

DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN LEARNING QUARTER 1 GRADE 9 ENGLISH MOST ESSENTIAL LEARNING COMPETENCIES (MELCS): BASIS FOR DEVELOPING AN INTERVENTION PLAN



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Difficulties Encountered in Learning Quarter 1 Grade 9 English Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs): Basis for Developing an Intervention Plan

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Abstract

This study investigated the difficulties encountered in learning quarter 1 Grade 9 English Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) by the grade 9 students in Sibulan National High School with an end view of developing an intervention plan. The data collected through the survey questionnaires underwent frequency counting to determine their percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, and rank. In contrast, the data obtained from the group discussions went through content analyses to determine the competencies students find challenging to learn. The results revealed that among the nine competencies in English 9 quarter 1, most students have responded that expressing obligations using modals, expressing prohibition using modals, using conditionals in expressing arguments, employing appropriate communicative styles in intimate situations, employing appropriate communication styles in casual situations, and employing appropriate communicate styles in conversational situations are slightly difficult to learn. Some of the reasons for students' difficulties in English quarter 1 competencies include confusion in using modals, difficulty in comprehension, difficulty in constructing sentences using modals, fear of parents' response, trust issues, absence of physical presence, no immediate perceivable reaction, strict impression, and fear of committing grammatical mistakes or mispronouncing words. Additionally, to overcome this difficulty, the students changed their mindset, became more focused on learning, researched the internet, watched tutorial videos, and communicated with the teacher. These findings served as the foundation for the development of an intervention plan. It is recommended that the intervention plan be implemented for students and that English teachers receive more pedagogical training to improve their instruction.

Keywords: *Conditionals, Intervention Plan, Modals, Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCS), Communicative Styles*

INTRODUCTION

In any human quest, difficulties are inevitably one to look forward to. The advancing trends in technology affect all facets of life, especially education. These innovations eased one's quest for knowledge. However, at some points, such trends undeniably challenge the teachers to understand where the educational landscape is leading the learners and even the educators themselves. These developments have led some proponents of educational reform to assert that children need a wider range of 21st-century skills to succeed in a society that is technologically advanced and rapidly evolving (Jerald, 2009).

Furthermore, the effects of the pandemic amplify the increasingly diminishing quality of learning among learners. The study conducted by Hartshorn and McMurry (2020) in Utah reveals that the level of priority for teaching and learning decreased for both the practitioners and their students during the pandemic compared to before its onset. In Iran, outside the purview of the pandemic, the study of Akbari (2015) notes that despite studying English for a long time in schools (almost 7 years since the country mandated the English subject to be taught in school), students are not able to communicate in English in authentic contexts.

Consequently, authorities and scholars have considered why Iranian students are not as successful in learning English as expected despite all the money, time, and effort put into it (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015).

Grammar is among the various linguistics areas that refer to "a system of lexicogrammatical patterns that are used to make meaning in appropriate ways" (Larsen-Freeman, 2014). Djalil (2011), as cited in Nurlaila (2019), noted that students learning a foreign language usually encounter several problems, especially if the grammar of that language is complicated and confusing. One grammar construction that has a remarkable usage among speakers of the English language is modal (modal auxiliaries or modal verbs such as can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should, among others). Djalil added that these modals have distinct semantic components (meaning and function) like permission, prohibition, and obligation. Notably, these functions change depending on the context and the context of the utterance in which specific models are used.

Apart from modals, conditionals also pose equal difficulty for learners in achieving language proficiency. Norris (2003) stressed that the nature of conditionals encompasses a range of meanings, displays linguistic and cognitive intricacy, manifests in diverse

forms, and serves various functions in discourse. Consequently, the difficulty in expressing arguments using conditionals arises from the interdependency between one circumstance and the occurrence of another.

The advent of the pandemic directed schools to carry out their teaching-learning processes remotely, i.e., modular, online, and blended learning. In support of the modified remote enrollment as a preparation for the new normal in education, the DepEd adopted the Basic Education-Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP). As stipulated in the D.O. 12 S. 2020, BE-LCP includes the adoption of the Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) as one of the modifications for the upcoming school year (Bayod & Bayod, 2020). As a result, the original eight learning competencies of the English Curriculum are congested and simplified.

This study is carried out to investigate the difficulties encountered by grade 9 students in learning the first quarter of English Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) with an end view of developing an intervention plan. Specifically, this study sought to:

1. determine the level of difficulty encountered by the learners in learning the following learning competencies:
 - Expressing permission using modals; Expressing obligation using modals;
 - Expressing prohibition using modals;
 - Using conditionals in expressing arguments;
 - Employing appropriate communicative styles in intimate situations;
 - Employing appropriate communicative styles in casual situations;
 - Employing appropriate communicative styles in conversational situations;
 - Employing appropriate communicative styles in consultative situations; and
 - Employing appropriate communicative styles in frozen situations;
2. identify the reasons for these difficulties;
3. discover the strategies employed by the learners in order to overcome these difficulties; and,
4. develop an intervention plan based on the findings.

1.1. Review of Related Literature

The concept of lifelong learning is critical in students' quest for knowledge (Martinez & Lord, 2012). The conception of learning should not only regard the

current or present experience, situation, or context but include the long-term utility of what has been learned. For students to realize this fact, teachers need to be able to catch up with the trends in the teaching and learning arena. Through this way, they will be able to picture what is happening inside the classroom, identify the shortcomings that have to be dealt with and resolved, and, more significantly, develop a pedagogical approach that fits the content to be taught and the learners who are the recipient of the knowledge.

In this 21st-century education, the center of learning has shifted from teacher-centered to learner-centered. It means that the teachers are no longer the sage on the stage but the guide on the side. They facilitate learning amongst their learners and provide inputs that will direct the learners to be responsible for their learning. By initiating collaborative, cooperative, and independent learning, students work together to achieve common goals and complete group and even individual tasks — goals and tasks that they would be unable to complete by themselves (Gillies, 2016).

Martinez and Lord added that two elements crucial in defining learning competencies are (1) applying what one knows and what one is capable of in doing a particular task or problem and (2) being able to transfer this ability in different contexts. In a similar vein, Gonczi (n.d.), as cited in Martinez and Lord (2012), describes competency as 'the ability to successfully meet complex demands in a particular context, through the mobilization of knowledge, cognitive skills but also practical skills, as well as social and behavioral components such as attitudes, emotions, and values and motivations.' The foundation of competencies is domain-specific knowledge that will be used in both current and, more importantly, future practice English was used in educational systems to facilitate global economic growth, and it has also served as a language of instruction and communication. As the global lingua franca, English was once and is still regarded as a language of prestige, thus bearing strength and offering numerous opportunities to its speakers. It is frequently linked to greater employability and is viewed as more advantageous than other languages (Moyo, 2012). It has been demonstrated that teaching modal auxiliary verbs in higher education can assist students in effectively using various auxiliary verbs in their writing. English modal auxiliary verbs entail syntactical and semantic functions by indicating modality, which comes in permission, ability, and obligation. Consequently, this complex nature of modals poses difficulty among speakers and users of the language (Ngoinjuguna, 2018).

These propositions reveal that learners' difficulty in learning how to use modal auxiliary is inherent in their quest for improving their productive skills: speaking and writing skills. In order to convey a message through an appropriate modality, language learners need to comprehend the usage of the modals thoroughly. Hence, the emphasis is on learning models as part of the learning competencies.

Modality is "one of the few loose concepts used in linguistics that defies any adequate formal explanation," claims Stamatovi (2016). Many academicians relate the concept of "modality" to the speaker's or writer's point of view. It is commonly accepted that language is used to convey factual information about the veracity of a proposition in an utterance and to convey one's attitudes, opinions, thoughts, and ideologies about those events. In addition to this, according to Leech (2014), modal auxiliary verbs are frequently employed to demonstrate obligation, probability, necessity, possibility, and certainty, indicating that the writer is presenting something with greater or lesser modality. This mainly explains the uses of modals in certain writings. This idea is related to the research topic as it mainly proposes the different models that are considered, and these different models can be seen as part of the learning competencies of the students.

Umeh and Anyanwu (2020) contend that "modal auxiliary verbs provide a complex problem in linguistic description." In the same vein, Ngoirinjuguna (2018) claims that the appropriateness of modal auxiliary use is vital for communication because the use of modal auxiliaries offers inherent problems, especially for first-language English speakers. These statements pinpoint their relatedness to the research topic as they show the inherent complexity of using modals. It is complex in that many features must be considered, including the appropriate modal for a particular function.

The study of Khojasteh and Rainer (2013) on Malaysian learners' ability to use modal auxiliaries revealed that the learners were unsure of which models to use to express modality in their sentences. This was evident in the inaccuracy of modals at the syntactic and, more specifically, semantic levels. This displays a concept of relatedness to this paper. It reflects specific difficulties that students encounter when it comes to using modals. On the other hand, in Sweden, Aijmer (n.d.), as cited in Torabiardakani et al. (2015), reported that Swedish students who have a propensity to misuse modal verbs are undereducated on the register interference aspect of modal verbs and are also undereducated on modal phrases and more extended sentence patterns.

The definitions of conditional statements are various. They present hypothetical events and their effects or factual implications (Saragi, 2016). Numerous academic studies have examined the misuse of conditional sentences by EFL learners. Conditional sentences often begin with "if," in which one clause depends on another. Someone uses a conditional statement when assuming something that may or may not occur.

The misuse of conditional sentences by EFL learners has been the subject of numerous academic studies. Conditional sentences often begin with "if," in which one clause depends on another. Someone uses a conditional statement when assuming something that may or may not occur. As described by Pare (2018), the two components of the conditional sentence construction are the main (independent) clause and the if-clause. The study by Kristina et al. (2020) revealed that students' errors in the use of conditions are caused by a combination of incomplete knowledge of verb forms (incomplete application of rules) caused by their inability to fully apply the rules of the target language, false concept hypothesis caused by their incomplete understanding of the rules, and incomplete knowledge of verb forms (incomplete knowledge of verb forms).

With a focus on semantic and syntactic elements, Rdaat and Gardner (2017) looked into how Arab English language learners used conditional sentences in both semantic and syntactic contexts. Their findings revealed that using the three types of conditionals and modalities is the most challenging concept for students to comprehend and apply. On the same note, Nur (2017) looked at the conditional sentence features that cause problems for EFL learners. The result showed that the conditional sentences under study did not necessarily fall into a fixed hierarchy of difficulty. Furthermore, the students understood all three types quickly, although they struggled to construct grammatically sound conditional phrases.

Kustianah and Wibowo (2020) looked at conditional sentence usage errors made by students and considered all cases. The results also showed that the students themselves, negligence, using a first language, translation, the learning environment (such as a textbook or teaching technique), and the learning facility all contribute to errors. The participants' final errors were omission, substitution, misordering, and addition. Looking into the use of appropriate communicative styles in intimate speaking situations, the study of Iraola-Real et al. (2021) demonstrated that demotivation, emotional imbalance, cognitive commitment, and depression are all positively,

moderately, and significantly correlated with parents' forceful communication style. The forceful communication style of parents was also negatively, significantly, and strongly correlated with life satisfaction.

In addition to the aforementioned literature and studies, this paper was also anchored on the following theoretical framework. The first framework is Gibbs' Reflective Cycle. This is significant to the study as it provides a structured framework for understanding and improving learning experiences through reflection. By guiding the participants through stages of description, feelings, evaluation, conclusions, and action, the model helps participants critically assess their experiences, identify challenges, and develop strategies for improvement. This aligns with the study's aim of addressing difficulties in learning by fostering a deeper understanding of what works and what needs refinement. Its iterative process supports continuous growth, making it an ideal framework for promoting reflective practice and experiential learning in education.

The second framework in which this study was anchored was Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). This theory is highly relevant to the study as it provides a systematic framework for understanding how students' experiences, reflections, and actions contribute to learning and improvement. The four stages of the learning cycle—Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation—align closely with the study's objectives. The model facilitates the identification of students' learning difficulties (Concrete Experience), reflection on the reasons for these challenges (Reflective Observation), formulation of strategies to address them (Abstract Conceptualization), and the development of actionable solutions in the form of an intervention plan (Active Experimentation). This framework ensures that the intervention plan is grounded in students' experiences and fosters meaningful learning to overcome difficulties and achieve the desired learning competencies in the English curriculum. Another framework used was Burch's Conscious Competence Theory (CCT). CCT is directly relevant to the study as it provides a framework for understanding and assessing the progression of learners' competence levels. The model's four stages—Unconscious Incompetence, Conscious Incompetence, Conscious Competence, and Unconscious Competence—align with the study's objective of identifying students' difficulties, understanding their reasons, and developing strategies to address them. The theory highlights how learners move from a lack of

awareness about their skill gaps to a state of natural proficiency, which resonates with the study's aim of improving student performance over time. By mapping students' competencies against these levels, the study can design an intervention plan tailored to their current needs while fostering long-term skill mastery and aligning outcomes with the learning competencies in the Grade 9 English curriculum. The final framework on which the study was anchored was the Language Learning Strategies (LLS) Theory. LLS is relevant to this study as it provides a framework for understanding how learners navigate and overcome difficulties in mastering language competencies. By focusing on the conscious strategies learners employ — cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social — this study explores how these methods help students address challenges in learning English. LLS is essential in identifying how learners regulate their learning process, manage emotions, and interact with peers and teachers, all of which contribute to their ability to achieve the learning competencies required in the Grade 9 English curriculum. Anchored on Gibb's Reflective Cycle Cycle — (1) *Description*, (2) *Feelings*, (3) *Evaluation*, (4) *Conclusions*, and (5) *Action*, figure 1 shows the schematic representation of the study's conceptual framework. As reflected, the respondents of the study were grade 9 English students. Gibb's Reflective Cycle uses the description/feelings, evaluation, and conclusion stages to determine the level of difficulties encountered, the reasons for the difficulties, and the strategies employed by the learners to overcome such difficulties, respectively. The fifth stage of the cycle (action stage) is the output of the study, which is the development of an intervention plan that the students will follow. The literature and theories presented reveal learners' inherent adversities in learning the aforementioned lessons and the framework on which the study was anchored. Thus, this study is carried out to alleviate the level of difficulty by developing an intervention plan for teachers to consider in the teaching-learning process.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers used a mixed-methods explanatory and descriptive design that generally consists of two distinct phases: quantitative followed by qualitative (Creswell et al., 2003, as cited in Bowen et al., 2017). The researchers first collected and analyzed the quantitative (numeric) data through frequency counting, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, and ranking in this design. The qualitative (text) data were then analyzed using the simplified Colaizzi step-by-step process.



The researchers employed a guided interview and survey questionnaire to gather data. The first part asked about the level of difficulties encountered by the students in achieving the following Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) stipulated in the Quarter 1 Grade 9 English curriculum. The second part of the instrument aimed to reveal the reasons for the learners' difficulties, while the third part assessed the strategies employed by these learners in overcoming the perceived difficulties. The instruments were presented to grade 9 English teachers in 3 public secondary schools in Dumaguete City for content and verbal description validation. Their expert suggestions were injected into the final instruments, which, later on, were pilot tested in one grade 9 section of Ajong National High School, the complementary central secondary school of Sibulan District 1 that is Sibulan National High School, where the actual data collection took place with three randomly sampled sections of Grade 9 students in the Academic Year 2022-2023.

The researchers followed a systematic procedure for data collection, beginning with securing approval from the Negros Oriental Schools Division Superintendent and subsequently coordinating with district supervisors and school heads of Sibulan National High School and Ajong National High School. After obtaining consent from the relevant authorities, they sought informed consent from the parents and respondents, ensuring ethical compliance given the respondents' minor status.

The data collection involved survey questionnaires and focus group discussions (FGD), during which key information was recorded and transcribed. Quantitative data were statistically analyzed, while qualitative data underwent the Colaizzi process for thematic analysis. The consolidated results were carefully reviewed to ensure alignment with the study's objectives, leading to valid conclusions and actionable recommendations.

Weighted mean indices and standard deviations are described as follows:

Weighted Means	Verbal Descriptions
1.00 – 1.79	Not Difficult to Learn (NDL)
1.80 – 2.59	Slightly Difficult to Learn (SDL)
2.60 – 3.39	Moderately Difficult to Learn (MDL)
3.40 – 4.19	Difficult to Learn (DL)
4.20 – 5.00	Very Difficult to Learn (VDL)

Standard Deviations	Verbal Descriptions
sd ≤ 3.00	Homogeneous
sd > 3.00	Heterogeneous

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. What is the level of difficulty the learners encounter in learning the MELCs?

Table 1. Level of difficulties encountered by students in learning Quarter 1 English Learning Competencies (n=130)

Learning Competencies	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Description	Rank
1.1 Expressing permission using modals;	1.75	0.97	NDL, Homogeneous	9
1.2 Expressing obligation using modals;	2.08	1.00	SDL, Homogeneous	8
1.3 Expressing prohibition using modals;	2.44	1.14	SDL, Homogeneous	4
1.4 Using conditionals in expressing arguments;	2.32	1.21	SDL, Homogeneous	6
1.5 Employing appropriate communicative styles in intimate situations;	2.53	1.07	SDL, Homogeneous	3
1.6 Employing appropriate communicative styles in casual situations;	2.38	1.14	SDL, Homogeneous	5
1.7 Employing appropriate communicative styles in conversational situations;	2.3	1.20	SDL, Homogeneous	7
1.8 Employing appropriate communicative styles in consultative situations; and	2.98	1.15	MDL, Homogeneous	2
1.9 Employing appropriate communicative styles in frozen situations	3.44	1.16	DL, Homogeneous	1
OVERALL	2.47	1.12	SDL, Homogeneous	

Table 1 presents learners' difficulties in learning the most essential competencies. It shows that the student respondents indicated that expressing obligation using modals, expressing prohibition using modals, using conditionals in expressing arguments, employing appropriate communicative styles in intimate situations, employing appropriate communicative styles in casual situations, employing appropriate communicative styles in conversational situations are Slightly Difficult to Learn (SDL). Based on the research instrument, this refers to how students find the English learning competencies relatively easy to learn as they need to devote 6%-35% of their time and effort to master the competencies; the achievement of learning outcomes is often obtained. Employing appropriate communicative styles in various situations poses challenges for learners. Haynes (2015) indicates that English language learners face obstacles when reading literature in English, as most literature is culture-bound, and students may lack prior knowledge of literary genres such as fairy tales, myths, legends, and tall tales.

However, expressing permission using modals was reported as Not Difficult to Learn (NDL), as reflected in the research instrument; this refers to how students find the English learning competencies not hard to learn

at all as they need to devote 1%-5% of their time and effort to master the competencies; the achievement of the learning outcomes is always obtained. Employing appropriate communicative styles in consultative situations was reported as Moderately Difficult to Learn (MDL), based on what can be seen in the research instrument; this means that students find the English learning competencies reasonably hard to learn as they need to devote 36%-65% of their time and effort to master the competencies; the achievement of learning outcomes is sometimes obtained. This is consistent with the findings of AlKhrshesh (2016), who noted that learners often struggle with selecting appropriate language styles in varying contexts, which requires a deeper understanding of sociolinguistic norms.

Lastly, employing appropriate communicative styles in frozen situations was reported as Difficult to Learn (DL), based on what is stated in the research instrument; this refers to how students find the English learning competencies hard to learn as they need to devote 66%-95% of their time and effort to master the competencies; the achievement of learning outcomes is rarely obtained. All standard deviations are less than 3.00, indicating homogeneity of the student respondents' level of difficulties encountered. This finding is supported by a study conducted by AlMekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011), which highlighted that students often face challenges in mastering formal and context-specific language styles due to limited exposure and practice.

2. What are the reasons for these difficulties?

1. *Expressing permission using modals can be difficult.* The reasons for this include the daily use of the modals, the strictness of the subject teacher, background knowledge, the teacher's teaching style, difficulty in comprehension, a distracting environment, uninterested learning, fear of asking questions, confusion in using modals, forgetfulness, insufficient time to learn, fear of being judged, fear of committing mistakes, and fear of misinterpretations.
2. *Expressing obligation using modals.* The reasons for this difficulty include confusion in using modals, teaching style, rare use of the modals, use to ask favors, fear to commit grammatical mistakes, insufficient time to learn, difficulty in identifying modals, unmotivated to learn, difficulty in comprehension, fear of misinterpretations, mental blocks, and dependence of the usage on the scenario.

3. *Expressing prohibition using modals.* The reasons for this difficulty include the difficulty in comprehension, distracting environment, confusion in using modals, teaching style, fear of being judged, background knowledge, insufficient time to learn, being hard-headed, unmotivated to learn, fear to participate in class, being attentive, afraid of the assessment, and difficulty in constructing sentences.
4. *Using conditionals in expressing arguments.* The reasons for this difficulty include difficulty in constructing sentences, teaching style, frequency of use, difficulty in comprehension, distracting environment, fear to ask questions, unmotivated to learn, used to express probability, confusion in using conditionals, being attentive, and dependence of the usage on the scenario.
5. *Employing appropriate communicative styles in intimate situations can be difficult.* The reasons for this difficulty include a close bond/relationship, fear of parents' response, dependence on the scenario's usage, a distant relationship, fear of being judged, parents not willing to listen, differences in perspectives, parents too busy, and lack of attention, which results in conflict.
6. *Employing appropriate communicative styles in casual situations.* The reasons for this difficulty include comfortability and constant company, closeness with each other, similar views and trustworthiness, trust issues, uneasiness, fear of getting judged by friends, ostracism, different perspectives leading to misunderstanding, inability of others to relate, thus missing the point, varying level of maturity, and seeking for belongingness.
7. *Employing appropriate communicative styles in conversational situations.* The reasons for this difficulty include the absence of physical appearance, no immediate perceivable reaction, language preference, closeness, mutual humor, and friendly attitude, fear of getting judged, information spreading, and the tendency of the information being used against oneself, reluctance to initiate communication because of level of closeness, virtual preference over inperson, impersonal conversation, and fear of being misunderstood or judged.
8. *Employing appropriate communicative styles in consultative situations.* The reasons for this difficulty include strict impression, shyness/reluctance to initiate a conversation, distant closeness between the student and the



teacher, fear of reprimanded, score deduction and correction, fear of crossing boundaries, recognition of the importance of the consultation intent, rare interaction with the teacher, teacher's favoritism, required level of confidence in order to communicate with them, connections to the consultant, and communication with professionals as a privilege and a source of inspiration for the future career.

9. Employing appropriate communicative styles in frozen situations. The reasons for this difficulty include fear of committing grammatical mistakes or mispronouncing words, fear of getting judged and laughed at, stage fright, shyness/nervousness, amount of speaking exposure, fear of getting corrected and talked about or backstabbed, fear of forgetting spiel/scripts, mundane and unappreciative reactions of the audience, and lack of preparation prior to communicating in a frozen situation.

10. Students encounter challenges in mastering English language competencies, particularly in using modals and appropriate communicative styles. Difficulties in expressing permission, obligation, and prohibition using modals often stem from confusion in their usage, insufficient practice, and fear of making grammatical mistakes. Teaching styles, distracting environments, and lack of motivation compound these challenges. Similarly, employing appropriate communicative styles in different contexts—intimate, casual, consultative, and frozen situations—presents difficulties due to fear of judgment, stage fright, and varying levels of familiarity with the interlocutor. A study by Ajaj (2022) highlights that students suffer from weaknesses in grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic aspects of the English language, which manifest in their spoken or written communication. Additionally, Hasan (2024) identifies vocabulary proficiency as a prevalent issue hindering English language development among students. These findings underscore the need for targeted instructional strategies to address specific areas of difficulty in English language learning.

3. What strategies are employed by the learners to overcome these difficulties?

Table 2. Strategies Employed to Overcome Difficulties in Learning the English Learning Competencies (n=130)

Strategies Employed to Overcome the Difficulties	Frequency	Rank
1. Studying even harder	77	1
1. Reading books	18	11
1. Researching on the internet	66	2
1. Watching tutorial videos on the internet	53	4
1. Communicating with the teacher and expressing perceived confusion/ difficulty	43	6
1. Classmates are helping one another	52	5
1. Changing one's mindset, becoming thirstier and hungrier for knowledge, and more focused on the learning process	77	1
1. Listening to the teacher even more religiously	33	7
1. Preparing oneself holistically	22	9
1. Practicing	56	3
1. Prayer	19	10
1. Receiving help from family members	16	12
1. Surrounding oneself with positive people rather than the distractive negative ones	28	8

Table 2 shows the strategies employed by the learners to overcome the difficulties in learning the English 9 learning competencies in the first quarter. The strategies employed by the learners are studying even harder, changing one's mindset, becoming thirstier and hungrier for knowledge and more focused on the learning process, researching on the internet, practicing, watching tutorial videos on the internet; classmates are helping one another, communicating with the teachers and expressing perceived confusion or difficulty, listening to the teacher even more religiously, surrounding oneself with positive people rather than the distractive negative ones, preparing oneself holistically, prayer, reading books, and receiving help from family members. Consistent practice and focused study are critical in overcoming such challenges, as highlighted by Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011), who emphasize the importance of intensive practice in mastering English modal verbs. Moreover, fostering motivation and maintaining a positive mindset is essential, as Haynes (2015) notes that intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes significantly enhance learners' ability to overcome obstacles in language learning. These strategies align with research-backed practices that enable learners to effectively address and mitigate their difficulties.

4. An Intervention Design for Learning Enhancement Program in Quarter 1 Grade 9 English Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs)

I. General Design Information	
Program Title:	Learning Enhancement Program on Quarter 1 Grade 9 English Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs)
Program Description:	This is an eight-day Formal Face-to-Face (F3) Intervention Designed to enhance learners' growth



	and boost their commitment toward learning and unity through team-building.
Duration:	Eight Days, plus additional supplementary intervention activities to monitor students/ progress (lasting for a month/4 weeks)
Management Level of Program	Junior high school level program facilitated by the NORSU Staff
Delivery Mode:	Formal Face-to-Face (F3) Intervention
Target Participants:	Grade 9 learners
Budget Requirements:	The materials needed for the eight-day intervention workshop include cartolina, manila paper, laptop, Smart TV, speaker, microphone, HDMI cord, adhesive tapes, construction paper, bond paper, ball pens, pencils, markers, and tarpaulins, as well as foods for the facilitators and snacks for the students in the morning and afternoon.
	<p>Rationale: English language proficiency is essential for students to excel academically and communicate effectively in today's globalized world. However, some students may struggle to master the necessary English learning competencies. To address this issue, implementing an intervention plan in Grade 9 English during the first quarter can significantly benefit students' language skills and overall academic performance. This rationale outlines the reasons for designing an intervention program and provides insights into its objectives, strategies, and expected outcomes.</p> <p>1. Identification of Learning Gaps: A preliminary analysis of Grade 9 students' English performance may reveal language skill and competency variations. Some students might struggle with grammar rules, vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, or written expression.</p> <p>2. Individualized Approach: The program can provide targeted interventions and support by considering students' unique strengths, weaknesses, and preferred learning styles. Individualized attention will enable students to progress at their own pace, reinforcing their understanding of English language concepts and skills.</p> <p>3. Clear Objectives: The intervention program should establish measurable objectives to guide teaching and learning. Setting specific goals will help students understand the program's purpose and monitor their progress throughout the quarter.</p> <p>4. Holistic Approach: The intervention program should adopt a holistic approach to cover all these aspects of language acquisition. Integrating interactive activities, group discussions, reading assignments, writing exercises, and audio-visual resources will engage students and provide a well-rounded learning experience.</p> <p>5. Differentiated Instruction: To accommodate students' diverse needs and abilities, the intervention program should incorporate differentiated instruction to ensure that content, materials, and instructional strategies are tailored to meet students' requirements.</p> <p>Expected Outcomes: Implementing this intervention plan for Grade 9 English during the first quarter is expected to yield several positive outcomes, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. improved language skills;

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. increased confidence; 3. engagement and motivation; and, 4. bridged learning gaps. <p>Enabling Objectives: At the end of the program, the students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. apply grammar rules and concepts appropriately in spoken and written English; 2. acquire a wide range of vocabulary words in different contexts; 3. improve oral communication skills by practicing effective speaking techniques, including clarity, fluency, pronunciation, and intonation; 4. apply critical thinking skills to evaluate and assess arguments, claims, and evidence presented in written and spoken English; 5. foster independent learning skills by promoting skill-directed learning, self-motivation, and resource utilization.
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CONCLUSION

The Grade 9 students' difficulty level varied from not difficult to learn to challenging. Employing appropriate communicative styles in frozen situations is difficult to learn, but expressing permission using modals is not tricky. Employing appropriate communicative styles in consultative situations is moderately challenging to learn, while the remaining six competencies are slightly complex to learn; the reasons for the above-mentioned difficulties varied from intrapersonal factors, interpersonal factors relating to the subject matter, teacher and classmates, and comprehension issues and other extraneous factors like insufficiency of time to learn the competencies and environmental distractions.

The student-respondents overcame their learning difficulties through ways like reading books, researching on the internet, asking assistance from classmates, friends, teacher, and even classmates, and indulging in independent learning; and the intervention plan is titled Learning Enhancement Program on Quarter 1 Grade 9 English Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs). This is an eight-day Formal Face-to-Face (F3) Intervention Designed to enhance learners' growth and boost their commitment toward learning and unity through team-building.

Recommendations

It is recommended that English subject teachers carry out training, workshops, and seminars as interventions for students to participate in, utilizing the intervention plan developed by the researchers. This will alleviate the competencies considered by the students as slightly challenging to learn and make them not difficult to learn. A replication of this study may be conducted to delve deeper into the students' reasons and strategies in

order to assert the responses being collected and revealed.

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