



## Odeeokaa Journal of English and Literary Studies

# Knowledge of the Four Language Skills: A Concomitant to English Proficiency

Benjamin F.C. Nwokedi, Ph.D

### Abstract

This journal explores the crucial role of integrating the four fundamental language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—in achieving English proficiency, interdependence of these skills and their collective impact on language acquisition. Active listening is highlighted as the foundation, significantly influencing the development of speaking abilities, while reading is positioned as a gateway to enriching vocabulary and understanding complex grammatical structures. The importance of writing skills is emphasized for academic success and effective communication. It further examines the impact of reading on vocabulary expansion and grammatical understanding, as well as the importance of writing for academic success and effective communication. The journal concludes with recommendations for educators to adopt a holistic approach to language teaching, leveraging technology to enhance learning outcomes. This comprehensive analysis aims to contribute to the field of language education by providing insights into effective strategies for developing English proficiency through an integrated skills approach.

**Keywords:** Knowledge, Four Language Skills, Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Concomitant, English Proficiency

*Odeeokaa Journal of English  
and Literary Studies, Vol.1 No.  
2 June 2025*

### Introduction

Understanding the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—is crucial for achieving English proficiency. These skills are divided into productive (active) skills, such as speaking and writing, and receptive (passive) skills, like listening and reading. Each skill plays a unique role in language learning and communication. Listening, the first skill we typically develop, is foundational for understanding spoken

language and plays a significant role in everyday communication. It's also vital for vocabulary building and improving pronunciation and comprehension. Speaking, on the other hand, involves producing language and requires recalling words and phrases from memory. It's crucial for interactive communication, allowing for immediate feedback and adjustment (Sharma & Puri, 2021). Reading, a receptive skill, enhances language acquisition by expanding vocabulary and improving understanding of

grammar and sentence structure. It also supports the other language skills by providing a rich source of linguistic input. Writing, while perhaps the most complex skill, involves organizing thoughts coherently and is essential for academic and professional success. Together, these skills are not isolated but interconnected, supporting and enhancing each other to facilitate full linguistic proficiency. Mastery of these four skills enables effective communication, fostering connections, and understanding across cultures. The integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in language learning ensures a holistic approach to acquiring proficiency in English, highlighting the importance of comprehensive language education(English club, 2024).

### **Language Proficiency and Competence**

Language proficiency encompasses the ability to perform in a language across different competencies and skills, including grammar, vocabulary, and both sociopragmatic and strategic aspects. This multifaceted view is encapsulated in models like the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which delineates language proficiency across six levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2). These levels describe ascending stages of language

mastery, from basic to advanced proficiency, highlighting the progression in learning a language(Slavit & Egbert, 2023). Language proficiency is not a static or uniform attribute; rather, it spans a continuum from initial acquisition stages to native-like fluency. The path to proficiency includes predictable stages, where learners gradually move from simple expressions and comprehension to complex communication and deeper understanding of linguistic nuances. As educators, understanding these stages helps in tailoring instruction to match students' proficiency levels, thereby facilitating effective language learning. For instance, the TESOL PreK-12 English Language Proficiency Standards outline specific competencies across different academic domains (e.g., social studies, science, mathematics, and language arts), emphasizing communicative purposes within educational settings. Language proficiency standards, such as those developed by TESOL and adopted by various states, provide a framework for educators to support ELLs in becoming proficient in English while achieving academic success in content areas like language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. These standards outline specific goals for ELLs at different proficiency levels, emphasizing the need for

instruction that is tailored to each learner's stage of language development (Harsch, 2017). Competence in a language, often discussed in terms of communicative competence, includes not just grammatical correctness but also the ability to use language appropriately in different contexts. This broader view of competence acknowledges the importance of sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of language use, such as understanding cultural nuances, idioms, and figurative language, which are vital for true proficiency. In essence, achieving English proficiency through the mastery of the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—is a complex process that involves more than just the mechanical use of language. It requires a deep understanding of the language's structural, functional, and cultural dimensions, as highlighted by the theoretical frameworks and proficiency standards discussed in the literature (Slavit & Egbert, 2023). The progression through these proficiency levels involves acquiring specific linguistic features at different stages. Early stages of learning might involve mastering simple grammatical structures or vocabulary, while advanced stages encompass understanding and using complex linguistic forms and functions. The variability in

learning rates among students is influenced by numerous factors including their first language, age, previous educational experiences, and personal motivations.

### **Listening: The Foundation of Language Learning**

Listening is foundational to language learning, impacting all aspects of language acquisition including phonology, morphology, and pragmatics. It is an active process where the learner engages with the language, promoting understanding and facilitating the development of speaking skills. Listening strategies should be emphasized over testing, encouraging more practical engagement with the language. The integration of listening and speaking skills is crucial for speech production and overall language development, offering a more holistic approach to learning English (Ambubuyog et al., 2023).

Listening is foundational to language learning, influencing various aspects of the acquisition process, from phonology to pragmatics. It is not just a passive activity but involves active engagement with the language. Research highlights the profound impact of active listening on language learning, emphasizing its role in promoting understanding and facilitating the development of speaking skills. A study by

Tasng (2019) demonstrated that listening to audios spoken by native speakers as homework significantly improved the English pronunciation of Cantonese L2 learners compared to those who did not engage in such activities. This suggests that listening activities can enhance pronunciation skills, a crucial component of language proficiency (Almalki & Algethami, 2022).

Furthermore, the role of listening instruction, self-efficacy, and strategy use in language learning is significant. Listening instruction can take various forms, such as process-based, comprehension-based, self-regulation-based, and strategy-based instruction. Self-efficacy, or the belief in one's ability to succeed, plays a mediating role between the type of instruction and the use of strategies for listening. This implies that effective listening instruction can enhance students' confidence in their listening abilities, which in turn influences their strategy use. Listening strategies, which may include both bottom-up and top-down approaches, are essential for successful comprehension and distinguish skilled listeners from less skilled ones (Xu et al, 2021).

### **Speaking: The Articulation of Thought**

Speaking skills are increasingly recognized in English language learning, with research showing a growing interest in this area. From 2010 to 2021, publications on English-speaking (ES) education have increased significantly, reflecting the importance of speaking skills in language proficiency and global communication, especially during times requiring global cooperation like the COVID-19 pandemic. The research spans across 40 countries, highlighting the global demand for effective speaking skills. Studies often focus on assessing speaking proficiency, teaching methods, and the use of technology and social networks to enhance speaking abilities (Rohaya et al., 2022).

Research indicates that students often face difficulties in speaking on specific topics, which can be attributed to a lack of understanding or too fast instruction from teachers. This can lead to a decrease in speaking competency and affect students' behavior, such as losing interest in public speaking. Educational games in the classroom have been identified as a strategy that fits the character of learners, enhancing their engagement and encouraging them to speak. This approach provides a fun and relaxed environment that can significantly impact students' confidence in speaking and their ability to communicate fluently and

appropriately (Kaur & Aziz, 2020). Furthermore, active listening is closely linked to the development of speaking skills. It is suggested that active listening before language learning helps form an idea of what the language may sound like. As a receptive skill that first develops in human beings, listening initiates language awareness. The sound, rhythm, intonation, and stress of the language can only be perfectly adapted through listening. Active listening has both positive and negative impacts on language learning and understanding. It encourages participation in classroom discussions and activities, motivating students to engage more actively in their lessons (Ambubuyog et al., 2023). Incorporating listening and speaking into the curriculum is not just about mastering tenses, reading, and writing; it's also about practicing these skills regularly. Techniques like frequently listening to English songs or watching English films with subtitles can make it easier for learners to get accustomed to the speech patterns in English. Such practices can be an easy method to improve listening and speaking skills, emphasizing the motto "practice makes perfect" (Prima & Tampubolon, 2021). The inclusion of language games and gamified learning approaches in the classroom can significantly enhance students'

motivation and achievement in learning English as a foreign language. Gamification integrates elements from games into non-game environments, aiming to shape behavior, enhance motivation, and foster increased engagement. This strategy has shown positive effects on students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in higher education settings, contributing to the overall success in English language learning. Speaking is a vital language skill that requires continuous practice and improvement. Integrating listening activities, gamification, and interactive methods into language learning can provide a supportive and engaging environment for students to enhance their speaking skills and overall language proficiency (Kaur & Aziz, 2020).

### **Reading: Gateway to Knowledge and Comprehension**

Reading is pivotal for academic success and plays a crucial role in preventing learning disabilities. Phonological awareness, an essential pre-academic skill, is highlighted by educators as critical for learning to read and write. It's considered a key factor for academic success and personal happiness. Pre-school and primary teachers attach significant importance to phonological awareness, as it directly influences students' reading abilities. Teachers' strategies to

promote phonological awareness range from story reading to exploring environmental sounds, emphasizing a gradual approach from larger to smaller phonological units (Lurdes et al., 2021). Reading comprehension and academic motivation are significantly influenced by performance-based assessment (PBA) in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. This assessment method, rooted in social-constructivist theory, emphasizes the integration of assessment with teaching/learning processes and is designed around authentic tasks requiring active student participation. By engaging learners in tasks that necessitate the application of knowledge and skills from various domains, PBA aims to enhance higher-order thinking skills such as analysis and synthesis, thereby promoting a deeper understanding of the material and improving academic outcomes (Heydarnejad et al., 2022).

Research highlights the critical role of exposure to the target language in language acquisition, emphasizing the positive correlation between language exposure and reading comprehension. Further, the learning environment, including classroom interaction and the presence of motivational and psychological factors such as self-efficacy, significantly influences language learning

outcomes. These insights suggest that effective language learning involves not only formal instruction but also immersive experiences and psychological readiness (Samer, 2018).

### **Writing: Expression and Communication**

Vocabulary is a critical foundation in language learning, essential for effectively communicating ideas and understanding texts. It encompasses the broad collection of words an individual knows or is likely to use in creating new sentences. A rich vocabulary aids in developing reading, writing, and comprehension skills, underscoring its importance both inside and outside the classroom. Effective vocabulary teaching strategies include engaging with diverse and contextually rich materials like songs and poetry, which contain a variety of uncommon vocabulary (Alqahtani, 2015).

Writing, especially in an academic context, requires students to transcend the limitations of oral communication by employing various techniques to convey their message clearly and effectively without the aid of non-verbal cues. This development of writing skills is crucial for students, as it aids in academic success through the clear expression of ideas, argumentation, analysis, and critical thinking. Moreover, academic writing mastery helps students to demonstrate their

understanding of topics, argue their points with reason and logic, and improve other relevant skills like reading and note-taking. Writing is essentially a conversation between scholars, demanding a deep understanding of the topic, audience awareness, and the ability to structure arguments and ideas coherently (Hanifi, 2020). Academic writing is crucial for conveying ideas effectively in written form, as it lacks the non-verbal cues present in oral communication. Developing strong writing skills is essential for university success, allowing students to demonstrate understanding, argue logically, and analyze critically. Furthermore, academic writing fosters the development of related skills such as critical thinking, reading, and effective communication with readers.

In the realm of language learning, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, the development of writing skills is of paramount importance. Academic writing, distinct from oral communication, requires learners to employ various techniques to convey their messages clearly in the absence of non-verbal cues. This development not only aids in achieving university success but also in preparing students for future research careers. Effective academic writing allows students to demonstrate their understanding of topics,

their analytical abilities, and their capacity to engage in reasoned argumentation. It's emphasized that academic writing should draw upon authentic texts from a diverse range of disciplines to provide a rich source of examples and models for learners (Hanifi, 2020).

### **Integrating the Four Skills for Holistic Language Learning**

Integrating the four language skills for holistic language learning emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive approach in educational settings, particularly in the context of achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within higher education. This holistic approach is vital for sustainable development, including in the domain of language education, where fostering inclusive and quality education is crucial. The University of the Basque Country's case study illustrates the practical application of integrating and evaluating SDGs within an institutional setting, showcasing the importance of a global and holistic transformation towards sustainability in education (Cámara et al., 2021). Integrating the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—into a holistic approach to language learning emphasizes the importance of developing these skills in harmony. Active listening, for

instance, is foundational to language learning and understanding, as it forms the initial idea of what the language sounds like, thereby facilitating the improvement of one's language ability. Effective listening strategies are significant in second language learning, as they aid in overcoming challenges related to accent, pronunciation, and vocabulary insufficiencies, which are common listening problems identified in language learners. Moreover, active listening before language learning initiates language awareness and is positively linked to students' enthusiasm and interest in their lessons, motivating them to participate actively in classroom discussions and activities (Ambubuyog et al., 2023).

## **DISCUSSION**

The integration of the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—into English language learning and teaching has been recognized as a pivotal approach to achieving language proficiency. This holistic perspective underscores the interrelatedness of these skills in enhancing learners' language competence and fluency. Active listening is foundational to language learning, setting the stage for language acquisition by helping learners understand the sound, rhythm, intonation, and stress of the language. Effective listening strategies facilitate the

improvement of speaking skills, as they enable learners to adapt what they hear into their speech, thereby improving pronunciation, vocabulary, and syntax. Research indicates that active listening significantly impacts language learning and understanding, suggesting its importance in the early stages of language education. The role of reading in language learning extends beyond mere comprehension of text; it fosters vocabulary acquisition, understanding of grammar, and exposure to varied linguistic structures. Reading serves as a gateway to knowledge, offering learners insights into different cultures, ideas, and perspectives, which, in turn, enriches their linguistic and cognitive skills. Academic writing, in particular, requires a nuanced understanding of the language, as it involves the ability to convey complex ideas coherently and persuasively. The development of writing skills is crucial for academic success and is closely tied to learners' ability to critically analyze texts and articulate their thoughts. Achieving proficiency in English requires a comprehensive approach that emphasizes the integrated development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. The use of technology and online platforms further supports this integrative approach, offering learners diverse and flexible means to



practice and hone their language skills. As such, a holistic approach to language learning not only prepares learners for academic success but also equips them with the necessary skills to navigate the complexities of real-world communication in English.

### **Findings**

Active listening serves as the cornerstone of language learning, enabling learners to familiarize themselves with the sounds, rhythms, and intonations of the English language, which is crucial for the subsequent development of speaking skills. It has been established that effective listening strategies significantly impact language comprehension and speaking ability, highlighting the need for their incorporation early in language education programs. The interdependence between listening and speaking skills underscores the importance of listening as a foundation for improving pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax, and overall fluency in spoken English. This relationship suggests that fostering active listening can lead to better speaking outcomes for learners. The act of reading not only builds vocabulary and grammar comprehension but also exposes learners to diverse linguistic structures and cultural contexts. This exposure is critical for developing a deeper understanding of the

language and enhancing reading comprehension skills, contributing to a well-rounded language proficiency. Academic writing, in particular, requires a nuanced command of the language, as it involves expressing complex ideas with coherence and persuasiveness. The development of writing skills is essential for academic success and is closely linked to learners' analytical abilities and their capacity to engage critically with texts. The findings from the discussion on "Knowledge of the Four Language Skills: A Concomitant to English Proficiency" emphasize the need for a holistic approach to language learning that equally prioritizes the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Incorporating technology and leveraging online platforms can further support and enrich the learning experience, paving the way for achieving comprehensive English proficiency.

### **Recommendations**

- Encourage active listening in the classroom through multimedia resources, native speaker interactions, and listening comprehension exercises.
- Incorporate speaking activities that mimic real-life scenarios, encouraging students to apply

listening insights to improve their speaking fluency.

- Utilize diverse reading materials, including literature, news articles, and academic texts, to expose students to various vocabulary and grammatical structures.
- Develop reading strategies that emphasize critical thinking and analysis to deepen comprehension and engage with texts more meaningfully.
- Implement writing exercises that cover a range of styles and purposes, from creative writing to academic essays, to build students' ability to express complex ideas clearly and effectively.
- Provide feedback on writing assignments that focuses on content, organization, grammar, and style to help students refine their writing skills.
- Design curriculum and instruction that seamlessly integrates listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities, emphasizing the interconnectedness of the four skills.
- Foster a learning environment that encourages curiosity, experimentation, and self-directed

learning to motivate students and support their journey towards English proficiency.

- Encourage educators to pursue ongoing professional development opportunities related to effective language teaching strategies, integrating technology in the classroom, and understanding the latest research in language acquisition.
- Facilitate sharing of best practices among educators through workshops, conferences, and professional learning communities.
- Employ assessment methods that evaluate students' proficiency across listening, speaking, reading, and writing, providing a comprehensive view of their language skills.
- Use assessments not only to grade but also to inform instruction, identifying areas where students need additional support or challenge.

## **Reference**

Almalki, N., & Algethami, G. (2022). An exploration of the potential benefit of extensive listening along with orthography for improving EFL learners' pronunciation. *Asian*

- Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education, 7(3).  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-022-00132-x>
- Ambubuyog, E. M. I., Laumoc, G. L. C., Mantac, F. H. A., & Pagulayan, F. M. C. (2021). Active Listening: Its Impact on Language Learning and Understanding of Education Students.  
<https://doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.04.02.33>
- Dalvinder Kaur, & Azlina Abdul Aziz. (2020). The Use of Language Game in Enhancing Students' Speaking Skills. International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 10(12).  
<https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v10-i12/8369>
- Ernst-Slavit, G., & Egbert, J. (2023). Language proficiency and communicative competence. Retrieved from  
<https://opentext.wsu.edu/planning-meaningful-instruction-for-ells/chapter/chapter-2-language-proficiency-and-communicative-competence/>
- Harsch, C. (2016). Proficiency. *ELT Journal*, ccw067.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccw067>
- Heydarnejad, T., Tagavipour, F., Patra, I., et al. (2022). The impacts of performance-based assessment on reading comprehension achievement, academic motivation, foreign language anxiety, and students' self-efficacy. *Language Testing in Asia*, 12(51).  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-022-00202-4>
- Prima, A., & Tampubolon, Y. (2021). The Importance of Listening and Speaking English to Improving English Language Skills.  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351784039\\_The\\_Importance\\_of\\_Listening\\_and\\_Speaking\\_English\\_to\\_Improving\\_English\\_Language\\_Skills](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351784039_The_Importance_of_Listening_and_Speaking_English_to_Improving_English_Language_Skills)
- Sáez de Cámara, E., Fernández, I., & Castillo-Eguskiza, N. (2021). A Holistic Approach to Integrate and Evaluate Sustainable Development in Higher Education. The Case Study of the University of the Basque Country. *Sustainability*, 13(1), 392.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/su13010392>

- Sharma, C., & Puri, S. R. (2021). The importance of four basic skills in learning English. *Teaching Guide*, 7(4), 007. DOI:10.47211/tg.2020.v07i04.007
- Veríssimo, L., Costa, M., Miranda, F., Pontes, C., & Castro, I. (2021). The Importance of Phonological Awareness in Learning Disabilities' Prevention: Perspectives of Pre-School and Primary Teachers. *Frontiers in Education*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.750328>
- Wang, J., Abdullah, R., & Leong, L.-M. (2022). Studies of Teaching and Learning English-Speaking Skills: A Review and Bibliometric Analysis. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.880990>
- Xu, J., Fan, J., & Luo, K. (2021). Exploring L2 Listening Instruction, Self-Efficacy, and Strategy Use: A Mediation Analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 758757. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.758757>
- Zoubi, S. A. (2018). The Impact of Exposure to English Language on Language Acquisition. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328492845\\_The\\_Impact\\_of\\_Exposure\\_to\\_English\\_Language\\_on\\_Language\\_Acquisition](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328492845_The_Impact_of_Exposure_to_English_Language_on_Language_Acquisition)