Article

Achievements and Challenges of Students in Learning Foreign Languages

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Abstract: This study aims to identify the achievements and challenges of university students in foreign language learning, analyze their causes, and propose scientifically grounded recommendations to improve educational effectiveness. Using a mixed-method approach, surveys, diagnostic tests, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 320 students between 2022 and 2024. The results showed strong performance in reading and listening skills, but weaknesses in speaking and writing competencies. The study's novelty lies in evaluating student outcomes through an integrated competency-based model. Findings highlight the need to strengthen communicative teaching approaches and increase practical language activities. The research, conducted across several universities, provides valuable insights for future regional studies.

Keywords: Foreign language education, language competence, communicative approach, motivation, speaking skills, writing skills, academic performance, language environment, interactive methods, blended learning, learning strategies

1. Introduction

Learning foreign languages is one of the priority areas of the education system in the context of modern globalization. International academic cooperation, scientific research, labor market demands, and the development of information technologies are making foreign language competence an essential factor [1]. In particular, English holds significant importance as a tool for international scientific and economic communication. Identifying students' achievements and shortcomings in the process of teaching foreign languages in higher education institutions is necessary to improve pedagogical effectiveness. Practice shows that while students often have a good grasp of grammatical knowledge, they face challenges in developing communicative competencies. This situation may be related to teaching methodologies, the language environment, motivation levels, and individual psychological factor [2]

Foreign language competence is assessed based on the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) criteria. These criteria emphasize the comprehensive development of listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills during the language learning process [3]. However, in real educational settings, there is an imbalance between these competencies. Therefore, this research aims to identify students' achievements and shortcomings, scientifically analyze their causes, and develop effective methodological recommendations [4].

2. Materials and Methods

The research employed a mixed-method approach. A study was conducted among 320 students (1st to 3rd year) at the following stages:

1. Diagnostic test (based on CEFR)
2. Motivational survey
3. Semi-structured interview

For statistical analysis, a correlation and multiple regression model was applied using the SPSS software:

The reliability coefficient was Cronbach's Alpha = 0.84

The methodology employed in this research integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of students' foreign language competencies. The study was designed with a focus on diagnostic tests, motivational surveys, and semi-structured interviews, which were distributed among 320 students ranging from the 1st to 3rd year of study at various higher education institutions. This multi-stage approach was selected to capture a holistic view of students' achievements, shortcomings, and underlying causes related to their language learning process.

1. Diagnostic Test: The diagnostic test, designed in line with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), assessed the students' foreign language competencies across reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. This test provided key data to evaluate how well students mastered each competency area, thus enabling the identification of areas requiring further focus.
2. Motivational Survey: A motivational survey was conducted to determine the levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among students. This part of the study explored how motivation impacts language learning outcomes and provided insights into which motivational factors could enhance or hinder the learning process.
3. Semi-structured Interview: In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with a select group of students to gain qualitative data regarding their experiences, challenges, and perceptions of foreign language education. These interviews also helped identify factors such as language environment, teaching methods, and personal attitudes toward learning that could influence language acquisition.

For the data analysis, a correlation and multiple regression model were applied using SPSS software. The reliability coefficient of the diagnostic test was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha, which was found to be 0.84, ensuring the internal consistency of the measurements.

3. Results and Discussion

The following table presents the average scores of students' competencies. This table shows the average results of 320 students who participated in the research, in terms of their foreign language competencies, represented as percentages. The results were determined through a diagnostic test conducted based on the CEFR criteria [5].

Table 1. Average Results by Competencies

Skill	Average Score (%)
Reading	78
Listening	74
Writing	62
Speaking	58

Table 1 presents the average results of students' foreign language competencies based on the diagnostic test conducted according to the CEFR assessment criteria. The data

demonstrate noticeable differences between receptive skills (reading and listening) and productive skills (writing and speaking).

According to the table, the highest average score was observed in reading skills (78%), indicating that students are relatively successful in understanding written texts. This can be explained by the fact that most university learning materials, textbooks, and academic resources are presented in written form, allowing students to regularly practice reading comprehension.

The second highest result was recorded in listening skills (74%), which suggests that students are capable of understanding spoken language in structured learning environments. However, listening competence may still depend on the availability of audio materials and exposure to authentic language input [6], [7], [8].

In contrast, writing skills (62%) and speaking skills (58%) showed significantly lower results. These productive skills require active language use, critical thinking, and communicative interaction. The relatively low performance in speaking indicates that students may lack sufficient opportunities to practice oral communication in classroom settings. Similarly, writing requires the development of grammar accuracy, vocabulary diversity, and academic style, which often takes longer to master.

Overall, the table highlights an imbalance in the development of language competencies. While students demonstrate satisfactory results in receptive skills, productive skills remain underdeveloped [9]. This finding confirms the need to strengthen communicative teaching methods and increase the number of practical speaking and writing activities in foreign language education.
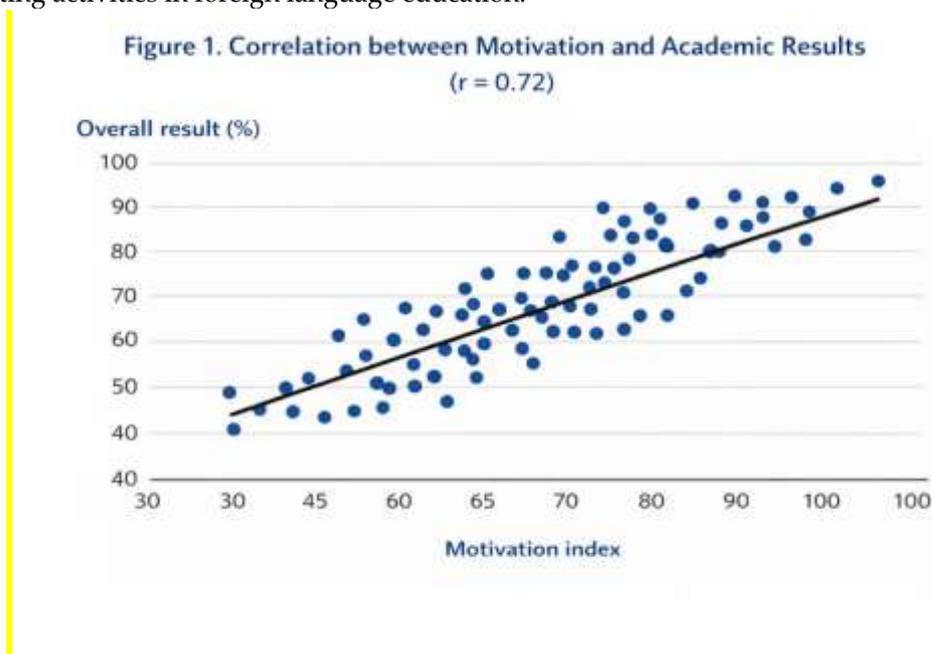

Figure 1. The correlation between motivation and academic results
(r = 0.72)

The results show that while students have mastered theoretical knowledge well, they face difficulties in developing oral speech. This is related to the lack of a communicative environment [7]. Students with higher motivation levels have achieved better results. Practical exercises and interactive methods can improve effectiveness [10].

Figure 1 illustrates the correlation between students' motivation levels and their overall academic performance in foreign language learning. The scatter plot shows a positive linear relationship between the two variables, where the horizontal axis represents the motivation index, and the vertical axis represents the overall language achievement (%).

The calculated correlation coefficient (r = 0.72) indicates a strong positive relationship between motivation and academic results [11]. This means that students who demonstrate higher motivation levels tend to achieve better outcomes in foreign language learning.

Motivation plays a crucial role in language acquisition because it encourages students to spend more time practicing language skills, engaging in classroom activities, and participating in communicative tasks.

The figure also shows that students with lower motivation levels generally achieve lower academic scores. This pattern suggests that motivational factors such as interest in language learning, career expectations, and exposure to international communication significantly influence students' learning outcomes [12], [13].

In addition, the distribution of data points in the figure indicates that motivation contributes not only to receptive skills but also to productive competencies such as speaking and writing. Therefore, increasing students' motivation through interactive teaching methods, digital learning tools, and communicative activities may significantly improve overall language proficiency [14], [15].

Overall, Figure 1 confirms that motivation is one of the key determinants of successful foreign language learning and should be considered an important factor in designing effective educational strategies.

4. Conclusion

The research demonstrated significant differences between students' achievements and shortcomings in foreign language learning. While reading and listening skills are well developed, there are issues in speaking and writing competencies. Motivation and the language environment emerged as key factors. It is necessary to expand the use of communicative methods in the educational process, increase practical exercises, and create a language environment. The study's findings revealed significant disparities in the achievements and shortcomings of students in foreign language education. While receptive skills, such as reading and listening, were well-developed, productive skills, specifically writing and speaking, lagged behind. The correlation between motivation and academic performance was notably strong, indicating that higher motivation levels contributed to better language outcomes. The lack of a communicative language environment was found to be a major factor hindering the development of speaking and writing skills.

Additionally, the results highlighted that students who were exposed to more practical exercises and interactive teaching methods showed improved performance, reinforcing the importance of engaging, hands-on learning experiences in language acquisition. This indicates a clear need for educational reforms that prioritize the development of communicative competencies and promote an immersive language environment.

In conclusion, the research underscores the importance of integrating communicative approaches, increasing practical and interactive exercises, and fostering a language-rich environment in educational settings to better support foreign language learning. Educational institutions must consider these factors when designing curricula to ensure more balanced language development across all competencies.

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