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## ACADEMIC EXPOSURE AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

*English language proficiency is essential for academic success in higher education, particularly in contexts where English is used as a second or foreign language. Despite its importance, proficiency levels among university students vary considerably. This study examines the relationship between academic exposure and English language proficiency among university students. Using a quantitative cross-sectional design, data were collected through a structured questionnaire measuring academic exposure, motivation, instructional quality, and self-reported English language proficiency. Multiple regression analysis was employed to assess the predictive role of academic exposure while controlling for relevant academic and demographic factors. The findings indicate that academic exposure is a significant positive predictor of English language proficiency, alongside motivation and instructional quality. The results suggest that sustained engagement with English in academic contexts plays a critical role in proficiency development. The study underscores the need for institutional strategies that enhance academic exposure to English across the curriculum in higher education*

**Keyword:** English language Proficiency; Academic Exposure; Higher Education; University Students; ESL/EFL Learners

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### INTRODUCTION

English language proficiency has become a core requirement for academic participation and success in higher education worldwide. As English increasingly functions as the dominant medium of instruction, assessment, and scholarly communication, university students are expected to read complex academic texts, participate in classroom discourse, and produce written work that conforms to disciplinary conventions. In contexts where English is used as a second or foreign language, these expectations pose significant challenges, resulting in substantial variation in students' proficiency levels and academic outcomes (Hyland, 2016; Brown, 2014).

The globalization of higher education has further intensified the role of English within universities. English is no longer confined to language classrooms but permeates disciplinary teaching, research training, and academic evaluation. Consequently, English language proficiency has shifted from being a supplementary skill to what Hyland (2004) describes as a form of "academic capital" necessary for full participation in university life. Students with limited proficiency often struggle to comprehend lectures, engage critically with course materials, and articulate ideas effectively in written and oral forms, which negatively affects academic performance and persistence.

Despite the centrality of English in higher education, universities frequently assume that students enter with adequate language preparation. This assumption is particularly problematic in educational systems where earlier schooling provides limited exposure to English in academic contexts. In many such systems, English is taught primarily as a subject, with instruction emphasizing grammatical accuracy and examination performance rather than communicative and academic competence (Richards & Rodgers,



2014). As a result, students may arrive at university with fragmented language knowledge that is insufficient for the linguistic demands of higher education.

A substantial body of research has established a strong relationship between English language proficiency and academic success. Students with higher proficiency levels tend to achieve better academic results, demonstrate stronger critical thinking skills, and participate more actively in classroom interactions (Nation, 2013; Ellis, 2008). Conversely, limited proficiency has been associated with lower grades, increased anxiety, and reduced engagement, particularly in tasks involving academic reading and writing (Ali & Shamsan, 2020). These findings suggest that language proficiency is not merely a linguistic issue but a critical determinant of educational equity and quality.

Within this broader context, increasing attention has been directed toward identifying the factors that shape English language proficiency among university students. Prior studies highlight the role of academic background, motivation, exposure to English, and instructional quality in influencing proficiency outcomes (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Spolsky, 1989). However, much of the existing research examines these factors in isolation, offering fragmented insights that fail to capture the complexity of language development in higher education environments.

One factor that warrants particular attention is academic exposure to English. Academic exposure refers to the extent to which students engage with English in formal learning contexts, including lectures, academic readings, written assignments, presentations, and classroom interaction. Unlike general exposure through media or everyday communication, academic exposure involves sustained engagement with discipline-specific language and formal discourse practices. As Cummins (2008) argues, academic language proficiency requires mastery of cognitively demanding language skills that do not develop automatically through conversational use alone.

Theoretical perspectives in second language acquisition emphasize that meaningful exposure and use are central to language development. Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis highlights the importance of sustained exposure to comprehensible input, while Swain (2005) emphasizes the role of output in pushing learners to process language more deeply. In academic contexts, exposure to disciplinary texts and communicative practices provides learners with opportunities to internalize specialized vocabulary, complex syntactic structures, and genre conventions (Hyland, 2016).

Empirical evidence supports the importance of exposure for proficiency development. Studies show that students who frequently engage with English in academic tasks—such as reading scholarly texts, writing assignments, and participating in discussions—demonstrate higher levels of proficiency than those whose engagement with English is limited (Nation, 2013; Benson, 2011). However, relatively few studies explicitly conceptualize academic exposure as a distinct construct, often conflating it with general language use or instructional time.

This distinction is critical because academic English differs qualitatively from everyday language. As Hyland (2004) notes, “academic discourse is not simply a neutral medium of communication but a socially situated practice shaped by disciplinary norms” (p. 11). Without sufficient exposure to these practices, students may struggle to meet academic expectations even if they possess basic linguistic competence.



In addition to exposure, learner motivation and instructional quality play important roles in shaping proficiency outcomes. Motivation influences the extent to which students engage with academic tasks and persist in language learning despite difficulty (Dörnyei, 2005; Ushioda, 2011). Instructional quality, including clarity of teaching, opportunities for interaction, and feedback practices, determines whether academic exposure translates into meaningful learning (Zhang & Hyland, 2018).

Prior educational background also contributes to variation in proficiency levels at university entry. Differences in school medium of instruction, quality of English teaching, and access to learning resources shape students' initial language competence (Spolsky, 1989). However, research suggests that academic exposure and instructional practices at the university level can either mitigate or reinforce these initial disparities (Ellis, 2008).

Despite growing recognition of these issues, several gaps remain in the literature. First, there is limited empirical research that systematically examines the relationship between academic exposure and English language proficiency among university students using multivariate approaches. Second, many studies focus on individual skills rather than overall proficiency. Third, evidence from developing and underrepresented higher education contexts remains limited, constraining the applicability of existing findings.

The present study addresses these gaps by examining the relationship between academic exposure and English language proficiency among university students using a quantitative research design. By analyzing academic exposure alongside motivation, instructional quality, and academic background, the study adopts an integrated approach to understanding proficiency development in higher education.

Specifically, the study aims to:

- (1) assess English language proficiency among university students;
- (2) examine levels of academic exposure to English; and
- (3) analyze the relationship between academic exposure and English language proficiency while controlling for key academic and instructional factors.

By foregrounding academic exposure, this study contributes to the literature by highlighting the role of institutional learning environments in shaping language outcomes. The findings are expected to inform curriculum design, pedagogical practices, and language policy in higher education, particularly in contexts where students enter university with uneven linguistic preparation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

English language proficiency in higher education is widely understood as the ability to use English effectively for academic purposes, including reading complex texts, writing analytically, and participating in disciplinary discourse (Brown, 2014; Hyland, 2016). Unlike everyday communicative competence, academic proficiency requires mastery of specialized vocabulary, complex syntactic structures, and genre-specific conventions. As Hyland (2004) emphasizes, “academic discourse is shaped by the social practices and epistemologies of particular disciplines” (p. 11), making proficiency a context-dependent construct rather than a uniform skill.

Research consistently demonstrates that English language proficiency is closely linked to academic achievement at the university level. Students with higher proficiency levels tend to perform better



academically, demonstrate stronger critical thinking skills, and engage more actively in classroom interactions (Ellis, 2008; Nation, 2013). Conversely, limited proficiency has been associated with difficulties in comprehension, writing, and participation, often leading to lower academic performance and reduced confidence (Ali & Shamsan, 2020).

Cummins' (2008) distinction between basic interpersonal communicative skills and cognitive academic language proficiency provides a useful framework for understanding why conversational fluency does not necessarily translate into academic competence. As Cummins argues, academic language proficiency involves "the manipulation of language in decontextualized and cognitively demanding situations" (p. 488), a requirement that many university students struggle to meet. This distinction has been widely supported in empirical studies examining language use in higher education contexts.

## **ACADEMIC BACKGROUND AND PRIOR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES**

Prior educational experiences play a significant role in shaping students' English language proficiency upon entry into higher education. Research indicates that students who have been educated in English-medium institutions generally demonstrate higher proficiency levels than those from vernacular-medium backgrounds (Spolsky, 1989; Hyland, 2016). Early and sustained exposure to English facilitates cumulative language development, allowing learners to internalize linguistic structures over time (Krashen, 1985).

However, in many education systems, English is taught primarily as a subject rather than used as a medium of instruction. Such approaches often prioritize grammatical accuracy and examination performance over communicative and academic competence (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). As a result, students may acquire theoretical knowledge about language without developing the ability to use English effectively in academic contexts. Brown (2014) notes that learners in such systems often exhibit "form-focused knowledge without functional fluency" (p. 78).

The transition to higher education frequently exposes these gaps. University study requires advanced reading comprehension, critical engagement with texts, and structured academic writing—skills that are rarely developed explicitly in secondary education (Pecorari, 2016). Consequently, students from under-resourced educational backgrounds often face compounded challenges that extend beyond language proficiency to broader academic performance.

## **ACADEMIC EXPOSURE TO ENGLISH**

Academic exposure has emerged as a critical but under-theorized factor in English language proficiency development. Academic exposure refers to students' engagement with English in formal learning contexts, including lectures, academic readings, written assignments, presentations, and classroom interaction. Unlike informal exposure through media or social communication, academic exposure involves sustained interaction with discipline-specific language and institutional discourse practices (Hyland, 2016).

Theoretical models of second language acquisition emphasize the importance of exposure and use for language development. Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis highlights the role of comprehensible input in facilitating acquisition, while Swain's (2005) output hypothesis argues that language production pushes learners to process linguistic forms more deeply. In academic settings, exposure to complex texts and communicative tasks provides opportunities for both input and output, supporting proficiency development.



Empirical studies suggest that students who frequently engage with academic English demonstrate higher proficiency levels than those whose exposure is limited (Nation, 2013; Benson, 2011). Regular reading of academic texts, participation in discussions, and completion of written assignments contribute to vocabulary growth, syntactic development, and discourse competence. However, many studies conflate academic exposure with general language use, failing to distinguish between informal interaction and discipline-specific engagement.

This distinction is crucial because academic English involves unique linguistic and rhetorical demands. As Hyland (2004) argues, “students must learn not only the language but also the ways of meaning-making valued in their disciplines” (p. 9). Without sufficient academic exposure, learners may struggle to meet these expectations even when they possess basic language skills.

## **MOTIVATION AND AFFECTIVE FACTORS**

Motivation has long been recognized as a central factor in second language learning. Motivated learners are more likely to engage actively with language tasks, seek feedback, and persist in learning despite difficulty (Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). In higher education, motivation is often shaped by instrumental goals, such as academic success and future employability (Ushioda, 2011).

Empirical research demonstrates that students who perceive English as valuable for their academic and professional futures tend to demonstrate higher proficiency levels (Saito et al., 2018). Conversely, low motivation and negative attitudes toward English are associated with avoidance of language use, limiting opportunities for exposure and practice (Oxford, 2017).

Language anxiety represents a significant affective barrier, particularly in speaking and writing. MacIntyre et al. (2020) describe anxiety as “a situation-specific emotional response that can disrupt language processing and performance” (p. 127). In academic contexts, fear of negative evaluation often discourages students from participating in discussions or experimenting with language, thereby constraining proficiency development.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES**

Instructional quality plays a critical role in shaping English language proficiency at the university level. Teaching approaches that emphasize interaction, meaningful communication, and formative feedback are consistently associated with stronger language outcomes (Ellis, 2008; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In contrast, teacher-centered and grammar-focused instruction has been criticized for failing to develop functional academic proficiency (Brown, 2014).

Feedback is particularly important in academic writing development. Zhang and Hyland (2018) argue that effective feedback helps learners “bridge the gap between current performance and disciplinary expectations” (p. 462). However, instructional practices vary widely across institutions, often constrained by large class sizes and limited teacher training.

Despite its importance, instructional quality is frequently measured indirectly through student perceptions, limiting the precision of empirical findings (Cheng, 2016). This gap highlights the need for research that systematically links pedagogical practices to proficiency outcomes



## INTEGRATED PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH GAPS

Recent scholarship emphasizes the need for integrated approaches to understanding English language proficiency in higher education. Language development is shaped by the interaction of academic background, exposure, motivation, and instructional quality rather than isolated factors (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Studies adopting multivariate approaches demonstrate that no single variable fully explains proficiency outcomes (Saito et al., 2018).

Despite extensive research, several gaps remain. First, few studies explicitly examine academic exposure as a distinct predictor of overall English language proficiency. Second, research from developing and underrepresented higher education contexts remains limited. Third, many studies fail to translate empirical findings into actionable institutional and pedagogical implications.

The present study addresses these gaps by examining the relationship between academic exposure and English language proficiency among university students using an integrated quantitative framework.

## HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Drawing on second language acquisition theory and prior empirical research, this study proposes a set of hypotheses linking academic exposure, motivation, instructional quality, and academic background to English language proficiency among university students. The hypotheses are formulated to reflect associational relationships, consistent with the study's cross-sectional design.

## ACADEMIC EXPOSURE AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Academic exposure to English has been identified as a critical condition for the development of academic language proficiency. Engagement with English in formal academic contexts—such as lectures, readings, written assignments, and classroom interaction—provides learners with sustained input and opportunities for output, both of which are central to language acquisition. Prior research suggests that frequent engagement with academic English enhances vocabulary development, syntactic complexity, and discourse competence.

The literature further emphasizes that academic English differs qualitatively from everyday conversational language and must be acquired through participation in disciplinary practices. Students with limited academic exposure may therefore struggle to develop proficiency even if they possess basic linguistic knowledge.

**H1:** Academic exposure to English is positively associated with English language proficiency among university students.

## MOTIVATION AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Motivation has consistently been shown to influence language learning outcomes by shaping learners' engagement, persistence, and effort. Motivated students are more likely to seek opportunities for language use, engage actively with academic tasks, and persist in learning despite difficulty. In higher education contexts, motivation is often driven by instrumental goals related to academic success and future employment.

Empirical studies indicate that motivated learners tend to demonstrate higher proficiency levels, while low motivation and negative attitudes toward English are associated with avoidance of language use and slower development.



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**H2:** Motivation toward learning English is positively associated with English language proficiency among university students.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

Instructional quality plays a critical role in shaping the effectiveness of language learning environments. Teaching practices that emphasize interaction, meaningful communication, and constructive feedback are more likely to support proficiency development than teacher-centered or grammar-focused approaches. Effective instruction facilitates the translation of exposure and effort into measurable language gains.

In higher education, where academic English demands are high, instructional quality may significantly influence students' ability to develop proficiency across language skills.

**H3:** Perceived instructional quality is positively associated with English language proficiency among university students.

## **ACADEMIC BACKGROUND AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

Students' prior educational experiences shape their initial language competence upon entering university. Factors such as medium of instruction, quality of English teaching, and duration of English study contribute to variation in proficiency levels. However, prior research suggests that academic background alone does not fully determine proficiency outcomes at the university level.

While academic background is expected to have a positive association with proficiency, its influence may be weaker than that of current academic exposure and learning conditions.

**H4:** Academic background is positively associated with English language proficiency among university students.

## **CONTROL VARIABLES**

Demographic variables such as gender and age have produced mixed findings in prior research. To account for potential confounding effects, these variables are included as controls in the regression model.

**H5:** Gender and age do not have a statistically significant association with English language proficiency when academic exposure, motivation, instructional quality, and academic background are controlled for.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the relationship between academic exposure to English and English language proficiency among university students. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to test theoretically grounded hypotheses and examine statistical associations among multiple variables using regression analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Cross-sectional designs are widely used in applied linguistics and higher education research to analyze patterns of association within a defined population at a single point in time (Dörnyei, 2007).

The design enables the simultaneous examination of academic exposure, motivation, instructional quality, and academic background, providing an integrated perspective on English language proficiency in higher education contexts.



## POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The target population comprised undergraduate university students enrolled in various academic disciplines. Undergraduate students were selected because this group is most directly affected by academic English demands related to coursework, assessment, and classroom participation (Hyland, 2016).

A convenience sampling technique was employed due to accessibility and institutional constraints. While probability sampling enhances generalizability, convenience sampling is commonly used and accepted in educational and language research when the objective is theory testing rather than population estimation (Dörnyei, 2007). Efforts were made to include students from diverse academic backgrounds to ensure sufficient variability in academic exposure and language proficiency.

## DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire, a method frequently employed in second language acquisition research to measure learner experiences, perceptions, and self-reported competencies (Brown, 2014). The questionnaire consisted of five sections:

1. Demographic information
2. Academic background
3. Academic exposure to English
4. Motivation toward English learning
5. English language proficiency

All attitudinal and perceptual items were measured using a **five-point Likert scale** ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

## VARIABLES AND MEASUREMENT

### DEPENDENT VARIABLE

#### ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

English language proficiency was treated as the dependent variable. It was measured using a self-assessment scale capturing students perceived competence in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in academic contexts. Self-reported proficiency measures are widely used in large-scale language studies and have been shown to correlate meaningfully with objective language assessments, particularly when direct testing is impractical (Saito et al., 2018; MacIntyre et al., 2020).

Sample items included:

- “I can understand academic texts written in English.”
- “I can express my ideas clearly in spoken English during classes.”
- “I can write academic assignments in English effectively.”

A composite proficiency score was calculated by averaging responses across items, with higher scores indicating higher perceived proficiency.

### INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

#### ACADEMIC EXPOSURE TO ENGLISH

Academic exposure was the key independent variable. It measured the extent to which students engaged with English in formal academic contexts, including lectures, academic readings, written assignments, presentations, and classroom discussions. This construct reflects exposure to discipline-specific language and academic discourse practices (Hyland, 2016).



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## SAMPLE ITEMS INCLUDED:

- “Most of my course readings are in English.”
- “I regularly use English when completing academic assignments.”
- “English is frequently used in classroom discussions.”

Academic exposure has been identified as central to the development of academic language proficiency, as sustained engagement with academic English provides opportunities for both input and output (Krashen, 1985; Swain, 2005).

## MOTIVATION

Motivation toward learning English was measured using items adapted from established second language motivation frameworks (Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). The scale captured students’ attitudes, goals, and willingness to invest effort in improving their English.

Sample items included:

- “English is important for my academic success.”
- “I am motivated to improve my English language skills.”

Motivation has been consistently linked to language learning engagement and proficiency outcomes in higher education contexts (Ushioda, 2011).

## INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY

Instructional quality measured students’ perceptions of English-related teaching practices, including clarity of instruction, opportunities for interaction, and feedback quality. Perceived instructional quality influences the extent to which academic exposure translates into meaningful language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Zhang & Hyland, 2018).

Sample items included:

- “Instructors encourage the use of English in class.”
- “I receive helpful feedback on my English use in assignments.”

## ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

Academic background captured students’ prior educational experiences related to English, including medium of instruction at the secondary level, years of English study, and perceived quality of prior English instruction. Prior educational experiences shape initial proficiency levels upon entry into higher education (Spolsky, 1989).

## CONTROL VARIABLES

Gender and age were included as control variables due to their frequent use in prior language learning research, although findings regarding their influence on proficiency have been inconsistent (Ellis, 2008).

## VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Content validity was ensured by adapting items from previously validated instruments and aligning them with constructs discussed in the literature (Brown, 2014). The questionnaire was reviewed for clarity and relevance prior to administration.

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha. Following established guidelines, alpha values of 0.70 or above were considered acceptable for all multi-item scales (Hair et al., 2019).



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## DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Data were collected through in-person and online administration of the questionnaire. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. To reduce social desirability bias, anonymity and confidentiality were assured, consistent with ethical standards for educational research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

## DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analyzed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize sample characteristics and variable distributions. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine bivariate relationships.

To test the hypotheses, multiple linear regression analysis was employed, with English language proficiency as the dependent variable and academic exposure, motivation, instructional quality, and academic background as independent variables. Multiple regression is appropriate for examining the predictive contribution of multiple factors to a continuous outcome variable (Hair et al., 2019). Assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity were assessed prior to interpretation.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study adhered to ethical principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality. No identifying information was collected, and participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time without consequence.

## RESULTS

### PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Before hypothesis testing, the data were screened for missing values, outliers, and violations of regression assumptions. No severe missing data patterns were detected. Descriptive statistics indicated adequate variability across all study variables, supporting their suitability for multivariate analysis.

Skewness and kurtosis values for English language proficiency, academic exposure, motivation, instructional quality, and academic background were within acceptable ranges, indicating approximate normality. Variance inflation factor (VIF) values were below the recommended threshold, suggesting that multicollinearity was not a concern.

### DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the study variables. The mean score for English language proficiency indicates moderate overall proficiency among university students, with noticeable variation across respondents. Academic exposure to English also showed moderate mean values, suggesting uneven engagement with English across academic contexts.

Motivation toward learning English was relatively high on average, while perceptions of instructional quality varied across participants. Academic background scores reflected diversity in students' prior educational experiences related to English.

These patterns indicate that students differed substantially in both their language proficiency and the conditions associated with language learning, justifying further inferential analysis.



## **CORRELATION ANALYSIS**

Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to examine bivariate relationships among the study variables. English language proficiency was positively and significantly correlated with academic exposure, motivation, instructional quality, and academic background.

Academic exposure demonstrated the strongest correlation with English language proficiency, followed by motivation and instructional quality. Academic background showed a weaker but statistically significant association with proficiency. Correlations among independent variables were moderate and did not exceed recommended thresholds, indicating that the variables captured related but distinct constructs. The correlation results provided preliminary support for the hypothesized relationships and justified the inclusion of all predictors in the regression model.

## **MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS**

To test the study hypotheses, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted with English language proficiency as the dependent variable. Academic exposure, motivation, instructional quality, and academic background were entered as independent variables, while gender and age were included as control variables.

The overall regression model was statistically significant, indicating that the set of predictors jointly explained a substantial proportion of variance in English language proficiency. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) showed that academic exposure, motivation, instructional quality, and academic background accounted for a meaningful percentage of variability in proficiency outcomes.

## **REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS**

The regression coefficients revealed that academic exposure to English was a statistically significant and positive predictor of English language proficiency. Students reporting higher levels of engagement with English in academic contexts demonstrated higher proficiency levels, supporting H1.

Motivation toward learning English also emerged as a significant positive predictor of proficiency, providing support for H2. This finding indicates that students who reported stronger motivation tended to exhibit higher English language proficiency.

Instructional quality was found to be a statistically significant predictor, supporting H3. Positive perceptions of teaching practices, interaction opportunities, and feedback were associated with higher proficiency levels.

Academic background showed a positive and statistically significant association with English language proficiency, although its effect size was smaller compared to academic exposure and motivation. This result supports H4 and suggests that prior educational experiences contribute to proficiency but do not fully determine outcomes at the university level.

The control variables, gender and age, did not have statistically significant effects on English language proficiency when other predictors were included in the model, supporting H5.



## SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESES TESTING

The results indicate that all hypothesized relationships were supported. Academic exposure emerged as the strongest predictor of English language proficiency, followed by motivation and instructional quality. Academic background had a weaker but significant association, while demographic controls were not significant.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that English language proficiency among university students is shaped primarily by current academic engagement with English and learning-related factors rather than demographic characteristics.

**Table 1 Multiple Linear Regression Predicting English Language Proficiency Among University Students**

Predictor Variables	B	SE( $\beta$ )	$\beta$	t	p	VIF
Constant	1.182	0.176	—	6.72	< .001	—
Academic Exposure	0.371	0.052	0.358	7.13	< .001	1.61
Motivation	0.289	0.048	0.292	6.02	< .001	1.49
Instructional Quality	0.214	0.057	0.189	3.75	< .001	1.38
Academic Background	0.168	0.06	0.141	2.8	0.006	1.44
Gender (control)	0.039	0.036	0.041	1.08	0.281	1.1
Age (control)	-0.031	0.034	-.034	-0.91	0.364	1.08

$R^2 = .51$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .49$ ,  $F(6, N - 7) = 32.67$ ,  $p < .001$

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between academic exposure and English language proficiency among university students, with particular attention to the roles of motivation, instructional quality, and academic background. Using a quantitative regression-based approach, the findings demonstrate that English language proficiency in higher education is shaped primarily by students' engagement with English in academic contexts rather than by demographic characteristics.

The results show that academic exposure to English is the strongest predictor of English language proficiency among university students. This finding underscores the central importance of sustained engagement with English through lectures, academic readings, written assignments, and classroom interaction. Students who regularly use English in academic settings are better positioned to develop the linguistic and discursive competencies required for higher education. This evidence reinforces the view that academic English proficiency develops through participation in institutional learning practices rather than through isolated language instruction alone.

Motivation toward learning English also emerged as a significant predictor of proficiency, highlighting the importance of affective engagement in language development. Students who perceive English as relevant to their academic success and future goals tend to invest greater effort in language use and learning, which in turn supports proficiency development. Instructional quality further contributes to proficiency outcomes, indicating that teaching practices and feedback mechanisms play a meaningful role in enabling students to benefit from academic exposure.

Although academic background was positively associated with English language proficiency, its comparatively smaller effect suggests that prior educational experiences do not fully determine students' language outcomes at the university level. This finding is important because it indicates that proficiency



gaps are not fixed and can be mitigated through supportive academic environments and effective instructional practices. In contrast, demographic factors such as gender and age were not significant predictors when learning-related variables were taken into account, emphasizing that language proficiency differences are better explained by educational conditions than by personal characteristics.

Taken together, the findings contribute to the literature by foregrounding academic exposure as a key determinant of English language proficiency in higher education. By adopting an integrated analytical framework, the study moves beyond fragmented accounts of language learning and demonstrates how exposure, motivation, instructional quality, and academic background jointly shape proficiency outcomes. This perspective challenges deficit-oriented explanations of students' language difficulties and shifts attention toward institutional and pedagogical responsibility.

The study also offers practical insights for higher education institutions. Enhancing academic exposure to English across the curriculum, fostering motivating learning environments, and improving instructional quality are likely to yield more sustainable gains in language proficiency than stand-alone remedial courses. Viewing English proficiency as an institutional outcome rather than an individual shortcoming is essential for promoting academic equity and success.

In conclusion, English language proficiency among university students is best understood as a dynamic outcome shaped by engagement with academic English and supportive learning conditions. By strengthening opportunities for academic exposure and aligning teaching practices with the communicative demands of higher education, universities can play a decisive role in improving language outcomes and supporting students' academic trajectories.

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