

IMPACT OF FACILITATION SKILLS ON IMPROVING ENGLISH LAN- GUAGE PROFICIENCY OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION STUDENTS

Sohaib Alam

Department of English Language and Literature, College of Sciences and Humanities
Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University
Abdullah Bin Amer Street, 16278, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
E-mail address: s.alam@psau.edu.sa
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9972-9357>

Rumzi Tausif

Department of Management, College of Business Administration
Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University
Abdullah Bin Amer Street, 16278, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
E-mail address: m.tausif@psau.edu.sa
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7485-9385>

Anam Shams

Department of English Language and Translation
College of Arts, University of Hafar Al-Batin
39524, Al Jamiah Street, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
E-mail address: anam@uhb.edu.sa
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1806-5286>

Mohammad Usama

School of Business, Galgotias University
Plot No. 2, Sector 17-A, Yamuna Expressway, Greater Noida, Gautam Buddh Nagar, India
E-mail address: mohammad.usama@galgotiasuniversity.edu.in
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2395-8441>

ABSTRACT

Aim. The study examines the impact of a facilitative-based teaching on the fundamental language aspects of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It also examines

its impact on key emotional components, including learners' confidence, engagement, attitude, and satisfaction.

Methods. The study employs a quasi-experimental framework that includes experimental pre- and post-assessment control groups. The treatment was administered over a period of 15 weeks, encompassing 80 undergraduate business administration students. Participants were divided into two groups: one had undergone the learning process using a facilitation-based teaching approach and a control group had undergone a conventional teacher-centred learning process. Data was collected through the EF Standard English Test (EF SET) to measure proficiency across all four language domains, and a structured Likert-scale questionnaire to assess confidence, engagement, attitude, and satisfaction.

Results. The study's results demonstrated that the adoption of facilitation-based teaching leads to significant enhancements in both receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) language abilities compared to the control group, underscoring the effectiveness of the approach. Additionally, participants in the experimental group reported increased self-confidence, increased motivation, and greater overall satisfaction with their learning experiences through a facilitation-based approach.

Conclusion. The results substantiate the claim that facilitation-based pedagogy is empirically validated for improving language proficiency and emotional involvement in learners, thereby bearing significant implications for curriculum development, educator training, ongoing professional growth, and future inquiries in the realm of English language instruction.

Keywords: facilitation skills, self-efficacy, learning outcome, activity learning, interactive strategies

INTRODUCTION

Over the last twenty years, English language education in higher education has shifted its focus, as teachers who once emphasised grammar and accuracy as primary learning goals now stress communicative competence, which combines grammar with the ability to use language in real-life situations. Michael Canale and Merrill Swain (1980) defined communicative competence as comprising four components: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic. Following researchers such as Lyle F. Bachman (1990), Marianne Celce-Murcia (2007), and Sandra J. Savignon (2018), who substantiated the notion that successful learners require comprehensive support beyond mere grammatical instruction. The necessity for proficiency in interaction, negotiation, and clear idea articulation in academic and professional contexts has significantly impacted university English instruction, particularly in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). In business education, a significant transformation is evident

as employers increasingly anticipate graduates who possess a comprehensive understanding of management theories and the ability to communicate proficiently in international work contexts. Therefore, English curricula for business students now increasingly encompasses presentations, meetings, negotiations, report composition, and email correspondence (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2013; Evans, 2013). These tasks, in turn, mirror professional practice and prepare learners to use English in authentic business contexts. Furthermore, scholars such as Leena Louhiala-Salminen and Anne Kankaanranta (2011) and Jack Berkovi (2016) have shown that professional success often depends on effectively using English with colleagues and clients. Thus, the objective of English instruction in business schools is to enhance accuracy, fluency, confidence, and pragmatic skills; nonetheless, empirical studies suggest that the emphasis on communicative proficiency often fails to yield the anticipated results, as numerous graduates continue to exhibit a lack of confidence and difficulties in effectively employing English in practical contexts. In fact, they face difficulties when participating in meetings, preparing professional documents, or communicating with people from different cultural or language backgrounds (Clement & Murugavel, 2015; Poedjiastutie & Oliver, 2017). This gap is primarily attributed to two factors: the predominance of teacher-centred pedagogies that inhibit student interaction and critical thinking, along with emotional barriers such as anxiety and shyness, particularly in English-speaking contexts. Consequently, these impediments adversely affect motivation and participation, ultimately leaving graduates ill-equipped for the English proficiency demands of the global workforce.

One promising approach to address the challenges of limited interaction and low confidence in English classrooms is the use of facilitation skills in language teaching, since facilitation shifts the teacher's role from lecturer to guide, allowing learners to share responsibility for building knowledge through interaction and reflection (Alam, 2025a). In this manner, educational engagement transforms into a collaborative and participatory endeavour, which empirical studies indicate enhances learner autonomy, active involvement, and the cultivation of advanced communication competencies (Brookfield, 2013; Meyer & Land, 2006). For example, in English classrooms, facilitation often involves problem-solving tasks, role-plays, group discussions, and case studies, all of which allow learners to practice language in realistic contexts while reducing anxiety through peer collaboration. Moreover, David H. Jonassen (2014) argues that these learner-focused activities promote greater involvement and yield significantly more impactful learning outcomes. Moreover, facilitation holds immense significance in business education, as effective professional communication demands not only grammatical precision but also the skills to persuade, negotiate, and adapt to diverse cultural environments. Undoubtedly, research within the domain of intercultural communication highlights that pragmatic proficiency and cultural awareness are essential components for achieving success in international professional environments (Dear-

dorff, 2006; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Furthermore, facilitation aligns with transformative learning theories by Jack Mezirow (2000) and Knud Illeris (2014), emphasising that genuine growth arises from reflective experiences, questioning of beliefs, and meaningful conversations. Nevertheless, there is still limited research on the explicit use of facilitation skills in English courses designed for business students, despite the widespread recognition of the need for innovative and learner-centred pedagogies. Most existing studies on language instruction continue to emphasise communicative language teaching (Richards, 2006) or the broader field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), without paying attention to facilitation as a pedagogical competence that reshapes classroom dynamics and learner outcomes (Anthony, 2018). In the realm of higher education, the wavering attention to English's dual role as both the instructional language and a pivotal factor for employability and social ascent becomes strikingly apparent (Bolton et al., 2017). Despite this, business schools often prioritise technical knowledge, quantitative skills, and managerial training over the development of systematic communication skills, leading to graduates who may be technically competent but underprepared to navigate the complex communication requirements of international workplaces (Boobalan et al., 2024). As a result, many students continue to struggle with essential tasks such as writing professional emails and reports, participating in business negotiations, delivering persuasive presentations, or collaborating in multicultural teams, tasks that are increasingly integral to professional success in the global economy (Evans, 2013). Given that English has solidified its position as the lingua franca of international business communication (Kirkpatrick, 2010; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2020; Nickerson & Planken, 2015), such deficiencies can directly limit career opportunities, global employability, and professional mobility for business graduates. This situation highlights the importance of empirically examining facilitation as a strategic pedagogical tool that can bridge the gap between classroom instruction and workplace communication, ensuring that business students are equipped not only with technical and managerial expertise but also with the communicative competence necessary to thrive in international professional environments.

To address the research gap, the present study seeks to examine the impact of facilitation skills on enhancing the English language proficiency of business students, a group for whom effective communication is as crucial as technical and managerial knowledge. Though much has been studied about communicative language teaching and ESP, the impact of a teacher's facilitative skills on language learning in business education remains largely unexplored. To address this, the research employs an experimental approach that contrasts interactive, student-driven classroom dynamics with conventional, lecture-focused teaching methods. This study examines whether facilitation enhances the four essential skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, while also increasing learner confidence, engagement, attitude,

and satisfaction. This research aims to enhance educational theory while providing actionable guidance for crafting business school curricula and teaching methods, particularly in the Saudi Arabian context, where proficiency in English is essential for employment and international career opportunities.

Accordingly, the study articulates the following questions:

- To what extent do facilitation skills improve the English language proficiency of business students compared to traditional teaching approaches?
- How do facilitation-based strategies influence business students' performance across different language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)?
- In what ways does facilitation influence student confidence, engagement, attitudes, and satisfaction for professional communication?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study integrates Communicative Competence Theory, Facilitation Theory, and Transformative Learning Theory to examine how facilitation skills can improve the English language proficiency of business students. Communicative Competence Theory (Bachman, 1990; Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia, 2007; Savignon, 2018) asserts that language proficiency extends beyond grammatical accuracy to include sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic skills, enabling learners to communicate effectively in authentic contexts such as presentations, negotiations, report writing, and intercultural interactions. Facilitation Theory (Brookfield, 2013; Meyer & Land, 2006) complements this by framing the teacher's role as a guide who fosters learner autonomy, reflection, and collaboration through strategies such as problem-solving tasks, role-plays, case studies, and discussions, aligning closely with task-based language teaching and English for Specific Purposes (Anthony, 2018). This student-focused approach is particularly significant in business studies, reflecting genuine workplace interactions that alleviate stress and boost self-confidence. Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 2000) highlights a reflective aspect, asserting that profound learning emerges when learners critically examine their beliefs and thoughtfully engage with their experiences, thereby developing linguistic proficiency alongside professional identity, adaptability, and intercultural sensitivity. Together, these theories underpin the conceptualisation of facilitation as a strategic pedagogical tool that enhances communicative competence by integrating linguistic knowledge with practical, reflective, and interactive learning, guiding the design of this study to assess how facilitation influences listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills as well as learner engagement, confidence, and preparedness for global professional communication.

Facilitation as Pedagogical Concept

Facilitation, as a pedagogical concept, emphasises a shift from the traditional teacher-centred model of education to a learner-centred paradigm, in which students take an active role in creating meaning, engaging in inquiry, and collaborating with one another. Facilitation transforms the teacher from a solitary knowledge bearer into a catalyst for a collaborative and reflective learning environment, empowering students to build understanding together (Alam et al., 2022). Stephen Brookfield (2013) describes facilitation as an intentional journey to create secure, welcoming environments that foster conversation, thoughtful introspection, and collective accountability among learners. Jan H. F. Meyer and Ray Land (2006) emphasise the power of facilitation in guiding students through pivotal “threshold concepts” that revolutionise their understanding. In contrast, Jeremy Harmer (1998) emphasises how facilitative approaches not only enhance comprehension but also promote learners’ autonomy and long-term communicative competencies. In essence, facilitation embodies an educational art and mindset where educators become mentors and partners, nurturing independent thought, critical analysis, and the practical use of knowledge beyond academic walls. The process thrives on active participation, peer engagement, and formative tasks that prioritise personal growth, reflection, and application over rote memorisation and isolated testing, ultimately aligning pedagogy with the demands of lifelong learning and adaptive problem-solving skills required in contemporary education (Table 1A).

English Language Proficiency in Business Education

English language proficiency holds a significant place in business education because it responds to the demands of global communication and the requirements of local contexts. At the global level, English has established itself as the lingua franca of business, enabling people from different linguistic backgrounds to engage in meaningful professional interaction (Kirkpatrick, 2010; Nickerson, 2025). Moreover, English serves as the linchpin in negotiations and cross-cultural interactions, where articulate communication can dramatically influence the triumph of global business agreements. The need for English fluency transcends mere communication, evolving into a vital strategy for success in international job markets. In the national and international context, English carries a dual function. In business schools, it serves as the primary teaching language, while also signalling job readiness in competitive labour markets (Graddol, 2010). Employers often associate English proficiency with professional prowess, thereby amplifying its significance from academia to career growth. A. Clement and T. Murugavel (2015) note that although numerous graduates learn technical expertise during their education, they often fall short in the communication skills necessary for professional excellence. A discord between tech skills and poor lan-

guage abilities hinders job prospects and workplace triumph. Thus, in Saudi Arabia, English fluency transcends mere language skills, serving as a vital link between scholarly readiness and real-world business demands. Employer demands underscore the pivotal role of English in the workplace. A plethora of research reveals a gap between graduates' skills and the linguistic demands of the job market (Ranasuriya & Herath, 2020). Employers frequently highlight the value of strong communication, collaboration in multicultural environments, and self-assurance in sharing ideas. When graduates fall short, their job prospects diminish, hindering their potential to drive company progress. This scenario suggests that business education should incorporate more comprehensive English communication training to align students with academic aspirations and industry standards.

Facilitation Skills in Language Teaching

Facilitation skills in language teaching are increasingly recognised as central to effective language pedagogy because they combine interpersonal, pedagogical, and reflective competencies that enable teachers to create environments conducive to participation and learning. Core facilitation competencies include active listening, asking probing questions, scaffolding learning, designing collaborative tasks, and giving constructive feedback, all of which shape interactional dynamics in the classroom and support learners' communicative development (Brookfield, 2013; Harmer, 1998). In broader educational contexts, research indicates that facilitation fosters learner engagement, enhances collaboration, and promotes critical thinking by structuring dialogue, encouraging reflection, and building safe spaces for expression (Hu & Shu, 2025; Mansour, 2024). When applied to language teaching, these practices align with communicative and constructivist approaches, particularly through task-based and case-based activities that require learners to negotiate meaning, engage in authentic interaction, and develop strategies for independent language use (East, 2017; Luciana, 2023; Motlagh et al, 2014). In these environments, guides steer learners through collaborative activities, demonstrate conversation techniques, and provide prompt feedback to foster independence and self-management (Brookfield, 2013). Effective facilitation also addresses affective dimensions by reducing anxiety, normalising trial-and-error in language use, and fostering motivation through relevance, voice, and learner choice (Dong et al., 2022). Moreover, scaffolded interaction and collaborative problem-solving provide opportunities for peer learning, where knowledge is co-constructed and communicative competence is reinforced through reciprocal exchange (Meyer & Land, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). Through the fusion of these techniques, facilitation elevates beyond conventional teacher-led methods, transforming educators into catalysts that inspire learners to engage, analyse, and articulate in the target language with greater prowess.

Empirical Studies on Facilitation in Higher Education

Empirical studies on facilitation in higher education have increasingly highlighted the pivotal role of peer-led models and learning assistants (LAs) in enhancing student engagement, academic performance, and overall learning experiences. These investigations highlight the crucial role of learner-focused, engaging methods in achieving profound educational outcomes.

Recent research highlights the significant impact of facilitation techniques on enhancing student learning outcomes in various educational settings. Nicolette Maggiore et al. (2024) examined the impact of Learning Assistant (LA) facilitation practices in STEM disciplines, revealing that LAs employing dialogic facilitation strategies characterised by open-ended questioning and student-centred prompts significantly enhanced student engagement and conceptual understanding. In contrast, while assertive guidance helped students reach conclusions, it fell short in nurturing profound learning. Carina M. L. Carlos et al. (2023) cleverly applied the Formative Assessment Enactment Model to illuminate how LAs, driven by their goals and insights into student thought, profoundly shaped the richness of student engagement. This highlights the necessity of equipping LAs to intuitively adapt to student needs, harmonising with formative assessment ideals. In the realm of peer-led learning, Athena D. F. Sherman et al. (2023) conducted a study examining the impact of peer facilitation on individual, community, and societal learning. The research revealed that student-driven collectives fostered a cooperative learning atmosphere, enhancing both feelings of belonging and academic achievement. This aligns with the notion that peer facilitation enhances academic success while cultivating a supportive learning environment. Furthermore, Sermin Vardal-Ocakli and Ahmet Ok (2024) focused on personal and social facilitators of student engagement, emphasising the role of peer relationships and social support in promoting active participation and persistence in higher education settings. Moreover, Youmen Chaaban et al. (2023) examined how discipline-specific facilitators navigated a multi-tiered professional learning programme, revealing that their strategies diverged significantly by discipline, highlighting the distinct educational needs of each area. Michael Sailer et al. (2021) introduced the C-model, a creative framework that highlights the synergy of tech tools, instructional design, and the learning atmosphere in enhancing educational experiences. This framework posits that harmonising these components is crucial for fostering student learning, particularly in tech-driven educational environments.

Despite these positive outcomes, challenges and critiques of facilitation in higher education have been widely discussed, highlighting multiple barriers to its effective implementation. Instructor readiness is often a significant constraint, as many teachers lack formal training in facilitation skills and struggle to adopt learner-centred approaches (Carlos et al., 2023; Maggiore et al., 2024). Institutional factors further complicate facilitation practices, with large class sizes, rigid curricula, and an over-

emphasis on examination-oriented teaching limiting opportunities for interactive and reflective learning (Chaaban, 2023; Sailer, 2021). Learner resistance also poses a challenge, as students accustomed to traditional, teacher-centred methods may find self-directed learning uncomfortable or unfamiliar, which can lead to reduced engagement and participation (Sherman et al., 2023; Vardal-Öcaklı, 2024). In addition, assessing the effectiveness of facilitation presents difficulties, as measuring its impact on concrete learning outcomes particularly in language acquisition or other skill-based disciplines requires robust, context-sensitive assessment tools, and there remains limited empirical consensus on best practices for such evaluation (Carlos et al., 2023; Maggiore et al., 2024).

Most research on language teaching emphasises CLT and ESP, largely overlooking facilitation, and there is limited experimental evidence linking facilitation to measurable improvements in English proficiency (Carlos et al., 2023; Maggiore et al., 2024; Sherman et al., 2023; Vardal-Öcaklı, 2024). Business students, who require strong workplace communication skills, remain underrepresented in facilitation studies, and there is a notable scarcity of research within the Saudi Arabian higher education context, where large classes and exam-focused curricula may influence outcomes (Chaaban, 2023; Sailer, 2021). This gap highlights the need for targeted studies to investigate how facilitation can enhance English fluency and improve workplace communication skills. In response, the conceptual framework for the present study positions facilitation as a critical mediating factor between instructional strategies and English proficiency outcomes, integrating principles from facilitation theory with established language learning theories (Carlos et al., 2023; Maggiore et al., 2024). It suggests that skilful guidance sparks student involvement, fostering confidence and resulting in notable gains in English skills. This framework highlights the vibrant art of facilitation in connecting teaching techniques with learning achievements, proposing a route where organised, student-focused guidance transforms educational input into real language skill enhancement.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study adopts a quasi-experimental research design with a pre-test and post-test control group structure to investigate the impact of facilitation skills on English language proficiency among business students. In a compelling comparison, the experimental group thrived through innovative facilitation strategies, such as active listening and collaboration, while the control group stagnated with outdated, teacher-centred methods that focused on grammar and lectures. Over a 15-week intervention, both groups underwent standardised English proficiency tests to assess

their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills before and after the treatment, demonstrating the effectiveness of our approach. The quasi-experimental approach was selected because it enables systematic comparison where random assignment is not feasible, while its integration of quantitative methods strengthens validity by capturing numerical outcome measures and statistically significant differences between groups. The design provides a robust framework for assessing how facilitation significantly enhances language learning success in business education.

Participants and Sample Size

The population for the present study comprised undergraduate business students enrolled in a public university in Saudi Arabia, where English serves as the primary medium of instruction; however, many learners face challenges in applying their language skills to professional communication contexts. The eighty participants were divided into experimental and control groups, ensuring balanced representation in terms of gender, academic performance, and English proficiency based on a preliminary placement test. The selection of business students was intentional, as they are a crucial audience needing strong communication skills for the workplace, yet they are frequently overlooked in research centred on facilitation. The sampling ensured representativeness within the institutional context while remaining manageable for intensive facilitation-based intervention. This systematic comparison facilitated a rigorous evaluation of facilitation versus conventional pedagogical methods, yielding credible insights into the effects of facilitation on English language proficiency.

Variables of the Study

The present study involved both independent and dependent variables, as well as moderating factors that influenced the outcomes. The independent variable was the instructional mode, defined as facilitation-oriented pedagogies in the experimental cohort contrasted with conventional teacher-centric approaches in the control cohort. The dependent variables encompassed the students' English language proficiency outcomes, evaluated through standardised pre- and post-tests across the four essential skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Moreover, supplementary dependent variables such as student confidence, engagement, attitude, and satisfaction were incorporated to comprehensively assess the overarching impacts of facilitation. The impact of moderating factors, including students' prior proficiency, motivation, and classroom dynamics, on the extent of observed improvement was recognised. By clearly distinguishing these variables, the study ensured a systematic evaluation of how facilitation as an instructional approach impacts measurable language outcomes in business students.

Intervention

The study implemented a 15-week intervention comparing facilitation-based instruction (experimental group) with traditional teacher-centred instruction (control group) to examine the impact on the English proficiency of business students (see Table A2). The experimental cohort engaged in learner-centric, facilitative endeavours such as role-playing, debates, collaborative writing, peer evaluation, and workplace simulations. The facilitator directed dialogue, structured activities, and promoted reflective self-evaluation among participants. Conversely, the control group adhered to a traditional lecture-centric methodology emphasising grammatical elucidations, textbook drills, exemplar responses, and minimal engagement, thus perpetuating a predominantly accuracy-focused educational atmosphere (Alam, 2025b). The weekly activities for both groups were meticulously designed to maintain content equivalence, albeit with distinct pedagogical methodologies (refer to Table A1). The activities of the experimental group evolved from initial engagement and confidence enhancement to sophisticated, cohesive workplace simulations that promoted genuine communication, collaboration, and language application. The control group persistently prioritised solitary practice, memorisation, and assessment-focused activities (Table A2).

Data Collection Tools and Techniques

The present study employed a quantitative approach to collect data on English language proficiency, confidence, engagement, attitude, and satisfaction among business students before and after the intervention. To measure proficiency gains objectively, the EF Standard English Test (EF SET), a CEFR-aligned standardised assessment with established validity and reliability, was administered as both a pre-test and post-test to evaluate performance across four language domains: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The pre-test determined baseline proficiency in the control and experimental groups, whereas the post-test assessed the quantifiable advancements achieved after the 15-week facilitation-based intervention. Furthermore, a systematically designed questionnaire with 20 closed-ended items evaluated via a five-point Likert scale was employed to measure confidence, engagement, attitude, and satisfaction regarding the educational experience. The adapted questionnaire, derived from established language learning scales, yielded measurable insights into students' perceptions of engagement, attentiveness, motivation, and satisfaction with the pedagogical methods employed (Maroco et al., 2016; Teuber et al., 2021). To uphold the integrity and uniformity of the facilitation process, detailed instructor logs were systematically maintained during the intervention to document methodologies, activities, and compliance with designated facilitation strategies.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using statistical techniques to evaluate the impact of facilitation-based instruction on English language proficiency, confidence, engagement, attitude, and satisfaction among business students. Descriptive statistics, encompassing mean scores and standard deviations, were computed for both pre-test and post-test outcomes to elucidate performance trends in the experimental and control groups. To assess the importance of the observed group differences, inferential statistics, specifically independent-samples t-tests for post-test comparisons and ANCOVA for baseline proficiency control, were utilised to evaluate the impact of the facilitation intervention. Furthermore, a repeated-measures ANOVA was employed to examine intra-group variations throughout the 15-week intervention period. To investigate the correlation between affective factors and language proficiency outcomes, analyses were performed to ascertain the relationships among confidence, engagement, attitude, and satisfaction metrics with proficiency advancements. Subsequent regression analyses were employed to assess the degree to which these variables mediated the influence of facilitation on the advancement of English language proficiency. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS (version 26), with a significance threshold set at $p < 0.05$, to ensure a comprehensive assessment of the direct and indirect effects of facilitation strategies on student learning outcomes.

Reliability and Validity

To ensure the reliability and validity of the study's findings, multiple measures were implemented. The EF Standard English Test (EF SET) serves as a standardised, CEFR-compliant assessment of English proficiency, ensuring robust content validity in evaluating listening, reading, writing, and speaking competencies. For instructor logs and structured observational data, inter-rater reliability procedures were applied, with multiple instructors independently reviewing and scoring selected sessions to verify consistency in recording facilitation practices and student engagement.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical standards to ensure the protection and rights of all participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were informed about the research's objectives, methodologies, and potential benefits. Additionally, institutional approval was secured from the affiliated college to authorise the study within the academic setting. Steps were implemented to ensure the confidentiality of student information, with all responses rendered anonymous and securely

stored to avert unauthorised access. Participants were reminded that they could leave the study at any time without any negative consequences, thereby promoting a friendly and safe environment for everyone involved. These ethical protocols guaranteed that the investigation adhered to established professional standards for responsible educational research.

RESULTS

Effect of Facilitation Skills on Overall English Language Proficiency

Descriptive Analysis

Before the intervention, both groups showed similar English skills, as reflected in their pre-test scores. This shows that both groups began at a similar skill level, and following the intervention, the experimental group demonstrated significant improvements in all areas, whereas the control group showed only slight improvements (Table A3).

Inferential Analysis

The independent-samples *t*-tests conducted on post-test scores confirmed statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups across all four skill domains and overall proficiency, with all *p*-values below 0.001. The results demonstrate that facilitation-based teaching significantly enhanced students' English skills.

The most substantial enhancement occurred in speaking (M gain = +17.68), followed by writing (M gain = +17.12), listening (M gain = +16.53), and reading (M gain = +15.10). This pattern suggests that facilitative competencies, particularly those that enhance communicative and productive abilities, are likely attributable to increased learner interaction, dialogic involvement, and collaborative problem-solving promoted throughout the instructional process.

ANCOVA Analysis

The ANCOVA results revealed a statistically significant main effect for instructional method, $F(1,77) = 42.87$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2p = 0.36$. The significant effect size ($\eta^2p = 0.36$) indicates that approximately 36% of the variance in post-test proficiency scores is attributed to facilitation-based instruction, demonstrating a powerful and impactful influence on language development that extends beyond initial abilities.

Influence of Facilitation-Based Strategies across Language Domains

A repeated-measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the differential effects of facilitation-based instruction across the four language domains, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing, in the experimental group. This analysis aimed to assess the significant variability in improvement across different skill domains resulting from the facilitation intervention.

RM-ANOVA Analysis

The repeated-measures ANOVA revealed a statistically significant main effect for skill type, *Wilks' Lambda* = 0.42, $F(3,37) = 17.23$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2p = 0.58$. This indicates that the facilitation-based intervention produced varying degrees of improvement across different language domains, with a large effect size ($\eta^2p = 0.58$) demonstrating that approximately 58% of the variance in proficiency gains could be explained by the type of skill practised during facilitation sessions.

Post hoc pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni adjustments effectively pinpointed the specific differences. The results showed that the mean improvement in speaking ($M = +17.68$, $SD = 6.71$) and writing ($M = +17.12$, $SD = 6.65$) was significantly greater than that in listening ($M = +16.53$, $SD = 5.89$) and reading ($M = +15.10$, $SD = 5.41$). Although all skill areas demonstrated substantial improvement, the difference in magnitude of gain among domains indicates that facilitation strategies exerted a stronger influence on productive skills than on receptive ones.

Descriptive Summary of Domain-Wise Improvement

Table 4 presents the results, showing that the most significant improvements were in speaking and writing, with listening and reading following closely. The closeness of the mean gain scores among the four skills indicates consistent overall improvement, though the slightly higher gains in productive skills suggest that facilitation strategies were particularly effective in enhancing learners' active use of language (Alam, 2025b).

The results emphasised that facilitation-based instruction significantly enhances speaking and writing skills by actively engaging learners in expressing their ideas, participating in discussions, and receiving feedback from peers and instructors. The enhancement of these skills showcases the effectiveness of facilitation techniques, such as collaborative dialogue and probing questions, which ignite critical thinking and language production. In contrast, receptive skills, listening and reading, exhibited notable but lesser improvements. This enhancement is due to targeted facilitation tasks that focus on guided interpretation, prediction, and inferencing. These activities likely enhanced cognitive skills and language comprehension, enabling students to interact

more effectively with learning materials. The significant improvement within the group ($\eta^2p = 0.58$) underscores the success of facilitation methods in promoting well-rounded language development. Facilitation appears to create a cohesive linguistic environment that promotes learning through exposure, interaction, and reflection, ultimately improving comprehension and output (Table A4).

Effects of Facilitation on Confidence, Engagement, Attitude, and Satisfaction

The study extended its investigation beyond linguistic outcomes to examine the affective and attitudinal effects of facilitation-based instruction. This aspect examined the impact of facilitation on students' confidence, engagement, learning attitudes, and overall satisfaction with instruction. Validated Likert-scale instruments evaluated these variables in both the experimental and control groups post-intervention.

Statistical Analysis

Independent-samples *t*-tests were conducted to compare post-intervention means between the two groups. As displayed in Table 5, the results revealed significant mean differences across all affective constructs. Participants in facilitation-based learning exhibited significantly greater confidence, engagement, attitude, and satisfaction compared to those receiving traditional teacher-centred instruction.

The *t*-test results confirm that all differences were statistically significant at the 0.001 level, demonstrating that the facilitation-based approach substantially enhanced students' affective engagement with the learning process. The effect sizes calculated via Cohen's *d* varied from 1.72 to 2.10, indicating substantial practical effects. These findings affirm that the facilitation model had a strong and positive psychological impact in addition to improving linguistic outcomes (Table A5).

Correlation and Regression Analysis

Further analyses were conducted to investigate the relationships between affective variables and their impact on language proficiency improvement. Pearson correlation coefficients revealed robust positive relationships between engagement and overall proficiency gains ($r = 0.72, p < 0.001$) and between confidence and speaking proficiency ($r = 0.68, p < 0.001$). The results suggest that learners who exhibit greater engagement and self-confidence are more likely to achieve higher levels of language proficiency.

A multiple regression analysis was subsequently performed to assess the predictive influence of confidence and engagement on overall language proficiency. The model was significant, $F(2, 77) = 61.82, p < 0.001$, explaining 61% of the variance in profi-

ciency ($R^2 = 0.61$), with both engagement ($\beta = 0.46$, $p < 0.001$) and confidence ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$) as key contributors. The results compellingly demonstrate that emotional involvement and self-assurance are crucial mediators linking facilitative teaching methods to language advancement.

The higher mean scores in confidence and engagement reflect the empowering nature of facilitation-oriented learning. This method cultivates learner ownership and confidence through active engagement, teamwork, and thoughtful feedback. Students should actively express ideas, negotiate meaning, and constructively respond to feedback to enhance their language skills and boost their confidence in communication. The remarkable enhancement in attitude and satisfaction highlights the emotional impact of the facilitation model. The dialogic exchange and positive reinforcement within an interactive learning setting mitigate anxiety and bolster learners' intrinsic motivation for English communication. This shift in perspective promotes ongoing involvement, receptivity to dialogue, and acceptance of critique, crucial elements for enduring language retention and proficiency advancement.

DISCUSSION

The overall findings of the study indicate that facilitation-based instructional strategies significantly enhanced students' English language proficiency and affective engagement compared to conventional teacher-centred methods. Engagement with a facilitative approach led to notable improvements in all core dimensions of English, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing, demonstrating a holistic enhancement of linguistic competence. Moreover, the facilitation method enhanced self-efficacy, engagement, and favourable learning dispositions, thereby elevating satisfaction and motivational levels. The results suggest that facilitation-driven teaching not only enhances academic success but also cultivates a dynamic and supportive learning environment that promotes both intellectual and emotional growth in language acquisition.

Through the synthesis of perspectives from Communicative Competence Theory, Facilitation Theory, and Transformative Learning Theory, this study's findings indicate that facilitation-driven pedagogy significantly enhances both the linguistic and emotional aspects of English language acquisition. Consistent with Communicative Competence Theory (Bachman, 1990; Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia, 2007; Savignon, 2018), the significant gains across all four language domains, especially in speaking and writing, demonstrate that facilitation fosters the holistic development of linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies essential for authentic communication. The emphasis on interactive tasks, negotiation of meaning, and problem-solving validates the theory's proposition that language learning transcends grammatical mastery to include pragmatic fluency and contextual adaptability (Hymes, 1972; Savignon, 2018). Learners' improved fluency and confidence indicate

that facilitation-based activities provide authentic opportunities for meaning-focused communication, supporting Bachman's (1990) and Celce-Murcia's (2007) assertion that communicative competence evolves through purposeful interaction rather than rote learning. These outcomes also substantiate Facilitation Theory (Brookfield, 2013; Meyer & Land, 2006; Harmer, 1998), which positions the teacher as a facilitator who structures dialogic learning, scaffolds participation, and nurtures safe and inclusive environments where learners co-construct knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). The substantial rise in confidence, engagement, and satisfaction corroborates Brookfield's (2013) claim that learner-centred environments enhance autonomy and critical reflection, while Harmer (1998) emphasises that such facilitation heightens intrinsic motivation by ensuring personal relevance and social interactivity. Similarly, the facilitation model in this study exemplifies the reflective and experiential processes highlighted in Transformative Learning Theory (Illeris, 2014; Mezirow, 2000), as students engaged in peer discussions, role-plays, and workplace simulations that challenged prior assumptions and fostered critical self-awareness. Through reflective dialogue and collaborative inquiry, learners experienced shifts not only in linguistic ability but also in professional identity and self-efficacy, echoing Mezirow's (2000) view that transformation occurs when learners move from passive recipients to active constructors of meaning. Overall, the integration of these theoretical perspectives explains how facilitation simultaneously cultivates communicative competence, fosters learner autonomy, and stimulates transformative growth in business English contexts, aligning with the broader educational premise that authentic, reflective, and collaborative engagement leads to deeper and more sustainable language learning (Brookfield, 2013; Harmer, 1998; Illeris, 2014; Savignon, 2018).

The findings of the present study corroborate an extensive body of research demonstrating the pedagogical effectiveness of facilitation-based and learner-centred approaches in higher education. Dialogic, reflective, and adaptive facilitation has been shown to enhance student engagement, conceptual understanding, and performance across disciplines (Alam et al., 2026; Brookfield, 2013; Carlos et al., 2023; Harmer, 1998; Maggiore et al., 2024; Meyer & Land, 2006). These practices promote learner independence, introspection, and enduring motivation, while also enhancing cognitive and emotional learning outcomes (Anthony, 2018; Ellis, 2003; Richards, 2006). The present study builds upon these insights in the context of English language instruction, demonstrating that facilitation-oriented pedagogy significantly enhances both linguistic competence and learner motivation. Furthermore, interactive and collaborative tasks, including debates, peer feedback, and joint writing activities, align with Task-Based Language Teaching principles and constructivist approaches, enhancing negotiation of meaning, metacognitive reflection, and autonomous language use (Celce-Murcia, 2007; Savignon, 2018; Willis & Willis, 2013).

The affective benefits of facilitation were also evident in the present study, with students reporting higher confidence, engagement, and satisfaction. Prior research

has highlighted that peer-led, socially supportive, and interactive learning environments can reduce anxiety, foster a sense of academic belonging, and promote intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Sherman et al., 2023; Vardal-Öcaklı, 2024). By creating psychologically safe spaces that emphasise dialogue, reflection, and collaboration, facilitation encourages self-expression, emotional well-being, and communicative empowerment qualities, particularly critical for business students navigating complex interpersonal and professional contexts (Copeland, 2023; Deardorff, 2006; Fernandes et al., 2024; Pricop, 2024; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). These outcomes confirm that facilitation bridges cognitive, linguistic, and affective dimensions, reinforcing the view that learning environments designed for participation, interaction, and autonomy support holistic student development (Brookfield, 2013; Harmer, 1998).

Contextual flexibility emerged as a key factor in the success of facilitation-based interventions. In the higher education setting, characterised by large class sizes, rigid curricula, and exam-oriented teaching, structured facilitation produced measurable gains in both engagement and linguistic proficiency (Carlos et al., 2023; Chaaban, 2023; Sailer, 2021). These findings demonstrate that facilitation can be effectively implemented even in resource-constrained or multilingual environments (Boobalan et al., 2024). Moreover, the significant improvements observed across speaking, writing, and other language domains support theoretical models emphasising interaction, reflection, and transformative learning (Brookfield, 2013; Canale & Swain, 1980; Illeris, 2014; Mezirow, 2000). By integrating communicative, constructivist, and motivational principles, facilitation emerges as a robust pedagogical approach that aligns classroom instruction with professional communicative demands, confirming its relevance for both academic and career-oriented outcomes in business English education (Anthony, 2018; Harmer, 1998; Kirkpatrick, 2010; Nickerson, 2015; Richards, 2006; Savignon, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the impact of facilitation-based pedagogy on students' overall language proficiency and affective outcomes, revealing that structured facilitative interventions such as debates, collaborative reading and writing tasks, reflective discussions, and peer feedback significantly enhanced all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students demonstrated significant improvements in receptive and productive skills, accompanied by increased confidence, positive attitudes, enhanced engagement, and overall satisfaction. Facilitation boldly cultivates dialogue and collaboration, forging inclusive, safe learning spaces that empower learners for academic, professional, and intercultural success. Facilitation proves to be powerfully effective in diverse, exam-focused, and resource-scarce classrooms.

Notwithstanding its contributions, the research is constrained by its singular institutional focus and a limited, discipline-specific sample, which may hinder gen-

eralisability, as well as an emphasis on short-term outcomes that neglect the exploration of long-term facilitation effects. Future studies may address these deficiencies by employing multi-institutional or cross-cultural frameworks, utilising longitudinal methodologies to evaluate ongoing linguistic and professional advancements, and exploring the incorporation of digital facilitation instruments or hybrid learning paradigms. Conducting comparative studies on teaching methods, teacher skills, student perspectives, and institutional influences will significantly enhance our understanding of how to optimise facilitation across diverse educational environments. This research substantiates that facilitation-oriented pedagogy is a robust, empirically supported framework that enhances linguistic proficiency, motivation, and student engagement. Facilitation weaves together cognitive, communicative, and emotional elements to craft a holistic teaching approach that equips students for academic and professional dialogues, bridging the gap between educational methods and real-world skills.

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APPENDIX

Table A1
Distinction between Teaching and Facilitating

Aspect	Teaching (Traditional Approach)	Facilitating (Learner-Centred Approach)
Role of the Teacher	Authority figure, source of knowledge, and evaluator (lecturer/expert)	Guide, mentor, facilitator of dialogue, co-learner (Brookfield, 2013)
Focus	Content delivery, coverage of the syllabus, and factual accuracy	Learning process, engagement, holistic skill development, and critical inquiry (Meyer & Land, 2006)
Methodology	Lecture-driven, unidirectional, teacher-led sessions	Interactive strategies such as group discussions, problem-solving, peer collaboration, and reflective inquiry (Harmer, 2025)
Learner's Role	Passive recipient of predefined content, limited participation	Active participant, critical thinker, collaborative knowledge constructor, contributing personal experiences (Brookfield, 2013)
Learning Environment	Structured, hierarchical, and controlled by the teacher	Flexible, adaptive, and co-constructed with learners' inputs and needs, shaping the direction of learning
Assessment	Summative evaluation focused on memory recall through exams, quizzes, and standardized tests	Emphasis on formative, reflective, and applied tasks, including peer assessment, portfolios, and real-world projects
Key Skills Used	Explanation, demonstration, lecturing, providing information	Questioning, scaffolding, listening, mediation, team facilitation, giving feedback, and managing group dynamics (Harmer, 1998)
Outcome	Mastery and retention of subject-specific content; short-term recall	Development of autonomy, creativity, critical reflection, transferable problem-solving, and communication skills (Meyer & Land, 2006)
Knowledge Ownership	Resides mainly with the teacher	Distributed across the teacher and learners through the co-construction of meaning
Student Motivation	Mainly extrinsic, driven by grades and teacher evaluation	Intrinsic, fostered by curiosity, engagement, and personal relevance of learning (Brookfield, 2013)

Source. Own research.

Table A2*Comparative Intervention Plan: Experimental vs. Control Groups*

Weeks	Experimental Group (Facilitation-Based Approach)	Control Group (Traditional Approach)
0–1	Orientation, icebreakers, group discussions, and facilitator-guided goal setting.	Course overview, grammar lecture, workbook exercises.
2–4	Role-plays, peer feedback, collaborative email/report writing.	Reading comprehension, teacher-led writing practice, and model answers.
5–7	Case-based vocabulary, analysis of authentic articles, and workplace simulations.	Vocabulary memorization, teacher explanation, and individual exercises.
8–10	Debates, presentations, peer/self-assessment, and scaffolded facilitator support.	Lecture-based discussions, essay writing demonstration, and midterm exam.
11–13	Negotiation role-plays, complex simulations, and collaborative projects on business proposals.	Teacher explanation of negotiation/report writing, repetitive drills, and individual assignments.
14–15	Integrated workplace tasks combining listening, speaking, reading, writing; final project and reflection.	Final exam preparation, grammar drills, comprehension exercises, and teacher-led review.

Source. Own research.**Table A3***Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Mean Scores for English Language Proficiency*

Skill Area	Group	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	Mean Gain	t-value	p-value
Listening	Experimental	58.12 (6.35)	74.65 (5.89)	16.53	9.41	< 0.001
	Control	57.86 (6.17)	61.20 (6.45)	3.34		
Speaking	Experimental	55.42 (7.02)	73.10 (6.71)	17.68	10.12	< 0.001
	Control	54.75 (7.44)	59.10 (6.80)	4.35		
Reading	Experimental	60.25 (5.93)	75.35 (5.41)	15.1	8.96	< 0.001
	Control	59.88 (6.11)	63.52 (5.89)	3.64		
Writing	Experimental	54.73 (7.28)	71.85 (6.65)	17.12	9.58	< 0.001
	Control	55.26 (7.02)	59.15 (6.41)	3.89		
Overall Proficiency	Experimental	57.63 (6.65)	73.74 (6.16)	16.11	9.92	< 0.001
	Control	56.94 (6.69)	60.74 (6.39)	3.8		

Source. Own research.

Table A4*Mean Improvement Scores across Language Skill Domains in the Experimental Group*

Skill Domain	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	Mean Gain	Rank of Improvement
Speaking	55.42 (7.02)	73.10 (6.71)	17.68	1
Writing	54.73 (7.28)	71.85 (6.65)	17.12	2
Listening	58.12 (6.35)	74.65 (5.89)	16.53	3
Reading	60.25 (5.93)	75.35 (5.41)	15.1	4

Source. Own research.**Table A5***Comparison of Affective and Attitudinal Variables between Groups*

Variable	Experimental Group Mean (SD)	Control Group Mean (SD)	t-value	p-value
Confidence	4.28 (0.46)	3.15 (0.57)	8.42	< 0.001
Engagement	4.35 (0.41)	3.24 (0.53)	9.1	< 0.001
Attitude	4.17 (0.48)	3.30 (0.52)	7.98	< 0.001
Satisfaction	4.42 (0.43)	3.18 (0.49)	9.76	< 0.001

Source. Own research.