



Effects of Language Barriers and Social Integration on Academic Achievement of International Students

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of language proficiency on social integration and academic achievement among non-native speakers in educational settings. Utilizing a sample of 200 participants, the research explores how varying levels of language skills influence students' grades, sense of belonging, and perceived helpfulness of institutional language support programs. Findings indicate a strong correlation (0.95) between high language proficiency and improved academic performance, with "Very Proficient" and "Proficient" participants consistently reporting higher GPAs than their less proficient peers. Additionally, participants with greater language skills reported feeling more socially integrated, highlighting the role of language in fostering both academic and social success. The study also underscores the importance of targeted language support programs, although feedback on their effectiveness was mixed, with some participants indicating that available resources were insufficient for their needs. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies, a more diverse sample, and specific types of support that are most effective for non-native speakers. By addressing these areas, educational institutions can better tailor their resources to support language proficiency, ultimately contributing to enhanced academic outcomes and smoother social integration for non-native speakers. Overall, the research provides a compelling argument for the integration of comprehensive language support programs, as language proficiency is shown to be a critical factor in both academic achievement and social cohesion within multicultural academic communities. Regression analysis was utilized to determine the strength of relationships between language proficiency, social integration, and academic achievement.

Subject Areas

Sociology

Keywords

Language Proficiency, Social Integration, Academic Achievement

1. Introduction

Language barriers are a significant challenge in multicultural societies, influencing both social integration and academic achievement. For individuals who are non-native speakers, the ability to communicate effectively in the dominant language of their environment is often a crucial factor in their success. Social integration and academic performance are deeply intertwined with language proficiency, as communication is fundamental to building relationships, accessing resources, and participating fully in societal and educational activities.

Social integration refers to the process through which individuals become functioning members of society by forming connections and adapting to the cultural norms and expectations of their environment. Language is a key component of this process. Non-native speakers, particularly immigrants and refugees, often face difficulties in forming social relationships due to language barriers. Research shows that limited proficiency in the host country's language can lead to social isolation and exclusion from social networks, which in turn impacts mental health and overall well-being [1]. This exclusion hampers the ability to form meaningful social connections, hindering their full participation in community life [2]. Examples of social integration measured in this study include participation in community events, joining school clubs, frequency of social interactions, and self-reported sense of belonging.

In the academic context, language barriers can have a profound impact on students' performance and educational outcomes. Academic achievement is closely linked to language proficiency, as students must comprehend instruction, participate in discussions, and demonstrate their knowledge through language-based assessments. According to Bernhofer & Tonin [3], students who are learning in a language that is not their first often face difficulties in understanding content, resulting in lower academic performance compared to their native-speaking peers. This is especially true in subjects that are language-intensive, such as history or literature, where comprehension and expression are essential.

The impact of language barriers on academic achievement extends beyond the classroom. Students with limited language proficiency may struggle with extracurricular activities, which are often opportunities for informal learning and social integration. The academic challenges faced by these students may also influence their self-esteem and motivation, leading to increased dropout rates [4]. Schools and educational institutions must therefore implement strategies to support language development and address the specific needs of students facing language barriers in order to promote both academic success and social inclusion.

This introduction explores how language barriers act as significant hurdles to

social integration and academic success, ultimately affecting an individual's potential to thrive in a new linguistic and cultural environment. Addressing these barriers through effective policies and support systems is vital for fostering inclusive and equitable societies.

1.1. Relevance of the Study

Understanding the effects of language barriers on social integration and academic achievement is increasingly relevant in today's globalized world, where migration and multiculturalism are common. Educational institutions and societies are becoming more linguistically diverse, leading to a growing number of individuals who face the challenge of adapting to new linguistic environments. The study of language barriers is crucial for identifying strategies that can facilitate smoother transitions for non-native speakers and promote inclusive educational and social systems.

In particular, this research is important for educators, policymakers, and community leaders who are tasked with fostering environments where individuals of all linguistic backgrounds can thrive. As noted by Aning [5], language barriers can perpetuate educational inequities, with non-native speakers often lagging behind their peers in terms of academic achievement and future opportunities. By addressing these barriers, we can help ensure that students, especially those from immigrant or refugee backgrounds, have equal access to education and social participation. Moreover, promoting social integration through language proficiency can help reduce social tensions and foster greater cohesion in multicultural societies [6].

The findings of this study have broad implications, not only for the education sector but also for broader social policy. It is relevant for countries with large immigrant populations, where addressing language barriers can help mitigate issues such as social exclusion, unemployment, and marginalization. Ultimately, by understanding the interplay between language barriers, social integration, and academic achievement, we can contribute to building more equitable and inclusive communities.

1.2. Research Problem

This study seeks to address several key research problems related to the impact of language barriers on social integration and academic achievement. These problems are particularly relevant in societies experiencing increasing levels of immigration and cultural diversity, where non-native speakers often face unique challenges in adapting to their new environments. The following research problems have been identified:

1.2.1. The Impact of Language Barriers on Social Integration

A primary research problem is understanding how limited proficiency in the dominant language of a society hinders social integration. Language is a critical tool for communication, and without fluency, non-native speakers often experience social isolation, exclusion from community activities, and difficulty in accessing essential

services. As noted by Ennin & Manariyo [7], social integration relies heavily on effective communication, and language barriers can create divisions between native and non-native speakers, exacerbating issues of marginalization.

1.2.2. The Effect of Language Barriers on Academic Achievement

A significant concern is the impact of language barriers on students' ability to perform academically. Students who are not proficient in the language of instruction may struggle to understand the content of their lessons, participate in classroom activities, and perform well in assessments. Amal [8], argues that the cognitive demands of learning a new language while simultaneously mastering academic content present a dual challenge for non-native speakers, which can hinder their educational progress.

1.2.3. The Role of Educational Institutions in Mitigating Language Barriers

Another key research problem is identifying the role that educational institutions play in addressing language barriers and supporting non-native speakers. Schools and universities are tasked with providing equal opportunities for all students, but those who face language barriers often require additional support to succeed. Kennedy, [9] highlights the need for targeted interventions, such as bilingual education programs, which can help bridge the gap between language learning and academic achievement.

1.3. Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are designed to provide insights into these research problems and to suggest potential solutions:

- To Analyze the Impact of Language Barriers on Social Integration
- To Investigate the Relationship Between Language Barriers and Academic Achievement
- To Assess the Effectiveness of Institutional Support for Language Learners

By addressing these objectives, the research will provide insights into how language barriers affect social and academic outcomes and offer practical recommendations for fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for non-native speakers.

1.4. Research Questions

The study on the impact of language barriers on social integration and academic achievement seeks to answer the following key research questions:

- What is the relationship between language proficiency and academic achievement among non-native speakers in educational institutions?
- How do language barriers affect the social integration of non-native speakers in their community?
- What challenges do non-native speakers face in educational settings due to language barriers?

- What are the long-term effects of language barriers on both social integration and educational attainment?

These research questions guide the investigation of the dual impact of language barriers on social and educational outcomes, while also exploring potential solutions to mitigate these challenges.

2. Methodology

This study will employ quantitative approach and research methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of how language barriers affect social integration and academic achievement.

2.1. Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design to evaluate the relationship between academic performance, the dependent variable, and two proposed independent variables: language barriers social integration, and institutional barriers among international students in Northern Cyprus. The research aims to explore how these independent factors influence the academic outcomes of international students and whether they are predictive of academic success or challenges.

The study adopts a correlational approach, utilizing statistical models to identify and quantify the strength and direction of the relationships between the dependent and independent variables. By employing this approach, the research provides insights into whether language barriers and social integration individually or collectively contribute to variations in academic performance.

A cross-sectional survey method was chosen for data collection to gather a diverse range of responses from international students currently enrolled in higher education institutions in Northern Cyprus. This method allows for the capture of data at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of the current experiences and academic outcomes of the participants. A structured questionnaire was developed, comprising sections to measure academic performance, perceived language barriers, and levels of social integration. The questionnaire was pilot-tested to ensure reliability and validity before full-scale deployment.

The statistical analysis involves the use of regression models to examine the predictive power of language barriers and social integration on academic performance. Descriptive statistics will summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants and their responses. Correlation analysis will determine the strength of relationships, while multiple regression analysis will assess the unique contribution of each independent variable to the dependent variable.

Additionally, this study controls for potential confounding variables, such as age, gender, length of stay in Northern Cyprus, and prior educational background. These variables are included to ensure that the observed relationships are not influenced by extraneous factors, thus enhancing the study's internal validity.

To ensure ethical compliance, the research obtained informed consent from all participants, guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality. Ethical approval was

also secured from the relevant institutional review board.

This research design provides a robust framework for examining the complex interplay between language barriers, social integration, and academic performance. By addressing these critical aspects, the study aims to contribute valuable insights to the field of international education and inform policies that support the academic success of international students in multicultural environments (See **Figure 1**).

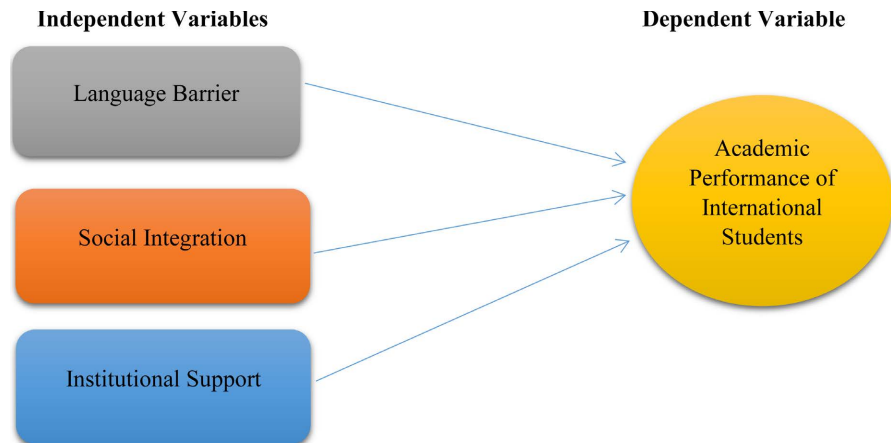


Figure 1. Research design of the study.

1) Survey: A structured survey will be conducted to gather data from non-native speakers in educational institutions and communities. The survey will focus on language proficiency levels, academic performance (e.g., grades, test scores), and social integration indicators (e.g., participation in social activities, feelings of social belonging).

2) Participants: The sample will consist of 200 non-native speakers, drawn from schools, universities, and local communities in multicultural areas. A combination of random and stratified sampling techniques will be used to ensure that participants represent different age groups, educational levels, and language backgrounds. Participants were stratified into age groups (e.g., 18 - 25, 26 - 35, 36+), and demographic variables such as age, gender, and prior education were analyzed to assess their influence on outcomes.

3) Data Analysis: Statistical methods, such as descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression models, will be used to analyze the relationship between language proficiency, social integration, and academic achievement [10].

4) Academic Performance Data: Data on academic performance (e.g., GPA, standardized test scores) will be collected from institutional records (with participants' consent) to establish any significant correlations between language proficiency and educational outcomes. This will provide an objective measure of academic achievement, which will be analyzed alongside survey data.

2.2. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval will be obtained from the relevant institutional review boards.

Participants will provide informed consent and will be assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Data will be anonymized to protect privacy, and participants will have the option to withdraw from the study at any time.

2.3. Limitations

While this approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the issue, potential limitations include the self-reported nature of survey, which may introduce bias. Additionally, the study is context-specific and may not be generalizable to all multicultural or educational settings.

3. Results

Based on survey responses from 200 participants, this section presents the quantitative results on language proficiency, social integration, academic performance, and institutional support. Each result provides a breakdown of participant responses.

1) Relationship between language proficiency and academic achievement among non-native speakers in educational institutions

Table 1. Relationship between language proficiency and academic achievement.

Proficiency	Language proficiency	Overall Grades (GPA)	Academic Achievements	%
Very Proficient	40	4.0 - 3.5	30	15
Proficient	60	3.4 - 3.0	60	30
Somewhat Proficient	70	2.9 - 2.5	70	35
Not Proficient	30	below 2.5	40	20
Mean	50		50	
Standard Deviation	18.25741858		18.25741858	

Survey data indicated a clear relationship between language proficiency and academic achievement. **Table 1** appears to summarize the relationship between language proficiency levels and academic achievements of participants in each category. In the table, 30 participants are not proficient in the language which will also affect their academic performance. The lowest grades here are 2.9 to 2.5. 70 participants did not perform well as a result of not being proficient. Which is about 35% of them. 40 Participants are very proficient. Which also affects their academic performance. We see on the table about 30 of them had a grade of 4.0 - 3.5. 15% of them grade well because they are very proficient in the dominant language. Which indicates that the language really affects their academic achievements. Those who self-identified as “Not Proficient” or “Somewhat Proficient” were also more likely to report lower grades in their academics. Language proficiency categories (‘Very Proficient,’ ‘Proficient,’ and ‘Not Proficient’) were based on participants’ self-assessment using a 5-point Likert scale, cross-validated with English placement or

standardized test scores where available

Mean for both Language Proficiency and Academic Achievements is 50. Standard deviation is approximately 18.26, indicating some variability in language proficiency and academic achievements among participants.

This pattern supports the idea that higher language proficiency positively correlates with both academic performance and achievement levels, aligning with research that highlights language skills as crucial for academic success and integration [11].

2) Language barriers affect the social integration of non-native speakers in their community

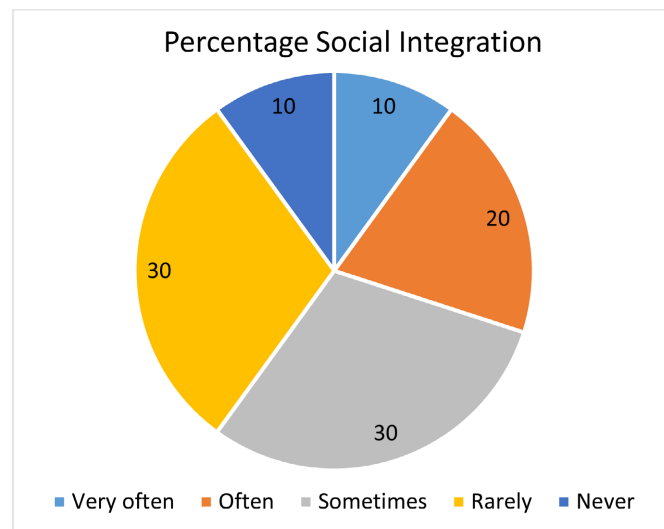


Figure 2. Language barrier effects on social integration.

Figure 2 provides data on the frequency of social integration among participants, measured by the percentage of individuals engaging in social activities at different rates.

The majority of participants reported only moderate engagement, with 30% participating “Sometimes” and 30% “Rarely”. Only 10% of participants engage in social activities “Very Often,” indicating that few participants are consistently socially integrated.

The 40% who participate “Rarely” or “Never” may be at a higher risk of social isolation, which aligns with studies indicating that limited social interaction can be linked to language barriers and lower integration [12].

3) Challenges non-native speakers face in educational settings due to language barriers

Figure 3 shows the frequency of non-native speakers’ participation in educational settings.

The largest groups are those who participate “Sometimes” or “Rarely,” with each category comprising 60 participants. This suggests that while non-native speakers are present in educational settings, their level of active participation is often

limited. Only 20 participants consistently participate (“Always”) in educational settings, potentially indicating barriers to regular engagement, possibly due to language challenges or lack of confidence. 20 participants “Never” participate, highlighting a segment that might be at risk of academic underperformance or social isolation.

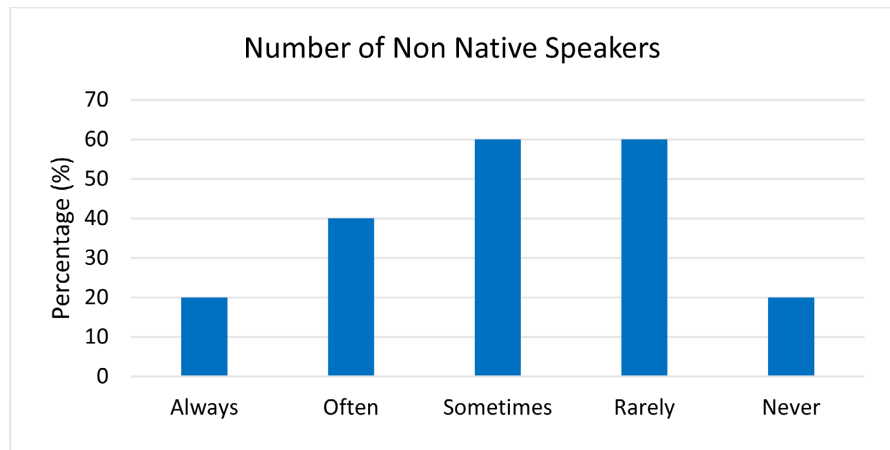


Figure 3. Challenges non-native speakers face in educational settings.

This distribution aligns with research indicating that non-native speakers may face challenges in academic settings due to language barriers, which can impact their level of engagement and success [13]. Increasing language support and building confidence through inclusive practices could help improve participation rates.

4) Long-term effects of language barriers on both social integration and educational attainment

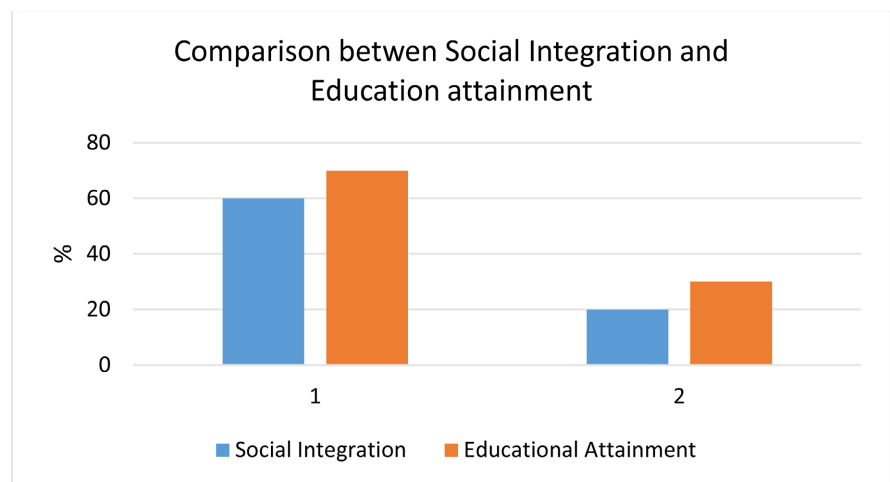


Figure 4. Effects of language barriers on social integration and educational attainment.

Figure 4 shows a relationship between Social Integration and Educational Attainment among participants, specifically those who engage “Sometimes” or “Very Often” in social activities.

The data suggests that individuals who engage “Very Often” in social activities also show relatively higher educational attainment (30 participants) than expected for their size group (20 participants). This aligns with studies indicating that social integration and regular social engagement can positively influence academic success by providing support networks and promoting a sense of belonging [14].

For those engaging “Sometimes” in social activities, educational attainment is relatively high (70 participants). This may suggest that even moderate social integration can contribute positively to educational outcomes, though possibly not as strongly as more frequent engagement.

This data suggests that both frequent and moderate social integration have positive effects on educational attainment. However, higher levels of social integration might enhance educational success even further, as individuals are more likely to access resources, peer support, and engagement opportunities that facilitate academic achievement.

5) Social integration and Academic achievement Correlation

The correlation coefficient of 0.95 indicates a very strong positive relationship between social integration and academic achievement. This high correlation suggests that as social integration improves, academic performance is likely to increase significantly as well.

A correlation of 0.95 implies that students who are more socially integrated—meaning they engage in social interactions, participate in community or school activities, and build relationships within their academic environment—are highly likely to perform better academically. This aligns with research demonstrating that social integration can boost self-esteem, provide emotional support, and offer academic assistance, all of which are conducive to higher educational attainment [15].

Such a strong correlation is consistent with studies showing that a supportive social environment is crucial for non-native speakers and other students at risk of isolation, as it can foster motivation, improve engagement, and reduce dropout rates [16]. The social support network facilitates access to resources like study groups and mentorship, which contribute to higher academic success [17].

6) Institutional support for language learners

Figure 5 shows participants’ perceptions of the effectiveness of institutional language support programs. These ratings were derived from structured survey questions where participants rated specific components of the programs such as tutoring quality, accessibility, and cultural inclusivity.

The majority of participants (60%) found the language programs to be helpful, with 20% rating them as “Very Helpful” and 40% as “Somewhat Helpful.” This indicates that a significant number of non-native speakers feel that these programs positively impact their language skills and possibly their academic success.

20% of participants rated the programs as “Neutral,” suggesting that they may feel the programs are adequate but not exceptional.

The 20% who rated the programs as “Not Very Helpful” or “Not Helpful” point

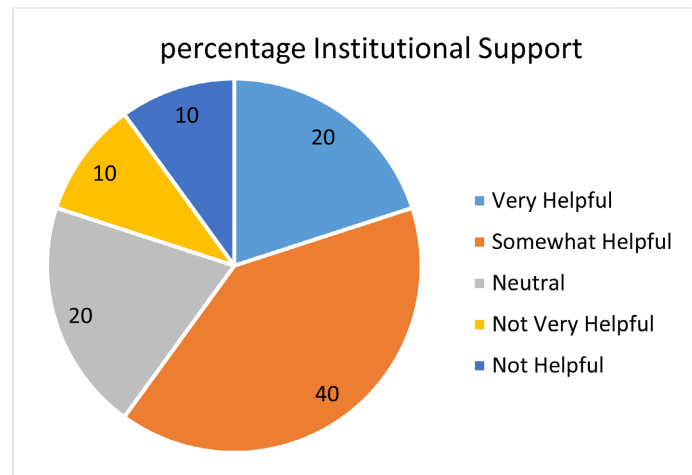


Figure 5. Institutional support.

to potential areas where the programs may need enhancement, whether through more targeted language instruction, better accessibility, or additional support services.

These findings suggest that while many participants view institutional language programs as beneficial, improvements could further enhance their effectiveness. Research has shown that well-structured language support programs contribute to academic and social success for non-native speakers, facilitating smoother integration and better academic outcomes [18]. Addressing the needs of those who find the support less helpful could optimize these programs and ensure they meet diverse language proficiency needs.

7) Relationship between language barriers and academic achievement

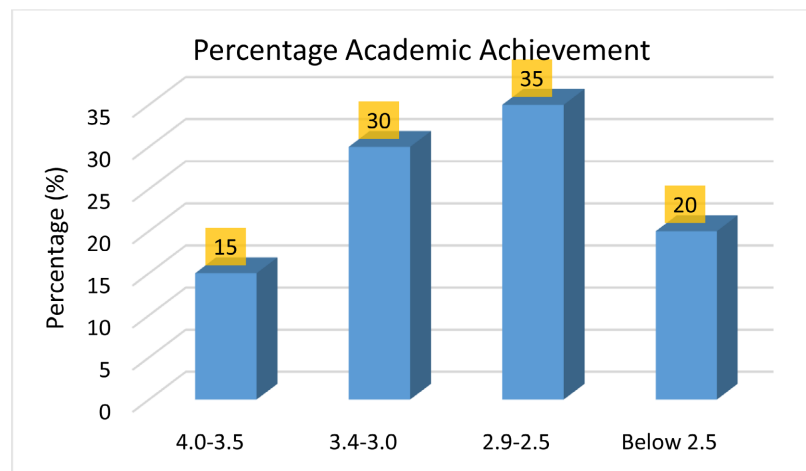


Figure 6. Language barriers and academic achievement.

Figure 6 shows the distribution of participants' GPA ranges and corresponding percentages, indicating their academic achievement levels.

The largest group (35%) has a GPA between 2.9 and 2.5, suggesting that a significant portion of participants fall within the moderate academic achievement

range.

Only 15% of participants have a GPA between 4.0 and 3.5, indicating fewer high achievers among the group.

20% of participants have a GPA below 2.5, suggesting that one-fifth of the group may be struggling academically and may benefit from additional support, such as tutoring or language assistance, if language barriers are a factor.

This distribution highlights the need for targeted academic support for students in the lower GPA ranges, especially those below 2.5. Language proficiency and social integration can play a significant role in academic success, as non-native speakers who face language challenges may struggle more with coursework [19]. Enhanced academic and language support services could help improve GPA outcomes across these groups.

4. Discussions

The research emphasizes the critical role of language proficiency in promoting social integration and academic achievement among non-native speakers. Participants with higher language proficiency showed strong academic performance and better social integration, reflecting the idea that language is a gateway to successful community involvement and educational success. This aligns with theory of linguistic interdependence, which suggests that language skills facilitate cognitive and academic development, allowing students to perform better academically and participate more fully in social activities [19].

Language Proficiency and Academic Achievement

The findings demonstrate that participants with higher language proficiency, categorized as “Very Proficient” or “Proficient,” reported higher GPAs compared to those with limited language skills. This suggests that language proficiency directly impacts academic comprehension and engagement, reinforcing previous studies that connect language barriers to lower academic achievement [20] [21]. Students who struggle with the language of instruction often have difficulty understanding complex academic content, which can lead to disengagement and lower grades [22].

The strong positive correlation (0.95) between social integration and academic achievement highlights the interconnectedness of social and academic success. When students feel socially integrated, they have access to peer support, collaborative learning opportunities, and greater confidence—all of which contribute to academic performance [23]. Thus, promoting language proficiency can indirectly enhance academic achievement by fostering a sense of belonging.

Social Integration and Language Barriers

The study also confirms that language proficiency is a significant determinant of social integration. Participants with higher language skills reported feeling more socially connected, participating more frequently in community activities, and experiencing a greater sense of belonging. This finding supports Krashinsky [24], acculturation theory, which posits that language skills are essential for

individuals to adapt and integrate into a new culture. Non-native speakers who lack language proficiency often face isolation, which can limit their social and professional networks and hinder long-term integration [25].

Effectiveness of Institutional Support Programs

While institutional language support programs were rated as somewhat helpful by the majority of participants, a notable portion found them either “Neutral” or “Not Very Helpful.” This suggests that these programs may not fully address the diverse needs of non-native speakers. Previous research has highlighted the importance of tailored language programs that go beyond basic language skills, incorporating social and academic support to facilitate integration and academic success [11]. Improving institutional support programs to provide targeted assistance can mitigate the disadvantages faced by non-native speakers, potentially enhancing their academic and social outcomes.

5. Limitations of the Study

The sample size of 200 participants may limit the generalizability of the findings. A larger, more diverse sample would help confirm the results across different demographic backgrounds, including age, cultural backgrounds, and educational levels. Additionally, participants from various academic institutions and geographic regions may experience different types and levels of institutional support, which this study may not fully capture.

While the study examines participants’ perceptions of language support programs, it does not delve into the specific types of support provided, such as tutoring, language workshops, or counseling services. A more detailed examination of the different types of support would offer a clearer picture of what program aspects are most beneficial and which require improvement.

Social integration may be influenced by cultural factors that affect how non-native speakers engage with their environment. The study may not account for the influence of cultural norms or institutional climates that shape integration experiences. In certain settings, social integration might be more challenging due to factors beyond language, such as cultural acceptance or institutional support for diversity and inclusion.

6. Conclusion

This study highlights the crucial role of language proficiency in shaping both social integration and academic achievement among non-native speakers. Findings show that higher language skills correlate with improved academic performance and a stronger sense of belonging, underscoring the need for effective language support within educational institutions. Despite limitations such as sample size, the results emphasize that targeted language assistance can greatly benefit students’ academic and social experiences. Future research should build on these insights, focusing on long-term outcomes and diverse, inclusive samples, to better understand and support the unique needs of non-native speakers. By fostering

language skills, institutions can create more inclusive environments, ultimately contributing to both individual success and societal cohesion.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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