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Student Perspectives on English Language Proficiency and its Significance in Health Sciences Education: An Exploratory Study of Assessing Course Efficacy and University Environment

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Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the efficacy of English language courses within health sciences programs. It investigates students' perceptions of their language proficiency, identifies their strengths and weaknesses across key subskills, and examines the influence of university culture on their English language development.

Employing a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design, quantitative data was collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data to explicate the quantitative findings.

Data analysis revealed a distinct profile of student skills. In reading, the strongest subskill was identifying main ideas, while understanding technical terminology and making inferences were the weakest. For speaking, students reported proficiency in answering questions and delivering presentations but struggled with fluency and spontaneous interaction. In listening, comprehension of explicit classroom discussion was strong, whereas inferring implicit information was weak. For writing, students demonstrated competence in spelling and paragraph structure but faced significant challenges in expressing ideas idiomatically.

The study concludes that students from diverse educational backgrounds encounter difficulties in achieving uniform proficiency. A key recommendation is to implement streaming based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels to better address individual learner needs. Furthermore, English language pedagogy

should be revised to integrate dedicated instruction in inferential reasoning, technical vocabulary, and idiomatic language use.

Keywords: Common European Frame of Reference (CEFR), English Language, English as a Second Language (ESL), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), Health Sciences.

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1. Introduction

As English is the second language in Pakistan, its acquisition requires proper teaching and learning. In the process of learning at the undergraduate level, students are offered different courses to improve their written and spoken communication skills. However, due to their varying level of educational background, their English language (EL) proficiency varies from each other that leads to different perceptions about English language, its importance and the role of university culture (Chan et al., 2022; Cook, 2008; Crawford & Candlin, 2013; Gaffas, 2019). Thus the analysis of the above-mentioned themes is needed to get explored. These elements of learning are supported by Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory (1978). The theory is favoured because it describes learning as an ongoing process of internalisation during training, in which the development of EL skills and knowledge is altered and linked between the social and cognitive planes.

In a multicultural setting, health sciences students can interact with one another and internalise the experience—including the use of EL in health sciences—by engaging in discussions and activities (Foong & Sow, 2020). Consequently, students participate in a variety of group activities and subsequently learn new skills and about the culture in which they are placed (Wells, 1994). This situation emphasises the necessity for research to pinpoint the elements that allow health sciences students to improve their English language proficiency. Due to the knowledge gap, neither the educators nor the

policymakers can support health sciences students who have communication problems (Foong & Sow, 2020).

The results of this study will help develop learning and support techniques for students who are studying in multilingual environments. Thus, a mixed method explanatory sequential study design will be employed where in the first phase data will be collected through a questionnaire and in the second phase through focus group interviews. This type of method is effective in cognitive studies to measure the cognitive changes (e.g. beliefs, knowledge, perspectives and understanding) to demonstrate that language education impacts the students learning at the university level.

1.1. Significance of the problem

When students enter the health sciences bachelor programs, a certain level of EL proficiency is the prerequisite element that helps them to comprehend the studies and facilitates them in communication with healthcare professionals, patients and peers (Chan et al., 2022; Gaffas, 2019). Subsequently, the English language courses offered in different health sciences bachelor programs assist the students to achieve a higher level of language proficiency and highlights the importance of EL learning (Cook, 2008) so that they can perform better in their studies and become successful healthcare professionals. However, the prerequisite of EL proficiency is not clearly defined which leads to varying mindsets students create about their EL proficiency. Therefore, this study aims to explore the students' perceptions of their English language proficiency, English language importance and the role of university culture to establishing the prerequisite level of English language in the health sciences bachelor programs. Furthermore, this study proposes to improve the English language teaching and learning environment.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Planning and implementation of English courses in any program reflect the status of the English language enjoys throughout the country due to which other research studies' results cannot be generalized to the wider population (Dudley-Evan & St John, 1998; Robinson et al., 2001). Thus, students' perceptions of their English language proficiency will vary from one context to another due to the type of English courses they are being offered, and the institution's cultural impact on language development (Gaffas, 2019). Nevertheless, how students perceive the impacts of such English courses on their language development needs to be explored in general to identify the challenges faced by health sciences students in their respective fields. This study's results will help to determine the factors required for improving the English language skills of health sciences students, which could later be incorporated into the English language pedagogy in undergraduate-level programs.

1.3. Research Questions

Major Research Question

1) Do the English language courses in the health sciences curricula help students in completing their undergraduate studies?

Extended Research Questions

1) What are the health sciences students' perceptions of their English language proficiency?
2) To what extent has the English language courses assisted the health sciences students in developing their English language proficiency?
3) How has the university culture influenced the health sciences students' English language proficiency?

1.4. Aims and Objectives

This study aims to evaluate the impact of English language courses offered in health sciences programs.

The objectives of the study are to:

- explore the perceptions of the health sciences students about their English language proficiency.
- investigate the efficacy of the English language courses in developing the health sciences students' English language proficiency.
- determine the influence of university culture on students' English language proficiency.

2. Review of Literature

Investigating English language proficiency not only judges the value of a language program but also aids in exploring the social role created through program evaluation (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Therefore, this study aims to explore students' perceptions of their English language proficiency as students' views and experiences play a significant role in contributing to English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs as per the EAP/ESP research conducted worldwide (Morrison, 2011a, 2011b; Evans & Green, 2007; Ivanic, 2006; Basturkmen & Lewis, 2002, Hyland, 1997 and Leki & Carson, 1994).

The sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (1978) is chosen as the theoretical framework for this study in light of the backdrop that pertains to the importance of the English language and the gaps in the literature on factors boosting EL skills in the field of health sciences. According to this concept, an individual's learning is influenced by their historical, institutional, and cultural settings. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is based on four key tenets: (i) learning comes before development; (ii) language serves as the primary means (tool) of thought; (iii)

mediation is essential to learning; and (iv) social interaction serves as the foundation for both learning and development (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978).

Several bachelors of sciences programs offered in the health sciences university aim to achieve the international benchmark where it can cater for students whose English is the second language. However, students struggle to communicate effectively in the English language because of their varying language learning backgrounds (Glew, 2013; Rabea et al., 2018). Several studies have been conducted in different world regions where English is the second language and health sciences students have varying levels of backgrounds for their English as a second language teaching and learning (Al-Khlaiwi, 2019; Bolderston et al., 2008; Choi, 2021; Dos Santos, 2019; Glew, 2013; Liu et al., 2020). Nevertheless, little research has been conducted in the Pakistani region on health sciences students. Therefore, this study will be a significant step to add the results to the existing body of literature that will help in enhancing the teaching and learning process of the English language in the health sector.

3. Methodology

This study employed the mixed methods approach's explanatory sequential design (i.e., qualitative and quantitative methods). The researcher in this design first collected quantitative data then qualitative data to further explain or elaborate the results (Cresswell, 2012). The pilot study was conducted in the month of June 2023 to ensure IRB ethical approval was granted to certify the tool's reliability. Informed consent was obtained before the start of the study and to maintain confidentiality the participants filled in the questionnaire anonymously.

3.1. Participants

The study was conducted in May 2024 in two stages. In the first stage quantitative data was collected through stratified random sampling (Cohen et al, 2007) where 224 female and 30 male students out of 254 total students participated in the

study. Majority of the participants (83) belonged to Doctor of Pharmacy program, 39 from Doctor of Physical Therapy program, and 33 from BS Nutrition / BS Public Health programs. The participants had different educational backgrounds: 230 had completed intermediate education from several local educational boards and 24 came from international educational board. The study participants were those who had completed all the English language courses offered in their programs. 143 participants were from second year, 80 were from third year, and 31 were from fourth year.

Focus-group interviews were conducted with 20 students. The selection was stratified into four groups; Matric and Intermediate (local educational board), O-level and Intermediate (local educational board), A-level, and other local educational boards.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of participants by gender

Gender	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Male	30	11.8
Female	224	88.2
Total	254	100.0

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of participants by programs

Program(s)	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Biotechnology	14	5.5
Pharmacy	83	32.7
Nursing & Midwifery	26	10.2
Radiology	6	2.4
Physiotherapy	39	15.4
Health Management	15	5.9

Medical Technology	23	9.1
Optometry	2	0.8
Psychology	13	5.1
Public Health	33	13.0
Total	254	100.0

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Participants by Study Year

Year of the study	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Second year	143	56.3
Third year	80	31.5
Fourth year	29	11.4
Internee	2	0.8
Total	254	100.0

Table 4: Demographic Characteristics of Participants by Educational Background

Educational Background	**Frequency**	**Percent**
A- level	13	5.1
AKUEB	21	8.3
KHI Board	177	69.7
O-level-Intermediate	11	4.3
Other board	32	12.6
Total	254	100.0

3.2. Instruments

The questionnaire was adapted from Gaffas' (2019) study. The questionnaire was used to obtain the data for the first research question and investigated the perceived English language proficiency in reading, speaking, listening, and

writing skills. The questionnaire consisted of 5 points Likert scale (strongly agree *5*, agree *4*, neutral *3*, disagree *2*, strongly disagree *1*) (See Appendix A).

The focus group interviews were audio-recorded to find the data for the study's second and third research questions. The interview questions were adapted from Chan, Mamat & Nadarajah's (2022) study. It covered three themes: English language use in university education, the impact of English Language proficiency on students, and the influence of university culture on English language proficiency (See Appendix B).

3.3. Procedure

The software used for data analysis was IBM SPSS Base Licensed version 26. Descriptive analysis was performed by finding the mean, minimum and maximum, range, standard deviation, level of skewness, and kurtosis. Moreover, cross tabulation and correlation were performed to answer the second research question. The independent variable of this study was English language teaching whereas the dependent variables were a) Perceived English Language Proficiency, b) Efficacy of the English language courses, and c) Influence of University Culture on English language proficiency.

The six steps of Braun and Clarke's framework were followed for thematic analysis, i.e., data familiarization, identification of codes, finding themes, reviewing of themes, definition, and naming of themes, and report production. It consisted of two levels: semantic and latent. Surfaced themes were analyzed at the latent level, whereas the data's explicit meaning was analyzed at the semantic level (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The questionnaire

Students were asked for their perceived English language proficiency by agreeing and disagreeing with the statements regarding reading, speaking, listening and

writing on a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. To smooth the way for data analysis, students' responses of 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' were combined under one category, namely (SD-D), and numeric value was assigned as (SD-D = 1). Similarly, 'strongly agree' and 'agree' were combined under one category, namely (SA-A), and numeric value was assigned as (SA-A =3). The remaining category of 'neutral' remained as it is (N = 2).

Table 2 (Reading skills) presents the findings of perceived proficiency in reading skills. As shown, students perceived that they 'distinguish the main ideas from supporting details' as the strongest subskill with 88.2% agreeing with this statement. While, the least strong subskill they perceived was 'understand the meaning of the technical terms', with 50% agreeing with the statement. The findings are aligned with the Cobb and Horst's (2001) and Gaffas's (2019) studies where the unknown technical terms were reported as the hindrance in reading and comprehending English text. Also, 58.3% students perceived that 'mak[ing] inferences to get implied message in the texts' is the second least strong subskill with 37% remain neutral and 4.7% disagree with the statement. The results reveal that the least strong subskills have a 50% ratio of agreement highlighting the difficulty of understanding of technical terms and inferential skill suggesting the EAP and ESP courses to integrate comprehension practices and inferential skills in the classroom resources and pedagogy as supported by the findings of the studies conducted by Afshar and Movassagh (2016) and Gaffas (2019).

Table 5: Reading Skills

		Percentage		
Sr	**Reading skills**	**SD-D**	**SA-A**	**N**
1	I understand the meaning of unfamiliar terms.	6.3	63.4	30.3

2	I distinguish the main ideas from supporting details.	3.6	88.2	8.3
3	I make inferences to get implied message in the texts.	4.7	58.3	37
4	I understand the text structure.	3.9	83.7	12.2
5	I understand references in the text.	3.6	84.2	12.2
6	I read quickly for specific pieces of information.	4	82.3	13.8
7	I read quickly for the main ideas in a text.	5.5	81.9	11.4
8	I understand the meaning of the technical terms.	5.9	50	44.1

Table 3 (speaking skills) presents findings of perceived proficiency in speaking skills (9-16) where their strongest subskills were answering questions and giving oral presentations as 78.8% and 78.3% respondents agreed with the statements respectively. While their weakest subskills were expressing ideas fluently and interacting with others in English as 48% and 49.2% students agreed with the statements respectively. The studies of Evans and Green, 2007 and Gaffas, 2019 have highlighted accuracy and fluency in speaking skills as the most challenging sub skill. This may be since the students are not given the opportunity for expressing ideas and interact in English outside the classroom because their first languages do the needful. Moreover, it is worth reporting that overall students did not perceive speaking as the strongest language skill because 58.7% (I express ideas accurately) to 67.3% (I express ideas with clear pronunciation) students agreed with the rest of the statements showing lack of practice time in the classroom or less opportunities outside the classroom.

Table 6: Speaking Skills

Sr.	Speaking Skills	SD-D	SA-A	N
9	I express ideas accurately.	6.7	58.7	34.6
10	I express ideas fluently.	12.5	48	39.4
11	I answer questions.	3.6	78.8	17.7
12	I ask for more information.	10.3	56.3	33.5
13	I participating in class discussion.	9.4	57.9	32.7
14	I express ideas with clear pronunciation.	7.1	67.3	25.6
15	I give oral presentations.	7.1	78.3	14.6
16	I interact with others in English.	15	49.2	35.8

Table 4 (listening skills) demonstrates the findings of the students' perceived proficiency in listening skills. Most students perceived that they ‘understand classroom discussion’ as the strongest subskill, with 93.3 % agreement. On the other hand, ‘understanding information not explicitly stated’ is the lowest subskill perceived, with 47.7% agreeing with the statement. However, topic identification and taking notes were the second and third least subskills perceived, with 92.6% and 85.5%, respectively. The overall findings suggest that students are more confident in comprehending discussions in class, identifying topics, and taking notes. In contrast, students find challenges in comprehending implied meaning while listening aligned with the findings of the studies conducted by Kelly’s (1991) and Gaffas (2019).

Table 7: Listening Skills

	Listening skills	SD-D	SA-A	N
17	I understand the meaning of unfamiliar words.	10.3	52.3	37.4
18	I understand information not explicitly stated.	10.6	47.7	41.7
19	I identify the topic of the lecture.	0.8	92.6	6.7
20	I take notes.	6.7	85.5	7.9
21	I understand classroom discussions.	0.8	93.3	5.9
22	I understand specialised terminology.	8.3	58.6	33.1
23	I understand my notes at a later date.	8.7	78.8	12.6

Table 5 shows students' perceived proficiency in writing skills. Students perceived that they ‘express ideas in idiomatic written English’ as the lowest sub-skill, with 38.5% agreeing with the statement. However, the majority of students perceived that they ‘use correct spelling’ as the strongest sub-skill, with 84.7%, ‘write paragraphs for an assignment’ as the second strongest sub-skill, with 80.3% and ‘use appropriate words’ as the third strongest sub-skill with 76.8% agreeing with these statements. The findings demonstrate that students are competent in spelling, word choice and paragraph writing in the class. On the other hand, students struggle with the usage of idiomatic expressions in their writing which are in agreement with the Evans and Green’s (2007), Gaffas’s (2019) and Morrison’s (2014) studies as students reported difficulties in text construction.

Table 8: Writing Skills

	Writing skills	**SD-D**	**SA-A**	**N**
24	I use appropriate words.	3.9	76.8	19.3
25	I express ideas in idiomatic written English.	25.5	38.5	35.8
26	I link paragraphs adequately.	6.7	66.9	26.4
27	I use accurate grammar in writing sentences.	8.7	64.2	27.2
28	I write paragraphs for an assignment.	3.6	80.3	16.5
29	I use correct spelling.	2.4	84.7	13
30	I refer to sources.	8.3	66.1	25.6
31	I use correction punctuation.	6.7	64.2	29.1

As shown in the table 6 skewness values ranged from -0.870 (Listening skill) to -0.568 (Speaking skill), indicating a moderate negative skew across all skills. This suggests that students tend to rate their proficiency lower rather than higher. Listening proficiency had the strongest negative skew (-0.870), meaning a larger number of students perceived their listening skills as below average. In contrast, speaking skill (-0.568) showed the least skewness, suggesting a more balanced distribution of perceived proficiency in this skill. Similarly, the kurtosis values indicate the peakedness of the distribution. Listening skill (5.641) exhibited the highest kurtosis, suggesting that students' self-ratings in listening proficiency were concentrated around specific values (e.g., many students rated themselves either low or high, with fewer mid-range ratings). Reading proficiency (3.650) also had a slightly peaked distribution. In contrast, speaking skill (1.816) showed

the lowest kurtosis, indicating a flatter, more varied distribution of perceived speaking proficiency. This difference in rating could be the course content where reading and writing skills are taught and given more practice than listening and speaking skills. Speaking skill has varying responses from the participants indicating their educational backgrounds where they might be given less or more opportunities to use English in the spoken discourse eventually leading to different perceptions.

The standard deviation values reflect the variability in students' self-assessments. Writing proficiency (writing skill: SD = 0.6712) and speaking proficiency (speaking skill: SD = 0.6397) had the highest standard deviations, suggesting greater variation in self-perceived skills among students implying that some students felt highly proficient while others rated themselves much lower. Conversely, reading proficiency (reading skill: SD = 0.49149) showed the least variation, indicating that students' perceived reading skills were more consistent across the sample suggesting a more uniform perception among students. Similarly, students perceived listening skill as their weakest skill (listening skill: SD = 0.53488) suggesting that most of the students have weak listening proficiency. These findings indicate that English language courses need to design activities and pedagogy that could target their weakest language subskills. Moreover, these findings reflect that varied educational background and university environment can influence their language proficiency negatively as well as positively. The importance of designing courses as per students need are in line with the studies of Afshar and Movassagh (2016), Eren et. al, (2024), Evans and Green (2007), Gaffas (2019),and Morrison (2014).

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Table 9: Skewness and Kurtosis Statistics of Study Variables

	Reading Skill	Speaking Skill	Listening Skill	Writing Skill
N	254	254	254	254
Mean	3.9042	3.6973	3.8858	3.7918
Median	3.8750	3.6250	3.8571	3.7500
Mode	3.88	3.38	3.71	3.75
Std. Deviation	0.49149	0.63970	0.53488	0.61712
Skewness	-0.642	-0.568	-0.870	-0.584
Std. Error of Skewness	0.153	0.153	0.153	0.153
Kurtosis	3.650	1.816	5.641	2.479
Std. Error of Kurtosis	0.304	0.304	0.304	0.304
Minimum	1.39	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

Table 7 shows p-values are 0.000 therefore, there are significant correlations between reading skill, speaking skill, listening skill, and writing skill. Also, these relationships are strongly positively correlated by the values of r = 0.619 (reading and speaking skills) r = 0.678 (reading and listening skills) r = 0.671 (reading and writing skills) r = 0.647 (speaking and listening skills) r = 0.674 (speaking and writing skills) and r = 0.696 (listening and writing skills). Thus indicating that working on one set of skill can improve students' proficiency in other skill. The results indicate that improvement in pedagogy and activity designing can significantly impact students' overall language proficiency.

Table 10: Pearson Correlation Coefficients among the Variables

		Speaking Skill	Listening Skill	Writing Skill
Reading Skill	**Pearson Correlation**	.619**	.678**	.671**
	p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	254	254	254
Speaking Skill	**Pearson Correlation**		.647**	.674**
	p-value		0.000	0.000
	N		254	254
Listening Skill	**Pearson Correlation**			.696**
	p-value			0.000
	N			254

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.2. Focus-group Interviews

Four focus-group interviews were conducted to get the answers of second and third research questions. The research questions focused on the assistance of offering English language courses for development of English language proficiency and influence of university culture on their English language.

The first theme of the study was English language use in the university education which emerged as two subthemes from students' responses; use of English language in Health Education, and comparison of English usage in school and university. The second and third themes were challenges in understanding due to English language as a barrier and impact of university environment on English mastery respectively.

Students expressed their opinions for the first subtheme emphasizing the importance of bilingualism in medical profession because it helps them to communicate easily with other health professionals and patients rather than only

in English. Some students reported, 'I think you should be able to communicate in more than one language. You have to be bilingual…'. However, some students mentioned that use of English is necessary because all courses are taught in English, books and resource materials are in English, research, reports, and seminars are conducted in English, and English is used for global communication. 'I believe that English is used, is primarily teachers were delivering lectures, giving us reading material, assignments, or having us do research and reports.' Another student said 'We should be considering studying more of in this language, because it's a global language and spoken globally in a lot of countries, including Pakistan. So I think this should be considered as a very important thing to include English language in our courses.'

For the second subtheme students compared their English language learning from school to university. Some students' English language learning experience at school was more rigorous than university while some experienced more opportunities of using English language at the university. Those students who had rigorous learning at school were from Cambridge Education, Catholic school background as they highlighted this aspect. 'I think the difference lies in that, yes, we were basically learning throughout the school that how to speak in English, how to write in English, or like different skills, listening skills, writing skills, verbal skills and all.' Whereas, those who expressed increased usage of English in university were from local educational boards. 'When we come in university, we actually utilize the language for the communication source and the better for the research and the other letters that help to understand and communicate with better ideas and how to grow, especially in fields, how this language is taken in field and how it will help us to enhance our growing skills.' A different aspect was also highlighted by some students that English has become simpler in university as a self-nominated activity while it was more complex in school where

it was more enforced to build a foundation as reported by one of the students, 'I believe that in schools, speaking English was not a voluntary act, but it was more of an enforced act by teachers. So that's where we look at it as a challenge, right? But in universities, it's more of a self-nominated, you know, talking into a creative innovation.'

Students responded for the second theme by expressing the challenges they faced due to English language. One of the interviewed groups mentioned that they first think in their L1 (Urdu in their case) and translate into English before speaking which becomes a challenge for them. 'First you have to think in Urdu, and then you take some time to convert it into English. So I think it was not impeded, but, yeah, it takes time.' 'If we think in Urdu, then we translate in English. That is the time where there's a hindrance, I guess we face a lot of resistance in speaking.' Also, some students pointed out the complexity of English vocabulary used in seminars and research papers failing to understand the subject-matter. 'So in seminars and researches, our English is not that up to a level that we can understand the research. For me, it's difficult to understand the research papers, because if you see the research paper the English used there, it's a very difficult one.' Similarly, teachers' accent and style of speaking English also became a challenge for students to understand the content of the lesson. 'In my second semester, our teacher, she used to speak English with an accent, and in our class, there were students who couldn't specifically understand because of her accent and because of the vocabulary she used.' Furthermore, some of the students expressed their fears and lack of confidence in presenting in English because they were not taught practical English. 'If you have no confidence, you will forget what you want to speak in front of the people.' 'I was a bit afraid that, how am I going to face all of these people while standing on the stage and speak in English.'

Students positively expressed about the third theme where university environment provided them opportunities and tasks that improved their English communication skills. One of the students appreciated presentation tasks where they have to present in front of a large audience enhancing their English mastery. 'The university has made us more proficient in speaking English in front of like a lot of people.' Another student supported, 'it actually prepared us for the future. For example, CV writing, resume writing, presentation, how to make presentation, how to write research articles.' Also, students highlighted that their English language teachers have helped them improve their English language skills. 'The teacher helped us and told us about website that we should search and work on, and at that point our English language is enhanced.' Similarly, some students expressed that their teachers taught them with technology integration and directed them to use it for improving their English language skills. For example, their 'professors' told them to listen to 'TED talks' and use 'Grammarly' to improve English grammar. University environment does play an important role in developing the language proficiency as reported in the studies of Gaffas (2019), Eren et al, (2024), and Mohamed et al (2024).

5. Conclusion

This study concluded that diverse educational background of students impede improvement in the English language skills of health sciences students. It emphasizes to implement streaming based on the Common European Frame of Reference (CEFR) levels to better address individual learner needs.

Due to diverse educational backgrounds, students face the challenge when English became the barrier in their learning rather than assistance in learning. The situation highlights the lack of proper language learning at school level widened tha gap making it more difficult for them. Consequently, it is imperative for the English language teachers and university administration to decrease the gap by

making the classroom conducive for learning by revising language pedagogy. The positive aspect generated from this study is the favorable university learning environment that provided students with opportunities to communicate in English frequently with peers and audience.

6. Limitations

The study is limited to Health Sciences students in Undergraduate programs. Therefore, its results cannot be generalized to medical students of MBBS and BDS. Furthermore, the sample of the study represents the students from different Undergraduate programs in the health sciences whereas each health sciences program needs individual in-depth exploration and investigation to diagnose the implementation of the English language courses and students' perceptions of each program. The results of this study would suggest the redesigning of the curricula and lesson plans which should cater for the needs and requirements of each discipline for the English language.

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APPENDIX-A

Consent

This study aims to evaluate the importance of English language (EL) skills in health sciences education from students' perspectives. This study also explores the English language proficiency of the students to gauge the scope of English language teaching in the healthcare sector.

Confidentiality

The data held in the survey is anonymized, except where you have provided your information for follow-up. Your data will be held by the Data Protection Act.

Data Protection Notice

The information you provide will be used for research purposes only. Your data will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be disclosed to any unauthorized third parties. The results of the research will be published in anonymized form.

Anonymity: The survey data is anonymous, and any publication of the results will not identify you in any way.

Confirmation of consent

I have been fully informed about the aims and objectives of the project. I understand that:

1) There is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project.
2) If I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation.
3) I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me.
4) Any information which I give will be used solely for this research project, which may include publications.

5) If applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researchers participating in this project in an anonymized form.
6) All information I give will be treated as confidential. The researchers will make every effort to preserve my anonymity.

Demographic Information

Name _____

Name of college/institution

- Dow Institute of Nursing and Midwifery
- School of Public Health
- Institute of Medical Technology
- Dow College of Pharmacy
- Dow Institute of Radiology
- Institute of Physical Therapy
- Dow College of Biotechnology
- Dow Institute of Business and health management
- School of Dental Care Professionals (DIKIOHS)
- Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences

Year of the study

- Third year
- Final year

Age _____

Gender

- Male

- Female

Number of English courses studied

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8

Educational Background

- Matric and intermediate (Karachi board)
- level and intermediate (Karachi board)
- A – level
- Matric and intermediate (AKUEB)
- Other

Contact number _____

Questionnaire Tool

Theme 2: Perceived English Language Proficiency Questionnaire Scale

	Reading skills	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
1	I understand the meaning of unfamiliar terms.					
2	I distinguish the main ideas from supporting details.					
3	I make inferences to get implied messages in the texts.					
4	I understand the text structure.					
5	I understand the references in the text.					
6	I read quickly for specific pieces of information.					
7	I read quickly for the main ideas in a text.					
8	I understand the meaning of technical terms.					
	Speaking skills					

9	I express ideas accurately.					
10	I express ideas fluently.					
11	I answer questions.					
12	I ask for more information.					
13	I participate in class discussions.					
14	I express ideas with clear pronunciation.					
15	I give oral presentations.					
16	I interact with others in English.					
	Listening skills					
17	I understand the meaning of unfamiliar words.					
18	I understand information not explicitly stated.					
19	I identify the topic of the lecture.					
20	I take notes.					

21	I understand classroom discussions.					
22	I understand specialised terminology.					
23	I understand my notes at a later date.					
	Writing skills					
24	I use appropriate words.					
25	I express ideas in idiomatic written English.					
26	I link paragraphs adequately.					
27	I use accurate grammar in writing sentences.					
28	I write paragraphs for an assignment.					
29	I use correct spelling.					
30	I refer to sources.					
31	I use corrected punctuation.					

APPENDIX-B

Focus-Group Interview Questions

Theme 1: English language use in university education:

1) How is the English language used in health education?
2) In what ways did you see the usage of the English language in school compared to university?

Theme 2: Challenges faced due to english language proficiency on students:

3) Can you explain instances where learning was delayed by the English language?

Theme 3: Influence of university culture on english language improvement:

4) In what way has the university learning environment improved