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Benchmarking the Nexus of Language Proficiency Transitions Outcomes and Student Adjustments

Jean Grace R. Barot
Graduate School, Cebu Technological University - Main Campus, Cebu City, Philippines

Email of Corresponding Author: barot@deped.gov.ph

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Abstract

This study examined academic language proficiency transitions, learning adjustments, and instructional challenges among Grade 7 students in three public secondary schools in Tanjay City, Negros Oriental, Philippines, as a basis for developing an Educational Management Intervention Plan. A quantitative descriptive-evaluative survey design involved 69 students selected through stratified random sampling and six English teachers through total enumeration. Data were gathered using two researcher-developed, content-validated questionnaires and analyzed through frequencies, percentages, weighted means, and ranking. Findings revealed moderate proficiency in academic vocabulary (M = 2.67) and reading comprehension (M = 2.63), but low proficiency in oral communication (M = 2.51) and written composition (M = 2.49). Cebuano predominated in home communication (91.30%), while translation and code-switching were extensively practiced (M = 4.04). Teachers identified administrative workload (M = 4.33) and heterogeneous, overcrowded classrooms (M = 4.23) as very serious challenges. The findings indicate gaps between elementary English achievement and secondary academic language demands, compounded by limited instructional resources and institutional support. Institutionalized diagnostic screening, differentiated language bridging, protected remediation periods, and targeted teacher development are recommended. The study's three-school, cross-sectional scope limits generalizability and causal interpretation. Supporting Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), the proposed intervention plan offers a context-specific framework for strengthening inclusive literacy instruction, educational management, and sustainable academic transitions.

Keywords: Academic Language Proficiency; Educational Management; Grade 7 Students; Instructional Challenges; Language Transition; Learning Adjustments; Sustainable Education

1. Introduction

Language proficiency plays a fundamental role in academic achievement, cognitive development, and effective participation in educational environments. The transition from elementary to junior high school represents a critical developmental stage during which learners encounter increasingly complex academic language demands, particularly in reading comprehension, oral communication, written composition, and vocabulary acquisition. While elementary instruction often emphasizes contextualized communication and foundational literacy, secondary education requires learners to comprehend abstract concepts, interpret expository texts, and communicate effectively across academic disciplines. This transition becomes particularly challenging in multilingual educational settings where English is primarily encountered within formal classrooms. Inadequate linguistic preparation, limited instructional support, and increased academic expectations may contribute to learning difficulties, communicative anxiety, and reduced classroom engagement. Consequently, addressing

language proficiency transitions requires coordinated pedagogical practices, responsive instructional leadership, and sustainable educational management interventions.

Related literature emphasizes the distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), demonstrating that conversational fluency does not necessarily indicate readiness for complex academic discourse. Academic language development requires sustained instructional support, structured exposure to disciplinary vocabulary, and opportunities for meaningful communication. Sociocultural perspectives further highlight the importance of teacher guidance, collaborative learning, and instructional scaffolding in facilitating linguistic development. Psychological perspectives identify motivation, self-confidence, and communication anxiety as influential factors in students' willingness to participate in academic activities. Empirical discussions across international educational contexts associate language transitions with difficulties in comprehension, academic writing, oral participation, and independent learning. Students frequently adopt compensatory strategies, including translation, code-switching, peer assistance, and communicative avoidance. Although these strategies may support immediate classroom participation, continued dependence on them without appropriate instructional guidance may constrain independent academic language development. Educational management literature consequently emphasizes diagnostic assessment, differentiated instruction, collaborative teacher development, and institutionalized language bridging programs as essential mechanisms for addressing transitional learning difficulties.

Globally, the transition from primary to lower secondary education presents significant linguistic and instructional challenges, particularly in multilingual communities where academic English differs substantially from the language used in everyday interactions. International educational discussions emphasize that successful transitions depend on the alignment of curricular expectations, learner readiness, and institutional support. In the Philippines, these challenges are reflected in the transition from elementary language instruction to the more demanding English-language competencies required in Grade 7. Differences in foundational literacy, limited reading resources, large class sizes, and substantial teacher workloads may further complicate this process. The implementation of the MATATAG curriculum underscores the importance of strengthening foundational competencies and addressing persistent learning gaps. At the local level, public secondary schools in Tanjay City, Negros Oriental, accommodate learners from diverse elementary feeder schools with varying socioeconomic backgrounds, linguistic experiences, and academic preparation. Sinugbuanong Binisaya (Cebuano) predominates in many home and community interactions, limiting opportunities for sustained English-language exposure outside school. Within Lourdes Ledesma Del Prado Memorial National High School, Tanjay City National High School, and Tanjay Legislated High School, these conditions create instructional challenges as teachers balance prescribed secondary competencies with learners' differing levels of academic language readiness. Limited contextualized materials, uneven access to digital resources, and insufficiently structured remediation mechanisms further emphasize the need for coordinated institutional responses.

The study is anchored in complementary linguistic, psychological, sociocultural, and educational management theories. Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Theory and Dual Iceberg Model (1979, 2021) explain the distinction between conversational language abilities and the cognitive-academic proficiency necessary for secondary education. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Zone of Proximal Development (1978; contemporary educational frameworks, 2020–2024) emphasize socially mediated learning, instructional scaffolding, and collaborative support in developing higher-order language competencies. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982, 2020) highlights the influence of motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety on language acquisition and classroom participation. From an organizational perspective, von Bertalanffy's General Systems Theory and Open Systems Theory (1968; modern educational administrative adaptations, 2021–2023) conceptualize schools as interconnected systems in which learner characteristics, instructional resources, administrative processes, and academic outcomes interact. Hallinger's Instructional Leadership Framework (2003) further emphasizes the responsibility of educational leaders to strengthen instructional quality, professional development, curriculum implementation, and learning environments. Collectively, these perspectives establish that successful language transitions depend not only on individual learner capabilities but also on responsive teaching practices, supportive classroom environments, and effective institutional governance.

The study is likewise supported by international and Philippine educational policies promoting inclusive, equitable, and developmentally appropriate learning opportunities. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), particularly Articles 28 and 29, recognizes children's rights to education and comprehensive development. The 1987 Philippine Constitution, particularly Article XIV, Sections 1, 2(1), and 7, establishes the State's responsibility to promote accessible and quality education and recognizes the role of language in instruction. Republic Act No. 10533, or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, emphasizes learner-centered, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate curricula, while Republic Act No. 9155, or the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, strengthens school-based management and institutional accountability. DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2019 provides policy guidelines for implementing the K to 12 Basic Education Program, whereas DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2016 institutionalizes Learning Action Cells as mechanisms for continuing professional

development. These frameworks, together with the MATATAG Agenda, provide an administrative and policy basis for strengthening language transition support, teacher collaboration, and school-level instructional interventions.

Despite extensive discussions of academic language development, learner adjustment, and instructional leadership, an important research gap remains concerning their integrated assessment within specific public secondary school environments. Existing literature identifies linguistic difficulties, communication anxiety, instructional constraints, and institutional support needs; however, the combined examination of these dimensions within the Grade 7 transition context of Tanjay City remains insufficiently established. In particular, there is a need for localized evidence linking students' language exposure, academic language proficiency, adjustment strategies, and teachers' instructional challenges to the development of a comprehensive educational management response. Addressing this gap requires examining both learner experiences and institutional conditions rather than treating language difficulties as isolated academic deficiencies. Accordingly, this study assesses language proficiency transition outcomes and learning adjustments among Grade 7 students, together with instructional support systems, across three selected public secondary schools in Tanjay City, Negros Oriental, during School Year 2026–2027. Specifically, it examines teacher and student profiles, students' language transition environments, proficiency in reading comprehension, oral communication, written composition, and academic vocabulary, their academic and psychosocial adjustments, and the challenges encountered by English language teachers. The findings will serve as the basis for developing a contextualized Educational Management Transition and Language Bridging Program.

This investigation primarily aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4): Quality Education, which promotes inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning opportunities. By examining language proficiency disparities and identifying appropriate instructional and administrative responses, the study contributes to efforts to improve foundational literacy, strengthen educational accessibility, and support learners experiencing difficulties during critical academic transitions. Its emphasis on differentiated instruction, professional development, and school-based management reflects the importance of providing responsive educational environments that accommodate diverse linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds. The proposed intervention program also supports the broader objective of reducing educational disadvantages by strengthening institutional mechanisms that enable learners to participate meaningfully in secondary education.

From a multidisciplinary sustainability perspective, the study contributes primarily to educational, institutional, and social sustainability. Educational sustainability is reflected in the proposed development of structured language bridging mechanisms that promote continuous literacy development and academic progression. Institutional sustainability is supported through evidence-based instructional leadership, systematic diagnostic monitoring, collaborative Learning Action Cell activities, and strategic allocation of educational resources. Social sustainability is addressed by recognizing the linguistic and socioeconomic barriers affecting learners' access to meaningful educational opportunities. By integrating language education, developmental psychology, sociolinguistics, and educational management, the investigation provides a foundation for responsive school-based interventions that may strengthen learner confidence, instructional effectiveness, and long-term academic participation. Ultimately, the study seeks to contribute to sustainable improvements in language transition management and educational quality within the public secondary schools of Tanjay City.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a quantitative descriptive-evaluative survey design to examine Grade 7 students' academic language proficiency, learning adjustments, and teachers' instructional challenges. The descriptive component documented existing learner characteristics and educational conditions without experimental intervention (Creswell & Guetterman, 2021; SurveyPoint, 2023), while the evaluative component assessed reading remediation programs, Learning Action Cell (LAC) activities, and instructional resource availability (Mertens, 2020; Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2021). Frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, and ranking were employed to identify priority intervention areas (Privitera, 2022). The study followed an Input-Process-Output framework grounded in General Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968; Griffiths, 1959; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2021). Educational institutions were conceptualized as interconnected systems transforming demographic, instructional, and institutional inputs into educational outcomes (Bush, 2020; Hoy & Miskel, 2023). Inputs included respondent profiles, language proficiency, learning adjustments, teacher challenges, and institutional support. The process involved securing permissions, administering questionnaires, and analyzing responses. The output was a Grade 7 Educational Management Intervention Plan emphasizing diagnostic screening, differentiated instruction, professional development, and language bridging programs.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The research was conducted in three public secondary schools within the Schools Division of Tanjay City, Negros Oriental, Central Visayas, Philippines. These institutions represented varied geographic, socioeconomic, and instructional environments relevant to language transition experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Bush, 2020; Hoy & Miskel, 2023). Lourdes Ledesma Del Prado Memorial National High School, located in Barangay Santa Cruz Viejo, serves predominantly rural and coastal communities where Cebuano or Sinugbuanong Binisaya is commonly spoken, limiting students' exposure to academic English outside school (Mertler, 2022). Tanjay City National High School, situated in Barangay Opao, accommodates a large and socioeconomically diverse population from urban and agricultural communities (DepEd, 2020; Alviola et al., 2022). Differences in household resources and educational opportunities contribute to varying academic preparedness (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2021; UNESCO, 2023), while large classes and instructional demands create additional challenges (Alcantara & Bacalso, 2021; OECD, 2023). Students also experience difficulties transitioning from conversational Cebuano to academic English (Cummins, 2021; Bernardo & Presbitero, 2023; DepEd, 2023). The school's instructional practices and learning recovery initiatives provide further administrative perspectives (David et al., 2021; DepEd, 2024; World Bank, 2022; Brillantes et al., 2023). Tanjay Legislated High School, located in Poblacion IV, serves urban and peri-urban learners with diverse academic backgrounds. Despite greater access to digital resources, classroom congestion and varying language competencies remain instructional concerns (Fraenkel et al., 2023). Across the three schools, teachers encounter substantial workloads and limited remediation resources (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2021). Their contrasting highway-coastal and urban settings provide contextual evidence for developing responsive educational management interventions (Privitera, 2022).

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The study involved 75 respondents comprising six Grade 7 English language teachers and 69 Grade 7 students from the three participating schools. Including both groups provided complementary perspectives on academic language proficiency, learning adjustments, instructional challenges, and institutional support (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Bush, 2020; Mertler, 2022; Cohen et al., 2021). Each school contributed two teachers and 23 students, totaling 25 respondents or 33.33% of the sample. Teachers represented 8.00% of respondents and provided information on instructional practices, student readiness, and institutional challenges (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2021). Students accounted for 92.00% and reported their language competencies, classroom participation, study habits, communication anxiety, and coping strategies. This distribution ensured equal representation across the participating institutions.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

Total enumeration was employed for the six Grade 7 English language teachers, comprising two teachers from each school. Stratified random sampling was used to select 69 Grade 7 students, with 23 respondents allocated equally to each institution. Students were selected from heterogeneous class sections to represent differences in sex, socioeconomic background, and Grade 6 English achievement. This sampling arrangement provided balanced institutional representation for evaluating language proficiency transitions and learning adjustments.

2.5 Research Instrument

Two researcher-developed, content-validated questionnaires were utilized: the Grade 7 Language Proficiency Transition and Adjustment Questionnaire for Students (LPTAQ-S) and the Secondary Language Instruction and Institutional Support Questionnaire for Teachers (LIISQ-T). These instruments assessed linguistic, psychological, instructional, and administrative conditions through structured Likert-scale responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Fraenkel et al., 2023; Mertler, 2022; Privitera, 2022). The LPTAQ-S examined student profiles, academic language proficiency in reading comprehension, oral communication, writing, and vocabulary, and learning adjustments involving independent study, speech anxiety, peer collaboration, and code-switching. English indicators were accompanied by Cebuano translations to facilitate comprehension (Cohen et al., 2021). The LIISQ-T gathered teachers' professional profiles, evaluations of student proficiency, instructional challenges, and institutional support involving remediation programs, LAC activities, and learning resources (Bush, 2020). The scoring procedures described a five-point Likert scale for interpreting responses (Nemoto & Beglar, 2020; Joshi et al., 2022). Weighted means were classified using equal intervals of 0.80: 4.21–5.00 (very high), 3.41–4.20 (high), 2.61–3.40 (moderate), 1.81–2.60 (low), and 1.00–1.80 (very low) (Creswell & Guetterman, 2021; Privitera, 2022; Boone & Boone, 2020; Fraenkel et al., 2023). These categories described academic proficiency (Cummins, 2021; DepEd, 2023), language exposure (Bernardo & Presbitero, 2023), learning adjustments (Mercer & Kostoulas, 2022), and the severity of instructional challenges (David et al., 2021; World Bank, 2022). Negatively worded items were designated for reverse scoring to maintain consistent interpretation.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection followed pre-administration, administration, and post-administration phases to ensure institutional authorization, standardized procedures, and participant protection (Creswell & Guetterman, 2021; Cohen et al., 2021; Mertler, 2022). During pre-administration, formal permission was requested from division authorities and the principals of the three participating schools. Research documents and questionnaires were submitted, and

schedules were coordinated with school personnel. Parental consent and student assent were obtained to ensure voluntary participation, confidentiality, and withdrawal rights (Mertens, 2020). During administration, questionnaires were personally distributed to teachers during designated planning periods and to students in quiet learning spaces, with 23 students participating per school. Instructions were explained in English and Cebuano, and respondents were assured that participation would not affect academic grades. Clarifications were provided without influencing responses (Fraenkel et al., 2023). During post-administration, completed questionnaires were retrieved, checked for completeness, coded, and anonymized. Physical documents were secured, while electronic responses were maintained in a password-protected database in accordance with Republic Act No. 10173, or the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The data were subsequently prepared for statistical analysis (Privitera, 2022).

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze respondent characteristics, language proficiency, learning adjustments, and instructional challenges (Privitera, 2022). The study used frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, and ranking without inferential tests of significant differences or relationships (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Mertler, 2022). Frequency counts and percentages summarized demographic, academic, and professional characteristics, with percentages calculated relative to the corresponding respondent totals (Fraenkel et al., 2023). Weighted means determined the descriptive ratings of language exposure, academic proficiency, learning adjustments, instructional challenges, and institutional support (Mertens, 2020; Privitera, 2022). The established Likert-scale ranges guided interpretation, while rank ordering identified the strongest and weakest competencies, common adjustment strategies, and priority instructional concerns (Cohen et al., 2021). The findings provided the empirical basis for developing a targeted Educational Management Intervention Plan addressing language transition challenges across the participating schools (Bush, 2020).

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical standards to protect the rights, privacy, and welfare of Grade 7 students and English language teachers participating in the research. Formal authorization was sought from the appropriate Schools Division authorities and school principals before data collection. Since the student respondents were minors, parental or guardian consent and student assent were obtained to ensure voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw without adverse consequences (Mertens, 2020). Participants were informed of the study's purpose and assured that their responses would be used exclusively for academic research and would not affect their grades or professional standing. All questionnaires were coded and anonymized, while physical and electronic records were securely maintained in accordance with Republic Act No. 10173, or the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Data collection was scheduled to minimize disruption to regular classroom activities, and findings were intended to be reported in aggregate form to protect respondent identities. These safeguards supported ethical research practices and responsible management of participant information.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

3.1.1 Educational Attainment of English Language Teachers

The findings revealed that 83.33% of English teachers had pursued postgraduate education. Specifically, 33.33% completed a master's degree, 33.33% earned master's units, and 16.67% pursued doctoral coursework. Only 16.67% held a bachelor's degree without postgraduate units. These results indicate that most teachers possessed advanced academic preparation. Despite these qualifications, Garcia and David (2021) and Besa and Valdez (2022) emphasized that general postgraduate education does not necessarily provide specialized competencies in language transition assessment and remediation. Targeted professional development remains essential for addressing students' Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) difficulties.

3.1.2 Position and Academic Rank of Teachers

Most teachers (83.33%) occupied Teacher I to Teacher III positions, while only 16.67% held a Master Teacher I designation. Teacher I and Teacher III each accounted for 33.33%, whereas Teacher II represented 16.67%. No respondent occupied the Master Teacher II position. This distribution indicates limited senior instructional leadership within Grade 7 English departments. Consistent with instructional supervision frameworks (Hallinger, 2020), fewer senior mentors may restrict opportunities for peer coaching, instructional supervision, and differentiated teaching support in heterogeneous classrooms.

3.1.3 Teaching Experience in English

Half of the teachers (50.00%) had 6–10 years of English teaching experience, while 16.67% each had 1–5 years, 11–15 years, and at least 16 years of service. Overall, 83.33% had more than five years of teaching experience, indicating substantial classroom exposure. However, Mercado and Villafuerte (2021) emphasized that teaching experience alone does not ensure proficiency in contemporary literacy recovery approaches. Continuous training in diagnostic assessment, differentiated instruction, and remedial strategies remains necessary.

3.1.4 Relevant Professional Development and Training

Half of the teachers (50.00%) reported division-level training as their highest professional development exposure. Regional and national or international training each accounted for 16.67%, while another 16.67% participated only in school-based Learning Action Cell activities. These findings reflect the observations of Garcia and David (2021) that localized training frequently emphasizes administrative compliance and curriculum implementation rather than specialized literacy intervention. Greater access to professional development in reading diagnostics, language bridging, and communication anxiety management may strengthen instructional effectiveness.

3.1.5 Age and Gender of Grade 7 Students

Most students were 12 years old (71.01%), followed by 13-year-olds (23.19%) and those aged 14 years or older (5.80%). Female students comprised 55.07% of respondents, while males accounted for 44.93%. The findings indicate that most learners were within the expected age range for Grade 7. According to Lucas et al. (2020), early adolescence involves heightened emotional sensitivity and concern about peer evaluation. These developmental characteristics may contribute to hesitation and communication anxiety during English-language classroom activities.

3.1.6 Dominant Home Language

Sinugbuanong Binisaya (Cebuano) was the dominant home language of 91.30% of students, while 5.80% primarily spoke Filipino and only 2.90% used English. This distribution demonstrates limited English-language exposure within most students' home environments. Macalindong and Ocampo (2022) and Cummins (2021) emphasized that limited opportunities to practice the instructional language outside school may constrain academic language development. The predominance of Cebuano highlights the importance of structured classroom language exposure and appropriate bridging strategies.

3.1.7 Parents' Educational Attainment

Nearly half of the students' parents (47.83%) had attained high school education, while 20.29% reached elementary education. Another 20.29% pursued college undergraduate or technical-vocational education, and only 11.59% completed a college degree or higher qualification. These findings suggest differences in the academic assistance available within households. Bernardo et al. (2021) emphasized that limited parental educational attainment may restrict home-based academic guidance, increasing students' reliance on school-provided learning support.

3.1.8 Estimated Monthly Family Income

The majority of students (57.97%) belonged to households earning below ₱10,957 monthly. Another 26.09% reported family incomes of ₱10,957–₱21,914, while 13.04% earned ₱21,915–₱43,828. Only 2.90% belonged to households earning ₱43,829 or above. These socioeconomic conditions may limit access to supplementary reading materials, computers, and internet connectivity. The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA, 2021) and UNESCO (2023) similarly identified household economic limitations as barriers to educational resources and literacy development.

3.1.9 Number of Siblings

Almost half of the students (49.28%) had three to four siblings, while 18.84% had five or more. Students with one to two siblings represented 26.09%, and only 5.80% were only children. Overall, 68.12% belonged to households with at least three siblings. According to de Guzman and Tan (2021), larger households may experience greater competition for educational resources and increased domestic responsibilities. These conditions can reduce opportunities for independent reading and sustained academic preparation.

3.1.10 Grade 6 English Academic Performance

Most students entered Grade 7 with passing English grades. Specifically, 37.68% were classified as Satisfactory, 34.78% as Very Satisfactory, and 15.94% as Outstanding. No student had a failing grade, indicating generally satisfactory academic records upon entering secondary education. Nevertheless, Magsambol (2023) and Espina and Manalastas (2023) emphasized that passing elementary grades do not always reflect readiness for advanced academic language demands. Students may demonstrate acceptable classroom performance while experiencing difficulties with critical reading, analytical writing, and complex English texts.

3.2 Academic Language Proficiency Transition Outcomes

3.2.1 Reading Comprehension and Critical Thinking

Reading comprehension and critical thinking obtained a composite mean of 2.63, interpreted as Moderate Level. Students performed best in identifying literal information (3.46, High Level), followed by recognizing central ideas and supporting details (2.84, Moderate Level). However, inferential reasoning (2.51), thematic synthesis (2.29), and evaluation of authorial bias (2.07) were rated Low Level. These findings indicate stronger literal comprehension than higher-order reading proficiency. Cummins (2021) and Custodio and Santos (2020) similarly emphasized the distinction between basic language comprehension and the cognitive demands of academic texts.

Students require structured instruction in inference, synthesis, and critical evaluation to strengthen academic reading proficiency.

3.2.2 Oral Academic Communication and Presentations

Oral academic communication obtained a composite mean of 2.51, indicating Low Level proficiency. Students performed moderately in factual recitation (3.32) and structured group discussions (2.75). However, spoken summaries (2.38), defending viewpoints (2.16), and formal presentations (1.94) remained at Low Level. These findings suggest that students experience greater difficulty with spontaneous and formal English communication than rehearsed responses. Ali and Razali (2021) and Krashen (2020) associated such difficulties with communication anxiety and fear of negative peer evaluation, which may discourage active oral participation.

3.2.3 Written Composition and Grammar

Written composition and grammar recorded a composite mean of 2.49, interpreted as Low Level and representing the weakest academic language proficiency dimension. Students demonstrated High Level competence in capitalization, punctuation, and spelling (3.42), but only Moderate Level proficiency in grammatical agreement and tense consistency (2.68). Paragraph development (2.33), complex sentence construction (2.12), and expository essay writing (1.88) were rated Low Level. The findings demonstrate that mastery of basic writing mechanics does not necessarily translate into effective academic composition. Macalindong and Ocampo (2022) similarly observed that limited instruction in discourse organization and extended writing contributes to students' difficulties in producing coherent secondary-level academic texts.

3.2.4 Academic Vocabulary Acquisition

Academic vocabulary acquisition obtained a composite mean of 2.67, interpreted as Moderate Level and representing the highest among the four proficiency dimensions. Students demonstrated High Level proficiency in identifying synonyms and antonyms (3.55) and Moderate Level competence in distinguishing denotative and connotative meanings (2.78). However, morphological analysis (2.45), contextual word inference (2.36), and domain-specific vocabulary application (2.19) remained at Low Level. These findings suggest that students possess basic lexical knowledge but experience difficulty applying advanced vocabulary across academic disciplines. Tindowen and Quilang (2021) similarly emphasized that unfamiliar technical terminology and abstract vocabulary present substantial challenges during the transition to secondary education.

3.3 Extent of Students' Exposure to the Language Transition Environment

3.3.1 Mother Tongue Utilization

Mother tongue utilization registered a composite mean of 4.12, indicating High Extent. Cebuano was extensively used during peer interactions (4.62) and family communication (4.54), both interpreted as Very High Extent. Teacher code-switching (3.88), peer clarification (3.81), and translating initial thoughts into English (3.74) were also rated High Extent. These findings demonstrate the predominance of the local vernacular in students' daily communication. Bernardo et al. (2021) similarly identified strong mother tongue usage in provincial secondary schools, emphasizing the need to balance familiar-language support with meaningful opportunities for English-language development.

3.3.2 English as the Medium of Instructional Discourse

English instructional discourse obtained a composite mean of 2.51, indicating Low Extent. Teacher-led English lectures were rated High Extent (3.48), while English questioning and recitation reached Moderate Extent (3.12). Student-initiated questioning (2.18), peer discussions (1.95), and sustained English immersion (1.84) were rated Low Extent. These findings indicate that English exposure occurs primarily through teacher-directed instruction rather than active student communication. Besa and Valdez (2022) similarly observed that predominantly one-way instructional discourse limits opportunities for learners to develop spontaneous English communication skills.

3.3.3 Exposure to Print and Digital Reading Materials

Exposure to print and digital reading materials recorded a composite mean of 2.36, indicating Low Extent. Printed DepEd modules were frequently used (3.65, High Extent), while access to dictionaries and grammar resources was Moderate (2.62). Supplementary literature (2.15), digital reading resources (1.82), and interactive reading applications (1.58) showed limited utilization. These findings indicate substantial dependence on standard learning modules and insufficient exposure to varied reading resources. Padios and Banogon (2022) similarly reported shortages of supplementary reading materials and digital learning facilities in provincial schools, potentially restricting literacy enrichment.

3.3.4 Classroom Interactive Academic Tasks

Classroom interactive academic tasks obtained a composite mean of 2.59, interpreted as Low Extent. Individual written exercises were frequently implemented (3.52, High Extent), while small-group activities reached Moderate Extent (2.94). Oral dialogues (2.41), debates (2.08), and independent essay writing (2.02) were rated Low Extent. These findings suggest that classroom activities emphasize written exercises over interactive

language production. Under Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory, collaborative interaction and guided participation facilitate language development. Limited exposure to communicative activities may therefore constrain students' opportunities to practice higher-order academic language skills.

3.4 Extent of Learning Adjustments Demonstrated by Grade 7 Students

3.4.1 Independent Study Habits and Reading Routines

Independent study habits and reading routines were generally rated Low Extent. Students demonstrated relatively stronger compliance with English module submission deadlines (3.45, Great Extent), but regular independent reading, vocabulary log maintenance, and voluntary remedial participation remained limited. These findings indicate that students are more responsive to assigned academic requirements than self-initiated learning activities. Lucas et al. (2020) similarly emphasized the importance of teacher guidance and parental support in developing consistent literacy routines among adolescent learners.

3.4.2 Management of Speech Anxiety and Hesitation

Speech anxiety management obtained a composite mean of 2.53, indicating Low Extent. Students moderately accepted pronunciation and grammar corrections (3.39) and attempted to overcome peer teasing (2.62). However, maintaining composure during unexpected questioning (2.44), using calming strategies (2.23), and volunteering to speak English (1.98) were rated Low Extent. These findings suggest that communication anxiety remains a significant barrier to classroom participation. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (2020) and Ali and Razali (2021) explain that fear of mistakes and negative evaluation may discourage learners from participating in English-language activities.

3.4.3 Peer Learning and Group Study

Peer learning and group study obtained a composite mean of 2.76, interpreted as Moderate Extent. Students participated effectively in assigned group activities (3.51, Great Extent) and sought assistance from proficient classmates (3.38, Moderate Extent). Peer editing was moderately practiced (2.76), while independent group study organization (2.25) and conversational English practice outside class (1.92) remained limited. These findings indicate that peer collaboration is more effective when structured by teachers. Consistent with Vygotskian principles, guided peer interaction provides opportunities for language scaffolding, although students require additional support to sustain collaborative learning independently.

3.4.4 Translation and Code-Switching Strategies

Translation and code-switching emerged as the most frequently utilized learning adjustment strategies, obtaining a composite mean of 4.04, interpreted as Great Extent. Combining Cebuano and English during communication (4.41) and mentally translating English into Cebuano (4.35) were rated Very Great Extent. Students also frequently requested Cebuano explanations (4.15), used translation tools (3.86), and prepared notes in Cebuano (3.42). These findings demonstrate substantial reliance on the mother tongue to understand academic content and communicate ideas. Rivera and Delos Santos (2020) and Macalindong and Ocampo (2022) emphasized that although translation facilitates immediate comprehension, prolonged dependence without structured progression toward English may limit spontaneous academic communication.

3.5 Challenges Encountered by English Language Teachers

3.5.1 Administrative Workload and Limited Remedial Time

Administrative workload and limited remedial time obtained a composite mean of 4.33, interpreted as Very Serious Challenge. Ancillary administrative responsibilities (4.67), extensive paperwork (4.50), and inflexible schedules (4.33) were the most significant concerns. Heavy teaching assignments (4.17) and insufficient class periods for remediation (4.00) were also rated Serious Challenges. These findings indicate that administrative responsibilities substantially constrain teachers' capacity to provide individualized literacy support. Mercado and Villafuerte (2021) and Lunenburg and Ornstein (2021) similarly emphasized that excessive non-instructional duties reduce opportunities for diagnostic assessment, lesson preparation, and remedial instruction.

3.5.2 Adequacy of Learning Modules and Instructional Materials

Instructional material adequacy obtained a composite mean of 3.93, indicating Serious Challenge. The mismatch between curriculum expectations and students' reading abilities (4.50) and the shortage of contextualized bridging modules (4.33) were rated Very Serious Challenges. Limited reference materials (3.83), insufficient digital resources (3.67), and delayed module distribution (3.33) were additional concerns. These findings demonstrate the need for differentiated and contextually appropriate instructional materials. Besa and Valdez (2022) and DepEd (2023) emphasized that secondary curricula often assume adequate foundational literacy, creating instructional difficulties when students enter Grade 7 with substantial reading gaps.

3.5.3 Availability of Diagnostic Assessment Tools

The availability of diagnostic assessment tools recorded a composite mean of 3.83, interpreted as Serious Challenge. The absence of standardized language transition screening instruments (4.33) was rated Very Serious

Challenge. Limited tools for distinguishing conversational and academic proficiency (4.17), inadequate progress-monitoring templates (3.83), insufficient assessment rubrics (3.50), and limited Phil-IRI training (3.33) were also reported. These findings highlight weaknesses in the systematic identification and monitoring of language proficiency gaps. Valerio (2020) emphasized that standardized diagnostic assessments are necessary for early identification of reading difficulties and timely implementation of targeted interventions.

3.5.4 Large Class Sizes and Mixed Proficiency Levels

Large class sizes and mixed proficiency levels obtained a composite mean of 4.23, indicating Very Serious Challenge. Wide differences in students' entry-level English competencies (4.67) and reading frustration (4.50) were the most significant concerns. Communication hesitation (4.17), high student-teacher ratios (4.00), and varying elementary instructional backgrounds (3.83) further complicated classroom instruction. These findings indicate that heterogeneous classrooms and class sizes of approximately 45–55 students restrict individualized feedback and differentiated teaching. David et al. (2021) and World Bank (2022) similarly emphasized that high student-teacher ratios limit remedial instruction and contribute to persistent learning difficulties among students requiring additional academic support.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concluded that Grade 7 students in three public secondary schools in Tanjay City, Negros Oriental, experienced substantial difficulties transitioning from elementary English competencies to the academic language demands of secondary education. Although students entered junior high school with passing English grades, their proficiency remained limited in higher-order reading comprehension, oral academic communication, written composition, and specialized vocabulary. The predominance of Cebuano in home communication, limited English exposure, insufficient reading resources, weak independent study habits, and speech anxiety further characterized their transition experiences. Students relied heavily on translation and code-switching, while teachers encountered serious challenges involving administrative workloads, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate diagnostic instruments, and insufficient contextualized learning materials. Existing institutional support mechanisms were only partially functional, particularly in remedial instruction, professional development, and learning resources. Collectively, these findings establish the need for a coordinated, school-based Educational Management Intervention Plan that strengthens language transition support, instructional leadership, and literacy development.

The Department of Education and the Schools Division of Tanjay City should strengthen Grade 7 language transition policies by institutionalizing diagnostic screening, structured language bridging programs, and protected remedial instruction periods. School administrators should rationalize teachers' administrative responsibilities, improve instructional scheduling, and allocate resources for contextualized reading modules, supplementary materials, and functional learning facilities. English department coordinators and Master Teachers should strengthen Learning Action Cell sessions through targeted professional development in differentiated instruction, academic language scaffolding, reading assessment, and speech anxiety management. Grade 7 English teachers should implement guided reading activities, structured oral discussions, vocabulary development exercises, and progressive writing tasks while using translation strategically to support English proficiency. Collaboration between Grade 6 and Grade 7 teachers should be strengthened to align literacy expectations across educational levels. Parents and community stakeholders should support regular home reading routines and access to learning resources. The proposed Educational Management Intervention Plan should undergo systematic implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

The study was limited to three public secondary schools in Tanjay City, Negros Oriental, involving 69 Grade 7 students and six English language teachers, which restricts the generalizability of its findings to other educational settings. Its quantitative descriptive-evaluative and cross-sectional design captured existing language proficiency, learning adjustments, and institutional conditions without establishing causal relationships or examining changes over time. The analysis relied on questionnaire-based assessments and descriptive statistics, without inferential testing. Furthermore, the proposed Educational Management Intervention Plan was developed from the identified needs, and its effectiveness was not established through the descriptive-evaluative findings. Future studies may employ larger samples, longitudinal approaches, and mixed-methods designs to examine language transition outcomes and evaluate intervention effectiveness.

5. Compliance with ethical standards

The authors affirm that no conflicts of interest exist in relation to this study. The research involved 69 Grade 7 students and six English language teachers from Lourdes Ledesma Del Prado Memorial National High School, Tanjay City National High School, and Tanjay Legislated High School in Tanjay City, Negros Oriental, Philippines, with institutional permission requested from the appropriate Schools Division authorities and school principals. Participation was voluntary, parental consent and student assent were obtained, and participants were assured of confidentiality, the right to withdraw without adverse consequences, and protection from academic or

professional repercussions (Mertens, 2020). Data were collected through structured questionnaires, with responses coded and anonymized, physical records secured, electronic data stored in a password-protected database in accordance with Republic Act No. 10173, and findings intended to be reported in aggregate form.

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