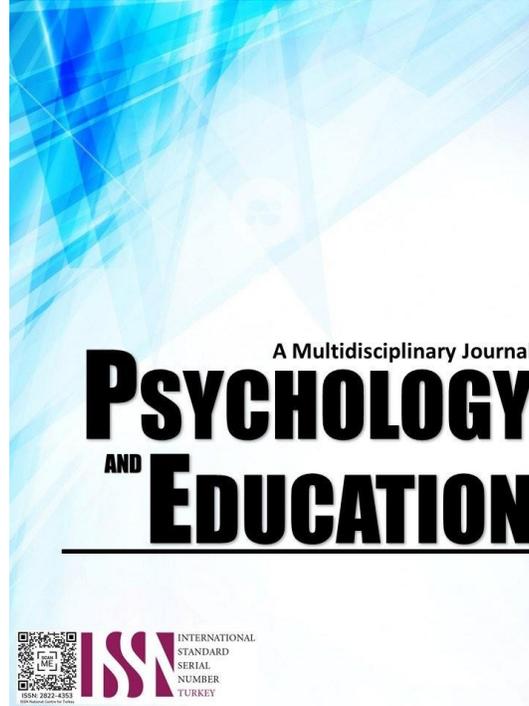


ENGLISH TEACHING PRACTICES: LANGUAGE CONFIDENCE OF THE GRADE 4 LEARNERS



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English Teaching Practices: Language Confidence of the Grade 4 Learners

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Abstract

The study explored the influence of English teaching practices on the language confidence of Grade 4 students in District II, Division of Valencia City, for the school year 2024–2025. Specifically, it identified teachers' preferred teaching strategies, assessed learners' language confidence levels, and examined the relationship between the two. It also analyzed differences based on gender. Employing a descriptive-correlational research design, the study utilized adapted instruments from Correll (2016), Nunan (1998), and Griffiee (1997), with 143 Grade 4 learners selected through simple random sampling. Statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, Pearson correlation, and t-test were used for data analysis. Findings revealed that teachers "often" employed their preferred instructional practices, focusing mainly on reading discussions, written reflections, and workbook activities. Learners demonstrated a "sometimes" level of language confidence, suggesting inconsistent comfort in using English for communication tasks. Results further indicated no significant relationship between teaching practices and learners' language confidence, and no significant differences based on gender. These findings suggest that while teachers consistently implement favored methods, frequent use alone may not effectively boost learners' language confidence. External factors such as emotional support, classroom climate, and learner autonomy may play a more crucial role. The study recommends that teachers integrate more communicative and engaging activities, such as group work and real-world speaking tasks, to foster a supportive environment that enhances students' willingness to communicate. Educational leaders are encouraged to provide training that focuses not only on instructional strategies but also on fostering students' emotional readiness for language use. Future research is recommended to explore additional variables influencing language confidence and to adopt qualitative approaches for deeper understanding.

Keywords: *English teaching practices, language confidence, grade 4 learners, classroom strategies, communicative competence*

Introduction

Communication is a vital aspect of the modern generation, especially with the growing influence of social media. Social media platforms have become primary spaces for people to interact, share ideas, and express themselves. Because of this, the ability to communicate effectively has become more important than ever. One of the key tools for this communication is language—particularly English, which is the most widely spoken and used language globally (Education First, 2020).

With the rise of digital platforms and remote work opportunities, knowing how to speak and write in English has become a valuable asset. More international job opportunities are now available online, requiring a good command of the English language. This makes English proficiency essential not only for communication but also for career advancement. For Filipinos, this global shift presents an opportunity to make use of their reputation for having strong English skills (Philippine Institute for Development Studies [PIDS], 2020).

The Philippines has long been recognized in Asia for its high level of English proficiency, providing Filipinos with a competitive edge, especially in the growing online job market. Being fluent in English enables individuals to work as freelancers, virtual assistants, and customer support professionals for clients around the world. However, this potential is hindered if learners are not confident in using the language. Despite formal instruction and early exposure, many Filipinos still struggle with speaking English fluently and confidently (Philstar, 2024).

In Valencia City, particularly in District 2, one of the largest districts in the Division—this issue remains evident. As part of the Department of Education, schools in this area are expected to demonstrate strong English performance. However, many learners show a lack of confidence in using the language, especially in oral communication. This suggests that, while students may be learning English, they are not gaining enough competence to apply it effectively in real-life situations (PIDS, 2020).

This lack of speaking confidence may be attributed to deeper challenges within the Philippine education system. Over the years, educators and researchers have expressed concern over a decline in the quality of education. These systemic issues are likely impacting how English is taught and how well students retain and use the language. If these challenges are not addressed, students may continue to miss out on both local and international opportunities that require English proficiency (Philstar, 2024).

To help address the challenges in education, the Department of Education (DepEd) has implemented the new MATATAG Curriculum, which emphasizes hands-on, practice-oriented learning. As part of this initiative, teachers have received training to enhance their proficiency in delivering this new curriculum effectively (Department of Education, 2023). In line with raising teaching standards, the Philippine Regulatory Commission (PRC) has outlined its mission of establishing high and rigorous benchmarks for what accomplished

teachers should know and be able to do. The PRC has developed five core propositions of effective teaching: (1) teachers are committed to students and their learning, (2) they know the subjects they teach and how to teach them effectively, (3) they are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning, (4) they reflect systematically on their practices and learn from experience, and (5) they are active members of professional learning communities (Professional Regulation Commission, 2022).

Teaching practices that support children's adjustment to school are especially important during the early years, particularly kindergarten and first grade. During this period, teachers apply a wide variety of strategies in the classroom. However, identifying and utilizing the most effective approaches is crucial to ensuring a successful teaching and learning experience for both teachers and students. Often, these practices are shaped by curriculum requirements and specific learning objectives (UNESCO, 2021).

Moreover, updated models of effective teaching emphasize a structured, evidence-based approach. Hattie (2021) advocates for clear steps that support the learning process, including setting goals, providing input, modeling, checking for understanding, and enabling both guided and independent practice. These practices form the basis of high-impact teaching strategies that promote student achievement. They also serve as a model for schools of education and teacher training programs aiming to build instructional competence among educators.

Therefore, based on these insights, the present study focuses on the teaching practices of English teachers and how these practices influence the language confidence of Grade 4 pupils in District 2 of the Division of Valencia City, particularly in terms of speaking skills.

Research Questions

This study intended to find out how English teaching practices can influence the language confidence of the learners of District II of Division of Valencia City, school year 2024-2025.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the English teachers' preferred teaching practices?
2. What is the level of language confidence of the Grade 4 learners?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the English teachers' teaching practices and the language confidence of the Grade 4 learners?
4. Is there a significant difference on English teachers' preferred teaching practices and level of language confidence when grouped according to gender?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. First, the descriptive design was used to examine the teaching practices of English teachers and the language confidence of Grade 4 pupils in District II of the Division of Valencia City during the school year 2024-2025. Second, the correlational design was used to determine the relationship between the English teachers' teaching practices and the pupils' language confidence. Statistical analysis was conducted to assess whether specific teaching strategies had a significant impact on learners' confidence in using the English language.

Respondents

This study was conducted in District II of the Division of Valencia City, located in Valencia City, Bukidnon. The schools within this district are situated across both urban and rural barangays, reflecting the diverse geographic and socio-economic conditions of the area. These public schools were established in various communities with the goal of expanding access to quality education and contributing to the overall development of the local population.

District II comprises six public elementary schools, each catering to a significant number of learners. Specifically, these schools collectively serve over 200 Grade 4 pupils, providing a sufficiently large and diverse sample for the purposes of this research. The substantial student population, combined with the variety of school settings, offers a reliable basis for analyzing teaching practices and language confidence levels among Grade 4 learners. The geographic location and distribution of the districts and schools in the Division of Valencia City, including those in District II, are illustrated in Figure 2, which provides a visual representation of the research setting.

The respondents of this study were 143 Grade 4 pupils from the six identified elementary schools in District II of the Valencia City Division. These pupils were chosen as they are at a critical stage in their language development, where foundational skills in speaking, reading, and writing in English are being strengthened. Grade 4 is typically the level where pupils begin to engage more actively in academic communication and are expected to express themselves more confidently in English, both orally and in writing. Assessing their language confidence at this stage provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of their English teachers' instructional practices. Moreover, the selected group represents a diverse mix of learners, ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of the learning environment and instructional approaches across different school contexts.

Table 1. *Distribution of Sample Respondents*

<i>Name of the School</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Bagontaas Central School	44
Kilangi Elementary School	11
Lurugan Elementary School	44
New Visayas Elementary School	11
San Carlos Elementary School	22
Ulaligan Elementary School	11
Total	143

Instrument

The instruments used in this study were adapted and modified from the work of Correll (2016), titled Teachers' Preparation to Teach English Language Learners (ELLs): An Investigation of Perceptions, Preparation, and Current Practices (Order No. 10306919). This questionnaire was selected because it features commonly used teaching practices that are applicable and relevant to current trends in English language instruction in the Philippines.

Additionally, the study employed adapted questionnaires from Nunan (1998) and Griffiee (1997). These tools were chosen for their effectiveness in evaluating the speaking confidence of language learners, making them suitable for assessing the language confidence of Grade 4 pupils in the context of this study.

Procedure

A letter requesting permission to conduct the study, endorsed by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies at Valencia Colleges Incorporated (Bukidnon), was formally submitted to the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division of Valencia City. The purpose of the letter was to seek approval to administer and distribute questionnaires to the identified teachers in the selected schools within the division. In addition, a separate letter of request was sent to district II

Schools District Supervisor and the school administrators to obtain permission to distribute questionnaires to the sampled Grade 4 pupils in the participating schools.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers of the study, "English Teaching Practices: Language Confidence of Grade 4 Learners," strictly adhered to ethical guidelines to ensure the safety, rights, and well-being of all participants. Informed consent was secured from the parents or guardians of the participating Grade 4 pupils, along with age-appropriate assent from the pupils themselves and consent from the involved teachers. To maintain confidentiality and privacy, the researchers used pseudonyms and ensured that all data were stored securely. The study was carefully designed to minimize any risks or discomfort, with a guarantee that participation would not affect the academic standing of the pupils. It was clearly emphasized that participation was voluntary, and that all participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. By implementing these ethical measures, the researchers ensured that the study was conducted with integrity and respect, while also contributing meaningful insights to the field of English language teaching.

Results and Discussion

This section deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of data that was gathered in the study. Discussion as presented through tabular and textual manner which was reflected in the succeeding table.

Problem 1: What are the English teachers' preferred teaching practices?

Table 2. *English Teachers' Preferred Teaching Practices*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
My teacher asks us to discuss different interpretations of what we have read.	4.36	1.032	Always
My teacher asks us to write something about what we read.	4.31	0.841	Always
My teacher asks us to work in a reading workbook or on a worksheet.	4.30	1.114	Always
My teacher asks us to explain or support their understanding of what we have read.	4.30	1.075	Always
My teacher asks us to complete a worksheet	3.92	1.160	Often
My teacher asks us to do a group activity.	3.90	1.016	Often
My teacher asks us to read extra material not in our textbook (such as newspaper, maps, charts, or cartoons).	3.56	1.154	Often
My teacher asks us to read books they have chosen themselves.	3.48	1.277	Often



My teacher gives us homework in English.	3.38	1.515	Sometimes
My teacher asks us to participate in mock trials, role-plays, or dramatization.	3.33	1.033	Sometimes
My teacher asks us to watch television shows, videos, or filmstrips.	3.17	0.929	Sometimes
My teacher asks us to read some magazines, newspaper, and storybooks.	3.10	1.460	Sometimes
My teacher asks us question on what we have read.	2.94	1.706	Sometimes
My teacher discusses new or difficult vocabularies.	2.88	1.554	Sometimes
My teacher asks us to write a report of three or more pages.	1.79	1.326	Never
Overall	3.52	0.468	Often

Table 2 indicates that the English teachers’ preferred teaching practices have an overall mean score of 3.52 (SD = 0.468), which is interpreted as "often." This suggests that teachers frequently apply a range of instructional strategies in their classrooms, reflecting consistent efforts to engage students and enhance language learning. These practices may include interactive activities such as group discussions, visual and contextual learning aids, scaffolded instruction, and differentiated teaching methods tailored to diverse learner needs. Such frequent use of student-centered techniques supports the development of learners’ language confidence by fostering active participation and meaningful communication. This finding aligns with recent studies which emphasize that regularly applied, interactive teaching strategies significantly improve learner engagement and language performance (Phan & Dang, 2021).

Among the indicators, the highest mean is observed in the practice where teachers ask students to discuss different interpretations of what they have read (Mean = 4.36, SD = 1.032), interpreted as "always." This suggests that engaging students in critical discussions is a widely used teaching strategy that encourages deeper comprehension, critical thinking, and collaborative learning. Similarly, teachers frequently ask students to write about what they have read (Mean = 4.31, SD = 0.841), work in a reading workbook or on worksheets (Mean = 4.30, SD = 1.114), and explain or support their understanding of a text (Mean = 4.30, SD = 1.075), all of which are also interpreted as "always." These practices reflect a strong emphasis on reinforcing reading comprehension through active engagement, written reflection, and structured tasks.

In the classroom, these practices can be observed through a variety of interactive and student-centered activities. Teachers facilitate group discussions where students analyze texts collaboratively, encouraging deeper understanding through peer insights. Written reflections such as journals or reading response essays allow students to connect personally with the material, demonstrating comprehension and critical thinking. Structured tasks, including guided reading exercises, comprehension questions, and graphic organizers, provide a framework for students to engage actively with the text. These strategies not only reinforce reading comprehension but also promote accountability and a habit of thoughtful reading. Recent research supports these findings, highlighting that when students are consistently encouraged to articulate their ideas through discussion and writing, their comprehension and language confidence significantly improve (Muth & Ghafari, 2021).

Meanwhile, the indicator, “My teacher asks us to write a report of three or more pages,” obtained the lowest mean of 1.79 (SD=1.326), interpreted as “never.” This implies that pupils are never asked by their teacher to write a report of three or more pages. The low mean suggests that extended writing assignments are infrequent in the classroom, which indicates limited opportunities for students to practice and develop their skills in organizing and expressing complex ideas in written form. Without consistent practice in long-form writing, students struggle to develop critical thinking, coherence, and analytical depth—skills essential for academic success (Applebee & Langer, 2013).

Problem 2: What is the level of language confidence of the Grade 4 learners?

Table 3. Level of Language Confidence of the Grade 4 Learners

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I can show an English-speaking visitor around the campus and answer questions.	3.39	1.506	Sometimes
I can give my opinion in English when talking to a native speaker.	3.25	1.445	Sometimes
I would like to study in an English speaking country.	3.23	1.564	Sometimes
I look for chances to speak English.	3.12	1.402	Sometimes
I can speak English easily.	2.97	1.409	Sometimes
I say something to other people in English every day.	2.92	1.439	Sometimes
I can discuss in English with native speakers.	2.86	1.415	Sometimes
When I speak English, I feel cheerful.	2.86	1.377	Sometimes
I can be interviewed in English.	2.71	1.398	Sometimes
I like speaking English.	2.66	1.343	Sometimes
Overall	3.00	0.804	Sometimes

Table 3 presents the level of language confidence of Grade 4 pupils in District II of the Division of Valencia City. The overall mean

score is 3.00 (SD = 0.804), interpreted as "sometimes," indicating that students occasionally demonstrate confidence in using the English language. This implies that learners display a moderate level of confidence in using the English language, which may vary depending on the context or activity. In the classroom, this can be observed through hesitant participation in oral discussions, selective volunteering during recitations, and reliance on peers or translation tools when expressing ideas in English. Such behavior suggests that while students are capable of using the language, they may still struggle with fluency, fear of making mistakes, or limited vocabulary. Research shows that learners' confidence in language use is closely linked to their communicative competence, classroom environment, and exposure to meaningful language tasks (Alamer, 2020; Dewaele & Li, 2020). Encouraging student interaction and creating a supportive atmosphere are essential in fostering greater confidence and willingness to use English actively.

Among the indicators, the highest mean score is observed in the ability to show an English-speaking visitor around the campus and answer questions (Mean = 3.39, SD = 1.506), interpreted as "Sometimes." This suggests that while some students feel capable of guiding and conversing with visitors in English, this confidence is not consistently present. Other indicators that scored relatively high include giving opinions in English when talking to a native speaker (Mean = 3.25, SD = 1.445) and expressing a willingness to study in an English-speaking country (Mean = 3.23, SD = 1.564), both of which are also interpreted as "Sometimes."

The results suggests that students are more inclined to use the language when they perceive the interaction as purposeful or socially meaningful. In the classroom, this is manifested through increased engagement during role-playing activities, interactive tasks, or when exposed to simulations that mimic real-world communication with English speakers. However, the inconsistency in their confidence indicates a need for sustained practice and encouragement. Research highlights the significance of communicative tasks and meaningful exposure in building learners' confidence and promoting willingness to communicate (Peng, 2020; Lee & Drajerati, 2020).

Similarly, students sometimes look for opportunities to speak English (Mean = 3.12, SD = 1.402) and feel that they can speak English easily (Mean = 2.97, SD = 1.409). They also occasionally say something in English every day (Mean = 2.92, SD = 1.439) and believe they can discuss topics with native speakers (Mean = 2.86, SD = 1.415). When speaking English, some students feel cheerful (Mean = 2.86, SD = 1.377), indicating that English communication brings positive emotions but is not a regular occurrence.

The results suggests that students' confidence and emotional engagement with the language are present but inconsistent. This indicates a developing but fragile sense of linguistic self-assurance, where motivation and positive affect exist but are not yet strong enough to drive habitual use. In the classroom, this is observed through sporadic voluntary participation, hesitant attempts at using English during peer interactions, and a preference for structured or guided speaking tasks. The occasional cheerfulness tied to English use points to the importance of creating enjoyable, low-anxiety learning experiences. Scholars emphasize that students' willingness to communicate is influenced by affective factors such as enjoyment, self-perceived competence, and the classroom climate (MacIntyre, 2021; Dewaele & Li, 2020).

On the other hand, the lowest mean score is observed in students' enjoyment of speaking English (Mean = 2.66, SD = 1.343) and their ability to be interviewed in English (Mean = 2.71, SD = 1.398), both interpreted as "Sometimes." This implies that these are areas of particular discomfort or uncertainty for learners. The findings suggest that while students may be open to using English in less formal or low-stakes situations, they often feel less confident and less positive about using the language in structured, high-pressure contexts such as interviews. In the classroom, this can be observed through students' reluctance to participate in oral exams, mock interviews, or impromptu speaking activities, often showing signs of anxiety or needing significant teacher prompting. These patterns reflect the role of performance anxiety and limited self-efficacy in affecting language use. Research underscores that learners' speaking confidence is shaped not only by language competence but also by their emotional responses to speaking tasks, especially in evaluative or formal settings (Yan & Horwitz, 2020; Zhang & Tsung, 2021).

Problem 3: Is there a significant relationship between the English teachers' teaching practices and the language confidence of the Grade 4 learners?

Table 4. *Test of Significant Relationship between the English Teachers' Teaching Practices and the Language Confidence of the Grade 4 Learners*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
English Teachers' preferred Teaching Practices	.040	.633	Not Significant

Table 4 presents the test of significant relationship between English teachers' preferred teaching practices and the language confidence of the respondents. The results indicate that English teachers' preferred teaching practices ($r = .040$, $p\text{-value} = .633$) have no significant relationship with the learners' language confidence. Since the p -value exceeds the conventional threshold of 0.05, the finding suggests that the preferred teaching practices of English teachers are not significantly related to the language confidence of the respondents. Hence, the first null hypothesis that states, "There is no significant relationship between the English teachers' teaching practices and the language confidence of the Grade 4 learners" is accepted.

The result implies that there is a potential disconnect between instructional strategies and learners' affective and communicative needs. This misalignment can hinder language development, as students may struggle to engage meaningfully if teaching methods focus heavily on grammar drills or lecture-based instruction rather than on interactive and confidence-building activities. For example, a

teacher might prioritize textbook exercises and written assessments, while students, who need to build speaking confidence, would benefit more from role-plays, peer discussions, or real-life simulations. This gap can lead to reduced motivation, minimal participation, and a lack of opportunities to practice English in low-stress environments. Research shows that when teaching practices do not consider learners' confidence and willingness to communicate, especially in speaking, the effectiveness of language instruction declines (Peng, 2020; Mercer & Ryan, 2020). Teachers need to adopt more learner-centered, communicative approaches that foster confidence and create a supportive atmosphere.

Problem 4: Is there a significant difference on English teachers' preferred teaching practices and level of language confidence when grouped according to gender?

Table 5. *Test of Significant Difference on English Teacher's Preferred Teaching Practices when the Respondents Are Grouped according to Gender*

Variable	Mean	t-value	p-value
Male	3.51	-.309	.758
Female	3.54		

Table 5 presents the test of significant difference in English teachers' preferred teaching practices when the respondents are grouped according to gender. The results show that male respondents have a mean score of 3.51, while female respondents have a slightly higher mean score of 3.54. The computed t-value is -0.309, with a corresponding p-value of 0.758. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the result indicates that there is no significant difference in English teachers' preferred teaching practices based on gender. The result implies that both male and female teachers generally adopt similar instructional strategies in language teaching, suggesting that gender does not play a determining role in shaping pedagogical preferences.

The result may indicate that professional training, curriculum requirements, and teaching experiences have a more substantial influence on teaching approaches than gender identity. For example, both male and female teachers might equally prefer using communicative language teaching (CLT), integrating group work, or utilizing multimedia resources in the classroom. This uniformity in teaching styles supports the idea that effective language instruction is guided more by best practices and student needs than by the teacher's gender. Research supports this by showing that while teachers may differ in personality or classroom management styles, gender does not significantly affect their choice of language teaching methods. As a result, training programs should focus on enhancing pedagogical skills and adapting to diverse classroom contexts rather than emphasizing gender-based teaching strategies (Çelik, 2020).

Table 6. *Test of Significant Difference on the Level of Language Confidence When the Respondents Are Grouped according to Gender*

Variable	Mean	t-value	p-value
Male	3.51	-.309	.758
Female	3.54		

Table 6 presents the test of significant difference in the level of language confidence when the respondents are grouped according to gender. The results show that male respondents have a mean score of 2.94, while female respondents have a higher mean score of 3.21. The computed t-value is -1.557, with a corresponding p-value of 0.122. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the result indicates that there is no significant difference in the level of language confidence between male and female respondents. This implies that gender does not play a crucial role in shaping students' self-assurance in using the English language. Therefore, the second null hypothesis that states, "There is no significant difference on English teachers' preferred teaching practices and level of language confidence when grouped according to gender" is accepted.

The result further suggests that both male and female learners experience similar challenges and levels of comfort when it comes to speaking, writing, or participating in English communication tasks. In the classroom, this may be reflected in how both genders equally hesitate or engage during oral recitations, group discussions, or presentations, with no observable pattern of one gender being more confident than the other. This finding aligns with research showing that language confidence is influenced more by individual learner variables—such as motivation, exposure, and support—than by gender (Subekti, 2020). It emphasizes the need for inclusive teaching practices that address the diverse needs of all students regardless of gender.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine how English teaching practices influence the language confidence of Grade 4 learners in District II, Division of Valencia City, during the school year 2024–2025. The research sought to identify the preferred teaching strategies of English teachers, assess the learners' language confidence, explore the relationship between teaching practices and learner confidence, and determine whether gender differences affect either factor. A descriptive-correlational research design was employed, with respondents selected through simple random sampling. Instruments adapted from prior research were used, and statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, t-test, and Pearson correlation were applied in data analysis.

The findings revealed that English teachers "often" employed their preferred teaching practices, indicating a consistent use of selected

instructional strategies. Meanwhile, Grade 4 learners demonstrated a "sometimes" level of language confidence, suggesting fluctuations in their comfort and ability in using English. The study did not find a significant relationship between teachers' teaching practices and learners' language confidence, indicating that other factors might play a more influential role. Additionally, no significant differences in teaching practices or language confidence were observed when comparing male and female teachers or students, suggesting that gender is not a determining factor in these aspects.

From these findings, the study concluded that while teachers show consistency in their instructional methods, learners exhibit only occasional confidence in English, pointing to a need for targeted interventions to build this confidence. The lack of correlation between teaching methods and language confidence suggests that variables such as individual learner traits or classroom atmosphere may have a greater impact. The absence of gender-based differences reinforces that effective teaching is not dependent on the teacher's gender, emphasizing the importance of instructional quality.

Based on these conclusions, several recommendations were proposed. Students should engage more in activities that use English, both in and out of the classroom, to enhance their confidence. Teachers are encouraged to diversify their instructional approaches and include confidence-building exercises like group work and public speaking. The Department of Education (DepEd) could support teachers through training programs that focus on students' affective needs and promote language enrichment activities in the curriculum. Future researchers are encouraged to investigate other potential influences on language confidence, including emotional and environmental factors, and to conduct long-term studies to assess the sustained impact of various teaching practices.

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