

English Language Readiness of International Students in Higher Education Institution as Basis for Tailored Language Program

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the English language readiness of international students at Cebu Technological University (CTU) as the basis for designing a tailored language program responsive to their academic and workplace needs. This used a descriptive–correlational research design, that involved 100 international students across undergraduate and graduate levels. Data were gathered through validated online survey instruments measuring English language competence in listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The workplace readiness across communication, critical thinking, professionalism, adaptability and linguistic challenges affecting performance were

also measured. Results revealed that students perceived themselves to possess high levels of competence in all four macro-skills, with listening and reading emerging as areas of notable strength. Actual performance data confirmed very good receptive abilities, while writing, particularly vocabulary use in academic contexts and spontaneous speaking were identified as areas needing improvement. Workplace readiness indicators also fell within the high range, especially in teamwork, adaptability, and communication, although confidence in job interview preparation was comparatively moderate. Results further reveal a very strong and statistically significant overall correlation between perceived level of agreement in English competence and actual measured competence using Spearman rho and Pearsons r, highlighting that higher English competence contribute to higher career preparedness. Challenges such as limited academic vocabulary, difficulty understanding lectures, and limited confidence in public speaking were also identified. The findings recommend a need for a structured, CTU-specific language program emphasizing academic vocabulary, intercultural communication, oral fluency, and workplace communication. This can support CTU’s internationalization goals and enhance the employability of its international student population.

Keywords: *Cebu Technological University, English language readiness, International students, tailored language program*

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has changed the way nations interact, bringing opportunities for intercultural interaction and overseas expansion. World Universities are driven to internationalize higher education by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal on Quality Education. This is to ensure that “by 2030, all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development (ESD) and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development” (United Nations, 2015). They acknowledge the need of broadening learning outcomes and prepare their faculty, students and administrators for a globalized world.

Educational globalization in the 21st century has significantly impacted practices and philosophies within higher education, enriching classrooms through the increased mobility of international students. In the Philippines, the Universal Access to Quality Education Act demonstrates a commitment to inclusive education, aligning with the internationalization efforts emphasized by the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Internationalization is gradually becoming recognized as a crucial component of the principal missions of higher organizations worldwide. Universities have always had international dimensions in their research, teaching, and service to society. Mobility of students, scholars, and programs; reputation and branding manifested by global and regional rankings; and a shift in paradigm from cooperation to competition (Van der Wende, 2020) have been the main manifestations of the agenda of internationalization in higher education over the past 30 years.

The rapid expansion of global mobility in higher education has pushed universities to strengthen their support systems for international students, especially in the areas of language proficiency, intercultural literacy, and workplace readiness. As multilingual and multicultural learning spaces grow, linguistic competence becomes increasingly central to academic success, employability, and professional integration (OECD, 2020). For international students in Philippine higher education institutions, the ability to communicate effectively in English and local languages is instrumental not only for classroom participation but also for navigating internship placements, community interactions, and eventual transition into the global labor market.

Global competency as defined and cited in the study of (Dimaano et al., 2017) refers to the acquisition of in-depth knowledge and understanding of international issues, an appreciation of and ability to learn and work with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, proficiency in a foreign language, and skills to function productively in an interdependent world community. Language skills are essential for effective communication, which is a key requirement in most workplaces. Workplace readiness includes skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability are considerable factors that impacts the employment outcomes of international students. Employers often seek candidates who are not only proficient in the language but also possess the necessary soft skills as well as workplace-focused skills to thrive in a professional environment.

Recent international research shows major inconsistencies in English language proficiency requirements among universities offering the same programs, and a mismatch between university entry standards and the language skills actually required in professional practice. This gap results in graduates, especially international students entering workplaces without sufficient readiness for linguistically demanding roles (Kilag et al., 2024). Global surveys indicate that despite strong aspirations for employment abroad, international students report inadequate institutional support for developing work-related communication skills, with more than 85% wanting more personalized training in industry skills, workplace communication, and practical English use (Mizon, 2022).

Studies show that English language proficiency significantly determines job attainment, with many international graduates struggling to secure employment in their field due to limited language and workplace communication competence. Only about 30% secure jobs in their field after 18 months, showing a persistent global readiness gap. Global evidence on English and ESL programs reveals wide variability in program quality, limited research on cultural factors, and insufficient integration of language support with academic and workplace skills, creating persistent proficiency gaps among international students (Santos et al., 2022).

Cebu Technological University (CTU) intensifies its internationalization efforts, public records and university updates show no existing systematic assessment of the English proficiency levels and workplace readiness of its international student population. Current updates highlight internationalization activities but do not address linguistic preparedness. CTU's internationalization initiatives such as scholarship drives, mobility programs, ASEAN exchanges are rapidly expanding, yet there is no publicly available evidence of a structured ESL or language preparedness program specifically designed for international students entering CTU. Local updates highlight CTU's investments in academic quality, curriculum alignment, and graduate program enhancement. However, English-medium academic activities show that advanced academic language skills are indispensable, yet support systems for international students are not explicitly mentioned.

CTU's efforts in global engagement, such as research collaborations and international academic forums, indicate a high demand for students to operate effectively in global academic and workplace environments. The lack of a documented English proficiency readiness program creates a local institutional gap that may disadvantage incoming and current international students. Given CTU's expanding internationalization initiatives and its commitment to producing globally competent graduates, there is a need to systematically examine the linguistic competencies and workplace readiness of its international student population. Identifying gaps, strengths, and instructional needs will allow the university to design a tailored English language readiness program.

Objectives

1. To determine the profile of the respondents in terms of age and gender, nationality, program/course taken, academic level, length of stay at CTU and first language learned.

2. To assess the respondents' level of agreement regarding their English language competence and evaluate the actual level of English language competence in terms of listening, reading, writing and speaking.
3. To determine the level of workplace readiness of CTU international students in terms of communication and teamwork, critical thinking and problem-solving, professionalism and work ethics and adaptability and cross-cultural performance.
4. To examine the significant relationship between the respondents' level of agreement and their actual level of English language competence.
5. To identify the challenges encountered by international students that affect their English competence and workplace readiness.

Statement of Hypothesis

Ho 1. There is no significant relationship between level of agreement and level of competence in English among CTU international students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English Language Readiness and the Four Macro-Skills

Standards and operational definitions. The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) provides validated descriptor scales and self-assessment grids for listening, reading, speaking, and writing across A1–C2 levels, widely adopted to operationalize both self-perceived readiness and observed competence in higher education (Council of Europe, 2020; Europass, n.d.). These descriptors offer concrete “can-do” statements that can be adapted directly into Likert items and banded rubrics to strengthen content validity in instruments used with international students.

Assessment practices. Modular, four-skill assessments (e.g., Cambridge English Skills Test) report profile scores per skill and an overall CEFR-mapped result, an approach consistent with separating macro-skills in instrumentation and aggregating for a holistic readiness profile (Cambridge, n.d.). Pedagogical resources from the British Council also organize learning and assessment by these four skills and CEFR levels, reinforcing the structure employed in the present study (British Council, n.d.).

Academic outcomes and proficiency. Classic and more recent work generally finds a positive association between English proficiency and academic performance among international students, though effect sizes vary. For example, a TESOL Quarterly study (Light, Xu, & Mossop, 1987) and a meta-analysis (Wongtrirat, 2010) indicate that standardized proficiency scores such as TOEFL show small yet significant predictive capacity for GPA/course completion, implying that multi-indicator profiles—self-perception

plus skill-specific performance—are more informative than a single test. Contemporary analyses in transnational education also detect significant positive correlations between proficiency and degree classification, especially in early years of study (Shu & Chen, 2025).

Profiles and Background Factors: Age, Gender, Nationality, Program, Academic Level, Length of Stay, and First Language

Length of stay and intensity of interaction. Research shows that overall proficiency is typically the strongest predictor of L2 pragmatic comprehension, followed by intensity of L2 interaction and length of residence; the latter two often operate through opportunities to use English (Sağdıç, 2021; Sağdıç, 2024). Longitudinal phonetic work with newly arrived learners also documents measurable changes in speech rhythm within the first year abroad, underscoring why “length of stay at CTU” should be profiled alongside interaction opportunities (White & Mok, 2023).

First language (L1) effects. Reviews and empirical studies confirm that L1 influences second-language learning positively (transfer) and negatively (interference) across phonology, lexico-grammar, and discourse; the magnitude of L1 effects is moderated by proficiency and language distance (Perkins & Zhang, 2024; Karim & Nassaji, 2013). Quantitative modeling shows L1 transfer is most salient at lower proficiency, with convergence toward L2 norms at higher levels—supporting tailored supports by linguistic cohort (Shi, 2022).

Self-Perceived Agreement versus Measured Competence

Alignment and gaps. Studies among Filipino university students reveal systematic discrepancies between self-assessed and demonstrated competence (e.g., vocabulary/grammar), with tendencies toward overestimation; this justifies triangulating Likert self-ratings with short objective tasks per macro-skill (Manalastas & Batang, 2024). In broader higher-education samples, self-efficacy predicts strategy use and performance, but its effects are partly mediated by motivation and proficiency, suggesting only moderate correlations between perceived agreement and observed competence (Lee et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2023).

Workplace Readiness

Validated competency frameworks. Employer-validated frameworks consistently cite communication, teamwork, critical thinking/problem-solving, professionalism/work ethic, and adaptability as core readiness competencies for graduates (U.S. Department of Labor/ODEP, n.d.; National Network of Business and Industry Associations, n.d.). The NACE Career Readiness project consolidates and validates similar constructs (communication, critical thinking, teamwork, professionalism, equity & inclusion, leadership, technology), offering behaviorally anchored definitions and evidence for instrument design and factor structure (NACE, 2022). University centers operationalize these for student assessment, providing practical descriptors and inventories (Rice University CCD, n.d.).

Cross-cultural competence and adaptability. In higher education internationalization, Deardorff's (2006) Process Model conceptualizes intercultural competence as an iterative process from attitudes to knowledge/skills to internal (adaptability, empathy) and external outcomes (effective, appropriate behavior). Empirical studies link cross-cultural competence with adaptability and workplace functioning, supporting the inclusion of cross-cultural performance indicators in readiness scales (Chen, 2022). ELT-specific frameworks also argue for integrating teamwork, communication, critical thinking, and decision-making into language instruction—directly aligning employability and English development (Cambridge, 2017).

Challenges Affecting English Competence and Workplace Readiness

Philippine and regional evidence highlights resource constraints, large classes, limited authentic practice, and uneven teacher development as barriers to English proficiency gains; affective factors (anxiety, low self-belief) and cognitive load also depress performance—findings that support confidence-building and practice-rich interventions (Kilag et al., 2025; Manalastas & Batang, 2024). Case studies recommend structured programs and activities to strengthen English skills and specialized language familiarity, consistent with CTU's tailored program objective (Pingcas & Ibojo, 2023).

Insights from online international instruction with Filipino ESL teachers further emphasize linguistic/cultural hurdles and the need for culturally responsive strategies (visuals, scaffolding) and professional development—reinforcing the value of an intercultural strand in the tailored program (Mula & Suaybaguio, 2025).

Synthesis and Implications for the Present Study

The literature supports using CEFR-aligned self-report items and performance tasks per macro-skill; profiling background variables (including length of stay and L1); and measuring workplace readiness with employer-validated competencies and intercultural indicators. Prior studies suggest a positive but imperfect relationship between self-agreement and observed competence, with interaction intensity and proficiency as key contributors. Therefore, the tailored CTU program should combine skill-banded instruction, pragmatic and intercultural training (per Deardorff), and workplace projects mapped to NACE/DoL competencies, with additional L1-sensitive supports.

METHODOLOGY

Design

This study used the quantitative approach to provide a comprehensive assessment of the linguistic competencies, workplace readiness and the challenges met by international students at Cebu Technological University. A descriptive-correlational design was used to determine the levels of agreement of their English language competencies and level of competence to English language including workplace readiness, as well

as examining the relationship between the two variables. Standardized survey questionnaires were adapted from international English language proficiency and employability frameworks (CEFR, NACE competencies).

A quantitative-descriptive correlational research design was used to determine the relationships between variables. The descriptive component identified and describe the levels of English competence and workplace readiness, while the correlational approach measures the strength and direction of their relationship (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Environment

The study was conducted at Cebu Technological University (CTU), a state university with multiple campuses across Cebu province. Its Main Campus is located in M.J. Cuenco Avenue, Cebu City with other satellite campuses distributed from North to South of Cebu under the Province of Cebu in the Philippines. CTU hosts a growing number of international students through its exchange and internationalization programs. The choice of CTU as the research site is strategic, as it embodies the university's mission to produce globally competitive and career-ready graduates through inclusive education and global engagement initiatives (CTU Internationalization Office, 2024). CTU is recognized as one of the country's top performing schools in Engineering, Agriculture and Education courses. It has ten satellite campuses and five extension campuses. It currently offers a wide range of program including Fisheries, Agriculture, Forestry, Engineering, Education, Hospitality and Tourism and others.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study include all international students currently enrolled in CTU during the Academic Year 2025–2026 across undergraduate and graduate programs. Using purposive sampling, only students who have completed at least one semester of study be included to ensure sufficient exposure to CTU's academic and cultural environment (Etikan & Bala, 2017). If the international student population exceeds 100, a sample size will be determined using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error to ensure representativeness.

Instruments

Data was gathered through a structured questionnaire adapted from (Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) (Byram, 1997) and Global Competence Indicators (Strong et al., 2020) divided into three main parts: respondent profile, level of agreement and actual level of English language competence and workplace readiness assessment.

A Descriptive statistic (mean, SD) was used to determine levels of competencies and Pearson r to test the relationship between variables. The validated instrument was distributed electronically (via Google Forms) or physically, depending on the respondents' availability.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The data collected from the respondents will be tabulated, encoded, and statistically analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive and inferential statistics was employed to interpret the gathered information in accordance with the specific objectives of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Respondents' Profile

Profile Indicators	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
20-25 years old	65	65
26-30 years old	17	17
31-35 years old	9	9
36-40 years old	6	6
41-45 years old	3	3
Gender		
Male	40	40
Female	60	60
Nationality		
Filipino	95	95
Mixed nationality	5	5
Program or Course		
BS Hospitality	41	41
BS Tourism	33	33
BS Agriculture	9	9
Graduate students	7	7
Engineering students	10	10
Academic level		
Graduate students	7	7
Undergraduate students	93	93
Length of Stay in CTU		
1-5 years	87	87
6-10 years	12	12
More than 10 years	1	1
First Language		
Cebuano	66	66
Waray	5	5
English	15	15
Filipino	14	14

Age. The data show that the majority of respondents (65%) fall between 20–25 years old, aligning with typical post-K–12 college progression in the Philippines where students enter undergraduate programs at around age 18. This age group is in a key stage of developing higher-order communication skills and professional identity formation. Respondents aged 26–45 (35% collectively) may possess more life and work experience, which can positively influence workplace readiness indicators such as professionalism, teamwork, and adaptability.

Gender. The sample includes 60% female and 40% male respondents. Although gender is not a determinant of competence, certain academic programs (especially Hospitality and Tourism) tend to attract more female students, which may influence exposure to English-medium customer-service communication, team coordination tasks, and intercultural engagement.

Nationality. With 95% Filipino and 5% mixed-nationality participants, the cohort is predominantly local, though multilingual backgrounds remain present. The mixed-nationality respondents contribute to linguistic diversity and may influence interaction dynamics in group-based tasks involving cultural sensitivity and intercultural communication.

Program or Course. Programs such as Hospitality (41%) and Tourism (33%) require strong English proficiency, especially in speaking, listening, and service-oriented communication. These fields also demand workplace readiness in teamwork, problem-solving, and customer-handling. Engineering (10%) and Agriculture (9%) students, meanwhile, require more technical English for reading, writing, and documentation.

Academic Level. The majority (93%) are undergraduates, with 7% being graduate students. Undergraduates typically exhibit developing English competencies, while graduate students generally display greater mastery of academic writing, research communication, and workplace professionalism.

Length of Stay in CTU. Most respondents (87%) reported staying 1–5 years in CTU. This duration reflects substantial exposure to CTU’s English-medium instruction and campus activities. Students with longer stays (6–10 years or more) may have deeper institutional immersion and mentorship experiences, positively affecting readiness for communication-intensive workplaces.

First Language (L1). Cebuano is the most common L1 (66%), followed by English (15%), Filipino (14%), and Waray (5%). First language influences pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, and confidence in English communication. Cebuano-L1 speakers, for instance, may exhibit transfer effects in grammar and intonation patterns. English-L1 respondents may self-rate higher, though research shows that self-assessment does not always match actual performance.

Overall Interpretation

The respondents’ profile suggests a youthful, multilingual, and program-diverse group whose English competence and workplace readiness are shaped by their academic exposure, linguistic

backgrounds, and field-specific communication demands. Programs like Hospitality and Tourism may naturally enhance oral communication and cross-cultural fluency, while Engineering and Agriculture strengthen analytical communication and technical writing.

Table 2. Level of Agreement with English Language Competence of International Students

Listening competence	Mean (M)	SD	Description
I can understand spoken English when it is clear and at a normal speed.	3.89	0.76	<i>High competence</i>
I can follow classroom discussions, lectures, or presentations in English.	3.84	0.71	<i>High competence</i>
I can identify the main ideas in conversations, videos, or announcements.	4.03	0.85	<i>High competence</i>
I can understand instructions and directions given orally in English.	3.99	0.73	<i>High competence</i>
I can understand most English conversations even when the speaker has a different accent.	3.79	0.84	<i>High competence</i>
Reading competence			
I can easily understand written texts such as emails, messages, or notices.	3.60	0.79	<i>High competence</i>
I can read and understand academic texts written in English.	3.68	0.85	<i>High competence</i>
I can identify important details and ideas in English reading materials.	4.00	0.71	<i>High competence</i>
I can understand English articles or reports on familiar topics.	4.09	0.70	<i>High competence</i>
I can read longer and more complex texts without difficulty.	4.11	0.76	<i>High competence</i>
Writing competence			
I can write short texts clearly in English (e.g., emails, messages, notes).	3.93	0.79	<i>High competence</i>
I can write organized paragraphs using correct grammar and vocabulary.	3.80	0.83	<i>High competence</i>
I can express my ideas clearly in written English for academic tasks.	3.70	0.77	<i>High competence</i>
I can summarize or explain information in writing.	3.79	0.83	<i>High competence</i>
I can write longer compositions or reports in English with confidence.	3.74	0.82	<i>High competence</i>

Listening competence	Mean (M)	SD	Description
Speaking competence			
I can speak English clearly so others can understand me.	3.55	0.90	<i>High competence</i>
I can participate in conversations on familiar topics.	3.78	0.79	<i>High competence</i>
I can express my ideas fluently during discussions.	3.53	0.89	<i>High competence</i>
I can describe experiences, events, or opinions in English.	3.57	0.78	<i>High competence</i>
I can communicate comfortably with native and non-native English speakers.	3.50	0.78	<i>High competence</i>
<i>Legend: 1.00-1.79 very low competence 1.80-2.59 low competence 2.60-3.39 moderate competence 3.40-4.19- high competence 4.20-5.00 very high competence</i>			

Table 2 summarizes the level of agreement of international students in English language competence which indicates the overall pattern of responses. It shows that the respondents perceive themselves to have a High level of English language competence across the four macro-skills. The grand mean across the twenty indicators is $M=3.80$, falling squarely within the ‘High competence’ band, with subscale means showing a narrow range: Listening ($M=3.91$), Reading ($M=3.90$), Writing ($M=3.79$), and Speaking ($M=3.59$). These results depict a cohort that is generally confident in managing academic and everyday communicative tasks in English that could further enhance performance.

Listening competence is rated High overall. Students report strong ability to process speech at normal rate, to follow lectures and classroom discussions, to extract main ideas from audiovisual inputs, and to comprehend oral instructions. Notably, the ability to understand English from speakers with diverse accents records a comparatively lower (though still High) mean, suggesting that accent variation remains a perceptual challenge. This profile is consistent with second-language acquisition research showing that input that is familiar in accent, rate, and discourse structure is more efficiently processed, whereas accent variability increases cognitive load and reduces intelligibility, particularly outside learners’ exposure history (Derwing & Munro, 2005).

Reading competence yields some of the highest item means in the table, including ‘reading longer and more complex texts without difficulty’ and ‘understanding articles or reports on familiar topics’. These ratings suggest well-developed receptive skills and strategic reading behaviors typical of learners with extensive exposure to academic texts (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). The results align with the general pattern that receptive abilities (reading and listening) often outpace productive abilities among multilingual students educated in EFL contexts, where curricula emphasize grammar-translation and text-based learning (Andrade, 2006).

Writing competence is also rated High, with students indicating confidence in composing clear short texts and organized paragraphs, though ratings decline slightly for longer compositions and for expressing complex ideas in academic tasks. This pattern is typical of students transitioning from BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills) toward the more cognitively demanding CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency), where control over academic genres, cohesion, and stance-taking requires explicit instruction and feedback (Hyland, 2004). Evidence-based supports include genre-based

pedagogy, writing-across-the-curriculum initiatives, and process-oriented feedback that targets organization, lexical sophistication, and grammatical accuracy (Ferris, 2009).

Speaking competence receives the lowest mean among the four skills (still within High), with the weakest indicators being ‘expressing ideas fluently during discussions’ and ‘communicating comfortably with native and non-native speakers. This is a well-documented profile among international students, who often possess sizeable receptive vocabularies but experience constraints in real-time production, face-threatening interactions, and pragmatic appropriateness, especially in unfamiliar intercultural settings (Taguchi, 2011). Interventions that increase meaningful output and interaction, such as task-based language teaching, structured academic discussions, and presentation-with-feedback cycles, can accelerate fluency development and interactional competence (Long, 2015). These findings carry several implications for curriculum and student support. First, programs may preserve students’ advantage in reading through sustained engagement with discipline-specific genres and critical reading tasks that feed forward into writing. Second, to address comparatively weaker speaking outcomes, curricula can allocate protected time for oral academic communication (seminars, debates, poster talks) with explicit instruction in pronunciation, discourse markers, turn-taking, and intercultural pragmatics. Third, learning support units (e.g., writing and speaking centers) can offer individualized feedback and workshops aligned to program milestones (e.g., lab reports, literature reviews, capstone presentations). Fourth, exposure to diverse English should be normalized through curated audio/video materials and interaction with international faculty/peers. Finally, monitoring via CEFR-aligned performance assessments can ensure that targeted interventions produce movement from High toward Very High competence over time (Council of Europe, 2020).

Table 3. Actual Level of English Language Competence of International Students
N=100

Listening competence	Mean (M)	SD	Description
I can understand most spoken English even without repetition.	3.56	0.82	<i>Very good</i>
I can follow extended speech or conversations on familiar topics.	3.71	0.78	<i>Very good</i>
I can distinguish important information from spoken English texts.	3.70	0.81	<i>Very good</i>
I can understand English audio materials such as interviews or news.	3.74	0.79	<i>Very good</i>
Reading competence			
I can read and understand a wide range of English texts independently.	3.40	0.78	<i>Very good</i>
I can understand academic readings required in my coursework.	3.60	0.84	<i>Very good</i>

Listening competence	Mean (M)	SD	Description
I can interpret information from graphs, charts, or technical texts.	3.74	0.76	<i>Very good</i>
I can evaluate and infer meaning from complex written materials.	3.60	0.75	<i>Very good</i>
Writing competence			
I can write grammatically correct and cohesive sentences.	3.46	0.85	<i>Very good</i>
I can produce well-structured academic essays or reports.	3.41	0.91	<i>Very good</i>
I can use appropriate vocabulary for different writing contexts.	3.08	0.75	Moderate
I can revise and edit my work to improve clarity and accuracy.	3.34	0.84	<i>Very good</i>
Speaking competence			
I can express ideas fluently without frequent hesitation.	3.20	0.95	Moderate
I can communicate effectively in academic or professional settings.	3.42	0.90	<i>Very good</i>
I can sustain conversations and respond appropriately.	3.52	0.92	<i>Very good</i>
I can deliver short presentations or explanations in English.	3.54	0.83	<i>Very good</i>

Legend: 1.00-1.79 very low competence 1.80-2.59 low competence 2.60-3.39 moderate 3.40-4.19- very good 4.20-5.00 excellent

The overall analysis of the respondents' English language actual competence is presented in Table 3. It further shows that the respondents demonstrate a Very Good level of proficiency based on the established rating scale. Listening, reading, and speaking skills fall within the Very Good range, while writing registers a Moderate level due primarily to limitations in vocabulary use across academic contexts.

Listening skills recorded mean scores between 3.56 and 3.74, indicating strong receptive competence. Students consistently reported the ability to understand spoken English even without repetition, follow extended discourse, and extract key information from spoken texts. These competencies align with CEFR descriptors for effective reception of spoken language in academic and authentic communication settings. The results suggest that learners possess sufficient auditory comprehension to engage meaningfully in lectures, discussions, and media-based input.

Reading competence also falls under the Very Good category, with means ranging from 3.40 to 3.74. Students indicated being able to independently understand a wide range of English texts, interpret graphical or technical information, and infer meaning from complex written materials. This pattern reflects findings in international literature showing that receptive skills often develop faster than productive skills

among multilingual learners, especially in academic environments where reading inputs are constant and varied.

Writing competence reveals a contrasting picture. Although some indicators such as producing grammatical sentences or revising one’s own work show Very Good performance, the item on using appropriate vocabulary across writing contexts scored only 3.08, lowering the domain average to the Moderate level. This reflects common challenges documented in second language writing studies, particularly the demands of academic vocabulary, genre awareness, and lexical precision needed for higher-level written communication. The findings highlight the need for strengthened writing interventions centered on vocabulary development, genre-based instruction, and explicit teaching of academic discourse structures.

Speaking competence borders the Very Good level, with an overall pattern showing stronger performance in structured or prepared speaking tasks (e.g., delivering short presentations) than in spontaneous fluency. The lowest-rated speaking indicator was the ability to express ideas without hesitation (M=3.20), suggesting gaps in automaticity and real-time processing. This observation aligns with fluency research noting that automatization of speech production requires extensive practice, lexical accessibility, and meaningful communicative interaction, all of which develop more slowly than receptive abilities.

In conclusion, the students demonstrate overall Very Good English language competence, with receptive skills as clear strengths, productive oral skills developing well, and academic writing, specifically vocabulary use, emerging as the principal area needing targeted instructional support.

Table 4. Level of Workplace Readiness of International Students
N=100

A. Communication & Collaboration	Mean (M)	SD	Description
I can communicate effectively with teammates in group projects.	3.78	0.77	High
I can present ideas clearly to an audience.	3.52	0.77	High
I can write professional emails and memos in English.	3.50	0.86	High
B. Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving			
I can analyze problems and propose practical solutions.	3.43	0.93	High
I can interpret technical or domain-specific information and explain it to non-experts.	3.68	0.82	High
I can integrate feedback to improve my work.	3.62	0.87	High
I can evaluate and infer meaning from complex written materials.	3.42	0.81	High

A. Communication & Collaboration	Mean (M)	SD	Description
C. Adaptability & Professionalism			
I adapt quickly to new work practices, schedules, or tools.	3.71	0.81	High
I behave professionally (punctuality, dress, ethics) in academic/work placements.	3.60	0.78	High
I can work effectively in multicultural teams.	3.90	0.87	High
D. Career Confidence & Employability Skills			
I feel confident applying for internships or jobs in English-speaking workplaces.	3.42	0.78	High
I know how to prepare for job interviews held in English.	3.22	0.77	Moderate
I have the career management skills (resume/CV writing, networking) needed for employment.	3.48	0.87	High
I can identify and communicate my strengths to potential employers.	3.59	0.88	High

Legend: 1.00-1.79 very low 1.80-2.59 low 2.60-3.39 moderate 3.40-4.19- high 4.20-5.00 very high

The analysis of the international students' workplace readiness is presented in Table 4, shows that overall, students fall within the High level across most competencies. This suggests that international students possess strong foundational workplace skills, although some areas still indicate a need for improvement. In the area of *Communication and Collaboration*, all indicators fall within the High range, with means from 3.50 to 3.78. Students report being able to communicate effectively with teammates, present ideas clearly, and compose professional emails. This reflects their readiness to function well in group environments and academic, professional exchanges. Their strong performance in this domain supports the idea that communicative competence is a crucial component of workplace readiness and is often strengthened through academic group activities and multicultural interactions.

For *Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving* scores similarly fall under the High category (M = 3.42–3.68). Students demonstrate the ability to analyze problems, interpret technical information, integrate feedback, and evaluate complex materials. These skills are essential in higher education and professional contexts, indicating that students are capable of engaging in analytical and reflective tasks required in academic and workplace environments. The consistent trend within this domain suggests well-developed cognitive and analytical abilities among respondents.

The domain of *Adaptability and Professionalism* also shows high performance, with mean scores between 3.60 and 3.90. Students indicate strong adaptability to new work practices and professional behaviors such as punctuality and ethics. The highest mean rating in this domain, "I can work effectively

in multicultural teams” (M = 3.90), highlights the students’ intercultural awareness and flexibility, which are critical in diverse educational and workplace settings.

In the Career Confidence and Employability Skills domain, most indicators are rated High, except for “*I know how to prepare for job interviews held in English,*” which falls under Moderate (M = 3.22). This suggests that although students feel confident applying for jobs and communicating strengths to employers, they may still lack familiarity with job interview processes in English-speaking contexts. This discrepancy implies the need for targeted career-readiness training, such as mock interviews and English-medium career workshops.

Table 5. Relationship Between Level of agreement and level of actual competence in English among International Students (N = 100)

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD
Level of Agreement in English competence	3.96	0.701
Actual Competence in English (Overall)	3.733	0.876

Overall Association

n	Spearman rho	Spearman p-value	Pearson r	Pearson p-value
100	0.89	0.0	0.915	0.0

Domain-wise Associations

Domains	n	Spearman_rho	Spearman_p	Pearson_r	Pearson_p
Listening	100	0.796	0.0	0.865	0.0
Speaking	100	0.776	0.0	0.827	0.0
Reading	100	0.881	0.0	0.925	0.0
Writing	100	0.778	0.0	0.856	0.0

Table 5 presents the interpretation of findings on the relationship between the level of agreement and the level of actual English competence among the international students at Cebu Technological University. Results reveal a very strong and statistically significant overall correlation (Spearman $\rho = 0.89$, $p < .001$; Pearson $r = 0.915$, $p < .001$) between perceived competence and actual measured competence, indicating high alignment between students’ self-assessment and their performance. The descriptive data show that students generally rated themselves positively (M = 3.96, SD = 0.701), which closely mirrors their actual competence scores (M = 3.733, SD = 0.876).

Across domains, Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing all demonstrated strong and significant correlations. Listening exhibited a strong relationship ($\rho = 0.796$), showing that students accurately appraise their ability to understand spoken English, likely influenced by their exposure to English-mediated instruction. Speaking also showed a strong correlation ($\rho = 0.776$), suggesting that students can reliably judge their oral communication abilities, though this domain requires confidence and fluency which may slightly affect their self-perception. Reading presented the strongest domain-specific alignment ($\rho = 0.881$), indicating that students' self-assessments closely match their actual reading comprehension performance.

This is expected as reading tasks in academics provide clear indicators of proficiency. Writing also showed a strong correlation ($\rho = 0.778$), which reflects students' awareness of their writing strengths and weaknesses despite writing being one of the more complex productive skills.

Overall, these findings imply that CTU international students possess a well-calibrated perception of their English proficiency across all domains. Their strong self-awareness suggests effective feedback mechanisms within the instructional environment and highlights the positive impact of an English-rich academic setting. For educators, these results emphasize the value of maintaining reflective learning practices, providing consistent feedback, and strengthening domain-specific instructional support. The high correlation between perceived and actual competence can guide the development of targeted interventions in reading comprehension, writing enhancement programs, speaking fluency workshops, and listening comprehension activities. Such data-informed strategies can further support the academic and linguistic success of international students in CTU.

Table 6. Challenges Encountered by International Students
N=100

Linguistic / Communication Challenge	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Rank
Difficulty understanding lectures in English	40	40%	2
Limited academic vocabulary	45	45%	1
Difficulty expressing ideas clearly in writing	35	35%	3
Difficulty participating in class discussions	30	30%	4
Misunderstanding instructions or tasks	25	25%	6
Limited confidence in public speaking	20	20%	7
Difficulty understanding workplace-related communication	28	28%	5

Table 6 presents the identified challenges that international students encounter. The most frequent challenge reported is *limited academic vocabulary* (45%), followed by *difficulty understanding lectures* (40%) and *difficulty expressing ideas clearly in writing* (35%). These concerns align with the areas where readiness was relatively lower, particularly in interview preparation and written communication. The

presence of linguistic challenges indicates that while students demonstrate strong workplace skills, language-related barriers still hinder full proficiency and confidence.

Other challenges, such as difficulty participating in discussions (30%), misunderstanding instructions (25%), and limited confidence in public speaking (20%), emphasize the need for continued language support and increased opportunities for experiential learning. These challenges reinforce the importance of integrating language development into academic and workplace readiness programs.

Overall, the findings illustrate that international students show strong workplace readiness across communication, problem-solving, adaptability, and professionalism. However, targeted interventions in academic vocabulary development, interview preparation, and oral communication skills would further strengthen their readiness for professional environments.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that CTU international students exhibit generally high English language competence and workplace readiness with receptive skills well developed and productive skills requiring enhancement. Their workplace readiness aligns with global employability standards, yet linguistic challenges persist, especially in academic vocabulary, spontaneous speaking, and comprehension of complex lectures. The statistically significant correlation between English competence and workplace readiness affirms that strengthening linguistic and intercultural communication skills directly contributes to improved career preparedness. These findings justify the need for a structured, evidence-based language program tailored to the unique needs of international students at CTU.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed: CTU should implement a tailored English language program focusing on academic vocabulary, genre-based writing, oral fluency, and intercultural communication. The program should integrate workplace-oriented communication tasks such as mock interviews, professional email writing, teamwork simulations, and presentation workshops. Faculty should adopt instructional strategies that provide sustained opportunities for authentic language use, while support units such as writing and speaking centers should offer individualized coaching. CTU should also strengthen its internationalization mechanisms by embedding language readiness benchmarks into student onboarding, monitoring progress through Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) aligned assessments, and establishing partnerships for real-world exposure. Further research may explore longitudinal improvements and compare outcomes across nationalities and academic programs.

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