

THE ROLE OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY IN ENHANCING SECRETARIAL STUDENT PERFORMANCE

M Faiz Al Islami Nst¹, Dela Sarifa Manurung², Rita Hartati³

E-mail: faiznst@gmail.com

Universitas Negeri Medan

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Abstract: This study investigates the impact of English proficiency on the performance of secretarial students, focusing on writing, speaking, listening, and reading skills. Data was collected from 22 students in a Secretaryship program through a descriptive survey. The findings reveal that while a portion of students are confident in their English abilities, many face challenges, particularly in writing professional emails and speaking in class discussions. Listening and reading comprehension also emerged as areas needing improvement. The majority of students recognized that their English proficiency moderately to significantly affects their academic performance in secretarial tasks. The study concludes that enhancing English proficiency through structured practice, feedback, and interactive activities is crucial for preparing students for professional secretarial roles, with recommendations including more writing assignments, role-playing, and speaking exercises to build competence and confidence.

INTRODUCTION

In today's increasingly interconnected world, English proficiency has emerged as a critical skill across various fields, particularly in administrative and secretarial roles. As globalization intensifies and communication transcends geographical barriers, the demand for proficient English speakers is greater than ever. Secretarial students, who often serve as the backbone of organizational communication, must possess strong English language skills to effectively manage their responsibilities, including writing professional documents,

conducting meetings, and interacting with clients.

Effective reading, listening, writing, and speaking are the cornerstones of human language acquisition, and English language proficiency is regarded as the foundation for these skills (Afful, 2007). Despite the importance of English in the workplace, many secretarial students struggle with varying levels of language proficiency, which can adversely affect their academic performance and professional readiness. Understanding how English proficiency influences secretarial student performance is crucial for educational institutions aiming to equip students with the necessary skills for success in their careers.

This research aims to explore the correlation between English proficiency and the performance of secretarial students, specifically focusing on four key language skills: writing, listening, reading, and speaking. By employing a descriptive survey methodology, this study gathers insights from students enrolled in a Secretaryship program. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of how enhancing English proficiency can lead to improved performance in secretarial roles, ultimately supporting students' academic and professional growth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English proficiency is essential for secretarial students, as effective communication forms the backbone of administrative roles. This literature review focuses on the four key language skills—writing, speaking, listening, and reading—highlighting their importance and how they contribute to student performance in secretarial programs.

Importance of Writing Skills in Secretarial Tasks

Writing skills are necessary for secretarial students' success since they constantly participate in professional duties that demand clear and efficient communication. One of the key responsibilities of a secretary is to prepare emails. Effective email communication is critical for sharing information, making requests, and tracking progress on projects. When a secretary has to plan a meeting, they must send an email that clearly states the date, time, venue, and agenda. A well-structured email not only ensures that recipients comprehend the information, but it also demonstrates professionalism and attention to detail. Huang (2016) underlines the importance of excellent email writing for easy communication and a positive image of the company.

In addition to writing emails, secretaries frequently create meeting agendas. A well-crafted agenda acts as a road map for meetings, guiding participants through the purpose, structure, and objectives. Clear wording in agendas improves attendees' readiness and engagement, allowing meetings to operate more effectively. For example, an agenda that includes conversation topics, time allocations, and responsible parties ensures that all important elements are covered. According to Goh and Burns (2012), this clarity improves the

efficacy of meetings, allowing firms to optimize production during these gatherings.

Secretarial students regularly participate to or write a variety of reports, including financial, progress, and performance reports. These papers demand the ability to convey data in a clear and logical manner. Sadler (2019) emphasizes the value of participating in a variety of writing projects, since report writing assesses a student's capacity to organize and evaluate material efficiently. A well-written report not only communicates critical metrics but also enables stakeholders to make educated decisions. For example, a monthly performance report that describes key performance indicators and makes suggestions might help to steer corporate strategy and direction.

Importance of Speaking Skills in Secretarial Tasks

Secretarial students must also have strong speaking abilities since they constantly communicate verbally in professional settings such as meetings, presentations, and phone conversations. Effective speaking helps secretaries to express their views effectively and confidently, resulting in improved cooperation and teamwork. Tuan and Nhu (2010) suggest that good speaking skills enable secretaries to express information succinctly, allowing colleagues and clients to comprehend and respond properly. This precision in communication not only boosts productivity, but it also adds to a good work environment.

Secretarial students frequently have to lead discussions or give presentations in the context of meetings. Speaking fluently enables them to represent their businesses successfully, which makes them priceless in these situations. For example, a secretary may be assigned to provide updates or to summarize important topics from earlier conversations during a team meeting. According to Lee (2021), having great communication skills in these kinds of circumstances is essential to making sure that everyone is on the same page and informed. Strong oral communication abilities enable secretarial students to constructively participate in conversations, advancing the topic and encouraging teamwork.

Moreover, it is impossible to exaggerate the value of practice in honing speaking abilities. Huang (2016) suggests using role-playing and simulations as useful instructional strategies to improve students' speech fluency and spontaneity. By participating in these hands-on activities, secretarial students get a taste of real-world situations and gain confidence and reflexivity. For instance, having a fake presentation or acting out a phone conversation with a customer can help students be ready for real-world scenarios where they will need to speak under pressure.

Importance of Listening Skills in Secretarial Tasks

Listening is an essential skill that is at the heart of effective communication in any workplace, especially for secretarial students who are vital in ensuring information flows smoothly. As highlighted by Goh and Burns (2012), strong listening abilities are critical for

secretaries to accurately grasp instructions, feedback, and information shared during meetings. This skill is particularly important since secretaries often act as the communication bridge between different departments, ensuring that everyone understands the messages being conveyed. By sharpening their listening skills, they can clear up misunderstandings and swiftly tackle any issues, which ultimately enhances the efficiency of the organization.

Good listening skills also play a significant role in building positive relationships in the workplace. According to Rahimi and M. A. (2014), being an attentive listener fosters a collaborative environment, as it shows respect for the opinions of colleagues. When secretarial students engage in active listening, they establish trust and rapport with their team members, creating a supportive and productive work atmosphere. This collaborative spirit not only boosts teamwork but also nurtures a positive organizational culture where ideas and feedback flow freely.

However, it's not uncommon for secretarial students to struggle with understanding native English speakers due to insufficient listening practice. Research by Arslan and Polat (2016) indicates that these students often find it challenging to comprehend spoken language in professional situations. This points to the urgent need for targeted listening exercises within their training programs to help them improve in this area. Incorporating activities like listening to recorded meetings, joining discussions, or simulating real-life scenarios can significantly aid students in developing the skills needed to navigate complex verbal communications with ease.

The Importance of Reading Skills in Secretarial Tasks

For secretarial students, reading proficiency is not just a helpful skill—it's essential. These students frequently handle a variety of written materials, including contracts, policies, and emails, which are all fundamental to their daily tasks. As Sadler (2019) points out, effective reading skills allow students to quickly and accurately pull out important information, which is crucial for making sound decisions. When secretaries can swiftly grasp the key points of a document, they are better equipped to respond appropriately and ensure that communication flows smoothly within the organization.

Additionally, Nation (2009) emphasizes that reading plays a vital role in building vocabulary, which is fundamental to developing all other language skills. A rich vocabulary enables secretarial students to express themselves more clearly and professionally, enhancing their overall effectiveness in written and verbal communications. This vocabulary expansion often occurs naturally through exposure to varied texts, further reinforcing the importance of strong reading habits.

Goh and Burns (2012) recommend integrating extensive reading into the curriculum, suggesting that this practice helps students become more fluent and confident readers. Engaging with a wide range of texts not only improves their reading abilities but also

encourages them to connect more deeply with the material. This deeper engagement can lead to greater retention of information and a more nuanced understanding of complex topics, which is invaluable in a fast-paced work environment.

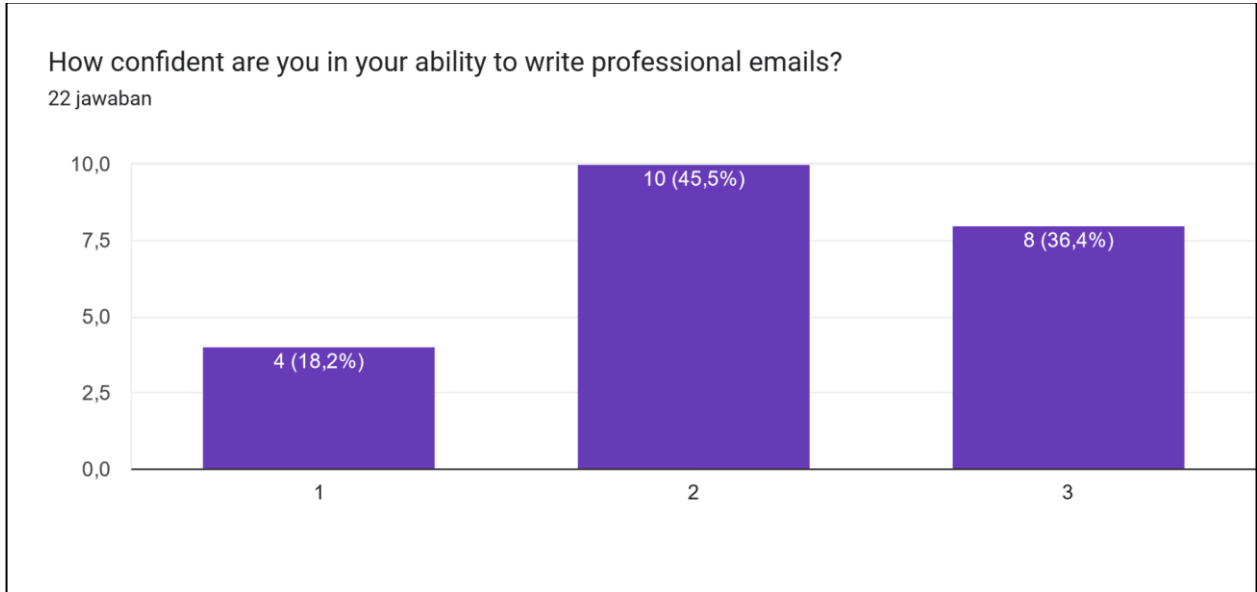
Lee (2021) further highlights the need for strong comprehension skills, as secretarial students often face complex documents that require careful analysis and an understanding of nuanced information. For instance, understanding a contract involves not just reading the words, but interpreting legal jargon and identifying key clauses that may impact the organization..

METHOD

The research project used a descriptive survey to gather viewpoints and opinions from participants. According to Avoke (2005), a descriptive survey design accurately captures the features of specific individual circumstances or groups. Every student enrolled in the Secretaryship school was the focus of the research. For this study, a total of 20 respondents were chosen using the stratified sample approach. In this study, data from participants was gathered via a questionnaire. It consisted of closed-ended questions. Data analysis produced numbers and facts that made it possible to understand the findings and draw conclusions from the study. Every question on the questionnaire had a code. Likert scale items were scored on a range of 1 to 3. To make sure that replies were understandable, readable, pertinent, and suitable, questionnaires were revised.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings presented in this study are based on the responses of 22 participants, obtained through a Google Form survey comprising 10 questions on a Likert scale.

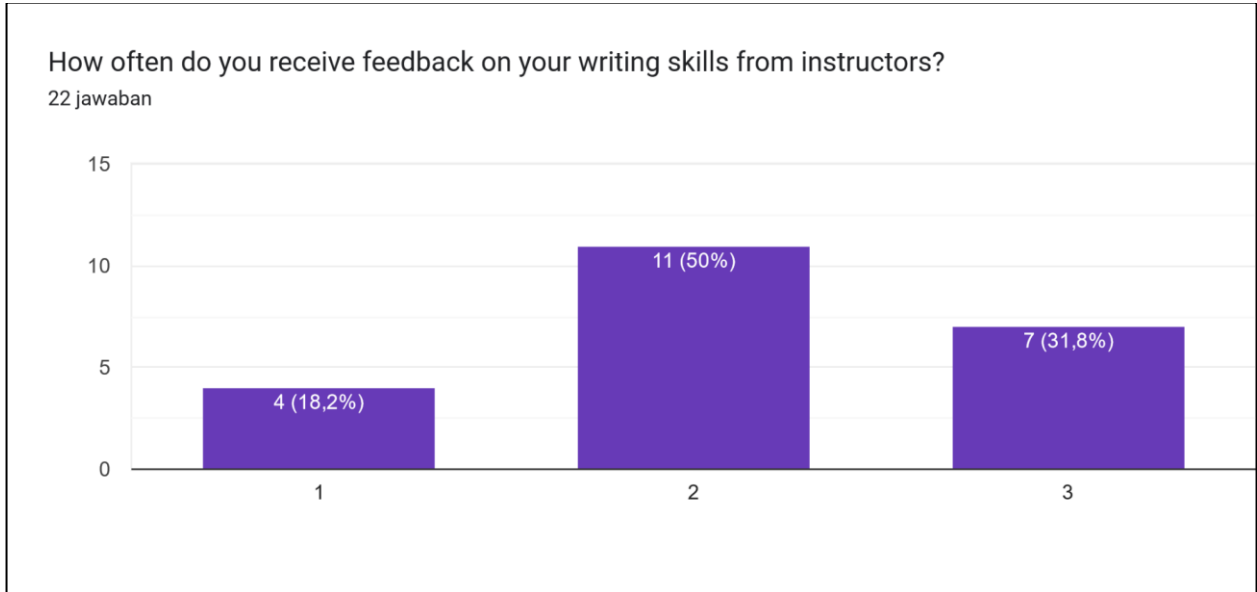


Based on the survey findings from 22 participants in the Secretaryship program, the distribution of responses to the question "How confident are you in your ability to write professional emails?" shows varying levels of confidence among the students.

The largest group, accounting for nearly half of the respondents (45%), demonstrated a neutral stance toward their confidence in professional email writing. This suggests that while these students may possess some foundational skills, they likely require further practice and guidance to feel more secure in their ability to perform this task effectively in professional settings.

Meanwhile, 36% of students expressed confidence in their email writing abilities. This indicates that more than a third of the participants feel adequately prepared to handle professional written communication tasks, likely due to sufficient instruction or practice. These students may be more familiar with email etiquette, structure, and the formal tone required in business communication.

However, 18% of the students reported feeling unconfident, highlighting a need for targeted interventions. These students might struggle with the formal aspects of email writing, such as clarity, grammar, and tone, which are essential in secretarial roles.



1. Frequency of Feedback Distribution:

The majority of the students (41%) reported that they sometimes receive feedback on their writing skills from instructors. This suggests that while feedback is provided, it may not be consistent or regular enough to fully support students in improving their writing skills. Feedback is critical for helping students identify areas of improvement, so receiving it only intermittently could impact their ability to develop the necessary skills for professional email writing and other secretarial tasks.

36% of students indicated that they rarely receive feedback. This is concerning, as it suggests that over a third of the students are not getting the necessary guidance to enhance their writing proficiency. Lack of feedback could hinder students' progress, as they may not be aware of their mistakes or how to improve their writing style, tone, or structure. Without constructive criticism, students may struggle to develop the confidence and skillset required for writing in professional settings.

On the other hand, 23% of students stated that they often receive feedback from their instructors. This smaller group benefits from more frequent and presumably detailed feedback, which is likely helping them refine their writing abilities. Regular feedback can be instrumental in reinforcing good writing habits and correcting common mistakes, allowing students to progress at a faster pace.

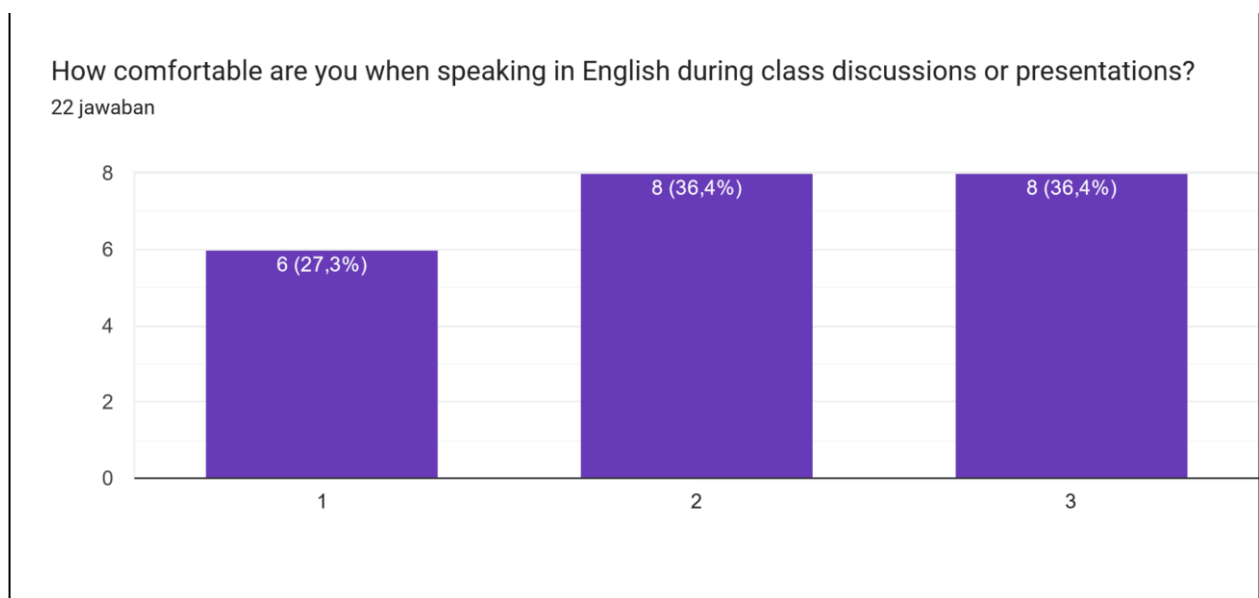
2. Impact on Writing Confidence:

The frequency of feedback correlates with how confident students feel about their writing abilities. Students who receive feedback more often are more likely to feel confident in their writing, as they are continuously being guided and corrected. For those who rarely receive feedback, the lack of consistent instructor input may explain why some students feel neutral or unconfident about their writing skills. Regular feedback serves as a critical tool for improvement, allowing students to track their progress and make necessary adjustments.

3. Suggestions for Improvement:

The responses indicate a need for more structured and regular feedback mechanisms within the Secretaryship program. To address the gap where students are not receiving enough feedback, instructors could introduce more opportunities for students to submit written work for review. This could include:

- **Frequent Writing Assignments:** Short, task-based writing assignments that mimic real-world scenarios could provide more opportunities for feedback.
- **Peer Review Sessions:** Engaging students in peer review could also increase the amount of feedback they receive, helping them understand different writing styles and common errors.
- **Dedicated Feedback Time:** Instructors could allocate specific time during class or in one-on-one sessions to review students' written work and provide targeted feedback.



1. Comfort Levels Distribution:

The majority of students, 45%, reported feeling neutral about their comfort level when speaking English during class discussions or presentations. This suggests that while they may not feel particularly anxious or hesitant, they also lack full confidence in their ability to communicate fluently in English in front of others. A neutral stance indicates that students may still be working on building their speaking skills, and could benefit from more practice or supportive learning environments that encourage participation without pressure.

27% of students indicated they are uncomfortable when speaking in English in these settings, which is a significant portion of the class. This group may struggle with fluency, pronunciation, or anxiety about making mistakes in front of peers or instructors. The discomfort experienced by these students could hinder their participation in discussions and presentations, limiting their ability to develop critical speaking skills that are necessary for future professional roles. This finding suggests the need for targeted interventions, such as confidence-building exercises, role-play activities, or opportunities for low-pressure speaking practice, to help these students gain the experience they need to feel more comfortable.

On the other hand, 27% of students reported feeling comfortable speaking in English during class discussions and presentations. This group likely feels confident in their English-speaking abilities, suggesting they have had sufficient practice or positive experiences that reinforce their comfort level. These students are more likely to engage actively in class and may be better prepared to handle professional situations where English-speaking skills are required, such as meetings or presentations in a business environment.

2. Implications for Speaking Practice:

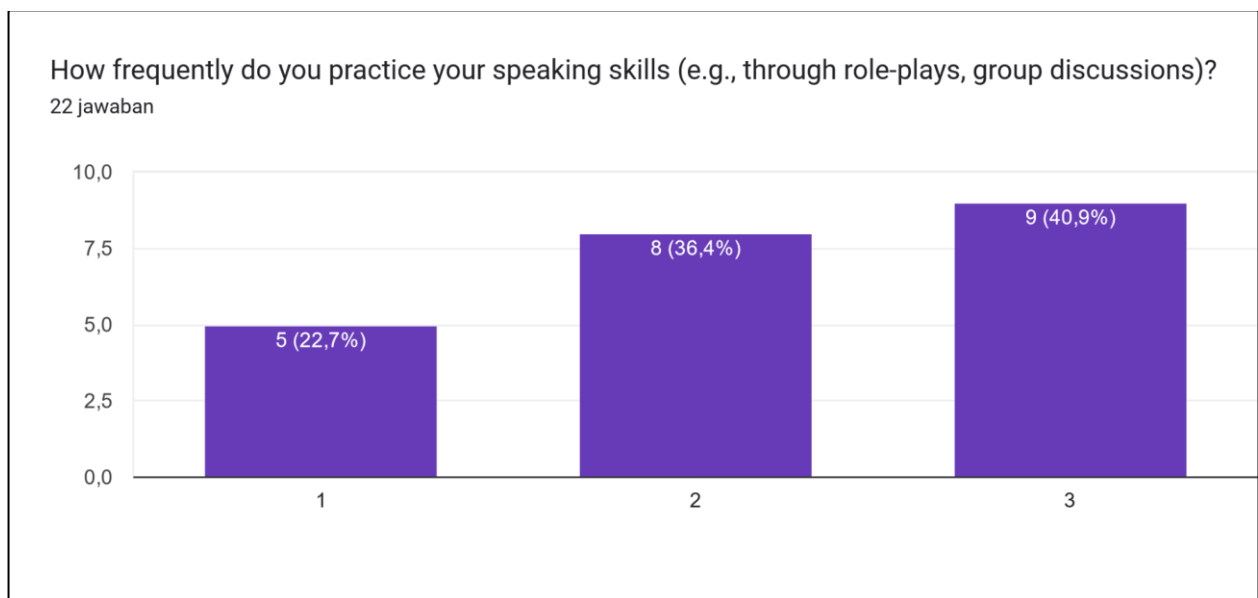
The distribution of responses shows that a significant portion of students remains either neutral or uncomfortable when speaking English in class, indicating room for improvement in their speaking confidence. Since speaking is a crucial skill for secretarial students, it is essential that the program provides more opportunities for these students to practice speaking in a supportive environment. Increased exposure to English-speaking activities, such as group discussions, presentations, and role-playing, could help neutral and uncomfortable students improve their fluency and reduce the anxiety associated with speaking English in public.

For the neutral group, more consistent opportunities for speaking practice could gradually build their confidence, allowing them to move from a neutral stance to a more comfortable one. For those who feel uncomfortable, a more individualized approach may be necessary, offering personalized feedback, encouragement, and support to address the specific areas they struggle with, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammar.

3. Recommendations for Improvement:

To support students in becoming more comfortable with speaking English, the Secretaryship program could incorporate the following strategies:

- **Speaking Workshops:** Interactive workshops that focus on public speaking, presentations, and discussions can provide students with more structured practice in a low-stress environment.
- **Role-Playing Scenarios:** Simulating real-life business situations where students must use English to communicate with clients or colleagues can help them gain practical experience and reduce speaking anxiety.
- **Peer Feedback:** Creating opportunities for peer-to-peer feedback after discussions or presentations could help students feel more supported and receive constructive criticism from their classmates.



1. Frequency of Speaking Practice:

A substantial portion of students, 41%, indicated that they often practice their speaking skills through activities such as role-plays and group discussions. This level of engagement suggests that these students are actively participating in exercises that enhance their verbal communication abilities, likely leading to improved fluency and confidence in speaking English. Regular practice helps them become more accustomed to using English in various contexts, which is crucial for their development as future secretaries.

36% of students reported that they practice their speaking skills sometimes. While this indicates some level of engagement with speaking activities, it suggests that these students may not be receiving enough consistent practice to fully develop their speaking skills. The occasional practice may help them maintain some familiarity with speaking in English, but it may not provide the depth of experience needed to significantly boost their confidence or fluency.

In contrast, 23% of students indicated that they rarely practice their speaking skills. This group may struggle with developing the necessary fluency and confidence due to the lack of opportunities for regular speaking practice. Infrequent engagement in speaking activities can lead to anxiety or hesitation when asked to communicate in English, which could hinder their overall performance in discussions and presentations.

2. Implications for Confidence and Skill Development:

The responses highlight a positive trend, as a majority of students engage in speaking practice either often or sometimes. Those who practice frequently are likely to experience improvements in their communication skills, which can lead to increased confidence during class discussions and presentations. Regular practice allows these students to refine their pronunciation, build their vocabulary, and develop their ability to express ideas clearly in English.

However, the 23% of students who practice rarely may face challenges in building their speaking skills. The lack of regular engagement in speaking activities can contribute to feelings of discomfort or anxiety when asked to speak in English, which may negatively impact their performance in professional settings. Addressing this gap is essential for ensuring that all students feel prepared to communicate effectively in their future roles.

3. Recommendations for Increasing Speaking Practice:

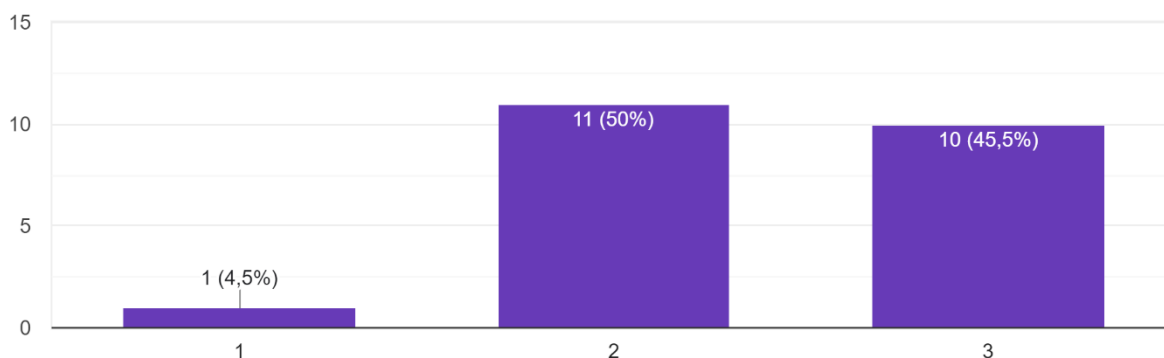
To enhance the speaking skills of all students, particularly those who practice rarely, the Secretaryship program should consider implementing more structured opportunities for speaking exercises. Some potential strategies include:

- **Regular Speaking Activities:** Scheduling weekly or bi-weekly speaking activities, such as role-plays, presentations, or group discussions, can provide more consistent opportunities for practice.

- **Interactive Learning Environments:** Creating interactive classroom environments that encourage students to engage in English conversations can help foster a culture of communication and collaboration.
- **Peer Feedback Sessions:** Incorporating peer review and feedback after speaking exercises can give students constructive insights into their speaking performance and help them identify areas for improvement.

How well do you understand spoken English during lectures and meetings?

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The findings presented in this study are based on the responses of 22 participants, obtained through a Google Form survey comprising one question:

"How well do you understand spoken English during lectures and meetings?"

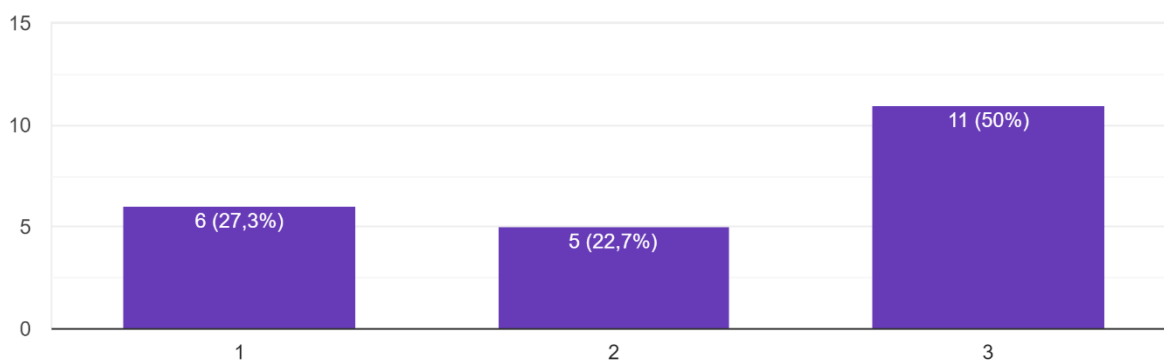
The largest group, accounting for 50% of respondents, demonstrated a moderate stance toward their understanding of spoken English. This suggests that while these students have some level of comprehension, they might still require further practice and exposure to become more proficient and comfortable in academic discussions and meetings conducted in English.

Meanwhile, 45.5% of students expressed confidence in their understanding, indicating that nearly half of the participants feel well-prepared to engage with English in professional and academic contexts. These students likely have sufficient exposure or prior training in spoken English, enabling them to follow discussions and lectures effectively.

However, 4.5% of the students reported struggling with comprehension, highlighting a need for targeted support. These students may benefit from additional English language training, focusing on listening skills and academic vocabulary, to ensure they can participate fully in academic discourse.

How often do you participate in listening exercises (e.g., listening to recordings, participating in discussions)?

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The findings presented in this study are based on the responses of 22 participants, obtained through a Google Form survey comprising the question:

"How often do you participate in listening exercises (e.g., listening to recordings, participating in discussions)?"

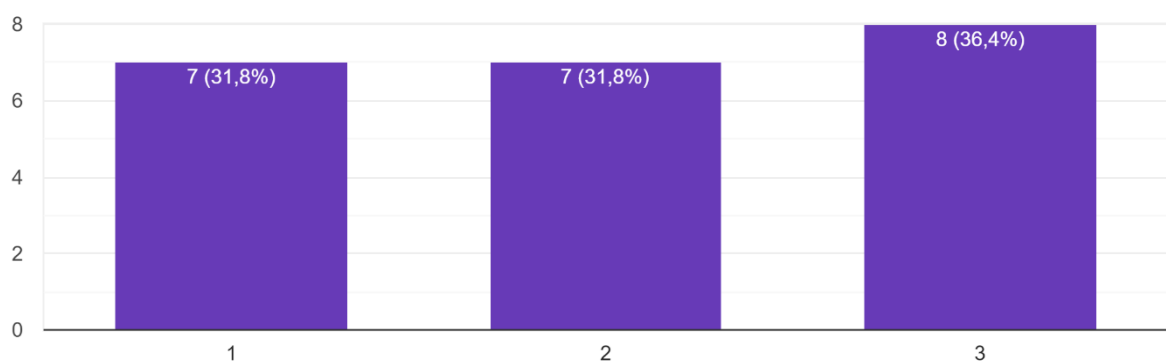
The largest group, representing 50% of respondents, consistently takes part in listening exercises. This suggests that half of the students are actively involved in listening practices, which likely helps improve their English listening skills and comprehension abilities. These students may feel more comfortable in engaging with listening-based activities, whether through academic discussions or other listening tasks.

Meanwhile, 22.7% of students participate less frequently but still maintain a certain level of involvement in listening exercises. This group may benefit from additional encouragement or structured opportunities to further engage with listening practices, enhancing their overall language proficiency.

However, 27.3% of the students reported rare participation in listening exercises, indicating a need for targeted interventions. These students may struggle with listening activities due to lack of practice, and increasing their exposure to listening exercises could significantly improve their listening comprehension.

How confident are you in your ability to comprehend written English documents (e.g., reports, contracts)?

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The findings presented in this study are based on the responses of 22 participants, obtained through a Google Form survey comprising 10 questions on a Likert scale.

How confident are you in your ability to comprehend written English documents (e.g., reports, contracts)?

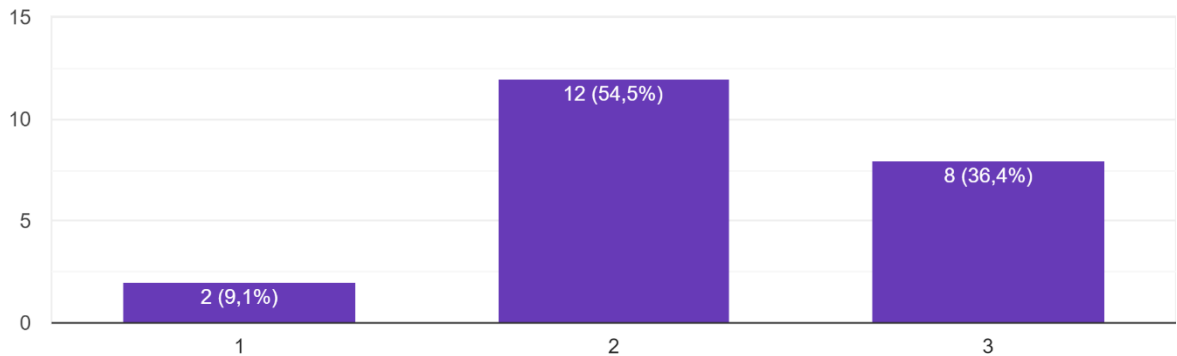
The largest group, 36.4%, felt confident in their ability to understand written English documents, suggesting that these students are likely well-equipped to handle professional written communication in English.

Meanwhile, 31.8% of students expressed neutrality in their comprehension skills. This indicates that although they may have some foundational understanding, they may benefit from further instruction or practice to feel more secure in their abilities.

However, 31.8%*m of the students reported low confidence, signaling a need for targeted interventions to improve their reading comprehension of English documents. These students may face difficulties with the structure or complexity of professional documents and could benefit from additional resources or support to enhance their skills.

How frequently do you engage in reading English materials (e.g., textbooks, articles) outside of class?

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The findings presented in this study are based on the responses of 22 participants, obtained through a Google Form survey comprising 10 questions on a Likert scale.

How frequently do you engage in reading English materials (e.g., textbooks, articles) outside of class?

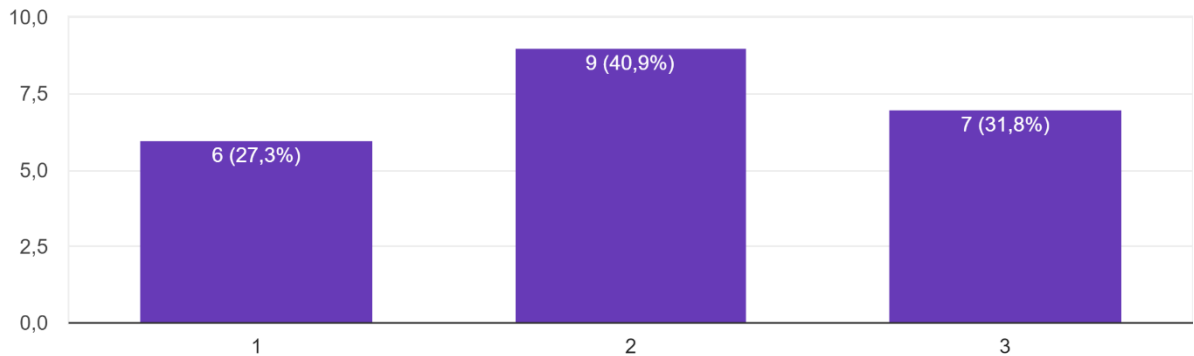
The largest group, 54.5%, engages with English materials moderately, indicating that more than half of the students dedicate some time outside of class to improving their reading and comprehension skills.

Meanwhile, 36.4% of students reported frequent engagement with English materials. This suggests that a significant portion of students are taking active steps to strengthen their English proficiency by reading additional resources outside of class.

However, 9.1% of the students reported minimal engagement with English materials, which indicates that these students may need encouragement or additional resources to increase their exposure to the language outside of formal classroom settings.

To what extent do you believe that your English language skills impact your academic performance in secretarial tasks (e.g., assignments, projects)?

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The findings presented in this study are based on the responses of 22 participants, obtained through a Google Form survey comprising 10 questions on a Likert scale.

To what extent do you believe that your English language skills impact your academic performance in secretarial tasks (e.g., assignments, projects)?

The largest group, 40.9%, feels that their English skills moderately impact their secretarial tasks, indicating that many students believe their proficiency helps to some extent in completing academic work.

Meanwhile, 31.8% of the respondents believe that their English proficiency has a significant influence on their academic tasks, which implies that these students may attribute much of their success in assignments and projects to their language skills.

However, 27.3% of students reported that they feel their English skills have a limited impact on their academic performance, which might suggest that they believe other factors besides language proficiency contribute more to their success in secretarial tasks.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study emphasize the significant impact that English proficiency has on the performance of secretarial students, particularly in the areas of writing, speaking, listening, and reading. The data collected from the survey revealed varying levels of confidence

among students in their ability to perform these tasks, with some demonstrating strong skills while others showed a need for further development.

Writing Skills

The findings indicate that while 36% of students expressed confidence in their ability to write professional emails, a notable proportion (45%) remained neutral, and 18% felt unconfident. This distribution suggests that many secretarial students possess a foundational understanding of professional writing but require additional instruction and feedback to develop stronger confidence. These results align with the literature, which highlights the importance of clear and professional writing in secretarial roles (Huang, 2016). It is essential that educational institutions provide more structured opportunities for writing practice, especially in business communication contexts, to build both skill and confidence.

Speaking Skills

In terms of speaking abilities, the results were also mixed. While 27% of students felt comfortable speaking English in class settings, nearly half remained neutral, and another 27% expressed discomfort. These results suggest that many students struggle with fluency, pronunciation, or anxiety in verbal communication. Given the critical role that speaking plays in secretarial tasks—such as leading meetings, giving presentations, and managing phone conversations—this is an area that requires attention. Similar to findings by Tuan and Nhu (2010), the current study underscores the need for regular speaking practice, role-playing, and feedback to help students improve their confidence in speaking English in professional contexts.

Listening Skills

Listening comprehension was another area of concern, as some students reported difficulty understanding spoken English during lectures and meetings. This could be due to a lack of exposure to native English speakers or complex language in professional settings. Given that secretarial roles often involve accurately interpreting instructions and feedback, strengthening listening skills through targeted exercises and real-world simulations is essential. The literature supports this, noting that listening is crucial for fostering effective workplace communication (Goh & Burns, 2012).

Reading Skills

With respect to reading comprehension, 36.4% of students expressed confidence in their ability to understand written documents, yet 31.8% of students indicated low confidence.

These findings point to a need for enhanced reading instruction, particularly in navigating complex professional documents such as contracts and reports. As noted by Sadler (2019), developing reading skills is vital for secretarial tasks that require the analysis of detailed information.

Impact of English Proficiency on Academic Performance

Overall, 31.8% of the participants felt that their English proficiency had a significant impact on their academic performance, while 40.9% believed it had a moderate effect. This demonstrates a clear recognition among students that their language skills are directly tied to their success in completing secretarial tasks. The literature also supports the correlation between language proficiency and job performance in secretarial roles (Afful, 2007), emphasizing the need for educational programs to focus on language skill development to better prepare students for the workforce.

Implications for Education

The results of this study highlight the importance of structured feedback and consistent practice in developing language skills. Educational institutions need to incorporate more interactive and hands-on learning methods, such as frequent writing assignments, role-playing activities, and peer review sessions. These strategies could help students gain more practical experience, reduce anxiety, and improve their proficiency and confidence in using English in professional settings.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research highlight the critical role that English proficiency plays in enhancing the performance of secretarial students. Mastery of key language skills—writing, speaking, listening, and reading—significantly contributes to students' success in both academic and professional contexts. Students with higher proficiency levels are better equipped to handle essential tasks such as writing professional emails, participating in meetings, and comprehending complex documents, all of which are vital for secretarial roles.

However, the study also identifies gaps in confidence and skill development among many students, particularly in writing and speaking. While some students express comfort with these tasks, others exhibit hesitance, underscoring the need for more targeted interventions. Regular feedback, structured practice, and interactive activities such as role-playing can help address these gaps, building students' competence and confidence.

In conclusion, enhancing English proficiency among secretarial students is essential for

their academic and professional success. Educational institutions should prioritize practical and consistent language instruction, providing opportunities for frequent practice and feedback. By doing so, they can better prepare students for the demands of modern secretarial work and ensure that they are ready to excel in their future careers

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