

# Challenges Met by Intermediate Fast-Learner Classes on Communication Skills

**Rubion, Junry P. Mosa, Carmelin P.**  
Surigao Del Norte State University, Philippines

**Abstract:** *This study explored the challenges faced by intermediate fast learner classes in five central schools of the Division of Surigao City in developing communication skills. Through interviews with 15 high-performing and 15 average-performing learners, challenges in reading, writing, speaking, and listening were identified and analyzed using thematic analysis. High-performing students struggle with comprehension, time management, and confidence, while average performers face additional difficulties in complex language and self-doubt. Strategies include resource use, external help, cognitive coping, and emotional regulation. Both groups employ various techniques to improve comprehension, fluency, and active listening*

**Keywords:** intermediate fast learner classes, communication skills, challenges, Surigao City, reading, writing, speaking, listening, thematic analysis

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, proficiency in communication plays a pivotal role to foster unity and to establish connections among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds across all facets of life. Effective communication is essential not only for personal and professional success but also for promoting cross-cultural understanding and collaboration. It enables the exchange of ideas, values, and perspectives, breaking down language barriers and bridging cultural gaps. In education, strong communication skills empower learners to engage meaningfully in a globalized world, enhancing their ability to contribute to international discourse and collaborate with peers from different cultural contexts. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the ability to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries is crucial for building inclusive communities, driving innovation, and achieving mutual understanding in a diverse, global society.

According to Kukulka-Hulme, Lee, & Norris (2020), language acquisition has transformed into a lifelong commitment, necessitating continuous attention to meet social, professional, educational, and personal needs. Given that English has emerged as a widely accepted lingua franca and the most prevalent global language (Yen & Mohamad, 2020), it is unsurprising that mastering it has become a fundamental requirement in one's life. However, for second language learners, acquiring proficiency in English is far from effortless. It poses a formidable challenge, demanding collaborative and substantial efforts from both learners and educators alike (Khasbani, 2021). Undeniably, all language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—are equally crucial. Yet, among them, speaking stands out as a particularly vital skill due to its central role in communication. Recognizing that speaking is the linchpin of effective communication underscores its significance as a skill that must be acquired (Ying, Siang, & Mohamad, 2021).

Nonetheless, Smith, J., & Carter, S. (2021) emphasized that, in reality, numerous studies have identified various factors hindering learners' communication abilities. These factors have contributed to learners being hesitant or reluctant to use the English language.

This study highlights the often-overlooked challenges faced by intermediate special classes, particularly fast learners, in developing communication skills. While much attention is given to broader educational strategies, there is a significant need to delve deeper into the specific struggles these students encounter. Their unique needs, often overshadowed by general teaching methods, require tailored approaches to effectively nurture their reading, writing, speaking, and listening abilities. Without a focused understanding of these challenges, educators may miss opportunities to implement targeted strategies that could better support these students in reaching their full potential. Addressing this issue is

crucial for ensuring that fast learners are not just meeting but exceeding communication benchmarks, thereby preparing them for the demands of an increasingly interconnected world.

Hence, this study attempts to investigate the challenges met by intermediate fast learners on oral communication skills. The findings of this study are viewed to assist language teachers to choose and introduce the best intervention program for speaking lessons.

### **Purpose of Statement**

This study aimed to determine the challenges met by the intermediate special classes of five central schools of the Division of Surigao City in the development of their communication skills.

Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions;

What are the challenges met by intermediate special classes pupils in terms of the following:

Listening

Speaking

Writing

Reading

What do you do to manage the challenges relating to the following;

listening

Speaking

Writing

Reading

Based on the data gathered, what communication skill intervention program can be proposed for the intermediate special classes?

## **II. METHODS**

This chapter presents the research design, research environment, respondents, research instrument, ethics and gathering procedure, and data analysis.

### **Research Design**

The study exclusively employed a qualitative method to investigate challenges faced by Grade 6 fast learners in communication skills, encompassing reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The primary method involves unstructured follow-up interviews with parents of these Grade 6 fast learners.

Through this qualitative approach, the research aims to delve deeply into the experiences, perceptions, and strategies of parents in supporting their Grade 6 children facing communication challenges. The focus remains sharply on Grade 6 fast learners and their parents, exploring the intricate details of their interactions, the specific challenges perceived, and the methods employed by parents to address these challenges.

### **Research Environment**

The research conducted among the select Grade 6 fast learners Surigao West Central Elementary School, Surigao City Pilot School, Surigao City Central Elementary School, CVDIEZ Memorial Central Elementary School and Surigao City Special Science Elementary School and in Surigao City Central Elementary Schools under the Schools Division Office of Surigao City, specifically in Barangay Taft and Barangay Washington, City of Surigao, Province of Surigao del Norte, as depicted in Plate 1.

Barangay Taft, is situated at coordinates approximately 9.7847 latitude and 125.4975 longitude on the island of Mindanao, has an elevation of around 8.0 meters or 26.2 feet above mean sea level. This locality holds significance as one of the 54 barangays comprising Surigao City, formerly known as Poblacion, within the province of Surigao del Norte.

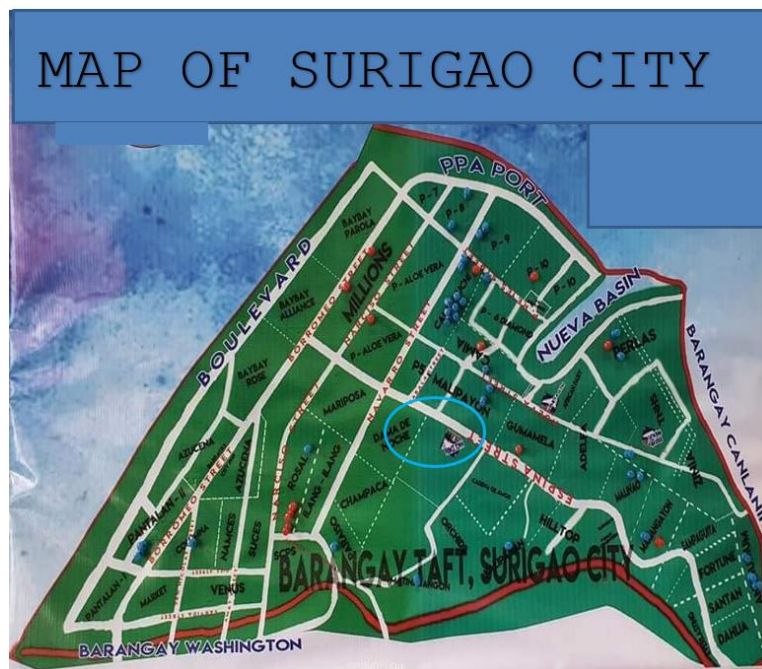
The City of Surigao, a first-class capital in the province of Surigao del Norte, Philippines, consists of 54 barangays. The city proper is divided into 5 urban barangays: Taft, Washington, San Juan, Canlanipa and Luna. Among these,

Barangay Taft and Barangay Washington stand out as the most densely populated and surrounding the city center. This area features commercial buildings, hotels, and businesses closely integrated with multistory housing structures.

Educationally, Barangay Taft hosts the highest number of schools, spanning both elementary and secondary levels. Four centrally located elementary schools, namely Surigao City Pilot School, Surigao City Central Elementary School, Mariano Espina Memorial Central Elementary School, and Navarro Memorial Central Elementary School, operate within the barangay. On the other hand, two of the respondents are coming from Barangay Washington, the CVDIEZ Memorial Central Elementary School and Special Science Elementary School and one from Barangay San Juan, the Surigao West Central Elementary School.

Surigao City Central Elementary School has 35 fast learners for grade 6 this year. CVDIEZ Memorial Central Elementary School has 38 Fast Learners, Surigao City Pilot School has 45, Special Science Elementary School has 38 and Surigao West Central Elementary School has 37 fast Learners.

Each school organizes one section for each grade level designated for fast learners. Therefore, this study focuses on 50% of the total population of the five schools offering special classes, examining the challenges they encounter in communication skills, covering reading, writing, speaking, and listening.



**Plate 1. Map of Surigao City**

**Informants**

The study participants composed of 6 fast learners with 3 being high-performing and 3 being average-performing from the five (5) central schools namely; Surigao City Pilot School, Surigao City Central Elementary School, CVDIEZ memorial Central Elementary School, Surigao City Special Science Elementary School, and Surigao West central Elementary School, enrolled in the school year 2023 – 2024. Additionally, data gathering will involve the parents or guardians of these fast learners.

However, to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the respondents, the names of the learners are not disclosed in this study. Instead, they are referred to using general descriptors such as ‘Learner 1 and so forth. This approach is implemented to protect the identities of the individuals involved and to uphold ethical considerations regarding respondent confidentiality. Table 1 below presents the respondent's distribution.

**Table 1. Distribution of Respondents**

Name of Learners	Academic Performance	Socio-economic Backgrounds of the parents
1.Learner 1	HIGH	MIDDLE
2.Learner 2	HIGH	HIGH
3.Learner 3	HIGH	MIDDLE
4.Learner 4	AVERAGE	HIGH
5.Learner 5	AVERAGE	HIGH
6.Learner 6	AVERAGE	MIDDLE
7.Learner 7	AVERAGE	LOW
8.Learner 8	AVERAGE	HIGH
9.Learner 9	AVERAGE	HIGH
10.Learner 10	HIGH	HIGH
11.Learner 11	HIGH	HIGH
12.Learner 12	HIGH	HIGH
13.Learner 13	HIGH	HIGH
14.Learner 14	HIGH	MIDDLE
15.Learner 15	HIGH	MIDDLE
16.Learner 16	AVERAGE	MIDDLE
16.Learner 17	AVERAGE	HIGH
18.Learner 18	AVERAGE	MIDDLE
19.Learner 19	AVERAGE	MIDDLE
20.Learner 20	AVERAGE	LOW
21.Learner 21	AVERAGE	MIDDLE
22.Learner 22	HIGH	HIGH
23.Learner 23	HIGH	HIGH
24.Learner 24	HIGH	MIDDLE
25.Learner 25	AVERAGE	MIDDLE
26.Learner 26	AVERAGE	HIGH
27.Learner 27	AVERAGE	HIGH
28.Learner 28	HIGH	LOW
29.Learner 29	HIGH	MIDDLE
30.Learner 30	HIGH	HIGH

**Research Instrument**

The research instrument for this qualitative study is a semi-structured interview guide meticulously designed to delve into the communication skills challenges encountered by Grade 6 Fast Learners. The instrument, detailed in Appendix A, is crafted to strike a balance between flexibility and structure, allowing for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and strategies.

The interview guide initiates with a warm introduction, elucidating the study's purpose, ensuring confidentiality, and emphasizing the voluntary nature of participation. It is meticulously made up of three (3) sections. The first section accurately captures the background information about the Grade 6 Fast Learners, encompassing demographic details, academic performance, and subjects of interest or difficulty.

The heart of the instrument lies in Section 2, where communication skills and challenges are comprehensively explored. The questions are strategically framed to elicit insights into general communication, reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. Participants are encouraged to share anecdotes and specific instances, fostering a nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play.

Section 3 shifts the focus to parental support and strategies. It investigates the active involvement of parents in their child's education, exploring educational activities and strategies employed to address communication challenges. This section provides a window into the collaborative efforts between parents and educators.

The guide concludes with a gracious acknowledgment, a reaffirmation of confidentiality, and contact information for any potential follow-up queries. The semi-structured nature of the interview guide allows for a dynamic interaction, enabling interviewers to delve deeper into specific areas based on participants' responses, thereby enriching the qualitative exploration.

This carefully designed research instrument serves as a roadmap for meaningful conversations, aiming to capture the nuanced and intricate aspects of communication challenges faced by Grade 6 Fast Learners and the strategies employed by parents in fostering their child's communication development.

### **Ethics and Data Gathering Procedure**

To gather appropriate data for the study, the researcher needed to undertake the following processes:

First, an endorsement letter from the Dean of Graduate School will be requested. After the endorsement will be sought, a formal request letter will also be sent to the Surigao City Division Superintendent to request permission and consent to undertake the research by administering the survey instrument to the identified respondents.

Upon obtaining consent, the researcher will promptly reach out to the respondents' advisers to apprise them of the study's rationale. Before initiating the data collection process, the researcher will thoroughly elucidate the purpose and objectives of the study to the respondents. Clear instructions will be provided to ensure the smooth and effective execution of the activity.

When everything is clear, data collection will then commence. The researcher will now proceed to a focus group discussion (FGD) with the 6 respondents. The discussion will likely last for about two one (1) hour to delve deeply into their experiences, opinions, attitudes, and perspectives on the challenges faced on communication skills. To ensure accuracy in capturing important points and participants' expressions during the interview, detailed notes and recording will be done with the consent and approval from the respondents.

After the time limit passed, the researcher will now proceed doing transcription and notes on the given responses. Retrieved, gathered, and subjected to analysis and evaluation. These raw data obtained will now be ready for its data analysis.

## **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Challenges in Reading**

The study revealed distinct challenges faced by high-performing and average-performing students when it comes to reading. High-performing students identified four main challenges: comprehension difficulties, time management for extensive reading, navigating difficult words, and language barriers. Comprehension issues arise particularly with complex or unfamiliar texts, leading students to rely on external resources like phones or to practice reading regularly to improve their understanding. Time management was another significant challenge, especially when dealing with large volumes of reading material. Students often felt pressured but managed by breaking the reading into smaller, more digestible parts or by quickly scanning the material while ensuring comprehension. Navigating difficult words posed a challenge as well, with students resorting to asking classmates, teachers, or using context clues to grasp the meaning of unfamiliar terms. Lastly, language barriers, particularly when reading in non-native languages or dealing with complicated grammatical structures, added to the difficulty.

Average-performing students echoed similar challenges, with a strong emphasis on comprehension and understanding. They often struggled with complex materials and heavily relied on external help, such as searching for meanings online. Time management also proved overwhelming for these students, who found it challenging to keep up with extensive reading tasks. The difficulty with complex or unfamiliar words was another common issue, leading students to use repetition, ask for help, or note down difficult terms for further study. Additionally, specific language features, particularly in Filipino or scientific texts, posed unique challenges that required extra practice or assistance.

**Challenges in Writing**

Writing challenges also varied between high-performing and average-performing students. High-performing students reported difficulties in managing the length and complexity of their writing. Writing long pieces or formulating complex sentences was particularly challenging, causing some students to freeze or struggle with motivation. Spelling and grammar issues were common concerns, with students frequently turning to the internet or seeking help to ensure accuracy. Overcoming stagnation and maintaining motivation were also significant challenges, with students employing strategies like re-reading or forcing themselves to refocus to continue writing. To meet deadlines, high-performing students often planned ahead, starting their writing tasks early to ensure timely completion. Quality improvement was a key focus, with students frequently reviewing and revising their work to enhance neatness, accuracy, and overall quality.

Average-performing students, on the other hand, primarily struggled with spelling, vocabulary, and improving the quality of their writing. They faced difficulties in getting words and spelling correct, often requiring extensive revisions and the use of strategies like drafting to refine their work. Similar to high-performing students, managing the length and complexity of writing was also a challenge, with students concentrating on tasks with extensive outlines and revisions to improve their work. Ensuring the quality of their writing was another concern, leading students to focus on accuracy and clarity through careful review and revision. Table 2 gives a clear view of the challenges mentioned above.

**TABLE 2.** Matrix of Challenges

Category	High-Performing Students	Average-Performing Students
<b>Challenges in Reading</b>		
Comprehension Difficulties	Struggle with complex/unfamiliar texts; practice reading	Difficulty understanding complex material; rely on external help
Time Management	Pressure from extensive reading; break reading tasks	Overwhelmed by reading load; manage time effectively
Navigating Difficult Words	Use context clues, ask for help from peers/teachers	Use repetition, ask for help, note down difficult words
Language Barriers	Difficulties with non-native languages/complex grammar	Struggles with specific languages/features; require extra practice
<b>Challenges in Writing</b>		
Writing Length and Complexity	Difficulty with long/complex writing tasks; freeze or lose motivation	Struggle with writing length; focus on extensive revisions
Spelling and Grammar Issues	Concerns about accuracy; use internet/help to improve	Struggles with spelling/vocabulary; require corrections
Overcoming Stagnation and Motivation	Use strategies like re-reading, refocusing to continue	May struggle with similar issues; focus on quality improvement through drafting
Ensuring Timely Completion	Plan ahead, start early to meet deadlines	Struggle to complete tasks on time; focus on refining work
Improving Writing Quality	Frequent review and revision for neatness/accuracy	Extensive revisions to improve quality; focus on clarity and accuracy

Average-performing students face several challenges in writing, particularly with spelling and vocabulary, managing lengthy tasks, and maintaining writing quality. They often struggle with spelling and finding the right words, relying on classmates, parents, or online resources for help. Handling long writing tasks is also challenging, but they cope by writing quickly or repeatedly revising their work until satisfied. When they encounter difficulties, they seek help from others or try to refocus by relaxing. To meet deadlines, they create schedules or write during spare time. Lastly, they are concerned with writing quality, frequently revising and refining their work to improve it. Table 3 deflected those challenges.

**TABLE 3.** Matrix on challenges of spelling and vocabulary

Challenge	Details
<b>Spelling and Vocabulary</b>	Struggles with spelling and finding appropriate words; relies on classmates, parents, or Google for help.
<b>Handling Writing Length</b>	Difficulty managing lengthy writing tasks; copes by writing quickly or repeatedly revising until satisfied.
<b>Getting Back on Track</b>	Seeks help from others or tries to refocus by relaxing when facing difficulties.
<b>Meeting Deadlines</b>	Creates schedules or writes during spare time to ensure timely completion.
<b>Improving Writing Quality</b>	Concerned with writing quality; frequently revises and corrects work, making multiple attempts to perfect it.

Students face various challenges in speaking, with differences observed between high-performing and average-performing students. High-performing students struggle with fluency, line memorization, and maintaining confidence, often feeling nervous during speaking tasks. They also encounter difficulties with pronunciation and articulation, working to improve clarity and delivery. On the other hand, average-performing students experience more pronounced issues with nervousness and self-confidence, which significantly impact their speaking ability. They also struggle with articulation and pronunciation, frequently seeking external help to improve. Additionally, understanding and responding to questions is a notable challenge for average-performing students, affecting their ability to participate effectively in discussions and presentations. These challenges highlight the efforts required by both groups to overcome obstacles in speaking tasks.

**TABLE 4.** Challenges in Speaking Matrix

Challenge	High-Performing Students	Average-Performing Students
<b>Fluency and Line Memorization</b>	Struggles with fluency and recalling lines; may panic if they forget lines but work to improvise.	N/A
<b>Confidence and Nervousness</b>	Experience nervousness and lack of confidence, especially when speaking in front of an audience.	More pronounced issues with nervousness and low self-confidence; use strategies to manage anxiety.
<b>Pronunciation and Articulation</b>	Challenges in pronunciation and articulating thoughts clearly; work to improve clarity and engagement.	Difficulties with articulation and pronunciation; often seek external help or practice to improve.
<b>Understanding and Answering Questions</b>	N/A	Significant challenges in understanding and answering questions, affecting participation in discussions.

**High-Performing Students:**

**Distractions and Environmental Challenges:** Struggle with background noise and other environmental factors that disrupt focus. They try to manage these distractions actively.

**Understanding and Processing Complex Language:** Find it difficult to understand rapid speech or complex sentences, often seeking clarification from peers or teachers.

**Average-Performing Students:**

**Difficulty with Understanding and Retaining Information:** Have trouble understanding and remembering what they hear, often needing to study or summarize information to retain it.

**Challenges with Distractions:** Distractions significantly impact their ability to focus, and they try to counteract this by concentrating harder or asking for help.

**Managing Long or Tricky Listening Tasks:** Struggle with longer or more complex listening tasks, focusing on staying attentive but finding it challenging to manage effectively.

**TABLE 5.** Challenges on High Performing Students Matrix

Challenge	High-Performing Students	Average-Performing Students
<b>Distractions and Environmental Challenges</b>	Struggle with background noise and other distractions; actively try to manage focus.	Significant impact from distractions; try to focus harder or seek help to manage them.
<b>Understanding and Processing Complex Language</b>	Find it difficult to understand rapid speech or complex sentences; seek clarification from peers or teachers.	N/A
<b>Difficulty with Understanding and Retaining Information</b>	N/A	Challenges with understanding and retaining information; often practice summarizing and studying.
<b>Managing Long or Tricky Listening Tasks</b>	N/A	Struggle with managing longer or more complex listening tasks; focus on staying attentive but find it challenging.

In our analysis of student challenges and strategies related to reading, we observe distinct patterns between high-performing and average-performing students. The following table outlines their responses and approaches to overcoming reading difficulties.

For high-performing students, we see a strong emphasis on utilizing diverse resources, employing creative problem-solving techniques, and actively seeking assistance from various sources. These students demonstrate persistence, strategic focus, and an ability to manage stress and complex tasks effectively.

Conversely, average-performing students often rely on external sources for help and adopt more passive strategies when encountering challenges. They exhibit mixed emotions, such as feeling overwhelmed, and employ coping mechanisms like breaking tasks into manageable parts or seeking help from others.

**TABLE 6.** Insight and Strategy to identify performing students in reading

Insight/Strategy	High-Performing Students	Average-Performing Students
<b>Utilization of Resources</b>	Use various resources (internet, teachers, parents) to overcome comprehension challenges.	Rely on external sources (internet, parents) for help with comprehension.
<b>Creative Problem-Solving</b>	Develop their own methods or formulas to solve comprehension issues.	Less likely to create own methods; rely more on external help.
<b>Seeking Assistance</b>	Actively seek help from teachers, classmates, or use the internet.	Primarily seek help from classmates or teachers for difficult parts.
<b>Reliance on External Sources</b>	Use a range of resources and methods.	Rely heavily on external sources like Google or parental help.
<b>Adaptation to Situational Challenges</b>	Use creative problem-solving and persistence to address challenges.	Attempt to solve issues independently but may struggle with resourcefulness.
<b>Active Seeking of Assistance</b>	Proactively ask for help from various sources and use contextual clues.	Mostly ask classmates or teachers for help; less use of contextual clues.
<b>Utilization of Resources</b>	Use internet and contextual clues effectively.	Rely on external help and basic contextual understanding.
<b>Persistence and Practice</b>	Demonstrate persistence and practice to improve understanding.	Use passive approaches like repeated reading; practice but less persistent.
<b>Mixed Emotions and Coping</b>	Maintain calmness, use efficient reading strategies, and demonstrate resilience.	Experience mixed emotions; use coping mechanisms such as breaking tasks into parts.
<b>Effort and</b>	Approach reading tasks calmly and	Acknowledge overwhelming feelings; adapt



<b>Adaptation</b>	strategically.	by reading during free time or breaking tasks down.
<b>Complex Vocabulary</b>	Use dictionaries and seek help for complex vocabulary.	Practice vocabulary and seek help; may feel anxious or stressed.
<b>Language Proficiency</b>	Seek assistance for native language challenges; practice and use additional resources.	Struggle with native language proficiency; practice and seek help but often face stress.
<b>Anxiety and Stress</b>	Manage stress through effective strategies and practice.	Feel overwhelmed or stressed; manage by adapting reading strategies and seeking help.
<b>Practice and Forgetfulness</b>	Exhibit perseverance with challenging materials through practice.	Emphasize practice due to forgetfulness; may struggle with retention.
<b>Enjoyment and Confidence</b>	Find enjoyment in reading and manage large volumes with confidence.	Acknowledge feeling overwhelmed but persist through reading and time management strategies.
<b>Persistence and Focus</b>	Continue reading until completion with focus and patience.	Exhibit persistence but may need to manage feelings of being overwhelmed.
<b>Relaxation and Practice</b>	Incorporate relaxation techniques to handle large reading tasks.	Use relaxation techniques and adapt strategies to cope with large reading tasks.
<b>Acknowledgment of Overwhelming Feelings</b>	View extensive reading as an opportunity and manage effectively.	Recognize feeling overwhelmed but persist through adaptation and time management.
<b>Adaptation and Relaxation</b>	Use relaxation and effective time management to cope with large reading loads.	Adapt by reading during free time and find enjoyment in reading.

Understanding how students tackle writing challenges reveals distinct strategies and attitudes based on their performance levels. High-performing students approach writing with engagement, effective time management, and self-initiated problem-solving. They often overcome difficulties such as hand fatigue and vocabulary issues through practice and seeking assistance. In contrast, average-performing students frequently struggle with spelling and vocabulary, relying on external help and focused practice to manage their workload. Both groups utilize various strategies to meet deadlines, address uncertainties, and refine their writing, reflecting their commitment to improving their skills and achieving better results. This analysis explores the different methods employed by students to enhance their writing and the insights gained from their experiences.

#### Challenges and Strategies:

**High-Performing Students:** Find engagement in interesting topics and manage challenges like hand fatigue, punctuation, and vocabulary through effective time management, practice, and seeking help. They use strategies such as taking breaks, practicing writing, and using online resources.

**Average-Performing Students:** Struggle with spelling and vocabulary, often relying on classmates, parents, or online tools for assistance. They may find writing tasks tiresome and use relaxation or external help to manage their workload. Spelling practice is a common focus.

#### Overcoming Writing Difficulties:

**High-Performing Students:** Use self-initiated strategies such as refocusing, retracing their steps, and seeking peer assistance. They engage actively with the writing process and generate new ideas.

**Average-Performing Students:** Employ cognitive strategies like thinking broadly about the topic, writing drafts, and seeking external help from classmates.

**Meeting Deadlines:**

**High-Performing Students:** Proactively plan and start assignments early, use time management techniques, and leverage technology to meet deadlines. They may also seek assistance when needed.

**Average-Performing Students:** Focus on the quality of work, engaging in multiple revisions and using time management techniques. They may prioritize speed or dedicate extra time to improve their writing skills.

**Handling Uncertainty:**

**High-Performing Students:** Engage in rigorous self-assessment and seek feedback to improve their writing. They are aware of their writing’s presentation and focus on grammar and language precision.

**Average-Performing Students:** Use positive thinking and perseverance to address uncertainties. They also seek feedback and engage in self-revision, often expressing concerns about handwriting and overall writing skills.

**Revising Work:**

**High-Performing Students:** Emphasize drafting and revising multiple times, focusing on grammar and spelling to produce polished work. They also learn from others and practice persistently.

**Average-Performing Students:** Engage in repeated revisions to meet specific requirements or improve their writing, often using drafting as a strategy. They see writing as a skill to be improved through continuous practice and acknowledge the need for revisions.

**TABLE 7.** Challenges and Strategies in Writing

Category	High-Performing Students	Average-Performing Students
<b>Writing Challenges</b>	- Enjoy writing when topics are interesting	- Struggle with spelling and vocabulary
	- Manage tasks through time management and specific strategies	- Rely on classmates, parents, or online resources for help
	- Face issues like hand fatigue, punctuation, and vocabulary	- Experience varying levels of engagement and perseverance
	- Use strategies such as practicing handwriting and seeking help	- Focus on spelling practice
<b>Overcoming Being Stuck</b>	- Use self-initiated strategies like refocusing and retracing steps	- Utilize cognitive strategies like thinking broadly and focusing
	- Engage actively with writing and seek peer assistance when needed	- Employ practical approaches like drafting and pausing
		- Frequently seek external help
<b>Meeting Deadlines</b>	- Plan proactively and complete tasks early	- Focus on quality and accuracy, often through multiple revisions
	- Use effective time management and technology	- Recognize the need for time management and sometimes practice proactive completion
	- Seek assistance and sometimes rely on natural writing speed	- Prioritize speed or practice to meet deadlines
		- Show commitment to improvement
<b>Handling Uncertainty</b>	- Engage in self-assessment and revision	- Adopt positive thinking and perseverance
	- Address concerns about handwriting, grammar, and language precision	- Seek feedback and engage in self-revision
	- Seek external feedback and show varied levels of action	- Often focus on handwriting and seek to improve it
<b>Revision</b>	- Emphasize drafting and multiple	- Engage in repeated revisions and strive for perfection

<b>Process</b>	revisions	
	- Focus on grammar, spelling, and learning from others	- Use drafting as a strategy and recognize the need for continuous practice
	- Show commitment to continuous improvement despite insecurities	- Often revise for specific requirements or competitions

High-performing students manage speaking challenges through mental resilience, quick thinking, preparation, and emotional regulation. They use techniques like memorization, pronunciation practice, and calming strategies to boost confidence and handle tough situations. They focus on creating impactful content and addressing specific challenges like a soft voice or complex topics.

Average-performing students rely on self-belief, practice, and seeking help from peers or teachers. They manage anxiety with calming techniques and focus on understanding and articulating ideas more clearly. Repetition, practice, and simplifying language are common strategies they use to improve communication.

Both groups emphasize the importance of preparation, confidence-building, and managing nervousness, with high-performing students placing more emphasis on mental and emotional strategies, while average-performing students focus on external support and practice.

**TABLE 8.** Speaking Challenges Matrix

Aspect	High-Performing Students	Average-Performing Students
<b>Mental Resilience &amp; Quick Thinking</b>	Use cognitive flexibility to improvise responses and handle tough questions.	Rely on self-belief and push through nervousness.
<b>Preparation &amp; Practice</b>	Emphasize thorough preparation, including memorization and pronunciation drills.	Practice and rehearse regularly to build confidence.
<b>Emotional Regulation</b>	Manage nervousness with calming strategies like relaxation and focusing techniques.	Use calming techniques such as deep breaths to manage anxiety.
<b>Engagement &amp; Attention Techniques</b>	Focus on creating impactful content and addressing specific challenges.	Focus on understanding and articulating ideas more effectively.
<b>Addressing Specific Challenges</b>	Identify and address challenges like soft voice or complex topics.	Seek help from peers or teachers to improve pronunciation and understanding.
<b>Self-Belief &amp; Confidence</b>	Maintain self-confidence and enjoy speaking as a positive activity.	Build confidence through positive self-talk and focusing on courage.
<b>Seeking Help &amp; Clarification</b>	Ask peers or use alternative languages to ensure understanding.	Seek assistance from teachers or classmates to articulate thoughts better.
<b>Physical &amp; Mental Preparation</b>	Use visualization, stretching, and physical relaxation to prepare for speaking.	Engage in physical and mental preparation, focusing on calmness.
<b>Simplifying Language</b>	Simplify explanations and use direct communication to overcome misunderstandings.	Simplify language and describe ideas differently to convey meaning clearly.

**Overcoming Nervousness and Listening Challenges:**

**Positive Visualization and Confidence Building:**

**High-Performing Students:** They use positive visualization and focus on building their confidence to overcome nervousness before speaking. They actively prepare mentally to feel more confident.

**Average-Performing Students:** They tackle nervousness by believing in themselves, gathering courage, and using calming techniques like deep breathing and positive self-talk to manage anxiety.

**Experiencing Nervousness but Persevering:**

**High-Performing Students:** Despite feeling nervous, they push through by focusing on their preparation and practice.

**Average-Performing Students:** They also experience nervousness but rely on self-belief and positive thoughts to persevere.

**Pride in Speaking Achievements:**

**High-Performing Students:** They feel proud when they succeed in specific events, demonstrate confidence and accuracy, or engage in self-reflection. Some students, however, associate pride more with academic success rather than speaking achievements.

**Average-Performing Students:** They experience pride through success in competitions, receiving compliments, and achieving correct answers, often reflecting on personal satisfaction and progress.

**Listening Challenges and Strategies:**

**High-Performing Students:** They deal with listening difficulties by seeking clarification, maintaining focus, and using repetition. They stay engaged during long or tricky parts by concentrating, managing distractions, and staying calm.

**Average-Performing Students:** They also seek help through clarification, focus on understanding the content, and actively engage with the material to overcome listening challenges. They emphasize focused listening and note-taking to retain instructions and stay on track.

**Understanding Different Accents and Speaking Styles:**

**High-Performing Students:** They prioritize careful listening, seek clarification, and make efforts to adjust to different accents.

**Average-Performing Students:** They focus on attentive listening, request clarification, and rely on their experiences to navigate accent variations.

**TABLE 9.** Overcoming Nervousness and Listening Challenges

Themes	High-Performing Students	Average-Performing Students
<b>Positive Visualization &amp; Confidence Building</b>	Focus on positive visualization to build confidence and overcome nervousness.	Use calming techniques like deep breathing and positive self-talk to manage nervousness.
<b>Experiencing Nervousness but Persevering</b>	Experience nervousness but push through by focusing on preparation and practice.	Tackle nervousness by believing in themselves and gathering courage.
<b>Self-Belief &amp; Courage</b>	Believe in their abilities, using self-belief to boost confidence.	Gather the courage to speak, despite initial nervousness.
<b>Calming Techniques</b>		Use deep breathing or positive self-talk to manage anxiety.
<b>Focus on Positivity</b>	Maintain a positive mindset to stay calm and approach tasks with confidence.	Focus on positive thoughts to reduce anxiety and boost confidence.
<b>Pride in Speaking Achievements</b>	Feel pride in specific events like competitions or presentations, often linked to confidence and accuracy in speaking.	Pride comes from success in competitions, positive feedback, and personal satisfaction in achieving correct answers.
<b>Listening Challenges</b>	Seek clarification from peers/teachers, maintain focus despite distractions, and use repetition to grasp content.	Rely on external support, summarize and review content, and focus to overcome distractions and personal challenges.
<b>Staying Focused During Listening</b>	Use active engagement, manage distractions, maintain calmness, and focus visually on the speaker.	Eliminate distractions, use active listening techniques, and engage with the content to maintain focus.

<b>Asking for Help</b>	Proactively seek clarification from teachers/peers, request repetition, and use peer support.	Ask for help from teachers/peers, approach friends for immediate assistance, and request repetition for understanding.
<b>Understanding Accents/Speaking Styles</b>	Prioritize careful listening, seek clarification, and adapt to different accents.	Focused listening, clarification requests, and rely on experiences with different accents.
<b>Listening Carefully for Instructions</b>	Emphasize detailed listening, seek confirmation, and use recording/writing for accuracy.	Focus on attentive listening, verify understanding with peers, and use note-taking to retain instructions.

#### IV. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

##### Summary

This study aimed to determine the challenges met by the intermediate special classes of five (5) central schools of the Division of Surigao City in the development of their communication skills. This looked into the challenges and insights on reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in English language. Data were gathered using interviews from 15 high-performing and 15 average-performing intermediate learners from special classes in different schools in Surigao City Division. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis method.

Findings. The study found that:

The reading challenges encountered by the high-performing students are comprehension difficulties, time management for extensive reading, navigating difficult words, and language barriers while the average-performing students experienced comprehension and understanding issues, time management concerns, difficulty with complex or unfamiliar words, and difficulty with specific language features.

In terms of writing, high-performing students experienced challenges on handling writing length and complexity, spelling and grammar issues, overwhelming stagnation and motivation, struggle in ensuring timely completion, and issue on improving writing quality. The average-performing students experienced challenges on spelling and vocabulary, handling writing length and complexity, difficulty on getting back on track, meeting deadlines concern, and issue on improving writing quality.

In terms of speaking, high-performing students often encountered difficulties with fluency and line memorization, struggling to maintain smooth delivery and recall during speaking activities, problem with confidence and nervousness, pronunciation and articulation issues. The average-performing students grapple with similar issues but face more pronounced struggles with nervousness and self-confidence, articulation and pronunciation difficulties, and concern on understanding and responding to questions pose significant challenges.

As to listening skills, high-performing students often face significant distractions from their environment, and they struggle with understanding and processing complex language. On the other hand, average-performing students have difficulties with understanding and retaining information, problems with distractions, and issues on managing long or complex listening tasks poses an additional hurdle.

High-performing students employ strategies such as leveraging a range of resources like the internet, teachers, and dictionaries; developing creative problem-solving methods; actively seeking assistance; and demonstrating persistence through continuous practice. They also use efficient reading techniques, maintain calmness and focus, break tasks into manageable parts, and incorporate relaxation techniques to manage their workload effectively. On the other hand, average-performing students rely on external sources for help, attempt independent problem-solving, and use passive comprehension strategies like repeated or silent reading. They adapt to challenges by managing their time, practicing patience, using techniques like reading during free time, fast reading, deep breathing, and maintaining a positive attitude despite feelings of overwhelm or stress.

High-performing students handle writing challenges by effectively managing their time, planning ahead, and starting assignments early to avoid last-minute pressure. They find engagement and enjoyment in writing, especially with interesting topics, and use specific strategies to overcome challenges like hand fatigue, punctuation, and vocabulary. Persistence is key for them, as they practice regularly, engage in rigorous self-assessments, and revise their work

meticulously, often seeking feedback to ensure high standards. They also leverage technology to enhance their writing and follow a methodical process of drafting and revising, learning from others and continuously improving their skills. On the other hand, average-performing students frequently rely on external help from classmates, parents, or online resources to manage spelling and vocabulary challenges. They focus on spelling practice, use cognitive and practical coping strategies, and may resort to relaxation or positive thinking to handle their writing tasks. They dedicate time to multiple revisions and careful proofreading, aiming for perfection and recognizing the iterative nature of writing. Self-revision and feedback-seeking are common, although they often struggle with self-doubt and insecurities. They adapt to deadlines by balancing speed with quality, maintaining a positive attitude towards improvement, and striving for better results.

High-performing students handle speaking challenges by demonstrating mental resilience, quick thinking, and a strong emphasis on preparation and practice, including memorization and pronunciation drills. They manage nervousness through emotional regulation and calming strategies, and they focus on engagement techniques to create impactful content. They enhance their communication by explaining further, simplifying language, seeking help, and using alternative languages when needed. They approach speaking as a positive and enjoyable activity, using relaxation techniques and positive visualization to build confidence and alleviate anxiety. High-performing students also feel a deep sense of pride in their speaking achievements, particularly in specific events or challenges. Average-performing students, on the other hand, rely on self-belief and confidence to tackle speaking difficulties, often seeking help from peers or teachers to overcome issues like pronunciation. They focus on regular practice and rehearsal to build confidence, using techniques such as deep breathing to manage anxiety. To improve clarity, they simplify their language or describe ideas differently, and like their high-performing peers, they may use alternative languages. Average-performing students manage nervousness with self-belief and positive self-talk, maintaining a positive mindset to approach speaking tasks with optimism. Their pride in speaking often comes from success in competitions, positive feedback, and personal satisfaction, reflecting their efforts and progress.

High-performing students tackle listening challenges by seeking clarification from peers and teachers, focusing on maintaining attention despite distractions, and employing techniques to re-engage when boredom sets in. They use active engagement techniques, visually focusing on the speaker, and managing distractions to stay attentive during long or challenging listening tasks. When they don't understand something, they proactively ask for clarification, request repetition, and utilize peer support to fully grasp the material. They prioritize careful listening, repetition, and adaptability when dealing with different accents, often seeking further clarification to ensure comprehension. They emphasize detailed listening and step-by-step execution for following instructions, sometimes recording or writing them down for accuracy. Average-performing students rely on external support, such as repetition and clarification, while making conscious efforts to focus and re-engage with the material. They use active listening techniques, avoid distractions, and concentrate on the lesson to maintain focus during difficult listening situations. When they encounter comprehension challenges, they ask for help from teachers or peers, seek immediate assistance from friends, and request repetition for clarity. They handle accent variations by relying on focused listening and drawing from their experiences with different accents, seeking clarification when necessary. For understanding instructions, they depend on focused listening, verification with peers, and note-taking to retain and review the information effectively.

## **Conclusions**

1. For high-performing students, challenges like comprehension difficulties, time management, navigating difficult words, and language barriers suggest a struggle to balance their advanced academic demands with their cognitive capacity to process complex information efficiently. These challenges indicate that even top students can face significant obstacles when the content exceeds their current linguistic and cognitive abilities, potentially limiting their full intellectual potential. On the other hand, the challenges faced by average-performing students—comprehension and understanding issues, difficulty with complex words, and specific language features—highlight a struggle with foundational reading skills. These challenges may reflect gaps in their basic language acquisition and processing abilities, which hinder their ability to progress to more advanced levels of reading.

2. High-performing students struggle with managing the length and complexity of writing alongside spelling and grammar issues, which suggests they face challenges in sustaining high standards under pressure. Their difficulties with

timely completion and maintaining quality reflect a tension between their aspirations and managing writing complexities within limited timeframes. In contrast, average-performing students grapple with foundational issues such as spelling, vocabulary, and task complexity, which disrupt their writing process and make it hard to meet deadlines.

3. The speaking challenges for both high-performing and average-performing students reveal deeper issues of self-expression, cognitive processing, and self-confidence. High-performing students struggle with fluency, memorization, and pronunciation due to perfectionistic pressures and fear of mistakes, impacting their confidence despite their achievements. Average-performing students face similar issues but with more intense nervousness and self-doubt, affecting their articulation, pronunciation, and ability to respond to questions. These challenges highlight a broader struggle with self-perception and anxiety, impacting their overall communication effectiveness.

4. High-performing students are often distracted by their environment and struggle with processing complex language despite their academic success, indicating that their ability to focus and decode complicated information is hindered by external and internal factors. This suggests that even high achievers can be overwhelmed by the complexity of the material, affecting their overall comprehension. Average-performing students, experience more difficulties with understanding and retaining information, coupled with distractions and managing long or complex listening tasks. These issues reflect a more fundamental struggle with maintaining attention and processing information, which may be compounded by their difficulties in organizing and recalling what they've heard. This indicates that their listening challenges are deeply tied to their ability to manage cognitive load and sustain focus, affecting their overall effectiveness in processing and utilizing auditory information.

5. The strategies employed by students to handle reading challenges reflect differing approaches to managing cognitive and emotional demands. High-performing students use a multifaceted approach by leveraging diverse resources, engaging in creative problem-solving, and seeking assistance actively. In contrast, average-performing students rely more on external help and passive strategies such as repeated reading. This indicates a more reactive stance where they adapt to challenges through perseverance and incremental adjustments, rather than employing a comprehensive strategy for overcoming difficulties.

6. High-performing students tackle writing challenges through proactive strategies that emphasize time management, early planning, and engagement with the material. They leverage technology and follow a methodical drafting and revising process, focusing on continuous improvement. In contrast, average-performing students rely more on seeking assistance and practical coping strategies to address spelling and vocabulary issues. While they also revise and seek feedback, their efforts are often hindered by self-doubt and insecurity. Their strategies emphasize adaptation to deadlines and maintaining a positive attitude despite challenges.

7. The strategies used by students to handle speaking challenges reveal differing levels of preparation and emotional management. High-performing students approach speaking with a combination of mental resilience and thorough preparation, emotional regulation, viewing speaking as a positive experience, seeking to enhance their communication through clarity, and commitment and dedication. Average-performing students rely on self-belief and regular practice to address speaking challenges. They also seek assistance from peers and teachers. Their focus on simplifying language and describing ideas differently helps improve clarity. Their positive mindset and pride often stem from personal satisfaction and success in competitions or receiving positive feedback, reflecting their ongoing efforts to overcome speaking difficulties.

8. The strategies for handling listening challenges highlight different levels of proactive engagement and adaptability. High-performing students adopt a comprehensive approach by actively seeking clarification, maintaining attention despite distractions, and employing techniques to re-engage when boredom arises. They use visual focus and manage distractions effectively, demonstrating a commitment to detailed listening and adaptability, especially when dealing with different accents or complex instructions. Their emphasis on proactive clarification and meticulous execution reflects a high level of engagement and a strategic approach to comprehension. Average-performing students, while also seeking repetition and clarification, show a more reactive stance by relying on external support and active listening techniques to overcome challenges. They focus on avoiding distractions and re-engaging with the material, using peer support and note-taking to manage comprehension issues. Their strategies indicate a practical approach to listening, where they adapt based on immediate needs and draw on experience to handle variations in accents and instructions.

### Recommendations

**DepEd Administrators.** They are encouraged to enhance the overall effectiveness of English language education by providing targeted professional development for teachers, ensuring access to diverse educational resources, and implementing support systems for both high-performing and average-performing students.

**English Language Teachers.** They are urged to adopt differentiated instruction and active learning strategies to address diverse student needs, integrate skill development across reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and provide constructive feedback. They are also encouraged to utilize educational technology and create engaging, interactive lessons that cater to both high-performing and average-performing students to effectively address their specific challenges.

**Pupils.** They are encouraged to engage in regular and varied practice of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, actively seek feedback and help from teachers and peers, and maintain effective study habits. They need to approach language learning with a positive attitude, reflecting on progress and overcoming challenges with persistence and self-belief.

**Parents.** They need to support their children's language development by providing a conducive learning environment at home, participating in educational activities, and encouraging persistence and patience. They need to communicate regularly with teachers to stay informed about your child's progress and foster a positive and supportive attitude towards learning.

**Future Researchers.** They are encouraged to continue exploring the challenges and effectiveness of language learning interventions across different contexts, study long-term outcomes of educational practices, investigate the role of technology in language education, and evaluate teacher training programs.

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