to express complex ideas with precision. Additionally, acquiring and using discipline-specific vocabulary proves particularly challenging. Mastering the nuanced registers and tones expected in formal writing can also be daunting.

Addressing these challenges is crucial for improving English writing instruction and fostering student proficiency. Educational institutions should prioritize authentic writing materials, enhance writing instruction, and provide targeted vocabulary development to build students' confidence and skills in English writing.

Table 15 presents the significant differences in the perceived challenges of learning English as a second language, grouped by sex. The H value of 3.743 is less than the critical value of 3.841 at a 0.05 level of significance, indicating that the null hypothesis cannot be

rejected. This suggests that there is no significant difference in the responses of male and female respondents regarding the challenges they face in learning English as a second language. Consequently, both male and female respondents encounter similar difficulties in this area.

Table 15. *Significant differences in the perceived challenges of learning English as a second language when respondents are grouped according to sex*

Groups	N	Median	df	$\chi^2(H \text{ value})$	$\chi^2c \text{ (Critical Value)}$	Significant Level	P-value	Decision
Male	37	3.51	1	3.743	3.841	0.05	0.053	Accept Ho
Female	43	3.87						

The study indicates that gender is not a major factor influencing how individuals experience or perceive the challenges of learning English as a second language. Therefore, instructional approaches and support programs designed to address these challenges do not need to be specifically tailored for gender differences. Instead, they can be developed to meet the needs of all learners, regardless of gender.

Sumarni and Rachmawaty (2019) found that male and female learners of English as a second language face similar challenges. Despite these similarities, they often employ different learning strategies: females tend to favor collaborative methods and group discussions, while males prefer self-directed learning. Socio-cultural factors, including societal expectations and gender roles, can influence these preferences and impact learners' self-perception and confidence. Moreover, individual differences within genders, such as motivation and learning styles, appear to have a more significant impact on learning experiences than gender itself.

These findings underscore the importance of adopting a diverse range of instructional strategies to address language learning challenges. Educators should consider the nuanced interplay of socio-cultural factors and individual differences, rather than focusing solely on gender. This approach will help create a more inclusive and effective learning environment for all students.

Table 16. *Significant differences in the perceived challenges of learning English as a second language when respondents are grouped according to age*

Groups	N	Median	df	$\chi^2(H \text{ value})$	$\chi^2c \text{ (Critical Value)}$	Significant Level	P-value	Decision
12-13 y/old	31	3.76	2	0.346	5.991	0.05	0.841	Accept Ho
14-15 y/old	42	3.73						
16-17 y/old	7	3.69						

Table 16 presents the significant differences in the perceived challenges of learning English as a second language when respondents are grouped by age. The H value of 0.346 is less than the critical value of 5.991 at a 0.05 level of significance, indicating that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. This suggests that there is no significant difference in the responses of respondents across different age groups. Consequently, it can be concluded that individuals belonging to various age groups face similar challenges in learning English as a second language.

The results indicate that the challenges faced by language learners are consistent across different age demographics. This implies that educational programs and support strategies for learning English as a second language can be applied universally, regardless of the learner's age. Therefore, instructional approaches and support programs may not need to be customized for specific age groups.

This finding is supported by the National Academies Press (2019), which reported no significant differences in perceived challenges across age groups. All age groups indicated similar difficulties with grammar, vocabulary acquisition, spelling accuracy, pronunciation clarity, sentence construction, listening comprehension, speaking fluency, reading comprehension, and writing proficiency. These findings emphasize that language learners encounter consistent challenges regardless of age.

The consistency of perceived challenges across age groups has significant implications for educational programs and support strategies in teaching English as a second language. Since the challenges are similar, instructional approaches and support programs can be designed and implemented universally, eliminating the need for age-specific customization. To enhance the effectiveness of English language instruction, educators and practitioners should focus on addressing the common difficulties encountered by learners across all age groups in these language domains.

Table 17. *Significant differences in the perceived challenges of learning English as a second language when respondents are grouped according to grade level*

Groups	N	Median	df	$\chi^2(H \text{ value})$	$\chi^2c \text{ (Critical Value)}$	Significant Level	P-value	Decision
Grade 7	20	3.98	3	10.170	7.815	0.05	0.017	Reject Ho
Grade 8	20	3.51						
Grade 9	20	3.89						
Grade 10	20	3.51						

Table 17 displays the significant differences in the perceived challenges of learning English as a second language when respondents are grouped by grade level. Since the H value of 10.170 exceeds the critical value of 7.815 at a 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there are significant differences in the responses of students based on their grade level,

suggesting that learners at different stages face distinct challenges in acquiring English as a second language.

The findings highlight the necessity of customizing educational programs and support to address the specific needs of learners at various grade levels. Younger students may struggle with fundamental language skills and comprehension, while older students might grapple with more complex grammatical concepts and advanced language abilities. As such, educators and policymakers should implement targeted strategies to address the unique challenges faced by learners at each academic stage. By acknowledging and responding to these differences, educational institutions can better support students in their English language learning journey, ultimately enhancing overall language proficiency outcomes across diverse learner populations.

A study by Daar (2020) revealed several unique challenges faced by junior high school students in private educational institutions. These students often struggle with complex grammatical concepts, including verb tenses, sentence structure, and word order. They also encounter difficulties in reading comprehension, particularly with academic texts, and in effectively expressing ideas in both spoken and written English. Additionally, challenges in vocabulary acquisition, especially with nuanced and domain-specific word usage, were noted.

These findings underscore the need for tailored educational programs and support strategies specifically designed for junior high school students in the Philippine private education context. By recognizing the unique needs of these students, educators and policymakers can develop targeted interventions, such as differentiated instruction, scaffolded learning activities, and explicit language instruction. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of collaboration among educators, curriculum developers, and administrators within private educational institutions to design and implement contextually relevant strategies for English language learning at the junior high school level.

By tailoring instruction, curriculum materials, and assessment approaches to meet the specific challenges faced by students in this grade level, institutions can create a more effective and supportive learning environment. This targeted approach is likely to lead to enhanced language proficiency outcomes for junior high school students, thereby improving their overall educational experience.

Table 18. *Significant differences in the perceived challenges of learning English as a second language when respondents are grouped according to socioeconomic status*

Groups	N	Median	df	$\chi^2(H$ value)	χ^2c (Critical Value)	Significant Level	P- value	Decision
Less than P100,000	46	3.57						
P100,000 - P300,000	14	3.89						
P300,001 - P500,000	4	4.19	4	15.152	9.488	0.05	0.004	Reject Ho
P500,001 - P1,000,000	9	3.98						
Above P1,000,000	6	3.54						

Table 18 presents the significant differences in the perceived challenges of learning English as a second language when respondents are grouped according to their socio-economic status. Since the H value of 15.152 exceeds the critical value of 9.488 at a 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there are significant differences in the responses of students based on their socio-economic status, suggesting that learners from different backgrounds face distinct challenges in acquiring English as a second language.

The findings underscore the importance of acknowledging and addressing disparities in access to resources and support systems within the educational landscape. Learners from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds may encounter obstacles such as limited access to quality educational materials, insufficient language support services, and socio-cultural factors that impede language acquisition. To address these disparities, educators and policymakers should create targeted programs and support systems specifically designed to assist learners from underprivileged backgrounds. Initiatives could include providing additional language support resources, financial assistance for learning materials, and teaching methods that resonate with students' cultural contexts.

Similarly, Huang et al. (2017) identified significant disparities in the perceived challenges of learning English among respondents based on their socio-economic status. Their research highlighted that learners from varying socio-economic backgrounds face unique hurdles in their English language acquisition journey. This emphasizes the necessity of recognizing and remedying these discrepancies through targeted support mechanisms. Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds often confront barriers such as limited access to quality educational resources, inadequate language support services, and socio-cultural obstacles that hinder language learning. The study advocates for tailored programs and support systems, including enhanced language resources, financial support for materials, and culturally responsive teaching methodologies.

By proactively recognizing and addressing the diverse challenges faced by English language learners across socio-economic strata, educational institutions can foster a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. This approach is essential for improving language proficiency outcomes for all learners, ultimately helping to mitigate educational inequalities and support the success of students from all backgrounds.

Table 19. Significant differences in the perceived challenges of learning English as a second language when respondents are grouped according to their Ways of Utilizing the English Language at Home

Groups	N	Median	df	$\chi^2(H$ value)	χ^2c (Critical Value)	Significant Level	P- value	Decision
Reading English books	31	3.87						
Speaking with family members in English	5	3.69						
Watching English movies/TV Shows	35	3.72	4	5.449	9.488	0.05	0.244	Accept Ho
Do not use the English Language at Home	7	3.27						
Others: Playing online games	1	4.36						

Table 19 presents the significant differences in the perceived challenges of learning English as a second language when respondents are grouped according to their methods of practice. Since the H value of 5.449 is less than the critical value of 9.488 at a 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. This suggests that there is no significant difference in the responses of learners based on their ways of practicing English. Consequently, it implies that students who utilize different methods for practicing English face similar challenges in their language-learning journey.

The findings indicate that learners using various methods to practice English encounter similar obstacles, highlighting the universality of certain challenges in language acquisition. Regardless of whether students engage in conversation practice, reading, writing, or using language apps, they may experience common difficulties related to vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation. This emphasizes the need to address these shared challenges through comprehensive and inclusive language education strategies. Educators and practitioners can implement diverse instructional methods and resources to help learners overcome these common difficulties, thereby enhancing language proficiency across different practice modalities.

This aligns with the findings of Kim (2023), which indicate that learners across various language learning contexts—including formal classroom instruction, self-study, and immersion programs—face similar hurdles in acquiring English. These shared challenges encompass aspects such as vocabulary acquisition, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation refinement, and comprehension of both spoken and written discourse. The study underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing these widespread obstacles in English language education. It advocates for the adoption of comprehensive and inclusive teaching strategies that integrate a range of instructional approaches and resources to support learners in overcoming these challenges. Such strategies may include structured conversation practice, extensive reading, writing exercises, and the use of language-learning applications, all aimed at improving language proficiency across diverse learning environments and methodologies.

By acknowledging and addressing the common challenges faced by English language learners, educators can develop inclusive instructional strategies that cater to various practice methods. This approach not only enhances the overall language proficiency of students but also fosters a more supportive and effective learning environment for all learners, regardless of their preferred practice methods.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

There is a majority of female student respondents than male student respondents. The age group of 14-15 years old constitutes the highest frequency among the respondents, while there is a lack of representation from respondents aged 16-17 years old, as well as those in the age groups of 11, 18-19, and 20 years old and above. The student respondents are evenly distributed across grade levels. In terms of practicing English at home, watching English movies/TV shows emerges as the most common method, while speaking English with family members is reported as the least frequent method, and playing online games as an alternative method is mentioned by very few respondents.

The study reveals that there are prevailing multifaceted challenges in learning English as a second language, particularly in the five linguistic domains which are grammar, vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, and sentence structure, and in four macro skills which are listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Both male and female respondents, as well as respondents from different age groups, encounter similar challenges in learning English as a second language. However, respondents from different grade levels and diverse socio-economic backgrounds report distinct challenges in learning English. Interestingly, the way respondents practice English at home does not significantly impact the challenges they face.

Based on the findings and conclusion the researcher made the following recommendations:

To the administrators, they may implement enhancement activities to improve the English language proficiency of the junior high school students. They may request or allocate funds in purchasing learning materials, textbooks, and other necessary facilities that will

be a great help to improve the English language proficiency of the junior high school students such as a speech laboratory. Since the locale is using the Dynamic Learning Program (DLP), they may consider reviewing the current DLP to ensure it adequately addresses identified challenges, potentially incorporating more scaffolding and support for grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and reading comprehension.

To the parents, they may create an English-rich environment at home to encourage students to practice English through movies, music, reading, etc. Maintaining open communication with teachers and collaborating on home learning strategies is crucial. They may explore supplemental English programs or online courses that can provide valuable extra support. For students in the Dynamic Learning Program (DLP), parents may explore supplementary resources that align with DLP and can provide additional practice in areas where students need extra support.

To the teachers, they may employ differentiated instruction is essential to cater to diverse student needs and learning styles. They may emphasize developing English communication skills - speaking, listening, reading, and writing - through real-world practice. Provide explicit instruction on grammar, vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, and sentence structure, especially in challenging areas. Regularly assess student progress and provide constructive feedback to guide their learning.

To the students, they may set personal goals for improving their English language skills and develop a study plan to achieve them. They may practice English regularly using various methods, such as watching English movies and TV shows, reading English books and articles, and engaging in conversations with native speakers or other English learners. Do not be afraid to make mistakes; they are a natural part of the learning process and should be embraced as opportunities to learn and improve. Moreover, they may develop effective self-learning strategies to complement the DLP.

To the future researchers, they may conduct a similar study and add more information about the multifaceted challenges of learning English as a second language in private educational institutions.

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