

Enhancing Language Proficiency and Fostering Positive Cultural Attitude Through Extended English Program

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ABSTRACT:

This study investigates the effectiveness of an extended English program backed by the English Access Microscholarship Program funded by the US Embassy. The intervention group comprised of economically disadvantaged learners aged 1149-1162 with low proficiency in English, who were selected and enrolled into the English Access Microscholarship Program directly. Fifty participants engaged in after-school instruction and enrichment activities aimed at enhancing their language skills and addressing the identified gaps in their English language abilities. This study employs a pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design. The study assesses the impact of an extended non-contractual English intervention program on students' language skills and attitudes towards other culture by comparing the outcomes of pretest and posttest. The data analysis involved comparing participants' language proficiency scores before and after the intervention through statistical tests. The findings showed significant improvements in participants' English language skills, as well as positive changes in their attitudes towards other culture. In conclusion, the findings suggest that students can significantly enhance their linguistic skills through intensive intervention programs. These programs alleviate the burden of passing a formal course. Moreover, the English Access Program emerged as a catalyst, expanding students' perspectives and fostering a positive outlook toward diverse cultures by exposing them to interactive and immersive learning experiences.

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Keywords: English Access Microscholarship Program, Intervention program, Language skills, Attitude and perception

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, research in language education has witnessed significant developments, particularly in addressing language proficiency gaps among economically disadvantaged students. Numerous studies have emphasized the importance of targeted interventions to support these students (Makarova et

al., 2020), however, there still a gap in the literature concerning comprehensive assessments of long-term effectiveness of such interventions and their effect on students' linguistic abilities and cultural attitudes (Lai & Gu, 2022).

Existing research often focuses on short-term outcomes, overlooking the potential long-term

benefits of sustained language interventions (Liu et al., 2020). This highlights the need for studies evaluating the lasting effects of language programs, especially among economically disadvantaged populations (Tran, 2021).

This study seeks to address these gaps by investigating the impact and magnitude of the extended non-contractual English intervention program on language skills and cultural attitudes among economically disadvantaged students. Drawing on recent advancements in language education and sociocultural theory (Brown & Dow, 2021), this study seeks to aid in the advancement of effective and enduring language intervention strategies for the specified population.

Attitudes, in this context, refer to individuals' predispositions or orientations towards language learning and cultural diversity. These attitudes can encompass a spectrum of sentiments, ranging from positive and receptive to neutral or even negative perceptions (Smith & Jones, 2018). It involves students' perceptions, attitudes, and appreciation toward cultural aspects embedded within the language learning process. This conceptualization encompasses cultural sensitivity and awareness, openness to diverse cultural perspectives and practices, engagement in activities promoting cross-cultural understanding, and integration of cultural elements into language use and expression (Johnson et al., 2020).

By utilizing pretest and posttest evaluations, this study assesses changes in participants' linguistic performance and attitudes following their exposure to the extended intervention program. The findings provide valuable perspectives into the effectiveness of the extended language interventions and their potential to enhance proficiency in language and intercultural skills among economically disadvantaged students, thereby addressing a substantial void in the existing literature.

A barrier identified in the learning process of students is poor English proficiency. This challenge is particularly pronounced in areas where mass media and interaction with English speakers are limited (Bernardo & Reyes, 2014). This circumstance is evident in the Province of Tawi-Tawi, an island recognized as the entry point to the Borneo-Indonesia Malaysia Philippines – East Asia Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) region.

In response, the Mindanao State University - Tawi-Tawi was founded with the objective of delivering high-quality education to the Muslim community, emphasizing fisheries, oceanography, and associated

fields (Republic Act No. 6060, Congress of the Philippines, 4 August 1969).

Drawing from Krashen's (1982) hypothesis on the affective filter, this study posits that reduced anxiety contributes to enhanced learning. Anxiety, fear, or frustration can act as barriers, hindering a student's ability to learn or accomplish a learning task. Research by McIntyre and Gardner (1989) further supports the notion that anxiety, particularly Communicative Anxiety, is linked to language learning and vocabulary acquisition.

Language Proficiency Enhancements focus on the improvement and development of students' language proficiency, particularly in English, through participation in the prolonged non-contractual English intervention program. Key indicators include: proficiency in language skills, accuracy and fluency in English communication, ability to comprehend and produce complex linguistic structures, and acquisition and retention of vocabulary and grammar concepts. While Cultural Attitudes pertains to students' perceptions, attitudes, and appreciation towards cultural aspects embedded within the language learning process. It encompasses cultural sensitivity and awareness, openness to diverse cultural perspectives and practices, engagement in activities promoting cross-cultural understanding, and integration of cultural elements when using the language.

In this study, the extended non-contractual English intervention program sponsored by the US Embassy serves as a platform for enhancing language proficiency and fostering cultural attitudes among students at Mindanao State University - Tawi-Tawi. By participating in the program, students are expected to demonstrate improvements in both language proficiency and cultural attitudes, leading to broader linguistic and intercultural competencies. The effectiveness of the intervention program can be assessed based on changes in these variables over time, as measured through various assessments, observations, and student feedback.

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To assess the effect of an extended non-contractual English intervention program on students' language skills and measure the degree of improvement.
2. To compare how students involved in the program enhanced their academic performance with peers who did not engage in the intervention.

3. To evaluate the program's influence on participants' attitudes and perceptions of other cultures and determine whether significant changes have occurred.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language proficiency and cultural attitudes are integral components of academic and social success, particularly in multicultural and multilingual settings. Various interventions and programs have been developed to enhance language proficiency and foster positive cultural attitudes among diverse student populations. This literature review explores key themes and findings pertinent to the enhancement of language proficiency and cultural attitudes through prolonged non-contractual English intervention programs.

Numerous studies have scrutinized the efficacy of language interventions in bolstering students' language proficiency. Makarova et al. (2020) uncovered significant enhancements in language skills among economically disadvantaged students enrolled in targeted intervention programs. Similarly, Liu et al. (2020) revealed enduring positive outcomes in linguistic performance and learner attitudes stemming from language interventions.

Learning Gaps

This study revolves around these three interconnected learning gaps: English language skills, academic performance, and cultural awareness. By investigating the impact of the intervention program on these aspects, the research contributes valuable insights into how effective are the educational interventions in addressing multifaceted learning challenges.

The significance of proficiency in English for academic success and social integration has been widely recognized in educational literature. Numerous studies have highlighted the significance of effective language instruction in improving students' reading, writing, listening, and speaking abilities (Cummins, 1981; Krashen, 1985). Additionally, research has emphasized the role of targeted intervention programs in supporting language development among "diverse student demographics" (August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006).

Achievement gaps regarding academic performance, particularly between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds or demographic groups, have been a subject of extensive scholarly inquiry (Reardon, 2011; Sirin, 2005). Various factors

contribute to these disparities, including unequal access to resources, differences in educational opportunities, and systemic inequalities within educational systems (Rothstein, 2017). Research has explored the efficacy of intervention programs, differentiated instruction, and other strategies aimed at narrowing these achievement gaps and promoting equitable educational outcomes (Hattie, 2009; Sawchuk, 2016).

In an increasingly globalized world, fostering cultural awareness and intercultural competence has become a priority in education (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006). Scholars have underscored the importance of promoting empathy, respect, and understanding "across cultural borders to enable effective communication" and collaboration in diverse environments (Bennett, 2008; Fantini, 2000). Educational interventions targeting cultural awareness often incorporate elements of multicultural education, global citizenship education, and intercultural communication training to enhance students' cross-cultural competencies (Banks, 2008; Chen & Starosta, 1996).

Intervention programs aimed at tackling these learning disparities typically utilize a range of instructional approaches, methodologies, and pedagogical strategies customized to meet the specific needs of the target population (Gersten et al., 2009; Slavin, 2014). Effective interventions often involve a combination of targeted instruction, ongoing assessment, teacher professional development, and collaborative partnerships with stakeholders (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Desimone, 2009). Moreover, research emphasizes the importance of sustained support and systemic reform efforts to guarantee the prolonged success and continuity of intervention initiatives (Fullan, 2007; Supovitz & Turner, 2000).

A noteworthy aspect of the study is its exploration of cultural awareness and perception. The objective is to evaluate how the intervention program influences participants' attitudes toward other cultures. This implies a perceived gap in cultural understanding or intercultural sensitivity, and the study endeavors to ascertain whether the intervention brings about significant changes in participants' attitudes and perceptions.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework encompasses key theories in acquisition and sociocultural perspectives on learning a language. The Sociocultural Theory of Vygotsky highlights the significance of social

interactions and cultural contexts in cognitive development, offering understanding into the mediating elements that impact language learning results (Vygotsky, 1978). Furthermore, the Affective Filter Hypothesis of Krashen underscores the influence of emotional factors such as motivation and anxiety on language acquisition processes (Krashen, 1982).

Sociocultural Considerations in Language Learning

The Sociocultural theory underscores the significant impact of societal and cultural factors on the processes and outcomes of language learning. (Tran (2021) critically analyzed language interventions tailored for culturally diverse classrooms, advocating for the integration of sociocultural considerations into program design and implementation to create more inclusive learning environments.

Lev Vygotsky's (1978) provides a framework emphasizing the function of social interaction, cultural context, and language in mental development. It can be applied to support the variables of enhancing language proficiency and fostering positive attitudes towards language learning and cultural diversity.

According to Vygotsky, the Zone of Proximal Development is the difference “between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with the guidance and support of a more knowledgeable other, such as a teacher or peer” (Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of language learning, interactions with more proficient speakers, whether through collaborative learning activities, discussions, or feedback, can support the development of learners' language. By offering chances for students to participate in meaningful social interactions in English, educators can help foster the acquisition of new language skills within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), thereby improving language proficiency.

In his book “Thought and Language,” Vygotsky (1934) introduced the concept of scaffolding, which denotes the assistance offered by an expert or a more competent peer to aid a learner in completing tasks beyond their current level of competence. In language learning, scaffolding can involve providing linguistic support, clarifying concepts, and modeling effective communication strategies. By scaffolding language learning experiences, educators can facilitate students' acquisition of language skills and gradually reduce support as learners become more proficient, thereby

fostering autonomy and self-regulation in language use.

Vygotsky highlighted the importance of cultural tools and artifacts, including language, symbols, and shared practices, in facilitating cognitive processes and shaping individuals' perceptions and behaviors. In language learning, cultural tools have a significant role in cultivating positive attitudes towards language and culture. Through the integration of culturally relevant materials, literature, and media into language learning activities, educators can encourage students to appreciate diverse cultural perspectives and practices, thereby fostering positive attitudes towards language acquisition and cultural diversity.

Therefore, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory provides theoretical support for the variables of enhancing language proficiency and fostering favorable perspectives on language acquisition and cultural diversity. By acknowledging the significance of social interaction, cultural context, and language as agents mediating cognitive development, educators can design language learning environments that capitalize on collaborative learning experiences, cultural relevance, and community engagement to promote students' language acquisition and intercultural competence.

Language Intervention Program

Effective language intervention programs often embrace diverse instructional methodologies tailored to learners' contextual needs. Brown and Dow (2021) advocate for the utilization of conversation analysis to inform language education practices and craft responsive intervention strategies, thereby shaping more targeted intervention programs.

The English Access Microscholarship Program, sponsored by the US Embassy, exemplifies a noteworthy language intervention initiative. This program seeks to provide English language instruction and support to economically disadvantaged students, empowering them with language skills essential for academic and professional success. It endeavors to bridge language gaps and overcome financial barriers that hinder access to quality language education.

In the Access Program, the different language skills were taught through various strategies, including lectures, enhancement activities, games, field trips, exposure to native speakers of English, language fora, film viewing, and English camp experiences. These diverse approaches aimed to cater to different learning styles and engage students actively in language acquisition.

The instructional materials were provided by the US Embassy, supplemented by resources available from the university's American corner, and teacher-produced instructional materials. This combination ensured a rich and varied learning experience, encompassing both authentic materials and specially curated resources tailored to the needs of the program.

To promote a positive attitude towards American culture, students were exposed to lectures, videos, and activities that provided insights into American culture. Additionally, they had the opportunity to simulate holidays celebrated in the US, allowing them to immerse themselves in cultural practices and traditions firsthand. These immersive experiences helped foster an appreciation for American culture and encouraged cultural exchange and understanding among participants.

When considering language intervention programs and their effect on students' language skills, it is valuable to explore relevant language acquisition theories to provide a theoretical framework for the study. Stephen Krashen's theory of second language acquisition, along with other related theories, can contribute significantly to understanding how language interventions may influence students' language proficiency.

Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis

Krashen (1982) proposed the Affective Filter Hypothesis, which suggests that affective variables such as motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence influence language acquisition. According to this hypothesis, individuals who are highly motivated, experience low levels of anxiety, and possess confidence are more likely to successfully acquire a second language, while those who have high levels of anxiety or negative attitudes may have their "affective filter" raised, hindering language acquisition.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis suggests that anxiety can serve as a barrier to language acquisition. When learners experience anxiety or stress, their affective filter is elevated, hindering the intake and processing of linguistic input. Conversely, when learners feel relaxed and confident, their affective filter is lowered, facilitating more effective language learning.

Several studies provide support for Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, indicating that learners' emotions play a significant role in their language acquisition process. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) discovered that anxiety in language classrooms impedes learning. Dörnyei's (2005) research on language learner psychology highlighted the

significance of motivation and anxiety in language learning. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) demonstrated a correlation between high anxiety levels and poor language skills. Ely (1986) highlighted the importance of a "supportive classroom environment for boosting learners' confidence and motivation." These studies collectively endorse Krashen's hypothesis, emphasizing the need to address learners' emotional well-being for successful language learning.

Learners who feel confident in their language abilities are more likely to take risks in using the language, experiment with new vocabulary and structures, and engage in communicative interactions. This positive self-perception reduces the affective filter and promotes language learning.

On Cultural Attitudes

Cultural attitudes are pivotal in language learning, shaping learners' engagement, motivation, and, ultimately, their proficiency in English. Byram (1997) underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity and openness in language acquisition, emphasizing that learners with positive attitudes towards cultural diversity are more inclined to embrace linguistic and cultural differences. This sentiment is further supported by Deardorff (2006), who argues that intercultural competence is indispensable for effective language learning, as it empowers learners to navigate diverse cultural contexts with confidence and understanding.

Conversely, anxiety stemming from cultural differences can impede language acquisition. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) discuss how heightened levels of anxiety can raise the affective filter, hindering learners' ability to process linguistic input and engage meaningfully with the language. However, learners who maintain positive attitudes towards cultural diversity are better equipped to overcome these barriers. Bennett (2008) and Fantini (2000) suggest that an appreciation for cultural differences fosters open-mindedness and adaptability, enabling learners to approach intercultural interactions with curiosity and resilience.

Moreover, an interest in cultural aspects intertwined with language learning can function as a potent motivator for learners. Oxford & Shearin (1994) and Oxford (1996) argue that learners who are intrinsically motivated to explore cultural elements of language are more inclined to actively engage with authentic materials and seek out opportunities for cultural immersion. This intrinsic motivation not only improves proficiency in language but also cultivates a

deeper understanding and appreciation of the target language community.

Fostering positive cultural attitudes is essential for promoting effective language learning experiences. By cultivating cultural sensitivity, openness, and intrinsic motivation, educators can create supportive learning environments that encourage learners to engage actively with language and culture. Ultimately, these attitudes contribute to learners' linguistic proficiency and intercultural competence, facilitating their journey towards successful language learning.

Swain's Output Hypothesis

Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis posits that language learners benefit from actively producing language, rather than solely receiving input.

Research studies have provided support for Swain's Output Hypothesis, demonstrating the benefits of output-oriented language learning activities. Studies by Swain and Lapkin (1982) and Swain (1995) found that learners who engaged in language production tasks, such as oral discussions and written compositions, demonstrated greater language development compared to those who solely received input. These findings underscore the importance of incorporating opportunities for language output in language learning programs.

Furthermore, Swain's theory is consistent with communicative language teaching approaches, which prioritize authentic contexts for meaningful interaction and language use. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Through the integration of output activities into language instruction, educators can provide opportunities for students to actively engage with the language and enhance their communicative competence.

Swain's Output Hypothesis (1985) emphasizes the significance of language production activities in language learning. By integrating opportunities for speaking and writing tasks into language interventions, educators can facilitate the development of students' language proficiency and cultivate positive attitudes towards language learning.

Gardner's Socio-Educational Model

Gardner's (1972) Socio-Educational Model suggests that motivational factors are central to language learning outcomes. In this model, students' motivation to learn a language is influenced by various factors, including their attitudes towards the language and the perceived relevance of language learning to their personal goals and aspirations.

Research studies have provided support for Gardner's Socio-Educational Model, demonstrating the importance of motivational factors in language learning outcomes. In the studies by Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Gardner (1985), they explored the relationship between attitudes towards the target language and language proficiency, showing that positive attitudes are conducive to language learning success.

Furthermore, contemporary research on language learning motivation, such as studies by Dörnyei (2005) and Deci and Ryan (2000), has emphasized the role of intrinsic motivation and self-determination to foster engagement and persistence in language learning activities. These studies provide empirical evidence for the relevance of motivational factors in language learning outcomes, aligning with Gardner's model.

Language interventions, such as the English Access Microscholarship Program, understanding and addressing students' motivations for participating in the program are crucial. If students perceive the program as a means to improve their language skills and access better educational and professional opportunities, this aligns with Gardner's model and has the potential to positively influence language outcomes.

When students are motivated to learn a language due to its perceived practical value in their lives, they are more likely to actively engage in language learning activities, invest effort into enhancing their language skills, and persist despite challenges. Their intrinsic motivation, combined with a clear understanding of the benefits of language proficiency, can drive them to make significant progress in their language acquisition journey.

Moreover, aligning language interventions with students' motivations can enhance program effectiveness and sustainability. By incorporating elements that resonate with students' interests, aspirations, and future prospects, educators can establish a learning environment that nurtures intrinsic motivation and encourages positive attitudes towards language learning.

Evaluation of Intervention Outcomes

Evaluating language intervention outcomes is crucial for gauging effectiveness and identifying areas for refinement. Existing research offers valuable insights into the evaluation of language interventions for economically disadvantaged students.

Studies by Snow and Van Hemel (2008) and August and Shanahan (2006) have explored the effectiveness of language interventions targeting diverse student populations, including economically disadvantaged students. These studies have highlighted the significance of utilizing rigorous evaluation methodologies, such as randomized controlled trials and quasi-experimental designs, to evaluate intervention effects on language proficiency and academic achievement.

Furthermore, longitudinal studies, such as those conducted by Scarella and Oxford (1992) and Baker et al. (2014), have investigated the lasting effects of language interventions on student outcomes. These studies have tracked students' progress over time to determine the sustained benefits of intervention programs and inform decisions about program continuation and refinement.

In addition, systematic reviews and meta-analyses, such as those conducted by Slavin et al. (2020) and Gersten et al. (2019), have synthesized existing evidence on the effectiveness of language interventions for economically disadvantaged students. These reviews have provided comprehensive assessments of intervention outcomes and identified promising practices for improving language proficiency and academic achievement among economically disadvantaged populations.

While specific studies may vary, existing research offers valuable insights into the evaluation of language intervention outcomes for economically disadvantaged students. By employing rigorous methodologies, conducting longitudinal studies, and synthesizing existing evidence, researchers can effectively assess the impact of language interventions and inform efforts to improve educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged populations.

METHODS

This research adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining elements of action research and qualitative inquiry to investigate the impact of an extended non-contractual English intervention program on language skills and cultural attitudes among fifty economically disadvantaged students aged 1149-1162 exhibiting low proficiency in English (speaking, reading, and writing). The study included an equal number of male and female student participants from junior high school and college. Classes were held every day after regular school hours, from 5 to 6 pm, including Saturdays, ensuring consistent engagement with the program alongside participants' existing educational

commitments. These students were engaged in an English program, funded by the US Embassy, Manila, comprising English language instruction and enrichment activities. The program aimed to enhance English language skills, provide exposure and training in computer usage, and involve participants in activities typical of American culture. Throughout the program, participants' classroom performance, English language skills, and attitudes/perceptions towards other cultures were continuously assessed.

To evaluate changes in attitude and performance, a comparative analysis was conducted between program participants and their non-participating peers. Employing a quasi-experimental research design, two groups were formed: the experimental group, comprising students enrolled in the Access Program with MSU, and the controlled group comprising 25 males and 25 females, who were not enrolled in the Access program. Their outcomes and data were compared to those of the participants to assess the effectiveness of the intervention program.

To measure the extent of change in the performance in English, both groups were given test before and after participating in the extended English intervention program. The language proficiency test consists of 100 items, focusing on speaking, reading, and writing skills, with parallel constructions used for both the pretest and posttest. These instruments have undergone validation to ensure their reliability and accuracy in assessing language proficiency. Additionally, participants complete a researcher-validated perception questionnaire, providing insights into attitudes towards American culture. This comprehensive approach aims to yield reliable data on language skills and cultural perceptions affected by the intervention program. This design facilitates a thorough investigation into how the program influences the desired outcomes.

Venue and Duration

The extended English program took place at the Mindanao State University – Tawi-Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography (MSU-TCTO) in Sanga-Sanga, Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, Philippines. To comprehensively assess and compare the program's impact, students from nearby schools, which served as the source of some program participants, were also integrated in the assessment and monitoring as the control group. The study spanned from January 2016 to February 2017, providing a year-long timeframe for an in-depth examination of the program's effects on the participating students and the comparative analysis with their counterparts from neighboring schools.

Research Approach

Drawing on the principles of action research, this study actively involves participants in the process of inquiry and change. By collaborating with stakeholders and engaging in iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection, the research seeks to not only assess the effectiveness of the intervention program but also inform ongoing improvements and adjustments.

Data Collection

Quantitative data is collected through pretest and posttest evaluations, measuring participants' linguistic performance and attitudes before and after exposure to the intervention program. These assessments include standardized language proficiency tests as well as surveys designed to gauge cultural attitudes and perceptions.

Qualitative data is gathered through participant observations and semi-structured interviews, enabling a more profound insight into participants' experiences, perspectives, and the contextual factors influencing program outcomes. These qualitative insights complement the quantitative findings, providing rich narratives and nuanced interpretations of the observed changes.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data is analyzed using statistical methods, such as descriptive statistics and inferential tests, to identify patterns, trends, and statistically significant differences in language proficiency and cultural attitudes between pretest and posttest measures. Qualitative data is analyzed thematically, with codes and themes derived from the interview transcripts and observational notes to uncover underlying meanings and insights.

Ethical Considerations

This study follows ethical guidelines for research involving human participants, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants' rights and dignity throughout the research process. Ethical approval has been secured from the institution's review committee prior to data collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Evaluation of Access Students' Learning Progress

Table 1 shows how learners' attitudes and performances change during the Access program. Scores are presented as percentages of the maximum score to track their progress in attitude, knowledge, and skills.

Table 1 English Language Skills, American Culture Knowledge, and Attitude Towards American Culture assessed through Pre-test and Midterm Evaluation.

Evaluation Domain	Period of Evaluation		Change
	Pre-test	Midterm	
English Language Proficiency	47.2%	53.0%	5.7%
Familiarity with American Culture	38.5%	64.3%	25.8%
Attitude Toward American Culture	54.3%	86.4%	32.1%

At the beginning of the program, despite having completed primary education in the Philippines, learners' English language skills and knowledge of American culture were still below desired levels. However, their understanding of American culture and ideas was already satisfactory. By the midterm assessment, there was a slight improvement in their English language proficiency, increasing from 47.2% in the pre-test to 53.0%. This represented a 5.7% increase. Notably, there was a significant improvement in their knowledge of and perception of American culture, with increases of 28.8 and 32.1 percentage points, respectively. Furthermore, their attitudes toward American culture showed an impressive increase of 32.1%.

The observed improvements in English language proficiency, familiarity with American culture, and attitude toward American culture among Access program participants align with the intervention's objectives. The noteworthy increase in participants' understanding of American culture suggests that the program effectively broadens their cultural awareness. The positive attitude shift also indicates linguistic development and a transformative impact on their perceptions of diverse cultures. These findings underscore the Access program's efficacy in fostering linguistic and cultural growth among the students involved.

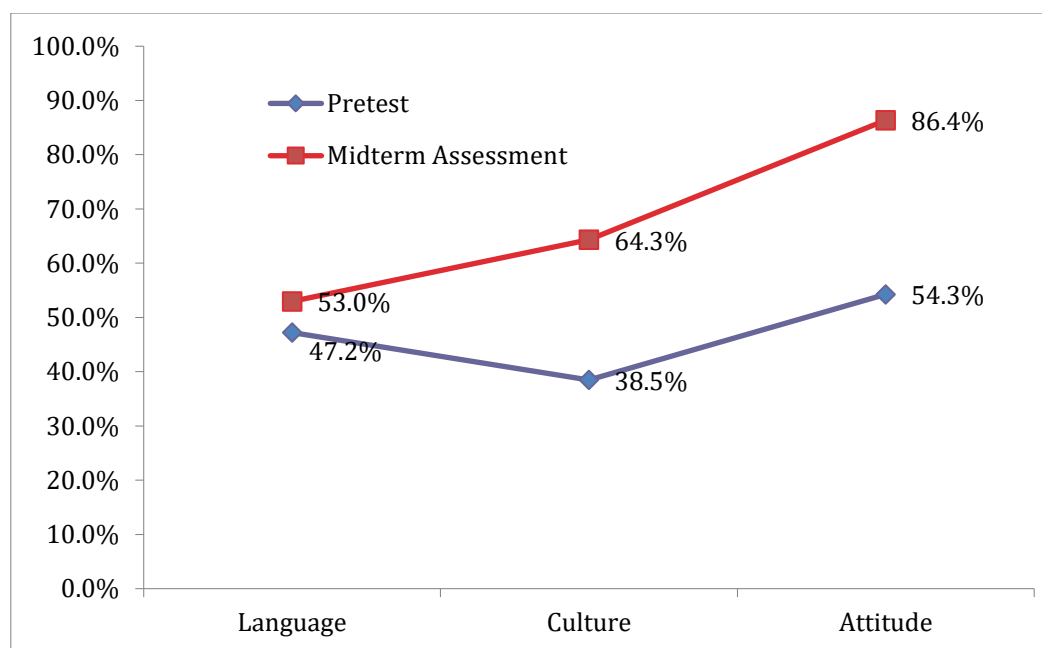


Figure 1: Comparison of pre-test and midterm evaluation scores of Access students

Figure 1 illustrates the development of the attitudes and performance of Access learners during the initial phase of implementation of the program. As previously noted, significant improvement was observed in their understanding of culture and positive perception, including acceptance and tolerance of American cultural aspects.

The table below displays the results of the statistical test using a t-test, examining whether the degree of change in the skills and attitudes of Access learners is substantial enough to determine significant learning progress among them.

Table 2 Summary of t-test comparing pre-test and midterm evaluation scores of Access students

Evaluation Domain Compared	Paired Differences			t	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean		
Proficiency in English	.05741	.16265	.02711	2.118	.041
Familiarity with American Culture	.25833	.20195	.03366	7.675	.000
Attitude Toward American Culture	.96296	.35544	.05924	16.255	.000

The results indicate that the midterm evaluation scores of Access students are significantly higher than their pre-test scores. With a 5% significance level, the Access program has significantly enhanced the learners' knowledge and skills, and has also brought about significant changes in their perceptions of American people and culture.

Comparison between Access and Non-Access Learners

During the midterm evaluation, a group of non-Access students underwent the same assessment questionnaires. These students were selected from peers of Access students who share similar ethnic, social, economic, and educational backgrounds. The primary objective was to assess whether the skill level and perceptions of the non-Access students differ from those in the program.

Table 3 Midterm Evaluation Scores of Access and Non-Access Learners

Domains	Learners Grouping		<i>Difference</i>
	Access	Non-Access	
Proficiency in English Language	64.3%	44.0%	20.3%
Familiarity with American Culture	53.0%	45.6%	7.4%
Attitude Toward American Culture	86.4%	59.6%	26.7%

Table 3 displays the assessment scores of learners, categorized into two groups: Access and Non-Access. The data reveals that students in the Access program obtained higher percentage scores in all assessed areas compared to their non-Access peers. Particularly, Access program participants achieved significantly higher percentage scores in English Language performance and exhibited more positive attitudes towards American culture than non-Access students.

The data analysis reveals notable differences between the two groups across various assessed areas.

In Proficiency in English Language, the Access learners demonstrated a significantly higher average score of 64.3% compared to Non-Access learners, who scored 44.0%. The difference of 20.3% indicates a substantial positive impact of the Access program on students' Proficiency in English language. This suggests that the intervention program has effectively enhanced the language proficiency of the participating students.

Regarding Familiarity with American Culture, the Access learners scored 53.0%, while Non-Access learners scored 45.6%. The 7.4% difference suggests that students in the Access program have a better understanding of American culture. This finding aligns with the objective of the Access program to expose

students to different cultures, showcasing its potential influence on students' cultural knowledge.

The most significant difference is observed in attitudes toward American culture. Access learners scored 86.4%, while non-Access learners scored 59.6%. This substantial difference of 26.7% indicates a considerable positive shift in the attitudes of Access learners toward American culture. The program imparts knowledge and notably influences students' perceptions and attitudes.

The results across all assessed areas consistently favor the Access learners, indicating a positive impact of the program on their Proficiency in English language, familiarity with American culture, and attitudes toward American culture. The observed differences underscore the effectiveness of the Access program in achieving its objectives and contributing to the overall growth and development of participating students.

The findings suggest that the Access program has a measurable and positive influence on students' language skills and cultural awareness. The program contributes to academic performance and fosters a more positive attitude toward cultural diversity. This underscores the potential of targeted language interventions to bring about holistic improvements in students' learning experiences.

Figure 2 illustrates the difference in average mean responses (in percentage) between the two groups.

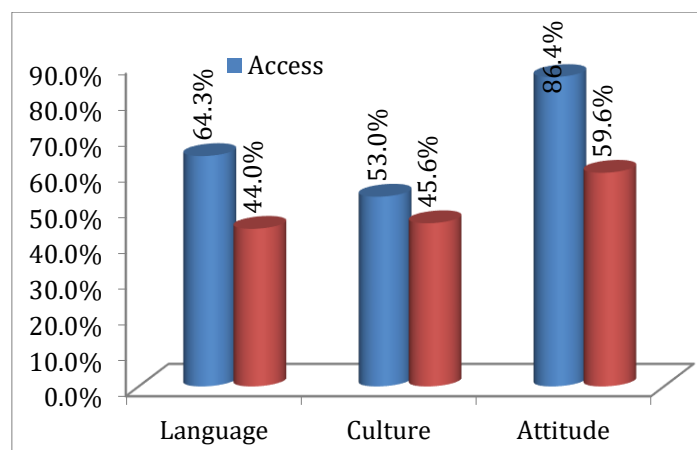


Figure 2 displays a graph illustrating the midterm assessment scores of Access and non-Access students.

To ascertain whether the consistently higher differences in mean responses suffice to conclude that Access students outperformed non-Access students, a

series of independent t-tests comparing the scores of the two groups were conducted. The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4 T-test comparing the two groups

Evaluation Domain Compared	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Proficiency in English Language	.20306	.04126	4.922	.000
Familiarity with American Culture	.07408	.03711	1.996	.050
Attitude Toward American Culture	.80141	.09089	8.818	.000

The aforementioned results suggest that, aside from familiarity with American culture, Access participants exhibit superior English language skills and hold significantly more positive attitudes towards the acceptance of American culture. This implies a significant impact of the program on English language proficiency and fosters a greater understanding and tolerance of cultures different from one's own.

To evaluate whether the observed disparities in mean responses consistently indicate superior performance among Access students compared to Non-Access students, a series of independent t-tests were conducted to compare the scores of the two groups. The summarized results in Table 4 offer insights into the statistical significance of their differences.

The mean difference of 0.20306, with a standard error of 0.04126, yielded a t-value of 4.922, which is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). This indicates that Access participants demonstrate significantly better English skills than their Non-Access counterparts. These findings confirm the effectiveness of the Access program in improving language proficiency.

Although the mean difference for familiarity with American culture is 0.07408, the t-value of 1.996 does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance ($p = 0.050$). This implies that this area's observed difference in mean scores is not statistically robust. According to the current analysis, access and Non-Access groups do not show a significant disparity in their familiarity with American culture.

The most significant difference is observed in attitude toward American culture, with a mean difference of 0.80141 and a highly significant t-value of 8.818 ($p < 0.001$). Access participants exhibit significantly more positive attitudes toward accepting and tolerating American culture than Non-Access students.

The statistical results confirm that Access students surpass Non-Access students in English language skills and demonstrate significantly more favorable attitudes toward American culture. Although the difference in knowledge of Western culture is not statistically significant, the positive trends favoring the Access group are noteworthy.

The findings suggest that the Access program is particularly effective in influencing language proficiency and fostering positive attitudes toward cultural diversity. The non-significant difference in familiarity with American culture may indicate that both groups receive similar exposure to this aspect, irrespective of program participation.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study uncover substantial learning progress among students enrolled in the Access program across three key domains: Proficiency in English language, familiarity with American culture, and attitudes toward American culture.

1. Although the Access language program showed a moderate yet significant enhancement in students' English language proficiency, it is important to highlight that the progress in this area was not as pronounced as

- in other aspects. To tackle this, a more thorough examination is required to explore strategies for achieving a greater impact on English language skills. This is essential to ensure that students are adequately equipped for future academic and professional endeavors, where robust English proficiency frequently serves as a prerequisite for success.
2. Compared to their Non-Access counterparts, students engaged in the Access program significantly improved their comprehension of American culture. These findings imply that the Access program serves as a crucial factor in expanding students' cultural awareness beyond mere language acquisition.
 3. Access students demonstrated a notable positive change in their attitudes towards accepting and tolerating American culture. This result emphasizes the transformative influence of the Access program, suggesting that it extends beyond language proficiency to foster a broader cultural awareness.

Overall, the findings underscore the comprehensive impact of the Access program on students, encompassing language skills, cultural knowledge, and attitudes. While celebrating the program's effectiveness in enhancing English language proficiency and fostering cultural openness, it is crucial to critically reflect on areas for improvement, particularly in maximizing the impact on English language skills to better prepare students for their academic and professional futures. By connecting these findings to the previously stated theory and literature review, we gain a nuanced understanding of the program's outcomes and their potential for informing practice and guiding future research.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study unequivocally affirm the positive and meaningful impact of the Access program across various dimensions for participating students.

Firstly, the program has significantly propelled progress in learning English language, indicating a commendable improvement in language proficiency.

Secondly, the noteworthy advancement in knowledge of American culture among Access students, in comparison to their non-Access peers, underscores the program's success in broadening cultural understanding.

Lastly, the observed positive shift in attitudes toward acceptance and tolerance of American culture among Access students signifies the program's role not just in

language development but also in fostering a mindset of openness and understanding towards diverse cultures.

Collectively, the Access program emerges as a valuable asset, effectively promoting learning, cultural knowledge, and cultivating positive attitudes among the student participants. However, it is imperative to acknowledge the need for continuous improvement and critical reflection to further enhance the program's effectiveness in addressing the diverse needs of students and preparing them for future academic and professional endeavors. By leveraging the insights gained from this study and engaging in ongoing evaluation and adaptation, educators and policymakers can ensure that the Access program continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and the areas of improvement identified, here are some recommendations:

1. While the Access program has demonstrated success, ongoing evaluations, and refinements could focus on tailoring interventions further to enhance specific aspects of language learning and cultural awareness. Incorporating feedback mechanisms and adapting content to address evolving educational needs could contribute to sustained program effectiveness.
2. Enhance English language instruction in the Access program by increasing interactivity and immersion, facilitating regular speaking and listening practice, and providing personalized support to address individual language needs.
3. Broaden cultural immersion activities in the Access program by organizing field trips to cultural landmarks, inviting guest speakers from diverse Western cultures, and encouraging active student engagement in discussions and projects that foster a deeper understanding of cultural nuances.
4. Promote intercultural exchanges by connecting Access students with individuals from Western cultures through online platforms, pen-pal programs, or cultural exchange initiatives. These interactions will facilitate a deeper appreciation for diversity, broaden students' cultural horizons, and foster a greater understanding of different cultures.

5. Conduct a longitudinal study to evaluate the lasting impacts of language programs, like the Access program, on language proficiency and cultural understanding. Track participants beyond the program duration to assess if the positive effects endure over time and apply them to real-life language use and cross-cultural interactions.

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