

Language Fluency Difficulty among First-Year AB English Students: Basis for Intervention Program

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Article History:

Date Received: August 23, 2026

Date Revised: August 28, 2026

Date Accepted: September 7, 2026

Date Published: October 07, 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.67903/ijroms0449>

Document ID: 2026IJROMS0449

Recommended Citation:

Gargar, M. K. T., Amallo, C. D., Baylon, A. L., Castillon, K. S., Dinanoy, C. P., Dosejo, S. P. G., Jalandoni, A. M., Jara, J. M. M., & Salioc, P. J. Y. (2026). Language fluency difficulty among first-year AB English students: Basis for intervention program. *International Journal of Research on Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1(9), 14–29. <https://doi.org/10.67903/ijroms0449>

Abstract. The study investigated factors contributing to language fluency difficulties among 150 first-year AB English students at a community college in Negros Occidental, with the aim of developing a targeted intervention program. Addressing these persistent challenges was vital for the academic and professional success of these majors, especially amid the reported decline in national English competency. Using a quantitative design with self-administered survey questionnaires, the research categorized contributing elements into three domains: linguistic, affective, and environmental factors. Findings showed that fluency challenges were shaped by these domains, with affective barriers such as anxiety, low confidence, and lack of motivation exerting the strongest impact. Vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, along with limited opportunities to practice English outside the classroom and peer judgment in unsupportive settings, further exacerbated these issues. The study also revealed that the impact of these barriers varied across demographic profiles. Sex differences were notable, with female students reporting stronger affective challenges. Environmental factors also differed by educational background, as students from public high schools consistently experienced less supportive settings, linking limited resource accessibility to poorer outcomes. Likewise, those from non-communication-focused Senior High School (SHS) strands, particularly the ABM strand and Others, reported the least favorable learning environments, underscoring how prior curriculum orientation and limited communicative exposure restricted fluency growth. These findings emphasized that fluency difficulties were shaped not only by universal barriers but also by profile-specific conditions. Consequently, the study recommended strengthening instruction, improving resources, and integrating affective support strategies through a carefully crafted intervention program.

Keywords: Fluency; Linguistic Factors; Affective Factors; Environmental Factors; College Students

Introduction

Language fluency played an important role in enabling individuals to communicate and participate effectively in an increasingly interconnected world. English, in particular, served as a global lingua franca, facilitating communication across different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Its widespread use in education, employment, science, technology, and international communication contributed to the continuing demand for English language proficiency. English was expected to retain its position as the leading global language of communication, while proficiency in English provided learners with opportunities for further study, employment, and international mobility (British Council, 2023).

In response to this demand, many Asian regions made tremendous strides in English language education, with several countries demonstrating significant progress in developing learners' English proficiency. The Philippines, together with other ASEAN member states, strengthened English education through policies and practices that promoted effective language learning. English was widely integrated into the basic education systems of ASEAN countries, reflecting the region's commitment to improving learners' language competence and preparing them for regional and global communication. This strong regional foundation offered promising opportunities for the continued growth and improvement of English proficiency (Zein, 2022).

Despite the importance of English proficiency, Filipino students continued to face challenges in developing essential language and literacy skills. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022 revealed that only 24% of 15-year-old students in the Philippines had reached at least Level 2 proficiency in reading, compared with the OECD average of 74%. Furthermore, the Philippines recorded an average reading score of 347 points, which was considerably lower than the OECD average of 476 points (OECD, 2023). These findings highlighted persistent difficulties in students' reading and comprehension abilities and emphasized the need to strengthen language and literacy skills among Filipino learners.

This concern was also evident in Philippine higher education, particularly among students majoring in English. For instance, Docena et al. (2023) examined freshmen English majors and found that they experienced apprehension during oral presentations, language disruptions, and difficulties related to preparation and confidence. Similarly, Auxtero et al. (2026) investigated first-year English majors and identified fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, low self-esteem, and lack of speaking practice as recurring barriers to oral proficiency. In another study, Masagnay (2026) observed that first-year English majors struggled with syntactic, morphological, lexical, and mechanical challenges, which were linked to limited knowledge of English structures and insufficient reading exposure. Taken together, these findings showed that Filipino English majors continued to face challenges that hindered their effective use of English and highlighted the need for appropriate support and opportunities to strengthen their language skills.

Therefore, a noticeable gap remained, particularly in terms of population focus. Although many studies had explored factors contributing to language fluency challenges, most had centered on general populations, with limited investigations specifically targeting AB English students. To address this gap, the present study investigated the factors affecting language fluency difficulties among first-year AB English students at a local community college in Negros.

Given these limitations and challenges, investigating the underlying factors was essential. This study sought to identify the root causes and provide a foundation for an intervention program. By understanding what contributed to language fluency difficulties, school administrators and educators could design targeted strategies to help students strengthen their language skills. These interventions would not only improve fluency but also support academic success and equip students with the competencies needed for their future careers.

Research Questions

This study aimed to investigate the factors affecting language fluency difficulties among first-year AB English students.

Specifically, it aimed to answer the following questions;

1. What is the profile of students in terms of:
 - 1.1 Sex,
 - 1.2 Section,
 - 1.3 Type of high school graduated from, and
 - 1.4 Senior high school (SHS) strands
2. What is the perceived level of language fluency difficulty among first-year AB English students in terms of:
 - 2.1 Linguistic
 - 2.2 Affective, and
 - 2.3 Environmental
3. Is there a significant difference in the perceived level of language fluency difficulty among first-year AB English students in terms of profile categorized by linguistic, affective, and environmental factors?
4. Is there a significant difference in the perceived level of language fluency difficulty among first-year AB English students in terms of linguistic, affective, and environmental factors when taken collectively?
5. Based on the results of the study, what intervention program can be crafted?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The study aimed to investigate the factors affecting language fluency difficulty. It focused on first-year students enrolled in the AB English program at a local community college in Negros during the school year 2025–2026. Out of the 240 first-year AB English students, 150 were selected as respondents for conducting the survey. Section A had a total sample of 26; Sections B, C, and D had 25 samples each; Section E had 23 samples; and Section F had 26 samples in the population. Data collection and analysis took place from July to September 30, and a set of data-gathering tools was employed, such as survey questionnaires and answer

sheets. During the study, each respondent was given the same set of materials, which were distributed in their respective classrooms and answered with honesty and willingness.

Literature Review

Language Fluency

According to a study by Li and Zhang (2023), language fluency referred to the capacity to use a language rapidly and confidently, without unnecessary hesitation or awkward pauses that hindered communication. It had become a common concern for both teachers and students learning English as a foreign language. In other words, fluency represented an expectation for anyone striving to become competent in the target language they worked hard to acquire. It signified a crucial indicator of language learning progress and served as a key condition for effective communication. Furthermore, the study conducted by Aziez et al. (2024) suggested that language fluency played a vital role for English majors, who needed to communicate effectively in both academic and professional settings. Speaking fluently improved students' capacity to participate comfortably in class debates and presentations, and to articulate ideas effectively. These were integral components of the English major curriculum. In a similar vein, Peltonen (2024) emphasized that language fluency was essential for effective communication, allowing individuals to express themselves clearly and confidently in both personal and professional contexts. According to the research, fluency affected academic success, especially in subjects that required strong communication skills. It also highlighted the importance of fluency in social interactions, employment opportunities, and academic performance. All things considered, academic achievement, career advancement, and personal development depended heavily on language fluency.

Language Fluency Difficulty

Language fluency difficulty referred to the ongoing inability to speak with the speed, accuracy, and smoothness needed for effective communication. This condition was usually marked by major struggles with pronunciation, difficulty finding words, and frequent grammar mistakes. Bernhofer and Tonin (2022) emphasized that these limitations significantly reduced a learner's quality of life, demonstrating a direct link between low fluency levels and lower academic grades, challenges in social integration, and fewer career opportunities in international environments. Furthermore, Quinto and Cacanindin (2024) identified that language fluency difficulty was heavily influenced by a mix of linguistic and environmental factors. Their research highlighted that a primary obstacle was "vocabulary gaps," where learners struggled to find the exact words needed to express complex thoughts, leading to disrupted communication. The study also noted that a lack of "real-life language exposure" outside of school settings prevented learners from developing the natural rhythm of the language, suggesting that fluency required environments that moved beyond rote memorization toward consistent, real-world use. In addition to environmental factors, Sorveto et al. (2025) found that mental barriers remained a major cause of language fluency difficulty. Their findings indicated that "foreign language anxiety," coupled with a deep fear of being judged and low confidence, created a mental "block" that hindered speaking ability. These emotional stressors not only slowed down language progress but also led to social withdrawal and mental fatigue, ultimately preventing learners from reaching the level of skill required for global communication.

Language Fluency Difficulty and Sex

Several studies identified sex as a significant factor influencing language fluency. The study conducted by Hirnstein et al. (2022) found, in a straightforward way, that women performed better than men in phonemic verbal fluency tasks, while no clear difference was observed in semantic fluency tasks. The study also showed that factors such as age group, access to education, and even study biases played a role in these patterns, making it clear that sex differences could affect language fluency challenges, especially for students in school or university settings where speaking tasks mattered a lot. Adding to this perspective, Piniel and Zólyomi (2022) discovered that female language learners often experienced higher foreign language classroom anxiety than males due to affective factors like fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism. This directly hindered oral fluency by causing more hesitations and reduced willingness to speak. This emotional barrier was key to understanding why some first-year AB English students struggled more with fluency in group discussions or presentations. In line with these observations, Sokołowski et al. (2020) identified notable sex-based differences in language fluency difficulties among young adults. They particularly highlighted how females demonstrated superior linguistic performance through enhanced semantic fluency, attributed to their efficient use of strategies during tasks. In contrast, males often encountered greater challenges in phonemic fluency tasks due to slower retrieval speed, more frequent pauses, and fewer strategic shifts. Additionally, affective factors played a key role: females tended to exhibit higher task confidence, lower performance anxiety, and more fluid emotional processing that supported sustained verbal output. Meanwhile, males' relative emotional

restraint and variability in motivation contributed to hesitation and reduced fluency flow, offering insights applicable to students.

Language Fluency Difficulty and Section

Students' struggles with language fluency often revealed significant differences across academic sections. Lam (2024) found that students' performance in language-related activities varied significantly between sections, which they attributed to differences in peer interaction, learning environments, and instructor effectiveness. Even with a consistent curriculum, the authors emphasized that section-specific factors influenced language learning and usage. Additionally, a study by Yang and Chano (2025) revealed that students in more collaborative and flexible sections demonstrated greater fluency progression, largely due to increased opportunities for practice and feedback. Omar et al. (2020) further confirmed that, over the course of a semester, student fluency improved more in sections that employed interactive teaching strategies such as debates, oral presentations, and role plays. In contrast, sections with more traditional or passive learning environments often lagged behind in language development. Their findings emphasized that beyond curriculum design, factors such as student motivation and confidence were critical in sustaining fluency growth, reinforcing the importance of dynamic and participatory teaching methods.

Language Fluency Difficulty and Type of High School Graduated From

The quality of a high school background had a significant effect on the language fluency and overall communicative ability of students. According to Pregoner (2025), students from public schools experienced greater difficulty with fluency compared to those from private schools. This was due to larger class sizes, fewer resources, and less exposure to the English language both inside and outside the classroom. These factors affected the students' ability to practice and develop confidence in using the language. In support of this, Eslit and Valderama (2023) observed clear gaps in speaking abilities among Senior High School students, with private school graduates generally outperforming their counterparts. The study highlighted that the quality of instruction, smaller class ratios, and increased engagement in oral communication activities gave private school students an advantage. Further evidence from Mercado (2022) revealed oral proficiency challenges among public Senior High School students, particularly in areas such as fluency, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary, with performance influenced by sociographic and academic factors. These studies confirmed that limited resources and larger class sizes in public schools contributed to persistent gaps in oral communication skills.

Language Fluency Difficulty and Senior High School Strands

Some studies further reinforced the role of Senior High School (SHS) strands in shaping students' language fluency. Macado and Diano (2021) compared students from HUMSS, ABM, GAS, STEM, and TVL strands and found that learners from language-intensive strands such as HUMSS generally demonstrated higher proficiency in speaking and writing, whereas students from non-language strands, STEM, and TVL faced more challenges due to their limited exposure to language-related subjects. Aranda (2022) supported this by analyzing the difficulties students encountered in the new K-12 English curriculum. The study found that students from non-language strands like STEM and TVL experienced more problems with speaking and comprehension compared to HUMSS students, who were more exposed to language-focused courses. Likewise, Galinada and Pimentel (2025) examined the factors affecting English language development, particularly in relation to strand selection, and concluded that strand choice was a crucial factor in fluency. HUMSS students demonstrated stronger communicative competence, while STEM and TVL students struggled because their curriculum emphasized math, science, and technical skills. Moreover, the study highlighted that motivation, parental engagement, and the classroom environment were also significant in achieving fluency.

Language Fluency Difficulty and Linguistic Factors

Language fluency difficulty among English students was often the result of persistent linguistic challenges, particularly in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. As emphasized in the study by Hamza et al. (2025), linguistic factors (such as grammar knowledge, vocabulary proficiency, and sentence formation during speaking) significantly affected learners' oral fluency. The findings indicated that limited linguistic competence could directly contribute to fluency problems, underscoring the need to focus on foundational linguistic skills to enhance spoken English performance. Luu et al. (2024) similarly identified limited vocabulary, improper grammar usage, and unclear pronunciation as key barriers that contributed to language fluency difficulty. The study suggested that linguistic competence (knowledge of form and structure) was foundational to fluent speech, and that students with weak linguistic foundations tended to struggle with fluency in real communicative contexts. Kholmurodovna (2024) further supported these findings, highlighting

that linguistic factors such as lexical resources, grammatical accuracy, and ease of language processing were central influences on fluency difficulty. The analysis outlined that learners' lack of sufficient linguistic knowledge (lexicon and syntax) directly hindered their ability to speak smoothly and confidently in English, reinforcing the importance of strengthening linguistic competence for improved fluency.

Language Fluency Difficulty and Affective Factors

Some studies demonstrated that the challenge in achieving language fluency was deeply linked with affective factors. Kiruthiga and Christopher (2022) established that affective factors, including self-esteem, self-confidence, anxiety, fear of failure, shyness, motivation, attitude, and empathy, played a crucial role in English-speaking performance. Their study reported that negative affective factors hindered the development of speaking skills, while positive affective factors facilitated learners' fluency and communicative ability. According to the results, emotional and motivational aspects significantly influenced how well students performed orally and how easily they became fluent in English. Expanding on this, Agcaoili and Guillermo (2024) found that speaking anxiety, an affective factor, significantly affected students' oral performance in English. They reported that many college learners experienced anxiety during speaking tasks, which influenced their fluency, accuracy, and willingness to speak. The study also explored strategies students used to cope with anxiety, demonstrating how affective challenges directly related to performance and fluency levels in English classrooms. Similarly, Suryani et al. (2020) identified affective factors such as shyness, lack of motivation, self-confidence, feelings toward interlocutors, topic anxiety, and self-consciousness as major inhibitors to speaking English fluently. Their research showed that students with low confidence and high emotional barriers struggled more with oral performance and fluency, underscoring the importance of addressing psychological needs in language learning contexts.

Language Fluency Difficulty and Environmental Factors

Several studies examined how environmental conditions shaped language fluency difficulty. Hamza et al. (2025) found that environmental influences, such as limited exposure to English and the absence of a supportive speaking environment, had the most significant impact on learners' fluency performance compared to linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical factors. These findings suggested that students who lacked regular opportunities to use English in meaningful contexts tended to experience greater fluency difficulty, highlighting the importance of creating a conducive learning environment to enhance oral competence. Building on this, Tran et al. (2024) demonstrated that frequent exposure to English and an engaging, supportive learning environment significantly enhanced speaking fluency. Their research underscored how environmental conditions, including classroom settings, interaction opportunities, and extracurricular engagement, played a crucial role in fostering students' communicative confidence and fluency development. Complementing these results, Nhan (2024) confirmed that students' fluency difficulties were linked to limited language exposure and insufficient opportunities to practice English in supportive settings. This aligned with research showing that environmental constraints, such as a lack of conversational practice and non-immersion in English environments, could significantly hinder fluency development among learners.

The review of related literature in this research highlighted key concepts such as language fluency, language fluency difficulty, and their variations across variables including sex, section, type of high school graduated from, and senior high school strand. It also emphasized three domains: linguistic, affective, and environmental, which were essential in understanding and uncovering the causes of language fluency difficulty. Examining previous studies and related literature helped the researchers identify gaps in the existing research, gain a deeper understanding of the study, and strengthen the results. Furthermore, the synthesis of various studies and concepts revealed that exploring language fluency issues through different lenses not only deepened the understanding of the problem but also offered a nuanced perspective on the findings. The integration of these concepts and research findings either corroborated or contradicted the study's results, ultimately enriching the investigation's focus on language fluency difficulty.

Methodology

Research Design

In this study, a quantitative research design was used, as the primary aim was to investigate factors affecting language fluency difficulty among first-year AB English students. This approach was considered ideal for collecting and analyzing numerical data to identify patterns, make predictions, examine relationships, and generalize findings to broader populations (Bhandari, 2023). A survey questionnaire served as the main instrument for data collection, allowing the researchers to measure linguistic, affective, and environmental

factors. The results provided structured insights into the causes of language fluency difficulty, which guided the development of targeted intervention programs.

Research Locale

This study was conducted at a local community college in Negros, focusing on first-year AB English students during the school year 2025–2026. Students were profiled according to sex, section, type of high school graduated from, and Senior High School strand. The study assessed language fluency difficulties across three domains: linguistic, affective, and environmental. It also examined differences based on student profiles and evaluated these factors collectively to determine their overall impact on language fluency.

Research Participants

The participants of this study were first-year AB English students at a local community college in Negros during the school year 2025–2026. They were considered well-aligned participants, as they were regularly enrolled in the AB English program, represented either male or female students regardless of section, and came from any type of high school with any Senior High School strand. They were therefore capable of providing the information the study aimed to gather. The total population consisted of 240 students, and 150 were proportionally selected across six sections as the sample.

Research Instrument

For this study, the researchers used a self-made questionnaire as the research instrument to gather essential information that addressed the research questions. The questionnaire was distributed to selected respondents, specifically first-year AB English students at a local community college in Negros. It contained two sections. Section 1 covered the profile of the student respondents, including their sex, section, type of high school graduated from, and senior high school strand. Section 2 focused on a tool designed to identify the factors that influenced language fluency difficulty among the students. These factors were categorized into linguistic, affective, and environmental domains, and were answerable using the following scale: 4 – Strongly Agree, 3 – Agree, 2 – Disagree, and 1 – Strongly Disagree. Prior to establishing the reliability of the test items, the questionnaire was pilot-tested with 30 first-year AB English students from a different institution who were not part of the actual study sample. This process helped identify ambiguities, assess internal consistency, and ensure the instrument's practicality. The results were then analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha, which evaluates the reliability of test scores by measuring the internal consistency of the test items (Sheposh, 2023). The instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.942, indicating an excellent level of reliability.

Data Gathering Procedure

To conduct the study at a local community college in Negros, the researchers first secured permission by submitting a formal letter to both the department head and the AB English program head. Upon receiving approval, the researchers prepared a survey questionnaire to serve as the data collection tool. Before implementation, the researchers confirmed the total number of respondents. They used stratified random sampling to obtain the sample of first-year AB English students and applied simple random sampling to determine the sample size for each section. Once the respondents were identified, with a total of 150, the researchers proceeded with the study. The survey materials included researcher-designed questions along with corresponding answer sheets. During data gathering, the researchers assembled the respective sections in their classrooms. They then presented their research title, thoroughly explained the purpose of the study, introduced the consent form and set of research instruments, and provided clear instructions on how to answer the survey questionnaire. Throughout the process, students were supervised during both the answering and retrieval of the questionnaires. Within 8 to 10 minutes, respondents completed the survey. Afterward, the data gathered were tabulated, categorized, and analyzed to address the specific statement of the problem.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: What is the profile of the students in terms of sex, section, type of high school they graduated from, and senior high school (SHS) strands?

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents When Grouped According to Sex, Section, Type of High School, and Senior High School Strand

Profile	Category	f	%
1. Sex	Male	33	22
	Female	117	78
	Total	150	100
2. Section	A	26	17.33
	B	25	16.67
	C	25	16.67
	D	25	16.67
	E	23	15.33
	F	26	17.33
3. Type of High School	Total	150	100
	Public	125	83.33
	Private	25	16.67
4. SHS Strand	Total	150	100
	ABM	14	9.33
	HUMSS	72	48
	STEM	12	8
	GAS	13	8.67
	Others	39	26
	Total	150	100

Table 1 above presents the demographic profile of the respondents, including their sex, section, type of high school they graduated from, and senior high school strand. In terms of sex, female students constitute the majority, with 117 respondents (78%), while male students account for 33 respondents (22%). The respondents are fairly evenly distributed across six sections (A to F), with Sections A and F having the highest number of students at 26 (17.33%), followed by Sections B, C, and D, each with 25 students (16.67%), and Section E with the lowest number at 23 (15.33%). Regarding high school background, 125 students (83.33%) graduated from public schools, while 25 (16.67%) came from private institutions. For senior high school strands, the majority of students are from HUMSS, comprising 72 respondents (48%), followed by those in the "Others" category with 39 respondents (26%), then ABM with 14 (9.33%), GAS with 13 (8.67%), and STEM with 12 (8%).

This suggested that the respondent pool was predominantly female, and the majority of respondents had attended public high schools. Their academic backgrounds were largely rooted in humanities-focused education, particularly the HUMSS strand. Lastly, the distribution across sections was relatively balanced, indicating that no single group dominated the sample and supporting a fair representation of perspectives within the study.

Research Question 2: What is the perceived level of language fluency difficulty among first-year AB English students in terms of linguistic, affective, and environmental factors?

Table 2. Perceived Level of Language Fluency Difficulty in Terms of Linguistic Factors Among First-Year AB English Students

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Expressing my ideas clearly because I have difficulty recalling the appropriate vocabulary while speaking English.	2.89	0.520	Highly Perceived
2. Finding the right words in English, often leading me to rely on my native language.	2.95	0.560	Highly Perceived
3. Constructing grammatically correct sentences in English.	2.93	0.646	Highly Perceived
4. Pronouncing English words clearly and accurately.	2.69	0.743	Highly Perceived
5. Articulating English words clearly because I'm used to code switching.	2.59	0.647	Highly Perceived
Overall	2.81	0.456	Highly Perceived

Table 2 presents the perceived level of language fluency difficulty among first-year AB English students, focusing on five linguistic factors, with an overall mean difficulty score of 2.81 (SD = 0.456), and with all interpretations marked as "Highly" difficult. The most significant difficulties are related to lexical and grammatical challenges, specifically finding the right words and relying on their native language (Mean = 2.95), as well as constructing grammatically correct sentences (Mean = 2.93). Difficulty in recalling appropriate vocabulary (Mean = 2.89) is also a major concern. While phonological challenges such as pronouncing words clearly (Mean = 2.69) and articulating them due to code-switching (Mean = 2.59) are also rated as "Highly" difficult, they are slightly less challenging than the core vocabulary and grammar difficulties.

Consistently high mean scores across all linguistic factors signified that AB English students faced significant, multifaceted difficulties that impeded their fluency in English. The dominant struggles in lexical retrieval and grammatical construction meant that students consistently struggled with the fundamental building blocks of communication. This implied that their academic progress and effective participation in English-medium classes were compromised, potentially leading to lower comprehension and reduced self-confidence. The consequence was a substantial gap between the expected proficiency for an AB English major and actual performance. Furthermore, the moderate yet still "Highly" rated struggles with pronunciation and code-switching suggested that interference from their native language or accustomed speaking patterns created an additional barrier to clear articulation, impacting both intelligibility and native-like command of the language. This situation necessitated urgent, targeted pedagogical interventions focusing on reinforcing vocabulary recall and structural accuracy to bridge the proficiency gap.

The findings aligned with prior research showing that linguistic problems such as limited vocabulary access, grammatical inaccuracies, and pronunciation difficulties significantly impeded learners' speaking fluency. For example, Susanto et al. (2023) reported that EFL university students experienced considerable fluency difficulties due to problems in lexical choice, spontaneous speech production, and linguistic performance during interactive speaking tasks, which prevented them from producing accurate and natural spoken responses. Similarly, Agcaoili and Guillermo (2024) found that college learners' anxiety and lack of confidence during speaking tasks, combined with linguistic limitations, reduced their fluency, accuracy, and willingness to communicate in English. Although pronunciation and affective challenges were evident, the studies emphasized that core lexical and structural weaknesses remained central barriers to fluent oral performance. These studies supported the idea that lexical retrieval and grammatical construction problems formed major obstacles to fluent English communication, consistent with the high difficulty means reported by first-year AB English students in this study.

Table 3. Perceived Level of Language Fluency Difficulty in Terms of Affective Factors Among First-Year AB English Students

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Hesitation in class discussions due to a lack of confidence or belief in my ability to speak English.	2.96	0.713	Highly Perceived
2. Nervousness when speaking English.	3.13	0.766	Highly Perceived
3. Difficulty finding personal motivation to improve my fluency, as my efforts seem to show little progress.	2.81	0.642	Highly Perceived
4. Mental blocks whenever I stand in front and in the middle of reciting.	3.15	0.739	Highly Perceived
5. Embarrassment when articulating words because I might pronounce them incorrectly.	2.92	0.832	Highly Perceived
Overall	2.99	0.585	Highly Perceived

The data in Table 3 present the perceived level of language fluency difficulty in terms of affective factors among first-year AB English students. All five indicators receive a "Highly" interpretation, underscoring the significant emotional challenges students face when using English in academic settings. The highest mean score is recorded for mental blocks during recitation (M = 3.15, SD = 0.739), suggesting that sudden lapses in thought are the most disruptive to fluency. This is closely followed by nervousness when speaking English (M = 3.13, SD = 0.766) and hesitation due to lack of confidence (M = 2.96, SD = 0.713), both of which reflect performance anxiety and self-doubt. Embarrassment when articulating words (M = 2.92, SD = 0.832) also emerges as a notable barrier, while difficulty in maintaining motivation (M = 2.81, SD = 0.642) receives the

lowest mean, though still interpreted as "Highly." The overall mean of 2.99 (SD = 0.585) confirms that affective factors consistently and significantly impact students' language fluency.

These findings implied that emotional barriers, particularly mental blocks and anxiety, played a dominant role in hindering effective communication. While motivation remained a concern, students appeared more affected by immediate emotional responses such as panic, hesitation, and fear of judgment. Given the high ratings across all affective indicators, it was essential for educators to implement strategies that fostered emotional resilience and confidence. Interventions such as guided speaking exercises, low-pressure recitation formats, and regular positive reinforcement helped reduce anxiety and mental blocks, ultimately promoting more fluent and spontaneous English use in the classroom.

This interpretation aligned with previous research showing that affective factors such as anxiety, lack of confidence, and emotional barriers significantly affected learners' speaking fluency. For instance, Ajiza et al. (2024) found that EFL students experienced high levels of anxiety during speaking activities, with internal and external emotional factors influencing how comfortably they participated in oral tasks. This supported the high mean scores for nervousness, mental blocks, and hesitation observed in this study. Similarly, Maharani et al. (2025) reported that anxiety and low self-confidence served as psychological barriers in speaking English, which hindered students' ability to speak fluently even when they had motivation and positive attitudes. These findings reinforced the interpretation that affective variables played a dominant role in language fluency difficulties.

Table 4. Perceived Level of Language Fluency Difficulty in Terms of Environmental Factors Among First-Year AB English Students

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Speaking proficiently in front of others because I'm scared that my classmates will judge me.	2.85	0.730	Highly Perceived
2. Receiving negative feedback from instructors about my English proficiency.	2.43	0.754	Moderately Perceived
3. Practicing English outside the classroom due to limited opportunities, as I frequently use my native language in daily communication.	2.95	0.712	Highly Perceived
4. My speaking and vocabulary because my instructor lack emphasis and motivation on this aspect.	2.45	0.701	Moderately Perceived
5. My vocabulary because of the lack of resources and extracurricular activities related to language.	2.65	0.646	Highly Perceived
Overall	2.66	0.477	Highly Perceived

Table 4 shows that first-year AB English students perceive a high overall level of language fluency difficulty in terms of environmental factors, with a mean of 2.66 and a standard deviation of 0.477, interpreted as "Highly". Specifically, they report facing challenges with classmates judging them when they speak, with a mean of 2.85 and an SD of 0.730, rated as "Highly." The greatest difficulty lies in practicing English outside the classroom due to limited opportunities in daily communication dominated by their native language, recording a mean of 2.95 and an SD of 0.712, also "Highly." Vocabulary expansion suffers due to a lack of resources related to language extracurricular activities, with a mean of 2.65 and an SD of 0.646, likewise rated as "Highly." Moderate difficulties are noted in receiving English proficiency feedback from instructors, with a mean of 2.43 and an SD of 0.754, interpreted as "Moderately," and in instructors' lack of emphasis and motivation in their subject, with a mean of 2.45 and a standard deviation of 0.701, also rated as "Moderately."

These findings indicated that external environmental factors, such as peer judgment from classmates when speaking, created significant barriers to open English expression through peer pressure. Limited real-world practice outside the classroom, amid native language dominance in daily communication, severely constrained practical application, while vocabulary growth was hindered by limited resources for language extracurricular activities. These represented the primary obstacles to fluency development for first-year AB English students. The dominance of "Highly" ratings across these three factors, relative to moderate challenges in instructor feedback and motivational emphasis, highlighted how non-classroom surroundings intensified

fluency barriers, prioritizing external pressures over instructional support in formal learning environments. This directly corresponded to the environmental focus of the problem statement. Without strategic interventions to counter peer dynamics, expand authentic exposure, and improve resource access, these barriers were expected to persist.

A study conducted by Dong (2022) revealed that environmental difficulties, particularly the scarcity of opportunities to practice speaking outside the classroom due to reliance on native language environments and limited real-world exposure, significantly hindered fluency development and contributed to heightened anxiety in communicative settings. Similarly, Rahmawati et al. (2025) examined how academic environments impacted English-speaking proficiency among learners, identifying limited resources and constrained practice settings as key barriers that maintained a cycle of low confidence and insufficient skill application beyond formal instruction.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference in the perceived level of language fluency difficulty among first-year AB English students in terms of profile categorized by linguistic, affective, and environmental factors?

Table 5. Significant Difference in the Perceived Level of Language Fluency Difficulty in Linguistic Factors in Terms of Profile

	Variable	Category	Mean Rank	Test Statistic	p-value	Interpretation
1.	Sex	Male	74.65	1902.5	0.897	Not Significant
		Female	75.74			
2.	Section	A	58.83	9.71	0.084	Not Significant
		B	66.76			
		C	75.46			
		D	84.56			
		E	92.3			
		F	77.04			
3.	Type of High School	Public	76.97	1379	0.347	Not Significant
		Private	68.16			
4.	SHS Strand	ABM	86	7.401	0.116	Not Significant
		HUMSS	76.15			
		STEM	51.63			
		GAS	60.38			
		Others	82.91			

Table 5 shows the perceived level of language fluency difficulty in terms of linguistic factors, with close mean rank values across profiles. By sex, males obtain a mean rank of 74.65, while females have 75.74, with a test statistic of 1902.5 and a p-value of 0.897. By section, mean ranks range from 58.83 (Section A) to 92.3 (Section E), with a test statistic of 9.71 and a p-value of 0.084. By type of high school, public school graduates have a mean rank of 76.97, while private school graduates have 68.16, with a test statistic of 1379 and a p-value of 0.347. By SHS strand, mean ranks are 86 (ABM), 76.15 (HUMSS), 51.63 (STEM), 60.38 (GAS), and 82.91 (Others), with a test statistic of 7.401 and a p-value of 0.116. All computed p-values are greater than 0.05.

The results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in the perceived level of language fluency difficulty in terms of linguistic factors when grouped according to sex, section, type of high school, and SHS strand. This suggested that linguistic difficulties such as grammar, vocabulary, sentence construction, and language structure were experienced at relatively similar levels by students regardless of their profile. The absence of significant differences implied that linguistic challenges were not shaped primarily by demographic or academic background but were more likely shared across the student population. Consequently, interventions aimed at improving linguistic competence were considered necessary for all learners rather than being targeted to specific subgroups, as linguistic difficulties appeared to be common and pervasive among students.

Bernhard and Bernhard (2022) investigated English second-language proficiency and reported that male and female learners demonstrated similar levels of overall language proficiency, indicating that sex did not always lead to significantly different linguistic outcomes in second-language learning contexts. Similarly, Alrabai (2022) found that learners' struggles with linguistic competence, particularly in syntax and lexical retrieval, were prevalent among students from different educational tracks, suggesting that linguistic barriers were not strongly associated with academic strand or school type. Together, these findings supported the view that linguistic challenges could be uniform across demographic groups rather than profile-specific, aligning with the present result that linguistic fluency difficulties did not significantly vary according to learners' profiles.

Table 6. Significant Difference in the Perceived Level of Language Fluency Difficulty in Affective Factors in Terms of Profile

Variable	Category	Mean Rank	Test Statistic	p-value	Interpretation
1. Sex	Male	60.97	1451	0.028	Significant
	Female	79.6			
2. Section	A	63.27	5.548	0.353	Not Significant
	B	70.04			
	C	77.48			
	D	82.14			
	E	89.04			
3. Type of High School	Public	75	1500	0.75	Not Significant
	Private	78			
4. SHS Strand	ABM	95.61	7.127	0.129	Not Significant
	HUMSS	76.56			
	STEM	54.79			
	GAS	62.5			
	Others	77.03			

The statistical data presented in Table 6 indicate that among the profile variables tested, only sex yields a significant difference in the perceived level of language fluency difficulty in terms of affective factors, as evidenced by a p-value of 0.028, which is lower than the standard 0.05 threshold. The findings show that females have a notably higher mean rank of 79.6 compared to males at 60.97, suggesting that female students perceive a higher level of emotional or psychological difficulty in language fluency. In contrast, the variable section shows no significant difference ($p = 0.353$), with mean ranks fluctuating between a low of 63.27 (Section A) and a high of 89.04 (Section E). Furthermore, the type of high school graduated from results in a non-significant p-value of 0.75, with public and private school graduates showing very similar mean ranks of 75 and 78, respectively. Finally, the SHS strand also fails to reach statistical significance ($p = 0.129$), despite the ABM strand recording the highest mean rank of 95.61 and STEM recording the lowest at 54.79. These results specifically highlight that while academic background and placement do not significantly alter affective perceptions, sex remains a defining factor.

The results implied that the emotional and psychological barriers to language fluency, often referred to as the “affective filter,” were more heavily influenced by sex-based experiences than by academic history or current class sections. This suggested that female students likely experienced higher levels of foreign language anxiety, lower self-confidence, or greater pressure to perform perfectly compared to their male peers. Because the differences in high school background and SHS strands were not significant, it indicated that the transition to college-level English studies leveled the playing field for students from various educational tracks, yet failed to mitigate the underlying sex-based affective gaps. Consequently, these findings pointed toward a need for instructors to implement more sex-sensitive affective interventions, focusing on building the confidence of female learners to reduce the psychological strain associated with language production.

Piniel and Zólyomi (2022) investigated sex differences in foreign language classroom anxiety. Their research highlighted that sex was a significant and “undeniable factor” in the affective domain of language learning, consistently showing that female students experienced higher levels of anxiety and psychological pressure compared to their male counterparts. Furthermore, academic history (such as SHS strands or high school type) did not significantly impact these affective results. The research indicated that while institutional factors and proficiency levels could fluctuate, the sex-based gap in affective filters often persisted due to underlying psychological traits and socialized pressures to perform.

Table 7. Significant Difference in the Perceived Level of Language Fluency Difficulty in Environmental Factors in Terms of Profile

Variable	Category	Mean Rank	Test Statistic	p-value	Interpretation
1. Sex	Male	74.08	1883.5	0.828	Not Significant
	Female	75.9			
2. Section	A	61.83	5.719	0.335	Not Significant
	B	66.62			
	C	78.96			
	D	83.08			
	E	83.39			
3. Type of High School	Public	78.7	1162.5	0.041	Significant
	Private	59.5			
4. SHS Strand	ABM	78.86	11.537	0.021	Significant
	HUMSS	76.48			
	STEM	43.83			
	GAS	59.46			
	Others	87.58			

Based on the data presented in Table 7, the results show that sex and section do not significantly affect students perceived difficulty in language fluency, with p-values of 0.828 and 0.335, respectively. However, a significant difference is found in the type of high school attended. Public high school graduates record a higher mean rank (78.7) than private school graduates (59.5), with a p-value of 0.041, indicating that students from public school's experience significantly greater environmental difficulty in language fluency than those from private schools. This highlights that a public school background contributes more strongly to students' struggles in their language environment. In addition, the SHS strand also shows a significant difference ($p = 0.021$). Students from the "Others" strand (TVL: HE, Industrial Arts, Agri-Fishery, and ICT) obtain the highest mean rank (87.58), followed by ABM (78.86), which means they experience the greatest level of difficulty. In contrast, STEM students record the lowest mean rank (43.83), indicating that they encounter the least difficulty in their language environment.

These results implied that school background and academic strand were the major sources of variation in students' language fluency environment, not sex or class section. Because public high school students and those from ABM and TVL-related strands had the highest mean ranks, it indicated that they were the most affected by limited English exposure and fewer speaking opportunities prior to college. On the other hand, private school and STEM students appeared better prepared for English communication, likely due to more consistent use of English and structured learning environments. Hence, the university should have prioritized support programs for public school graduates and non-language-focused strands to help reduce the gap in fluency development.

These findings aligned with previous studies, which emphasized that environmental factors such as classroom atmosphere, infrastructure, and involvement in real-world situations affected students' development of English language skills. Almerino et al. (2020) discovered that students in ABM showed low performance in oral fluency due to a lack of involvement in English-speaking situations and inadequate institutional support, while Baron (2022) reported low performance in fluency skills in ABM, HUMSS, and other strands regardless of differences in their curriculum. These studies pointed out that a lack of involvement and equity had a negative impact on fluency, with public school students experiencing less structured situations and ABM and other strands facing continuous issues that hampered their use of language skills. This was similar to the findings of this study, where students in less favorable situations showed higher mean ranks. On the other hand, STEM students, who had lower mean ranks, reflected more structured situations, as well as a lack of differences for sex and section, which indicated that the issue was institution- and curriculum-driven rather than sex- or grouping-based.

Research Question 4: Is there a significant difference in the perceived level of language fluency difficulty among first-year AB English students in terms of linguistic, affective, and environmental factors when taken collectively?

Table 8. Significant Difference in the Factors Affecting the Language Fluency Difficulty Among First-Year AB English Students

	Component	Mean Rank	H-Test	p-value	Interpretation
1.	Linguistic	222.89	37.422	<0.001	Significant
2.	Affective	272.19			
3.	Environmental	181.42			

The findings in Table 8 reveal that there is a significant difference in the factors affecting language fluency difficulty among first-year AB English students when linguistic, affective, and environmental factors are considered collectively. As shown in the table above, affective factors obtain the highest mean rank (272.19), followed by linguistic factors (222.89), while environmental factors record the lowest mean rank (181.42). The Kruskal–Wallis H test result of 37.422 with a p-value of less than 0.001 indicates a statistically significant difference among the three factors, suggesting that they do not equally influence students' language fluency difficulty.

These results showed that affective factors had the strongest influence on the language fluency difficulties experienced by the respondents compared to linguistic and environmental factors. This implied that students' emotions, motivation, confidence, and anxiety played a major role in affecting their ability to speak English fluently. Even when students had access to learning materials, competent teachers, and a supportive classroom environment, fluency difficulties still occurred when fear of making mistakes, nervousness, and low self-confidence were present. This suggested that language fluency difficulty was not only influenced by linguistic knowledge but was also strongly shaped by students' emotional and psychological conditions.

The findings aligned with previous studies that emphasized the importance of affective factors in language learning. A study by Wang et al. (2024) reported that emotional intelligence was positively associated

with speaking accuracy and fluency among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, as students who managed their emotions more effectively demonstrated improved oral performance. Similarly, research by Owaidah (2024) found that affective components such as self-awareness, motivation, and emotional regulation were significantly related to English language proficiency. These studies supported the present findings by highlighting that affective factors played a crucial role in shaping learners' speaking fluency.

Research Question 5: Based on the results of the study, what intervention program can be crafted?

The intervention program that can be crafted is a holistic approach designed to mitigate fluency barriers and enhance the communicative competence of first-year AB English students. The program addresses these challenges comprehensively by prioritizing affective development (reducing anxiety, building confidence), linguistic growth (improving vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation), and environmental support. It ensures equal access to language-rich, interactive settings for all students, especially those from less-exposed backgrounds. By integrating emotional resilience, linguistic competence, and functional practice, the program aims to strengthen fluency, boost academic performance, and prepare students for professional success.

Ethical Considerations

The following components of ethical standards were carefully ensured throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained before conducting the study, with respondents receiving a detailed briefing about the study's purpose, procedures, duration, and the nature of their involvement. Consent was documented through a signed form, with copies provided to each respondent, and their voluntary participation was regarded as essential, with the right to withdraw at any stage. Researchers explained that participation was completely voluntary, with no rewards or pressure involved. In cases where respondents were minors, written parental or legal guardian consent was obtained prior to any data collection, and the minor's individual assent was also secured to ensure voluntary participation, protecting the privacy rights of underage participants and ensuring compliance with standard ethical research protocols. Recognizing the vulnerability of the research participants, the researchers took proactive measures to safeguard their well-being, ensuring that no one was pressured into joining, placed in a difficult position, or made to feel stressed. Surveys were scheduled at convenient times in neutral, safe environments, and the researchers maintained a supportive tone throughout. They monitored respondents for signs of fatigue, distress, or hesitation, and allowed anyone who felt uncomfortable to pause or stop without judgment. A careful evaluation of risks and benefits was also conducted, with deliberate steps taken to minimize any physical, psychological, or social harm, while potential benefits were clearly communicated to help respondents understand the study's purpose and how it could be applied to their future endeavors, encouraging reflection on how their findings might influence future programs or interventions relevant to their academic or professional careers. Privacy and confidentiality were strictly upheld, with all personal data handled securely; respondents' names and identities were not disclosed in reports, presentations, or analyses, and participants were allowed to de-identify their data by using pen names. Access to data was restricted to the research team, with physical documents stored safely, and data protection followed institutional and national ethical guidelines to prevent unauthorized access or misuse. Finally, transparency was maintained throughout the process by communicating findings with honesty, accuracy, and impartiality, ensuring that no data were falsified and respondents were offered genuine transparency, while any breaches, mistakes, or unforeseen consequences were acknowledged in the final report to preserve scholarly integrity.

Conclusion

This study concluded that English fluency among first-year AB English students stemmed from the intersection of linguistic, affective, and environmental factors, which collectively created substantial barriers to effective oral communication. Linguistic difficulties, particularly in lexical retrieval and grammatical construction, were evident; however, affective influences such as performance anxiety, mental blocks, and low self-confidence exerted the strongest impact on students' ability to communicate fluently. Environmental constraints, including limited exposure to structured English-speaking situations and varying levels of academic support, further intensified these challenges. These interconnected factors demonstrated that fluency difficulties were not isolated to language competence alone but were embedded within learners' emotional experiences and learning contexts. Notably, while linguistic challenges showed no significant variation across student profiles, affective and environmental factors varied markedly according to sex, section, high school type, and strand. Female students experienced higher levels of foreign

language anxiety and psychological strain, whereas graduates from public high schools and those from ABM and TVL strands encountered greater environmental barriers due to reduced exposure to English-rich contexts compared to their STEM and private school counterparts. These profile-based differences underscored that fluency difficulties were shaped by emotional disposition and prior educational experiences rather than linguistic knowledge alone. The findings highlighted the need for targeted, sex-sensitive, and context-responsive interventions that moved beyond traditional grammar-focused instruction toward fostering emotional resilience and providing focused support for learners from less advantaged academic backgrounds.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, which revealed that linguistic, affective, and environmental factors influence the language fluency of first-year AB English students, the following recommendations are proposed to help improve these areas: For school administrators, to strengthen institutional support for language development, they may implement a Language Fluency Enhancement Program. This may include providing faculty training on effective fluency instruction, organizing English-related activities, and establishing language resource corners equipped with reading materials, speaking practice areas, and audio-visual tools. Administrators may also conduct regular fluency assessments to monitor student progress and ensure that learning programs address fluency needs effectively. For teachers, they may adopt interactive and learner-centered approaches that promote authentic language use. Strategies such as debates, role-playing, and oral presentations can enhance communication skills and confidence. Teachers may also use formative assessments to identify students' weak areas and provide timely feedback to help them overcome fluency difficulties. Integrating real-life communication tasks into lessons can make language learning more meaningful and practical. For students, they may actively engage in enrichment programs such as reading clubs, writing clinics, and English conversation circles. They are also encouraged to utilize digital learning tools and practice consistent self-study to expand their language exposure. Developing self-discipline and motivation in using English beyond the classroom can help them gradually improve their fluency.

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