

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Effectiveness of English language teaching methods and language learning skills among college students in public higher education institutions in Sulu

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ABSTRACT

English is the most widely spoken language in the world, serving as a common medium for people from different linguistic backgrounds. It is the primary or secondary language in many countries and is often used as the international language of business, diplomacy, science, and technology. Hence, there was a need for effective teaching and instructional strategy to enhance the competence of the college students. This study investigated the effectiveness of various English language teaching methods and assessed the language learning skills of college students in public higher education institutions (HEIs) in Sulu, Philippines. Quota sampling (n=200) was carried out to sample the college students from four (4) different public HEIs in Sulu. Close-ended questionnaires were administered to determine the effectiveness of three different English language teaching methods—(i) Grammar-Translation Method, (ii) Direct Method, and (iii) Audio-Lingual Method. This study also analyzed the level of English language learning competence of college students based on their (i) listening skills, (ii) speaking skills, (iii) reading skills, and (iv) writing skills. Key findings indicated that different teaching methods, namely the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method, and the Audio-Lingual Method, each offered distinct advantages for language learning. In assessing the language learning skills of the students, the study found high competence across all four key areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Inferential analysis indicated that the effectiveness of English language teaching methods can be correlated to the language competence of college students. Further studies shall be done to determine whether the teaching methods could directly influence the language skills of students.

Keywords: competence; effectiveness; English language; language learning skills; teaching methods

1. Introduction

There has been a significant rise in the global demand for English language learning^[1,2]. One of the primary factors contributing to this is the widespread usage of English as a foreign or second language. In addition, English serves as the primary language for international commerce, science, education, and technology, facilitating communication among individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds^[3-6].

The adoption of English as a medium of instruction (MOI) and the inclusion of English language learning in early grades are evident results of policies implemented in response to the increasing popularity of

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English^[7,8]. The phenomenon known as “Englishization”^[9] can be attributed to the evolving perception of the English language. The transformation of “global literacy skills”^[10] has been observed, and these skills are considered crucial for enhancing global competitiveness within the knowledge economy. English proficiency is crucial for individuals looking to improve their employability and social status, and it can also contribute to the overall prosperity of a nation. Due to this rationale, nations that do not speak English have implemented significant educational and linguistic reforms to enhance their proficiency in the English language^[11-14].

In the Philippines, it is interesting to acknowledge the prominent role that English holds as one of the official languages and a primary medium of instruction within the educational system^[15]. The Philippines is widely recognized for its notable proficiency level in the English language, as evidenced by its prominent ranking on the global English Proficiency Index^[16,17]. But even with this competence, there are still issues, especially with reading comprehension, as the country fails to meet the standards of international tests like the International Mathematics and Science Study and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)^[18].

It has been observed that whereas writing allows learners to work independently and at their own pace without bothering their classmates, speaking skills necessitate learners to actively participate in conversations and become part of a group. Research has recognized that when it comes to language skills, such as listening, writing, and reading, expressing oneself in the foreign language classroom has been identified as the most significant cause of anxiety^[19-21].

Teaching is always connected to learning, with a teacher's understanding of learning shaping their knowledge of teaching. According to Wahyuni & Inayati^[22], the aim of teaching is to provide lessons by offering instructions that guide students through a series of experiences. Essentially, teaching is a process of managing and organizing the environment around students, enabling them to grow through learning activities. Effective teaching media and activities, such as games, are crucial for successful instruction, as they increase student engagement and motivation in language learning^[23].

The goal of this study was to analyze the effectiveness of different English teaching methods and assess the language learning skills of the college students in public HEIs in Sulu, Philippines. This comprehensive investigation aimed to provide a detailed evaluation of various pedagogical approaches, including the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method, and the Audio-Lingual Method, each known for its unique contributions to language education. By examining these methods, the study sought to identify which techniques best enhance students' proficiency in key language domains such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Furthermore, the study aimed to evaluate the students' overall language competence, providing insights into their ability to understand and use English across diverse contexts and communicative situations.

2. Literature review

2.1. English language teaching methods

The English language has become a crucial tool for communication in the global community^[24]. Given its prominence as the dominant language used in academia, politics, social interactions, and business, the demand for English as a global language in education, social settings, and commerce has become a top priority for worldwide communication^[25]. Integrating 21st century skills as a transformational pedagogy is necessary due to their vital function in boosting students' effective influence and exposure in today's world^[26-28].

Teaching refers to the actions carried out by a teacher in a particular educational context to assist the student in achieving specific educational and learning objectives, which vary depending on the teaching technique. The term “teaching method” refers to the way that teachers take to achieve educational goals. Class involvement, memorization, and practical demonstration are examples of teaching approaches that are adapted

to the subject matter, as well as the students' abilities and degrees of engagement. The choice of method depends largely on what is being taught and can be influenced by student competence and enthusiasm^[29].

Grammar-Translation Method. This is a method of teaching and learning language that focuses on grammar rules^[29,30]. This approach focuses on memorizing and comprehending a few rules to influence sentence structure in the target language^[31]. According to Sittirak^[32], the grammar-translation method has been widely utilized and remains effective after many years of use. Elmayantie^[33] suggests that grammar-translation can improve students' comprehension and vocabulary. In a study among Bangladeshi students, applying grammar-translation method was the most successful strategy to learn a foreign language^[34].

Direct Method. This method involves learning in the target language without translation into the native language or mother tongue^[35]. The Direct Method focuses on developing pupils' oral skills, including listening and speaking skills^[36]. The direct method not only improves student's speaking skills, but also helps them increase their vocabulary^[37,38]. Not only in English but Direct Method can also help students learn Arabic^[39] and Italian^[40]. However, according to Hall^[41], Direct Method classes are small, rely solely on the second language for communication and instruction, prioritize speaking and listening, and have minimal grammar analysis.

Audio-Lingual Method. This method focuses on training, drills, discussion, vocabulary, and reading wherein the students are encouraged to study a foreign language without using their own language^[42]. Larsen-Freeman^[43] discovered that the audio-lingual method is an instructional strategy that involves repeating specific words to learn them. Repetitions and drills help break down difficult sentences into smaller sections. Audio-lingual language training emphasizes repetition of structural patterns through spoken practice^[44,45]. According to Prasetya et al.^[46], the audio-lingual method effectively helped kindergarten pupils master vocabulary.

2.2. English language skills

Learning English as a second or foreign language is highly sought after by students due to its widespread usage. During this endeavor, individuals must develop proficiency in the four fundamental linguistic components of the English language *i.e.*, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The active or productive abilities of speaking and writing are distinct from the passive or receptive abilities of listening and reading^[47].

Listening Skills. According to Ryczek^[48], the act of listening can be defined as the cognitive ability to comprehend and interpret communication. Specifically, listening to a language is the capacity to receive and interpret spoken communication by analyzing a sample of the language. It is a bilateral activity that involves both receiving and decoding information, as well as generating responses, predicting outcomes, and adjusting^[49,51]. Ria et al.^[51] examined the techniques employed by senior high students in Bandar Lampung. Their study revealed that students employed cognitive techniques, metacognitive strategies, and social strategies to listen and learn basic English language principles.

Speaking Skills. Speaking is regarded the most crucial and essential skill for effective communication among the four language skills^[21,52]. Mariyanti^[53] defines speaking as the act of constructing and exchanging significance by employing both verbal and non-verbal symbols across diverse situations. Speaking is a dynamic and inventive activity that involves the reception, construction, and transmission of meaning through spoken language. In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, it is crucial for learners to focus on developing their speaking and listening abilities. Students should engage in exercises that involve analyzing speech abilities. Teachers should set specific targets based on the class level and the English proficiency of the students^[50,54].

Reading Skills. Beatrice^[55] described reading skills as the mental processes that a reader employs to understand a text. Mulatu & Regassa^[2] believed that reading involves the act of searching for the fundamental origins of the tree of meaning where the skilled readers concentrate on the central message of a piece. Sutherland and Incera^[56] propose a set of behaviors and activities that students should engage in to cultivate a critical reading attitude—previewing, reviewing, summarizing, elaborating, synthesizing, and applying. The primary disparities between the widely acknowledged notion of the significance of critical reading skills and the current situation, wherein students continue to exhibit deficiencies in this, can be attributed to inadequate pedagogical practices employed by educators and sporadic interventions that focus on the cultivation of specific critical reading skills without adopting a comprehensive and comprehensive approach^[57,58].

Writing Skills. It involves a cognitive process through which students engage in conception, considering effective communication strategies, and structure their thoughts into coherent sentences that are comprehensible to others^[59,60]. It can also be the act of conveying coherent and succinct thoughts, ideas, and information through written text^[61-63]. The production of well-written papers is anticipated from students. It is imperative for individuals to consider additional fundamental principles and writing elements, including an in-depth knowledge of the writing mechanism^[60].

3. Research questions

This study assessed the effectiveness of different teaching strategies in English language teaching based on the language skills of the college students in public HEIs in Sulu. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions.

- What was the demographic profile of the college students in public HEIs in Sulu?
- How effective were the English language teaching strategies?
- What was the level of language learning skills of college students?
- Did the effectiveness of English language teaching strategies differ based on the students' demographic profiles?
- Did the level of language learning skills of college students differed based on their demographic profiles?
- Is there any significant correlation between the effectiveness of English language methods and the language skills of the college students in Jolo, Sulu?

4. Methods

4.1. Research design

A descriptive-correlation design was carried out to analyze the effectiveness of English language teaching strategies and the level of English language learning of college students in Sulu. Key demographic variables were gender, age, course, parents' educational level, and average monthly income.

A descriptive-correlational design systematically describes a specific phenomenon while examining the relationships between two or more variables within that phenomenon. In this approach, researchers collected data providing an accurate representation of the subjects or settings being studied. They then analyze this data to identify any potential associations or patterns among the variables, without manipulating any variables or establishing a cause-and-effect relationship^[24,64,65].

4.2. Participants and sampling

The participants in this research were college students from public HEIs in Sulu enrolled in academic year 2023-2024. Because of time and resource limitations, quota sampling was carried out to sample the

participants. There were two hundred (n=200) college students who participated in the study. Quota sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where the researcher ensures that specific segments or quotas of a population are adequately represented within the sample. In this study, the researchers selected four participating public HEIs in Sulu. A quota for each of these institutions was established as presented in the **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Quota from each institution.

Public Higher Education Institutions in Sulu	N
HEI A	75
HEI B	75
HEI C	25
HEI D	25
Total	200

4.3. Research instruments

This study developed a questionnaire that elicit the responses from the participants. The first part sought information about the demographic profiles of the students in terms of their (i) sex, (ii) age, (iii) course, (iv) parental educational attainment, and (v) monthly income. The second part of the questionnaire sought the level of implementation of different English language teaching methods designed based on the study of Liu & Shi (2007). This study modelled the questionnaire in three teaching methods—(i) Grammar-Translation Method, (ii) Direct Method, and (iii) Audio-Lingual Method. The third part of the questionnaire sought data regarding the learning skills of the college students based on their (i) listening skills, (ii) speaking skills, (iii) reading skills, and (iv) writing skills.

4.4. Data gathering procedure

Before the surveys could be distributed, the researcher received a letter of authorization from the dean's office of graduate studies. After receiving approval from the dean's office, the researcher quickly asked the president of Sulu State College for a letter of agreement prior to starting the study's questionnaires. Following approval, she informed the deans of several institutions that she would be conducting and gathering data for her study by presenting the authorized letter of authorization to them. The researcher personally delivered 200 questionnaires to first-year Sulu State College students in each department after receiving permission from the several deans to collect any data that would be required for her study.

4.5. Data analysis

The questionnaire was designed to represent coded responses into numerical values for analysis. In this study, a quantitative analysis was conducted to describe the effectiveness of English teaching methods and the language learning skills of the freshmen students in public HEIs in Sulu. Both weighted mean and standard deviation calculations were performed. The weighted mean was used to evaluate effectiveness of teaching methods and the language learning skills of the freshmen students.

Descriptors were utilized to interpret the mean scores. Criteria for calculating mean scores were established to categorize responses. **Table 2** below displays the descriptors used in this study.

Table 2. Descriptors for mean scores.

Rating Scale	Scale Value	Description	Interpretation
<i>Effectiveness of English teaching methods</i>			
5	4.50-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very High
4	3.50-4.49	Agree	High
3	2.50-3.49	Moderately Agree	Moderate
2	1.50-2.49	Disagree	Low
1	1.00-1.49	Strongly Disagree	Very Low
<i>Level of language learning skills</i>			
5	4.50-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very High
4	3.50-4.49	Agree	High
3	2.50-3.49	Moderately Agree	Moderate
2	1.50-2.49	Disagree	Low
1	1.00-1.49	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

5. Results

Question 1. What was the demographic profile of the college students in public HEIs in Sulu?

Table 3 presents the demographic profile of students based on their sex, age, course, parental educational attainment, and monthly income. Findings indicated that in terms of age, majority of students (80%) were ≥ 20 years old. Some of them (16.0%) were 18 to 19 years old and only 4.0% were ≤ 17 years old. For their sex, majority of the students were female (72.5%) while only 27.5% were male.

Based on the course enrolled, most students were taking Education (54.0%). Some of them were taking Agriculture (15.0%) and Arts (15.0%). Computer Science and Engineering only had 12 participants (6.0%). Both Nursing (5.0%) and Administration & Management (5.0%) had the lower number of participants with 10 students each.

Table 3. Demographic profiles of the students.

Demographics	Frequency (N=120)	Percent
<i>Age</i>		
17 years old & below	8	4.0%
18-19 years old	32	16.0%
20 years old & above	160	80.0%
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	55	27.5%
Female	145	72.5%
<i>Course</i>		
BS Agriculture	30	15.0%
Bachelor of Arts	30	15.0%
BS Administration & Management	10	5.0%
BS Computer Science & Engineering	12	6.0%

BS Education	108	54.0%
BS Nursing	10	5.0%
<i>Parental Educational Attainment</i>		
Primary	104	52.0%
Secondary	64	22.0%
Tertiary	16	8.0%
Post Graduate	16	8.0%
<i>Monthly Income</i>		
10,000 & below	176	88.0%
11,000 to 15,000	16	8.0%
16,000 to 20,000	3	1.5%
21,000 & 25,000	4	2.0%
26,000 & above	1	.5%

Most students (52.0%) had parents with primary education. Some had a secondary level (22.0%). Both tertiary (8.0%) and post-graduate (8.0%) levels had the lowest number of participants. In terms of their parent monthly income, majority earned ≤Php10,000 (88.0%). Some earned Php11,000-Php15,000 (8.0%). There were 2.0% who earned Php21,000-Php25,000. Among the lowest number of participants were those who earned Php16,000-Php20,000 (1.5%) and ≥Php26,000

Question 2. How effective were the English language teaching strategies?

5.1. Grammar-translation method

Table 4 shows the effectiveness of Grammar-Translation Method. The freshmen college students reported that this English language teaching method was highly effective ($M= 4.2986$, $SD = 0.569$). Specifically, the Grammar-Translation Method “enhances the understanding of text” ($M=4.425$, $SD = 0.6607$), “help in creative writing” ($M=4.440$, $SD = 0.7870$), “help in having good marks” ($M=4.345$, $SD = 0.740$).

Table 4. Effectiveness of grammar-translation method.

	Statements	Mean	S.D.	Rating
1	I think, reading translation enhances understanding of the text.	4.4250	.66073	High
2	I think, grammatical rules help in creative writing.	4.4400	.78708	High
3	I think, translation of text keeps the learners’ interest in the lecture.	4.3000	.72292	High
4	I think, grammatical exercises can help get good marks in the paper.	4.3450	.74076	High
5	I think, if there is well awareness of grammatical structure students can identify an audio passage in a better way.	4.1600	.82936	High
6	I think, communication in English in the class gives mental satisfaction to the students.	4.1900	.89325	High
7	I think, learners feel easy in understanding the concept in national language.	4.2300	.83100	High
Total Weighted Mean		4.2986	.56931	High

Legend: 4.50-5.0 (Very High); 3.5-4.49 (High); 2.5-3.49 (Moderate); 1.50-2.49 (Low); 1.0-1.49 (Very Low)

5.2. Direct method

Table 5 presents the effectiveness of Direct Method. The believed that direct method was an effective strategy in English language teaching ($M=3.9525$, $SD=.60846$). Specifically, the Direct Method in English language teaching strategy “helps in fluency of speech, good pronunciation and power of expression” ($M=4.155$, $SD=0.7706$), “helps in motivating students to understand and pronounce words” ($M=4.065$, $SD=0.8210$), and “helps students acquire fluency” ($M=4.005$, $SD=0.8175$).

Table 5. Effectiveness of direct method.

	Statements	Mean	S.D.	Rating
1	I think, fluency of speech, good pronunciation and power of expression are properly developed.	4.1550	.77068	High
2	I think, earners express themselves with only the target language.	3.9450	.74481	High
3	I think, the students are motivated to understand and pronounce words or sentences in foreign language.	4.0650	.82106	High
4	I think, rules of grammar can be easily learned.	3.8350	.78156	High
5	I think, it gives the opportunity to speak in meaningful context.	3.9100	.80943	High
6	I think, t is an activity method facilitating alertness and participation of the students.	3.9100	.77777	High
7	I think, teaching concepts and vocabulary is easy.	3.7950	.85829	High
8	I think, it helps the students acquire having fluency.	4.0050	.81751	High
Total Weighted Mean		3.9525	.60846	High

Legend: 4.50-5.0 (Very High); 3.5-4.49 (High); 2.5-3.49 (Moderate); 1.50-2.49 (Low); 1.0-1.49 (Very Low)

5.3. Audio-lingual method

Table 6 presents the effectiveness of Audio-Lingual Method. Based on the response from students, findings indicated that the use of Audio-Lingual Method was effective ($M=4.0831$, $SD=0.51870$) for them in learning. Specifically, the Audio-Lingual Method “improves students’ vocabulary” ($M=4.330$, $SD=0.7374$), “improves listening skills” ($M=4.280$, $SD =0.6509$), and “helps communicate fluently in English” ($M=4.125$, $SD=0.7696$).

Table 6. Effectiveness of audio-lingual method.

	Statements	Mean	S.D.	Rating
1	I think, audio lingual method helps students improve their listening skills.	4.2800	.65094	High
2	I think, question and answer drills improve students’ vocabulary	4.3300	.73744	High
3	I think, grammar rules and translation tests are easy to construct and can be objectively scored.	4.0250	.80474	High
4	I think, grammar is easily understood.	3.8850	.85759	High
5	I think, audio lingual is interesting and lively.	4.0900	.65117	High
6	I think, students are encouraged to use and speak foreign languages.	4.0500	.76841	High
7	I think, audio lingual method helps students to communicate fluently in English.	4.1250	.76963	High
8	I think, lessons can be learned easily	3.8800	.83612	High
Total Weighted Mean		4.0831	.51870	High

Legend: 4.50-5.0 (Very High); 3.5-4.49 (High); 2.5-3.49 (Moderate); 1.50-2.49 (Low); 1.0-1.49 (Very Low)

Question 3. What was the level of language learning skills of college students?

5.4. Listening skills

Table 7 presents the level of language learning skills of college students based on their listening skills. As indicated, they manifested very high level of listening skills ($M=3.8375$, $SD =.7232$). Specifically, the students reported they “can understand English speakers of different accents and dialects” ($M=3.8900$, $SD=.9499$), “can listen, recognize, and use English idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms” ($M=3.8500$, $SD=.8609$), “can distinguish between literal and implied meanings in English conversation” ($M=3.825$, $SD=.8532$), and “can listen and comprehend spoken English in a variety of accents and dialects” ($M=3.825$, $SD=.9102$).

Table 7. Language learning in listening skills.

	Statements	Mean	S.D.	Rating
1	I can understand English speakers of different accents and dialects.	3.8900	.94995	High
2	I can follow English conversation and lectures without difficulty	3.7900	.90554	High
3	I can distinguish between literal and implied meanings in English conversation	3.8250	.85324	High
4	I can extract key information from English audio recordings	3.8450	.85123	High
5	I can listen, recognize, and use English idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms.	3.8500	.86093	High
6	I can listen and comprehend spoken English in a variety of accents and dialects	3.8250	.91023	High
Total Weighted Mean		3.8375	.72320	High

Legend: 4.50-5.0 (Very High); 3.5-4.49 (High); 2.5-3.49 (Moderate); 1.50-2.49 (Low); 1.0-1.49 (Very Low)

5.5. Speaking skills

Table 8 presents the level of language learning of college students in terms of their speaking skills. Findings indicated that they had high competence in speaking ($M=3.688$, $SD=.71154$). Students reported that they “can use a wide range of vocabulary in spoken English” ($M=3.8150$, $SD=0.9246$), “can use appropriate gestures and facial expressions when speaking English” ($M=3.800$, $SD =0.9350$), and “can use appropriate grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation in English” ($M=3.740$, $SD =0.8810$).

Table 8. Language learning in speaking skills.

	Statements	Mean	S.D.	Rating
1	I can speak English fluently and confidently.	3.6800	.89533	High
2	I can express my ideas and opinions clearly in English.	3.6200	.88856	High
3	I can participate effectively in English discussions and conversations.	3.6600	.92122	High
4	I can use appropriate grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation in English.	3.7400	.88107	High
5	I can adjust my speaking style to fit different situations and audiences in English.	3.6450	.93453	High
6	I can communicate effectively with native speakers of English	3.5400	1.00171	High
7	I can clearly articulate my ideas and thoughts in spoken English.	3.6550	.96469	High
8	I can use a wide range of vocabulary in spoken English.	3.8150	.92469	High

9	I can effectively use intonation and stress in spoken English.	3.7250	.86784	High
10	I can use appropriate gestures and facial expressions when speaking English.	3.8000	.93508	High
Total Weighted Mean		3.6880	.71154	High
Legend: 4.50-5.0 (Very High); 3.5-4.49 (High); 2.5-3.49 (Moderate); 1.50-2.49 (Low); 1.0-1.49 (Very Low)				

5.6. Reading skills

Table 9 shows the level of language learning of college students based on the reading skills. As indicated, they were highly competent in reading ($M=3.794$, $SD=.6835$). Specifically, the students reported that they “are comfortable with reading long texts in English” ($M=4.0200$, $SD=.7762$), “can read English text with ease” ($M=3.915$, $SD=.8610$), “can read and understand academic texts in English” ($M=3.845$, $SD=.8802$), and “can comprehend the main ideas and details of a passage in English materials” ($M=3.800$, $SD=.9873$).

Table 9. Language learning in reading skills.

	Statements	Mean	S.D.	Rating
1	I can read English text with ease.	3.9150	.86109	High
2	I am comfortable with reading long texts in English.	4.0200	.77628	High
3	I can understand most of the vocabulary in English texts.	3.7700	.92812	High
4	I can identify the main idea of a text in English.	3.7450	.85653	High
5	I can comprehend the nuances and figurative language in English text.	3.7200	.89195	High
6	I can read and understand academic texts in English.	3.8450	.88026	High
7	I can easily comprehend technical terms and jargon in English.	3.6400	.92991	High
8	I can read and interpret complex graphs and charts in English.	3.7150	.89878	High
9	I can effectively scan and skim through texts in English to locate specific information.	3.7700	.82493	High
10	I can comprehend the main ideas and details of a passage in English materials I read.	3.8000	.98736	High
Total Weighted Mean		3.7940	.68352	High
Legend: 4.50-5.0 (Very High); 3.5-4.49 (High); 2.5-3.49 (Moderate); 1.50-2.49 (Low); 1.0-1.49 (Very Low)				

5.7. Writing skills

Table 10 presents the level of language learning of college students based on their reading skills. Findings indicated that they had high reading skills ($M=3.664$, $SD=.7702$). The students reported that they “can write grammatically correct sentences in English” ($M=3.775$, $SD=.9046$), “can use appropriate vocabulary and tone in writing” ($M=3.720$, $SD=.93055$), “can express ideas and thoughts clearly in written English” ($M=3.715$, $SD=.93711$), and “can write creatively and expressively” ($M=3.710$, $SD=.9541$).

Table 10. Language learning in reading skills.

	Statements	Mean	S.D.	Rating
1	I can write grammatically correct sentences in English.	3.7750	.90469	High
2	I can write coherently organized paragraphs in English	3.6550	.87740	High
3	I can use appropriate vocabulary and tone in my writing in English.	3.7200	.93055	High
4	I can write clear and concise emails, reports, and other professional documents in English.	3.5650	.92740	High
5	I can write creatively and expressively in English.	3.7100	.95418	High
6	I can express my ideas and thoughts clearly in written English.	3.7150	.93711	High
7	I can write cohesive and coherent paragraphs in English.	3.6750	.89070	High
8	I can effectively use grammar and vocabulary in writing English sentences	3.6800	.90092	High
9	I can write effective business emails in English.	3.5500	.94974	High
10	I can write academic papers that meet international standards in English.	3.5950	.97763	High
Total Weighted Mean		3.6640	.77024	High

Legend: 4.50-5.0 (Very High); 3.5-4.49 (High); 2.5-3.49 (Moderate); 1.50-2.49 (Low); 1.0-1.49 (Very Low)

Question 4. Did the effectiveness of English language teaching strategies differ based on the students' demographic profiles?

As shows in **Table 11**, there was no significant difference on the effectiveness of Grammar-Translation Method ($t=0.30$; $p=0.764$), Direct Method ($t=-1.273$; $p=0.205$), and Audio-Visual Method ($t=-0.551$; $p=0.582$) based on the sex of college students. These results suggest that the sex of college students does not significantly affect their perceptions of the effectiveness of the Grammar-Translation Method, Direct Method, or Audio-Visual Method.

Table 11. Inferential analysis for sex.

Variables	Mean	S. D.	Mean Difference	t	Sig.	Description	
Grammar-Translation Method	Male	4.3169	.56390	0.02720	.300	.764	Not Significant
	Female	4.2897	.57465				
Direct Method	Male	4.0091	.48642	-0.10462	-1.273	.205	Not Significant
	Female	4.1137	.53031				
Audio-Visual Method	Male	3.9136	.59554	-0.05338	-.551	.582	Not Significant
	Female	3.9670	.61681				

*Significant at $\alpha=0.05$

In **Table 12**, findings indicated that there was significant difference on the perceived effectiveness of Grammar-Translation Method ($F=4.573$; $p=0.011$) and Direct Method ($t=3.416$; $p=0.035$).

Furthermore, post-hoc analysis using Tukey's Test revealed that on Grammar-Translation Method, the perceptions of students of ages ≥ 20 years old significantly differed ($d=-.6044$; $SE=.2026$; $p=0.009$) compared to those ages ≤ 17 years old. Similarly, in Direct Method, the perceptions of college students of ages 18-19 years old significantly differed ($d=-.2033$; $SE=.1164$; $p=0.027$) compared to students of ages ≥ 20 years old.

Table 12. Inferential analysis for age.

Sources of Variation		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Description
Grammar-Translation Method	Between Groups	2.862	2	1.431	4.573	.011*	Not Significant
	Within Groups	61.636	197	.313			
	Total	64.498	199				
Audio-Lingual Method	Between Groups	0.716	2	.358	1.335	.265	Not Significant
	Within Groups	52.824	197	.268			
	Total	53.540	199				
Direct Method	Between Groups	2.470	2	1.235	3.416	.035*	Not Significant
	Within Groups	71.204	197	.361			
	Total	73.674	199				

*Significant at $\alpha=0.05$

In **Table 13**, there was significant difference on the perceived effectiveness of Grammar-Translation Method ($F=3.906$; $p=0.002$), Audio-Lingual Method ($F=5.995$; $p=0.000$), and Direct Method ($F=5.017$; $p=0.000$).

In Grammar-Translation Method, Tukey’s Test revealed that the perceptions of BS Education students significantly differed compared to Bachelor of Arts students ($d=-.4285$; $SE=.1134$; $p=0.003$).

In Audio-Lingual Method, post-hoc analysis identified that the perceived effectiveness of BS Agriculture ($d=-.4416$; $SE=.1262$; $p=0.008$), BS Administration & Management ($d=-.7041$; $SE=.1785$; $p=0.002$), BS Computer Science and Engineering ($d=-.6333$; $SE=.167$; $p=0.003$), and BS Education ($d=-.7041$; $SE=.1785$; $p=0.002$) students significantly differed compared to Bachelor of Arts students.

In Direct Method, post-hoc analysis revealed that the perceived effectiveness of BS Agriculture ($d=-.56666$; $SE=.1497$; $p=0.003$), BS Administration & Management ($d=-.65831$; $SE=.2117$; $p=0.026$), BS Computer Science and Engineering ($d=-.6062$; $SE=.198$; $p=0.03$), and BS Education ($d=-.5634$; $SE=.1196$; $p=0.000$) students significantly differed compared to Bachelor of Arts students.

Table 13. Inferential analysis for course.

Sources of Variation		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Description
Grammar-Translation Method	Between Groups	5.899	5	1.180	3.906	.002	Significant
	Within Groups	58.599	194	.302			
	Total	64.498	199				
Audio-Lingual Method	Between Groups	7.165	5	1.433	5.995	.000	Significant
	Within Groups	46.375	194	.239			
	Total	53.540	199				
Direct Method	Between Groups	8.435	5	1.687	5.017	.000	Significant
	Within Groups	65.239	194	.336			
	Total	73.674	199				

*Significant at $\alpha=0.05$

In **Table 14**, there was significant difference on the on the perceived effectiveness in Grammar-Translation Method ($F=2.956$; $p=0.034$) and Direct Method ($F=4.456$; $p=0.005$).

In Grammar-Translation Method, post-hoc analysis indicated that the perceptions of college students having parents with secondary level education significantly differed ($d=-.23317$; $SE=.0891$; $p=0.047$) compared to those students with primary education level.

In Direct Method, the perceived effectiveness of students having post-graduate parents significantly differed ($d=-.5722$; $SE=.1658$; $p=0.004$) compared to those students having parents with secondary level.

Table 14. Inferential analysis for parental educational attainment.

Sources of Variation		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Description
Grammar-Translation Method	Between Groups	2.792	3	.931	2.956	.034	Significant
	Within Groups	61.706	196	.315			
	Total	64.498	199				
Audio-Lingual Method	Between Groups	1.435	3	.478	1.799	.149	Not Significant
	Within Groups	52.105	196	.266			
	Total	53.540	199				
Direct Method	Between Groups	4.704	3	1.568	4.456	.005	Significant
	Within Groups	68.969	196	.352			
	Total	73.674	199				

*Significant at $\alpha=0.05$

In **Table 15**, findings indicated that there was no significant difference on the perceived effectiveness of Grammar-Translation Method ($F=00.303$; $p=0.876$), Audio-Lingual Method ($F=.551$; $p=0.699$), and Direct Method ($F=.610$; $p=0.656$).

Table 15. Inferential analysis for monthly family income.

Sources of Variation		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Description
Grammar-Translation Method	Between Groups	.398	4	.100	0.303	0.876	Not Significant
	Within Groups	64.099	195	.329			
	Total	64.498	199				
Audio-Lingual Method	Between Groups	.598	4	.149	0.551	0.699	Not Significant
	Within Groups	52.942	195	.271			
	Total	53.540	199				
Direct Method	Between Groups	.910	4	.228	0.610	0.656	Not Significant
	Within Groups	72.763	195	.373			
	Total	73.674	199				

*Significant at $\alpha=0.05$

Question 5. Did the level of language learning skills of college students differed based on their demographic profiles?

In **Table 16**, there was no significant difference on the level of language learning of college students in Listening Skills ($t=1.155$; $p=0.249$), Speaking Skills ($t=0.644$; $p=0.521$), Reading Skills ($t=0.270$; $p=0.788$), and Writing Skills ($t=-0.189$; $p=0.851$).

Table 16. Inferential analysis for sex.

Variables		Mean	S. D.	Mean Difference	t	Sig.	Description
Listening Skills	Male	3.9394	.82799	.13152	1.155	.249	Not Significant
	Female	3.8079	.67198				
Speaking Skills	Male	3.7455	.80894	.07254	.644	.521	Not Significant
	Female	3.6729	.67017				
Reading Skills	Male	3.8182	.79701	.02929	.270	.788	Not Significant
	Female	3.7889	.63841				
Writing Skills	Male	3.6491	.80941	-.02313	-.189	.851	Not Significant
	Female	3.6722	.75969				

*Significant at $\alpha=0.05$

In **Table 17**, findings indicated that there was significant difference on the Writing Skills ($F=0.3321$; $p=0.038$) of college students in terms of their age. Post-hoc analysis revealed that the Writing Skills of students ages ≥ 20 years old significantly differed ($d=-.3468$; $SE=.1658$; $p=0.032$) compared to students of ages ≤ 17 years old.

Table 17. Inferential analysis for age.

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Description	
Listening Skills	Between Groups	.155	2	.078	0.147	0.863	Not Significant
	Within Groups	103.925	197	.528			
	Total	104.080	199				
Speaking Skills	Between Groups	.814	2	.407	0.802	0.450	Not Significant
	Within Groups	99.937	197	.507			
	Total	100.751	199				
Reading Skills	Between Groups	2.222	2	1.111	2.412	0.092	Not Significant
	Within Groups	90.751	197	.461			
	Total	92.973	199				
Writing Skills	Between Groups	3.850	2	1.925	3.321	0.038	Significant
	Within Groups	114.211	197	.580			
	Total	118.061	199				

*Significant at $\alpha=0.05$

In **Table 18**, there was significant difference on the level of language learning of college students in Listening Skills ($F=1.950$; $p=0.88$), Speaking Skills ($F=2.608$; $p=0.026$), Reading Skills ($F=7.546$; $p=0.000$), and Writing Skills ($F=4.483$; $p=0.001$).

Table 18. Inferential analysis for course.

Sources of Variation		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Description
Listening Skills	Between Groups	4.980	5	.996	1.950	.088	Significant
	Within Groups	99.100	194	.511			
	Total	104.080	199				
Speaking Skills	Between Groups	6.346	5	1.269	2.608	.026	Significant
	Within Groups	94.405	194	.487			
	Total	100.751	199				
Reading Skills	Between Groups	15.138	5	3.028	7.546	.000	Significant
	Within Groups	77.835	194	.401			
	Total	92.973	199				
Writing Skills	Between Groups	12.229	5	2.446	4.483	.001	Significant
	Within Groups	105.832	194	.546			
	Total	118.061	199				

*Significant at $\alpha=0.05$

In Listening Skills, post-hoc analysis indicated that the level of language learning of BS Education students significantly differed ($d=-.4546$; $SE=.1475$; $p=0.028$) compared to Bachelor of Arts students.

In Speaking Skills, the level of language learning of BS Education students significantly differed ($d=-.4592$; $SE=.1439$; $p=0.020$) compared to Bachelor of Arts students.

In Reading Skills, the level of language learning of BS Agriculture ($d=-0.7833$; $SE=0.1635$; $p=0.000$), BS Administration & Management ($d=-0.9033$; $SE=0.2312$; $p=0.002$), BS Computer Science and Engineering ($d=-0.9100$; $SE=0.2163$; $p=0.001$), BS Education ($d=-0.7053$; $SE=0.1307$; $p=0.000$), and BS Nursing ($d=-0.7833$; $SE=0.2312$; $p=0.011$) students significantly differed compared to Bachelor of Arts students.

In Writing Skills, post-hoc analysis revealed that the level of language learning of BS Agriculture ($d=-0.7200$; $SE=0.1907$; $p=0.003$), BS Computer Science & Engineering ($d=-0.9500$; $SE=0.2522$; $p=0.003$), and BS Education ($d=-0.6027$; $SE=0.1524$; $p=0.001$) significantly differed compared to Bachelor of Arts students.

In **Table 19**, this study found out that there was significant difference on the Writing Skills ($F=4.385$; $p=0.005$) of students based on their parent's educational attainment. Post-hoc Analysis revealed that the writing skills of students with parents having post-graduate level significantly differed compared to those having a primary ($d=-0.95833$; $SE=0.2313$; $p=0.003$) and secondary ($d=-0.87563$; $SE=0.2124$; $p=0.013$) level.

Table 19. Inferential analysis for parental educational attainment.

Sources of Variation		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Description
Listening Skills	Between Groups	3.065	3	1.022	1.982	0.118	Not Significant
	Within Groups	101.015	196	.515			
	Total	104.080	199				
Speaking Skills	Between Groups	1.306	3	.435	0.858	0.464	Not Significant
	Within Groups	99.445	196	.507			
	Total	100.751	199				
Reading Skills	Between Groups	1.871	3	.624	1.342	0.262	Not Significant
	Within Groups	91.102	196	.465			
	Total	92.973	199				
Writing Skills	Between Groups	7.425	3	2.475	4.385	0.005	Significant
	Within Groups	110.636	196	.564			
	Total	118.061	199				

*Significant at $\alpha=0.05$

In **Table 20**, findings indicated that there was no significant difference on the Listening Skills ($F=0.131$; $p=0.971$), Speaking Skills ($F=0.415$; $p=0.797$), Reading Skills ($F=0.355$; $p=0.841$), and Writing Skills ($F=0.724$; $p=0.576$).

Table 20. Inferential analysis for monthly family income.

Sources of variation		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Description
Listening Skills	Between Groups	.279	4	.070	.131	.971	Not Significant
	Within Groups	103.801	195	.532			
	Total	104.080	199				
Speaking Skills	Between Groups	.851	4	.213	.415	.797	Not Significant
	Within Groups	99.900	195	.512			
	Total	100.751	199				
Reading Skills	Between Groups	.672	4	.168	.355	.841	Not Significant
	Within Groups	92.301	195	.473			
	Total	92.973	199				
Writing Skills	Between Groups	1.728	4	.432	.724	.576	Not Significant
	Within Groups	116.333	195	.597			
	Total	118.061	199				

Question 6: *Is there any significant correlation between the effectiveness of English language methods and the language skills of the college students in Jolo, Sulu?*

In **Table 21**, correlation analysis revealed that the effectiveness of English language teaching methods can be correlated ($r=0.611$; $p=0.000$) to the language skills of the college students. Further analysis can be done to identify whether the effectiveness of the teaching methods increases has a relative influence on students' language skills.

Table 21. Correlation between effectiveness of English language methods and language skills.

Variables		Pearson <i>r</i>	Sig	Description
Dependent	Independent			
Effectiveness of English Language Teaching Methods	Language Learning Skills	.611	.000*	High

*Correlation Coefficient is significant at alpha .05
 Correlation Coefficient Scale: 0.0-0.1=Nearly Zero; 0.1-0.30=Low; .3-0.5 0=Moderate; .5-0.7-0=High; .7-0.9= Very High; 0.9-1=Nearly Perfect

6. Discussion

The analysis of the effectiveness of different English language teaching methods among freshmen college students revealed several implications for educational strategies. The Grammar-Translation, Direct, and Audio-Lingual, present different advantages that address different aspects of learning the English language.

Findings of this study revealed that the Grammar-Translation Method emerged as the most highly regarded, with students reporting substantial benefits in understanding texts, creative writing, and achieving good academic marks. This method emphasized detailed translation and grammar rules which could solidify foundational language skills and academic performance. Previous studies indicated that Grammar-Translation Method promotes the practice of translating passages into and from the first language^[31,66-68]. This study found out that the Grammar-Translation Method allowed students to enhance their understanding of texts, be creative, and be aware of grammatical structures. These findings strengthened the results of Suhria & Ilmi^[69] that students found learning grammar by translation to be easier especially with emphasis on translation exercises. The iterative nature of translation tasks facilitates the integration of grammatical rules by students, enabling them to employ them with greater efficacy across diverse learning contexts. As a result, the Grammar-Translation Method not only improves students' skills in interpreting and creating written texts, but also equips them with the necessary tools for accurate and subtle language usage.

This study also found out that Direct Method can be an effective strategy especially in improving the fluency in speech, have good pronunciation, and motivate students for language learning. Unlike Grammar-Translation Method, Direct Method facilitates the learning of a foreign language without relying on the native language of mother tongue^[70]. The Direct Method is a pedagogical approach that places emphasis on the development of students' oral skills, specifically in the domains of listening and speaking^[71,72]. Schmitt^[72] emphasized the key characteristics of vocabulary instruction through the utilization of the direct method especially employing various techniques, including reading aloud and engaging in question-and-answer sessions. The knowledge on Direct Method from previous studies was consistent. This focus on oral proficiency and direct association between meaning and language helped students build confidence and competence in real-world communication, making it a valuable approach in language education.

In Audio-Lingual Method, findings of this study revealed its effectiveness in improving student's vocabulary, listening skills, and communication skills. Students believed that the Audio-Lingual Method is particularly effective in improving students' listening skills, a foundational component of language learning. The Audio-lingual method claims that foreign language learning occurs through the process of habit formation, reinforcement, and association^[42,73,74]. This study consistent with the study of Nshimiyimana & Bazimaziki^[75] indicating that the Audio-Lingual Method facilitates the development of communicative competencies among learners, through repetitive listening and speaking drills, students develop better auditory assessment and comprehension, which are crucial for effective communication. The approach actively involves learners in the lesson using dialogues and drills, which are particularly effective in teaching English to learners who do not have English as their native language.

In language learning skills, the college students manifested competence in Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. The observed level of proficiency in listening skills suggested that the students possess the ability to effectively comprehend spoken language, determine detailed meanings, and actively engage in conversations or lectures. These competences are essential when it comes to actively participating in verbal communication and effectively processing novel information.

In this study, the college students among the public HEIs in Sulu were competent in listening skills. The students reported their competence in understanding English speakers from diverse accents and dialects, recognizing and using idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, discerning between literal and implied meanings in English conversation, and comprehending spoken English across various accents and dialects. The process of comprehension is not exclusively contingent upon the verbal expressions of the speaker. Instead, the recipient of auditory stimuli establishes a cognitive linkage between the auditory stimuli and their preexisting cognitive framework, subsequently striving to apprehend the intended significance that the speaker has skillfully discussed^[76-79]. In this study, the students' language comprehension abilities are demonstrated by their advanced cognitive process, which allows them to deal with linguistic diversity and effectively engage with spoken language in many circumstances.

The college students from public HEIs in Sulu also had competence in speaking. Their competencies in speaking skills involved the use of an extensive vocabulary, suitable gestures, facial expressions, syntax, terminology, and pronunciation in spoken English. These findings indicated that the college students in Sulu have both language fluency and the capacity to effectively express meaning and participate in verbal communication. This study was consistent with the findings of Santos et al.^[80] indicating that Filipino students were generally proficient in speaking English. Additionally, findings from Dadulla^[81] noted that Filipino students are approaching proficient in pronunciation and developing in phrasing, content, organization, and language use. The findings of the study among college students in public HEIs in Sulu reflected that students were competent in speaking because of their effective use of their vocabulary, expressions, terms, and proficiency in pronunciation of words.

Additionally, the college students also had high competence in both reading and writing. Their reported language learning competence in reading skills involved comfort with reading long texts, ease in reading English materials, understanding academic texts, and grasping the main ideas and details of passages. These findings suggested that the students possess not only the ability to decode written language but also the capacity to comprehend and analyze complex textual information effectively. Similarly, their reported competence in writing includes writing grammatically correct sentences, using appropriate vocabulary and tone, expressing ideas clearly, and writing creatively and expressively. These findings indicated that the students not only have

a strong command of written English but also demonstrate proficiency in structuring coherent and compelling written compositions, highlighting their competence in both receptive and productive language skills.

The analysis of various aspects of English language learning among college students across different settings and methodologies underscores several key themes and trends. Across different teaching methods like Grammar-Translation, Direct Method, and Audio-Lingual Method, students exhibit varying competencies, suggesting the importance of tailored approaches to suit different learning styles and objectives. The effectiveness of each method lies in its ability to address specific language learning skills, whether it be understanding texts, developing oral proficiency, or improving vocabulary acquisition. The students' competence in these skills is not solely reliant on explicit instruction but is also influenced by cognitive processes and cultural factors, highlighting the complexity of English language learning.

7. Conclusion

The comprehensive analysis of different English language teaching methods and the language learning skills of college students among the public HEIs in Sulu, Philippines offered remarkable findings that could reflect effective educational strategies and language proficiency.

Across various English language learning methods such as Grammar-Translation, Direct Method, and Audio-Lingual Method, each approach presented advantages that could address different aspects of English language learning. The Grammar-Translation Method stands out for its emphasis on understanding texts, fostering creativity, and promoting academic success through detailed translation and grammar rules. Conversely, the Direct Method enhanced oral proficiency, pronunciation, and motivation for language learning by immersing students in authentic speaking and listening experiences. Similarly, the Audio-Lingual Method proves effective in improving vocabulary, listening, and communication skills through repetitive drills and habit formation.

The students' demonstrated competence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing underscores their well-rounded language proficiency, shaped by cognitive processes and cultural factors. Importantly, these findings highlight the importance of designed educational approaches that cater to different learning styles and objectives, acknowledging the complexity of language learning and the nature of English language proficiency. This study highlighted the significance of considering various teaching strategies and skill areas in designing effective language education programs to foster holistic language development among college students.

Author contributions

Conceptualization, AAS and CSU; Methodology, AAS and CSU; Software, AAS and CSU; Validation, AAS and CSU; Formal Analysis, AAS and CSU; Investigation, AAS and CSU; Resources, AAS and CSU; Data Curation, AAS and CSU; Writing-Original Draft Preparation, AAS and CSU; Writing-Review & Editing AAS and CSU; Visualization, AAS and CSU; Supervision, AAS and CSU; Project Administration, AAS and CSU; Funding Acquisition, AAS and CSU. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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