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## Unlocking success: strategic approaches to enhancing communicative competence in English learning

### Відкриваємо секрет успіху: стратегії підвищення комунікативної компетентності в навчанні англійської мови

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#### Abstract


This article explores the multifaceted nature of communicative competence, discuss its key components, and examine strategies for developing and enhancing this vital skill based on the survey conducted among English language learners. Through a deeper understanding of communicative competence, learners can unlock the full potential of their language abilities and navigate the complexities of our interconnected world with confidence and proficiency. The analysis of an online survey among first-year students provides insights into gender distribution, English proficiency levels, communication skills, and cultural awareness. A significant gender disparity is evident, with females comprising 83% of participants. Regarding English proficiency, the majority perceive themselves as intermediate, with smaller proportions identifying as pre-intermediate, beginner, or advanced. While confidence in overall communication skills is high, specific challenges exist in grammar,


#### Анотація

У даній статті досліджується багатогранна природа комунікативної компетентності, обговорюються її ключові компоненти, а також розглядаються стратегії розвитку та вдосконалення цієї життєво важливої навички на основі опитування, проведеного серед тих, хто вивчає англійську мову. Завдяки глибшому розумінню комунікативної компетентності студенти можуть розкрити весь потенціал своїх мовних здібностей і впевнено та кваліфіковано орієнтуватися у складнощах нашого взаємопов'язаного світу. Аналіз онлайн-опитування серед студентів-першокурсників дає уявлення про гендерний розподіл, рівні володіння англійською мовою, комунікативні навички та культурну обізнаність. Очевидною є значна гендерна диспропорція: представниці прекрасної статі складають 83% учасників. Щодо рівня володіння англійською мовою, то більшість вважає себе на середньому рівні, менша частка – на попередньому, початковому або просунутому. Хоча впевненість у загальних

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speaking, and writing. Limited engagement in English conversations outside formal settings indicates a need for increased practice opportunities. Various strategies are employed to enhance English skills, including media consumption and interaction with native speakers. These findings underscore the importance of tailored support for learners at different proficiency levels, promoting increased engagement in English practice outside the classroom, and integrating cultural sensitivity training to enhance communication skills and intercultural competence.

**Keywords:** communication skills, communicative competence, effective communication, language teaching, online survey participants.

## Introduction

In the contemporary global landscape, characterized by the ever-evolving dynamics of globalization and international collaboration, the acquisition of proficiency in foreign languages stands as a pivotal determinant of success. Among these languages, English emerges as the predominant lingua franca facilitating communication across borders, disciplines, and cultures. Various societies possess unique sets of standards and principles that shape how communication occurs. These cultural standards play a pivotal role in determining the selection of verbal actions, the level of explicitness or subtlety employed, the application of courteous tactics, and the understanding of significance (Bernadette, 2017; Kádár & Zhang, 2019). Despite the recognized importance of English, numerous studies reveal significant deficiencies in the development of communicative competence among learners worldwide. For instance, a 2020 report by the British Council Collen (2020) found that less than 50% of non-native English speakers demonstrated adequate communicative competence, impacting their academic and professional opportunities. Language serves as an extraordinary instrument, enabling humans to transmit not only information but also their intentions, emotions, and social interactions (Al-Athwary, 2022; Xiao & Lee, 2022). However, achieving fluency transcends mere acquaintance with grammatical structures and vocabulary. It encompasses a broader spectrum of language skills encapsulated within communicative competence. This entails

комунікативних навичках є високою, існують певні проблеми з граматиною, говорінням та письмом. Обмежена участь у розмовах англійською мовою за межами офіційних установ вказує на необхідність збільшення можливостей для практики. Для покращення навичок англійської мови застосовуються різні стратегії, зокрема використання засобів масової інформації та спілкування з носіями мови. Ці висновки підкреслюють важливість індивідуальної підтримки студентів на різних рівнях володіння мовою, сприяння більш активному залученню до практики англійської мови за межами аудиторії та інтеграції тренінгів з культурної чутливості для покращення комунікативних навичок та міжкультурної компетентності.

**Ключові слова:** комунікативні навички, комунікативна компетентність, ефективна комунікація, викладання мови, учасники онлайн-опитування.

the adept articulation of ideas with clarity and confidence in oral expression, the adept comprehension of spoken discourse in native-like contexts, encompassing subtle nuances and intricate details, and the adept interpretation of texts spanning varying levels of complexity, discerning both primary and ancillary themes. Furthermore, effective writing entails the production of clear, concise prose adhering to grammatical conventions and stylistic norms. The consequences of insufficient communicative competence are far-reaching, affecting not only individual career prospects but also broader economic and social integration. Therefore, investigating this area is critical. This study aims to address the current gaps in communicative competence by exploring effective teaching methodologies and providing concrete recommendations for educators. By enhancing communicative competence, we can better prepare learners for the demands of the globalized world, thereby contributing to their personal and professional success. Consequently, communicative competence serves as the cornerstone of language proficiency, encompassing a multifaceted array of skills essential for effective communication in diverse contexts. This study not only highlights the existing deficiencies but also underscores the importance of targeted interventions to improve communicative competence, thereby justifying the need for this research.

## Literature Review

Previous research has thoroughly investigated gender differences in academic settings. Psaki et al. (2018) noted that in various low- and middle-income countries, girls' education is advancing, yet gender disparities in educational participation persist, with females frequently outnumbering males. This pattern is reflected in the findings of this study, which observed a significant gender disparity among first-year students. Moreover, Mott (2022) in her report emphasized the multifaceted nature of gender disparities, attributing them to a complex interplay of sociocultural factors. Her mixed-methods research combined quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews, providing a comprehensive view of the issue. However, Mott acknowledged that further research is needed to explore interventions that can effectively mitigate these disparities. The current study's observation of a significant gender gap among first-year students aligns with these previous findings, indicating a persistent imbalance in educational representation.

Understanding students' perceptions of their English proficiency levels is crucial for effective language instruction. Khadigeh (2020) conducted a survey-based study involving 500 non-native English speakers, highlighting the importance of tailored language programs to accommodate learners at different proficiency levels. This study's recommendations, which include differentiated instruction and personalized learning plans, resonate with the current study's analysis. Khadigeh's work, while insightful, was limited by self-reported data, which may not accurately reflect actual proficiency levels. Additionally, Smith et al. (2019) underscored the role of diverse language learning strategies, including exposure to authentic materials and interaction with native speakers, in enhancing language proficiency. The findings regarding students' varied approaches to improving their English skills resonate with these existing studies, emphasizing the need for a multifaceted approach to language instruction.

Effective communication in English extends beyond linguistic proficiency to encompass cultural awareness and sensitivity. Tsang (2022) emphasized the significance of cultural competence in fostering successful cross-cultural communication, a theme echoed in the current study's findings regarding the importance of cultural awareness for effective communication. Her ethnographic study involved international students in a multicultural setting, revealing that

those with higher cultural awareness had better communication outcomes. Tsang's findings support the current study's emphasis on cultural awareness, though her research was limited by its small sample size. Furthermore, Johnson W. & Johnson T. (2018) highlighted the role of language practice outside formal settings in enhancing communication skills, aligning with the current study's recommendations to encourage more frequent English conversations among students. Johnson W. and Johnson T. pointed out the need for institutional support to facilitate such practices, noting a gap in extracurricular language learning opportunities. Overall, the literature supports the importance of addressing both linguistic and cultural dimensions in language learning to promote effective communication in English.

The European Union Department developed the 'Common European Framework of Reference for Languages' (CEFR), which outlines language competences demonstrated through activities and actions related to generating and perceiving texts, linked to specific communication topics and areas, and using appropriate strategies (Council of Europe, 2001). The CEFR underscores the importance of developing communicative competence to solve communication problems in various conditions, an idea supported by Bondarchuk (2023). Celce-Murcia (2007) rethought the role of communicative competence in language teaching, emphasizing its importance in real-world communication contexts. Her work aligns with the current study's focus on practical language use and cultural awareness. Furthermore, the development of intercultural communicative competence in teaching English, as explored by Dvorianchykova et al. (2022), emphasizes the integration of cultural elements in language instruction, which is crucial for fostering effective communication in multicultural environments. Hult & Johnson (2017) provided a practical guide on research methods in language policy and planning, highlighting the importance of robust methodological approaches in studying language education. Their insights underscore the necessity of combining quantitative and qualitative methods, as done in the current study, to capture the complexity of language learning processes.

Evans et al. (2021) explored the impact of migration on educational outcomes, noting that gender dynamics play a crucial role in the adaptation and success of migrant students. Their study, published in the *IZA Journal of Development and Migration*, used a cross-

sectional analysis to examine how educational participation rates among migrants differ by gender. The findings suggest that while female migrants often achieve higher educational outcomes, they face unique challenges that require targeted support measures. This adds a layer of complexity to understanding gender disparities in education and supports the need for comprehensive strategies to address these issues.

Kate Whiting (2020) in her article for the World Economic Forum identified the top job skills of the future, emphasizing the importance of complex problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity. Whiting's analysis indicates that language proficiency, particularly in English, is integral to these skills, as effective communication is a cornerstone of global collaboration and innovation. This aligns with the current study's emphasis on enhancing communicative competence to prepare students for future job markets. Wilson & Sabee (2003) explicated the theoretical term "communicative competence" in their comprehensive review, highlighting its various components including linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competencies. Their work, presented in the "Handbook of Communication and Social Interaction Skills," provides a detailed framework for understanding how communicative competence can be developed and assessed. This theoretical foundation supports the current study's approach to integrating diverse instructional strategies to enhance communicative competence among learners.

As per the definition provided in the 2014 Law of Ukraine 'On Higher Education', competence refers to a dynamic combination of knowledge, skills, practical abilities, ways of thinking, professional, ideological, and civic qualities, as well as moral and ethical values. It determines an individual's ability to carry out professional and educational activities successfully and is the outcome of studying at a specific level of higher education (Law of Ukraine 1556-VII, 2014). Additionally, Lightbown and Spada (2013) and Nation and Macalister (2010) provided foundational insights into how languages are learned and the design of language curricula, respectively. Their works support the need for diverse instructional strategies and the integration of both linguistic and cultural competencies in language education.

Despite these insights, gaps remain in the literature regarding the most effective methods to develop communicative competence.

Specifically, there is a need for more empirical research on long-term outcomes of various instructional strategies and the role of digital tools in language learning. Additionally, while cultural competence is acknowledged as crucial, more studies are needed to explore how it can be systematically integrated into language instruction. The current study aims to address these gaps by investigating the development of communicative competence through a combination of traditional and innovative methods, including digital tools and cultural immersion. By providing the results of the online surveys for educators, this research seeks to enhance communicative competence among learners, thereby improving their personal and professional prospects in a globalized world. Reading books, articles, and other texts in English can help improve your understanding of the language and expand your knowledge of different topics. Writing texts in English can help improve your grammar and style. Additionally, using online language resources and apps can provide a variety of ways to practice your language skills. Attending language courses and clubs can be beneficial for socializing with other English language learners and improving language skills.

### Methodology

This study employed an exploratory mixed-methods approach to investigate language learning and acquisition among first-year university students. The research was designed to provide both a broad overview and an in-depth understanding of the subject, combining quantitative and qualitative data to ensure comprehensive findings. The research was exploratory in nature, aiming to uncover patterns and insights that could inform future studies and interventions in language education. Quantitative data was collected to assess various metrics, including gender distribution, English proficiency levels, and the frequency of English conversations among participants. Techniques used for the quantitative analysis included descriptive statistics to summarize the basic features of the data, frequency distributions to determine the number of occurrences of different responses, and correlation analysis to explore potential relationships between different variables such as gender and English proficiency levels. Qualitative data was gathered to explore participants' communication skills, challenges, strategies, and perceptions of cultural awareness through open-ended survey questions. Techniques used for the qualitative analysis included thematic analysis to identify, analyze,

and report patterns (themes) within the data and content analysis to systematically categorize textual information to identify trends and patterns. A mixed analysis approach was employed, combining quantitative assessments with qualitative insights to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research objectives. This integration facilitated a robust exploration of language dynamics, enhancing the validity and reliability of the study findings.

The researchers carried out an exploratory study in four Ukrainian universities using an online survey conceived and developed by a team of researchers. These universities were Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Kyiv, Ukraine), Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design (Kyiv, Ukraine), National University of “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy” (Kyiv, Ukraine) and Volodymyr Vynnychenko Central Ukrainian State University (Kropyvnytskyi, Ukraine). To gather the information the researchers needed, they developed a web-based questionnaire in Google Forms. The research participants were 95 first-year students, selected based on their enrolment in these universities.

The sample consisted of first-year students, chosen to provide a representative sample of the population under study. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling method, ensuring a diverse representation in terms of gender and academic background. To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the following measures were taken: the questionnaire was pilot-tested with a small group of students to refine the questions for clarity and relevance; consistent procedures were followed in administering the survey to all participants; and combining quantitative and qualitative data helped in cross-verifying the findings. Quality control procedures included data cleaning to ensure accuracy and completeness of the data by checking for any inconsistencies or missing responses, and ethical considerations such as

ensuring participant anonymity and confidentiality, and obtaining informed consent from all participants. The steps followed included the development of the questionnaire by a team of researchers, pilot testing and refinement based on feedback, distribution of the online survey to participants via university communication channels, data collection over a specified period, and data analysis using statistical software for quantitative data and qualitative analysis software for open-ended responses. By providing these details, the methodology ensures that other researchers can accurately replicate the study, thereby contributing to the reliability and validity of future research in this area

## Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study, which explored gender distribution, English proficiency levels, communication skills, and cultural awareness among first-year university students in Ukraine. By analysing both quantitative and qualitative data, the study offers a comprehensive overview of the current state of language learning and highlights areas requiring further attention to enhance English language instruction and proficiency.

### A. Gender Data

Figure 1 demonstrates the gender data on online survey participants. The data in Figure 1 below clearly shows that out of 95 students who took part in the online survey, 83% were female and 17% were male. This indicates a significant gender disparity, with females outnumbering males by a considerable margin. Additionally, the point “gender” reflects a minority representation of males, accounting for only 17% of the total population among freshmen. Overall, the characterization of the point “gender” underscores the unequal distribution of genders within the first-year students due to a lot of factors, especially war in Ukraine.

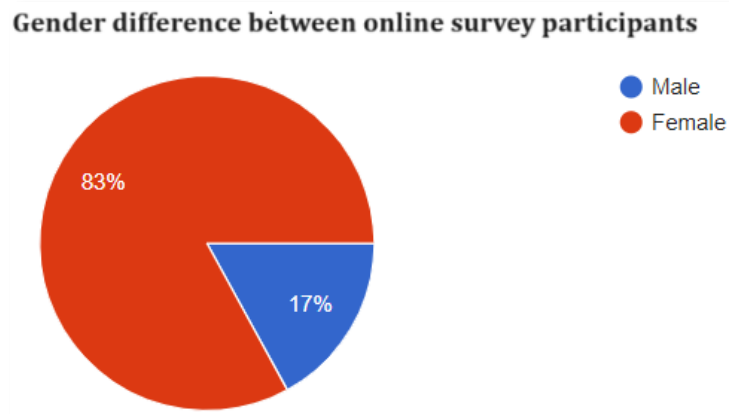


Fig. 1. Gender difference between online survey participants.

B. Current English proficiency level

The analysis of the data reveals that the majority of students, accounting for approximately 69.1%, perceive their current English proficiency level to be at the intermediate stage. This suggests that a significant portion of the surveyed students are comfortable with everyday conversations, possess moderate comprehension skills, and can express themselves with reasonable fluency.

Furthermore, the data indicates that 14.9% of students consider themselves to be at a pre-intermediate level, indicating a slight progression beyond the beginner stage but still with a limited

command of English. Additionally, 10.6% of students identify as beginners, suggesting that they have a basic understanding of the language but may struggle with vocabulary and grammar.

On the other hand, only 5.3% of students perceive themselves to be at an advanced level of English proficiency. This smaller proportion indicates that a minority of surveyed students feel confident in engaging in complex discussions, comprehending nuanced language, and expressing themselves fluently in various contexts.

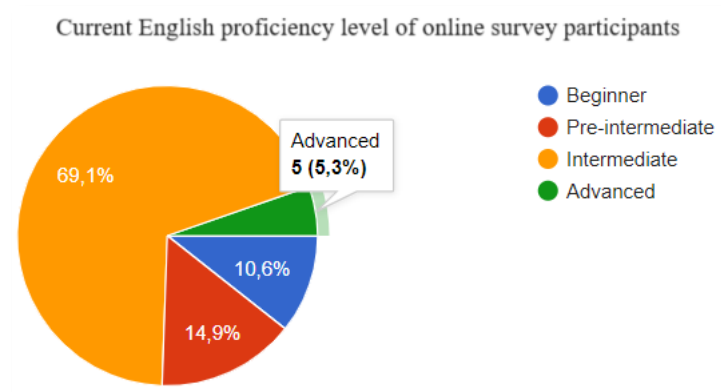


Fig. 2. Current English proficiency level of online survey participants.

The data underscores the importance of recognizing the diverse proficiency levels among English language learners. While a considerable portion of students perceive themselves to be at the intermediate level, indicating a satisfactory command of the language for everyday communication, there remains a significant number at pre-intermediate and beginner levels who may require additional support and resources to progress further.

Furthermore, the relatively small percentage of students identifying as advanced highlights the need for tailored programs and opportunities to challenge and nurture higher-level language skills. Efforts to provide enrichment activities, advanced courses, and opportunities for immersion or authentic language practice could benefit this subgroup of learners.

Overall, understanding the distribution of students across different proficiency levels

allows educators to better address the varied needs and aspirations of learners. By offering a comprehensive and inclusive approach to English language instruction, institutions can empower students to achieve their language learning goals effectively and confidently.

### C. Communication Skills

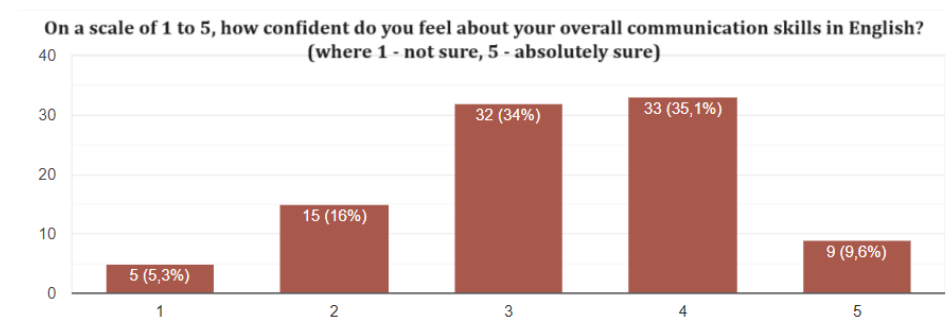
Communication skills encompass various abilities that enable individuals to convey information effectively, both verbally and non-verbally, in diverse contexts and with different audiences. These skills include listening, speaking, writing, and non-verbal communication such as body language and facial expressions. Effective communication is essential in personal, professional, and academic settings, facilitating the exchange of ideas, information, and emotions.

In personal relationships, strong communication skills contribute to building trust, fostering understanding, and resolving conflicts amicably. In the workplace, effective communication is vital for collaboration, teamwork, leadership, and customer relations. Professionals who can articulate their ideas clearly, actively listen to others, and adapt their communication style to

different situations are often more successful in their careers. Moreover, effective communication is crucial for academic success, as it facilitates learning, comprehension, and the expression of ideas in both written and oral forms.

Overall, communication skills play a pivotal role in various aspects of life, influencing social interactions, career advancement, academic achievement, and personal development. Enhancing these skills through training, practice, and self-awareness can lead to improved relationships, greater opportunities, and increased success in both personal and professional domains.

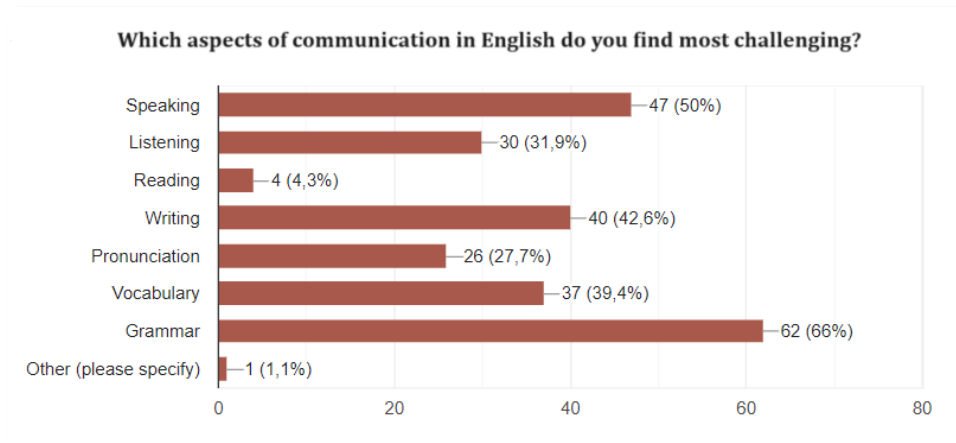
Our survey asked the first-year students to evaluate their overall communication skills in English. The results indicate that the majority of respondents (69.1%) rated their confidence in their overall communication skills in English as a 4, indicating a high level of confidence. Meanwhile, 34% of respondents rated their confidence as a 3, suggesting a moderate level of confidence. Only a small percentage of respondents felt either not confident at all (5.3%) or very confident (9.6%), with 16% of respondents rating their confidence as a 2.



**Fig. 3.** Overall communication skills in English of online survey participants.

These findings suggest that a significant portion of the surveyed individuals possess a relatively high level of confidence in their English communication skills. However, there is also a notable percentage who may feel less assured in

this area. Further analysis could explore factors influencing respondents' confidence levels and identify areas for improvement to support individuals in enhancing their English communication skills.



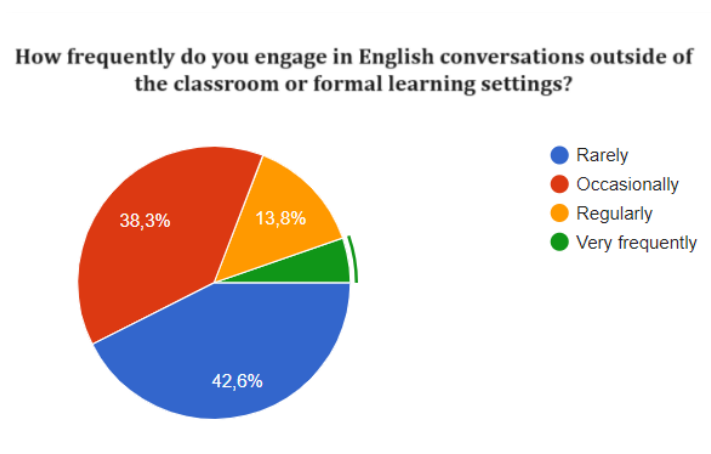
**Fig. 4.** Aspects of communication in English the online survey participants find most challenging.

The survey results reveal that grammar is the aspect of communication in English that respondents find most challenging, with a substantial majority of 66% identifying it as such. Following grammar, speaking and writing are cited as the next most challenging aspects, with 50% and 42.6% of respondents, respectively, indicating difficulty in these areas. Listening and pronunciation are also mentioned by a significant portion of respondents, with 31.9% and 27.7%, respectively, finding these aspects challenging. Additionally, vocabulary poses a challenge for 39.6% of respondents. Interestingly, reading appears to be the least challenging aspect, with only 4.3% of respondents citing it as such.

These findings highlight specific areas where individuals may require additional support or resources to improve their English communication skills. Further analysis could delve into the reasons behind the perceived

challenges and explore strategies for addressing them effectively.

Engaging students in English conversations outside of the classroom or formal learning settings is crucial for their language development. It provides them with real-life opportunities to practice and apply what they have learned in class, thereby reinforcing their language skills and confidence. Encouraging students to converse in English outside of the classroom fosters a more immersive learning experience, helping them to adapt to various communication contexts and interact with native speakers. Additionally, such interactions expose students to diverse accents, colloquial expressions, and cultural nuances, enriching their understanding of the language and enhancing their cultural awareness. Overall, promoting English conversations outside formal settings empowers students to become more fluent, confident, and culturally competent communicators.



**Fig. 5.** Frequency with which online survey participants engage in English conversations outside of the classroom or formal learning settings.

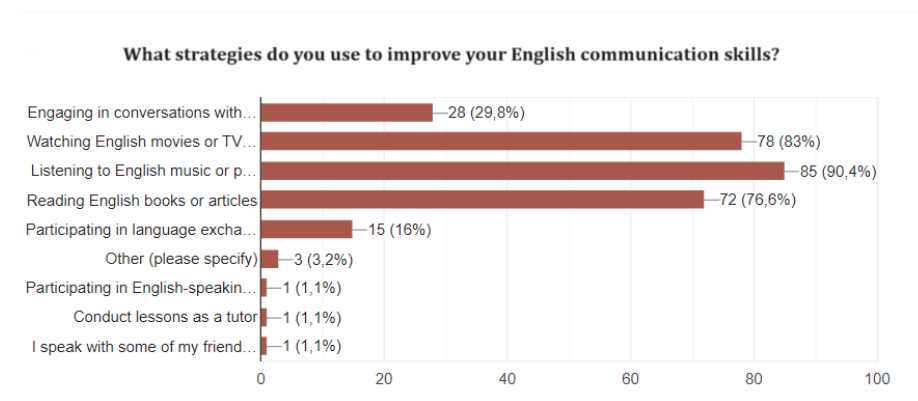


The survey results indicate that a significant portion of respondents engage in English conversations outside of the classroom or formal learning settings only occasionally, with 38.3% falling into this category. Additionally, 42.6% of respondents reported engaging in such conversations rarely.

On the other hand, a smaller proportion of respondents reported engaging in English conversations more regularly, with 13.8% indicating that they do so regularly and 5.3% stating that they engage in such conversations very frequently.

These findings suggest that there may be limited opportunities for individuals to practice their English communication skills in real-life situations outside of formal learning environments. Encouraging more frequent and regular practice through various means, such as language exchange programs or conversation clubs, could help individuals build confidence and fluency in English.

Exploring effective strategies to enhance English communication skills is vital for language learners seeking proficiency and fluency. In today's interconnected world, where English serves as a global lingua franca, individuals are increasingly motivated to refine their language abilities to engage in diverse personal, academic, and professional contexts. Understanding the varied approaches employed by learners to bolster their communication skills offers valuable insights into effective language acquisition methodologies. From immersive experiences such as conversing with native speakers to utilizing multimedia resources like movies, music, and podcasts, learners employ a range of techniques tailored to their preferences and learning styles. This exploration not only sheds light on the diverse pathways to linguistic mastery but also underscores the importance of adaptability and creativity in the language learning journey.



**Fig. 6.** Strategies the online survey participants use to improve their English communication skills.

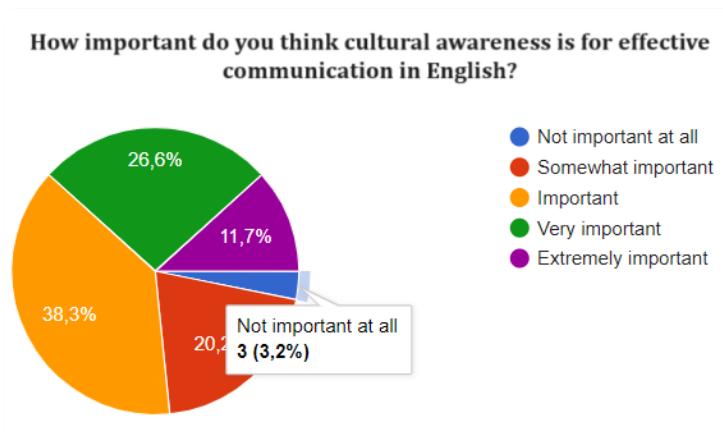
The survey results reveal that respondents employ various strategies to enhance their English communication skills. A significant majority of respondents, 90.6%, reported that they listen to English music or podcasts as a method to improve their English proficiency. Additionally, 83% of respondents indicated that they watch English movies or TV shows for language improvement. Furthermore, a considerable proportion of respondents, 76.6%, reported reading English books or articles as a strategy to enhance their communication skills. Engaging in conversations with native speakers was also cited by 29.8% of respondents as a method they use to improve their English.

While fewer respondents mentioned participating in language exchange programs, with only 16% choosing this option, other strategies were also reported. Some respondents mentioned conducting lessons as a tutor, speaking with friends, and participating in English-speaking clubs as

additional methods to enhance their English communication skills.

In general, these findings demonstrate the diverse approaches individuals employ to develop their English proficiency, ranging from passive activities like listening and watching to active engagement through conversation and participation in language exchange programs.

Cultural awareness plays a pivotal role in fostering effective communication in English, transcending mere language proficiency to encompass a deeper understanding of societal norms, customs, and values. In an increasingly interconnected world where individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds interact on a regular basis, the ability to navigate cultural nuances is essential for building rapport, fostering mutual respect, and avoiding misunderstandings. Cultural awareness plays a vital role in promoting intercultural competence and fostering meaningful cross-cultural interactions.



**Fig. 7.** Importance of cultural awareness for effective communication in English according to the online survey participants.

The survey results indicate that respondents generally recognize the significance of cultural awareness for effective communication in English. A substantial proportion of respondents, 38.3%, deemed cultural awareness as important, while 26.6% considered it very important. Additionally, 11.7% of respondents rated cultural awareness as extremely important for effective communication in English.

Only a small percentage of respondents, 3.2%, indicated that cultural awareness is not important at all. Similarly, a minority of respondents, 20.2%, viewed cultural awareness as somewhat important.

These findings underscore the importance of cultural sensitivity and understanding in facilitating successful communication in English, highlighting its role in fostering meaningful interactions and bridging cultural divides. The findings align with previous studies that emphasize the multifaceted nature of language learning. For instance, Krashen's (1989) Input Hypothesis highlights the importance of comprehensible input in language acquisition, which is reflected in the respondents' use of English media. Similarly, Swain's (1993) Output Hypothesis underscores the role of language production in developing proficiency, evidenced by respondents' engagement in conversations. These connections suggest that learners benefit from a balanced approach that includes both input and output activities.

Moreover, the survey reveals that while many respondents engage in English conversations outside formal learning settings, there is still room for increased frequency in such interactions, which could further enhance their proficiency. This finding is consistent with

research by Derwing & Munro (2013), which emphasizes the importance of authentic communication opportunities for language learners to improve fluency and confidence. Providing more opportunities for real-life practice, such as language exchange programs or conversation clubs, can bridge this gap.

Based on the survey results, it is evident that there is a notable emphasis on the importance of communication skills in English among the respondents. Despite facing challenges, such as grammar and vocabulary acquisition, the majority of participants are actively engaged in improving their communication abilities through various means, including watching English media, listening to podcasts, and reading English materials. The survey also highlights the significance of cultural awareness in effective communication, with a considerable portion of respondents acknowledging its importance. This underscores the need for learners to not only develop linguistic proficiency but also to cultivate an understanding of cultural nuances and context.

Moreover, the survey reveals that while many respondents engage in English conversations outside formal learning settings, there is still room for increased frequency in such interactions, which could further enhance their proficiency. Overall, the findings suggest a strong awareness among respondents regarding the importance of communication skills in English and a willingness to actively work towards improving them. Moving forward, continued efforts to address challenges and enhance cultural awareness can contribute to more effective communication in English.

The analysis of the data underscores the importance of recognizing the diverse proficiency levels among English language learners, with a significant portion of students perceiving themselves at the intermediate level. However, there remains a notable number at pre-intermediate and beginner levels who may require additional support and resources to progress further. Efforts to provide tailored programs and opportunities for advanced learners are essential, as indicated by the relatively small percentage of students identifying as advanced. Enrichment activities, advanced courses, and opportunities for immersion or authentic language practice could benefit this subgroup of learners. These findings echo the principles of differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2001), which advocate for varied teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of learners.

Overall, understanding the distribution of students across different proficiency levels allows educators to better address the varied needs and aspirations of learners. By offering a comprehensive and inclusive approach to English language instruction, institutions can empower students to achieve their language learning goals effectively and confidently. Moving beyond proficiency levels, effective communication skills in English are crucial for personal, professional, and academic success. While a majority of respondents express confidence in their overall communication skills in English, there are specific areas such as grammar, speaking, and writing where challenges persist. Encouraging students to engage in English conversations outside of formal learning settings is vital for their language development. While a significant portion of respondents already do so occasionally or regularly, there is still room for increased frequency, which could contribute to enhanced proficiency and confidence.

The strategies employed by respondents to improve their English communication skills vary, highlighting the importance of catering to individual preferences and learning styles. From passive activities like listening and watching to active engagement through conversation, learners utilize a diverse range of methods to bolster their proficiency. These strategies align with findings by Oxford (1990), who identified various language learning strategies that contribute to successful language acquisition, including cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies. Cultural awareness emerges as a critical component of effective communication in

English, with respondents recognizing its significance in fostering meaningful interactions and bridging cultural divides. Incorporating cultural sensitivity training into language learning programs could further enhance learners' communication skills and intercultural competence, as suggested by Byram (1997). Incorporating cultural sensitivity training into language learning programs could further enhance learners' communication skills and intercultural competence.

Thus, the survey results underscore the importance of communication skills in English and cultural awareness among first-year university students in Ukraine. The findings suggest a strong awareness among respondents regarding the importance of these skills and a willingness to actively work towards improving them. Moving forward, continued efforts to address challenges and enhance cultural awareness can contribute to more effective communication in English.

## Conclusions

The conclusions drawn from the survey underscore a pervasive acknowledgment among participants of the vital significance of effective communication skills in English. Moreover, it reveals an encouraging disposition among respondents to actively engage in endeavors aimed at refining these skills. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of language acquisition, it becomes apparent that continued efforts are imperative to overcome obstacles, foster a deeper understanding of cultural nuances, and provide a spectrum of learning avenues. By addressing these facets comprehensively, the trajectory towards more proficient English communication among language learners can be significantly bolstered. Consequently, initiatives geared towards offering tailored support, promoting cultural sensitivity, and expanding access to diverse learning resources are poised to yield tangible advancements in English language proficiency. This includes implementing enrichment activities, advanced courses, and opportunities for immersion or authentic language practice to cater to various proficiency levels, as well as incorporating cultural sensitivity training into language programs. Ultimately, these endeavours stand to not only enrich individual communication abilities but also contribute to broader societal and intercultural cohesion. By integrating insights from existing literature, such as the theories of Krashen, Swain, and Oxford, educators can develop more effective strategies to support

language learners. Enhanced focus on providing diverse and frequent opportunities for authentic communication, tailored instructional approaches, and cultural sensitivity training can empower learners to achieve greater proficiency and confidence in English. This holistic approach to language education promises to foster more effective and meaningful interactions, both within and beyond the academic environment.

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