

## Competencies of Alternative Learning System (ALS) Learners in English Communication: Basis for a Student Development Program



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**ABSTRACT:** This study examined the competencies of Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners in English communication as assessed by their teachers. The results served as a foundation for designing a student development program. Using a descriptive research design, the study assessed the proficiency levels of ALS learners in key communication skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—and identifies challenges they encounter in acquiring English language skills. Data is gathered through a survey with ALS teachers. Findings revealed varying levels of learners' English proficiency across different areas of communication skills. Listening and speaking skills were generally strong, but weaker in providing active feedback during discussions. Viewing and reading skills were well-developed, but less proficient in critical analysis and interpretation. Writing skills were weak and struggled most with revising and editing their work for clarity and accuracy. The results underscored the importance of tailored support to bridge language gaps and improve ALS learners' opportunities for academic and professional growth.

**KEYWORDS:** Alternative Learning System, English communication, competencies, student development program, language proficiency

### I. INTRODUCTION

Communication competencies were pivotal for effective interaction in various settings, encompassing verbal, nonverbal, written, and digital communication. These skills were particularly crucial in educational environments, where they facilitated clear and efficient information exchange, enhancing learning outcomes and interpersonal relationships (Sabbah et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2020). The significance of communication skills was further highlighted in non-formal education systems such as the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines. The ALS was designed to provide educational opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults who were unable to complete their formal education due to various socio-economic barriers (Igarashi, 2020).

The ALS aimed to bridge the educational gap by offering flexible and modular learning programs that catered to the diverse needs of its learners. These programs emphasized not only academic proficiency but also essential life skills, including effective communication (Campilla & Lopez, 2020; Tomarong & Rañoa, 2024). Research indicated that strong communication skills were integral to the success of ALS learners, enabling them to articulate their thoughts clearly, engage meaningfully in discussions, and build self-confidence (Baccal et al., 2021; Tindowen et al., 2020). Moreover, effective communication skills were essential for ALS learners to navigate various social and professional situations, fostering better relationships and opening doors to opportunities for personal and professional growth. By incorporating communication skills development into its learning programs, the ALS not only equipped its learners with the tools they needed to succeed academically but also empowered them to thrive in all aspects of their lives. As a result, ALS graduates were better prepared to face the challenges of the future with confidence and resilience, ensuring their continued success beyond the classroom.

Moreover, the relationship between communication skills and academic achievement had been well-documented. Khan (2020) found that teachers' communication skills significantly influenced learners' academic success, suggesting that enhancing these skills among educators could positively impact student outcomes. This finding underscored the necessity of integrating communication skills training into educational programs, particularly in non-formal settings like ALS, to ensure comprehensive student development (Shinde & Shinde, 2022; Tizon, 2020).

Despite the recognized importance of communication skills, ALS learners faced numerous challenges that hindered their development in this area. Factors such as irregular attendance, financial instability, and limited access to resources contributed to

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gaps in communication skills among these learners (Estrada et al., 2020; Chan, 2020). Addressing these challenges required targeted interventions and a supportive learning environment that fostered the growth of communication competencies.

This study sought to assess the proficiency of ALS learners in communication skills and pinpoint areas that required enhancement. By doing this, it aimed to provide a foundation for creating a complete student development program that was specifically designed to meet the distinct requirements of ALS learners. Implementing such a program would not only improve their communication skills but also facilitate their general scholastic and personal development, ultimately aiding their successful assimilation into society and the job market. This study aimed to reveal the precise obstacles that ALS learners encountered in the development of their communication abilities by analyzing the collected data. To overcome these problems and offer specific assistance, educators and policymakers could establish a more comprehensive learning environment that promoted the achievement of every student. The ultimate objective was to enable individuals with ALS to surmount obstacles to efficient communication and reach their maximum capabilities in academic and professional environments.

## II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the profile of respondents in terms of sex, length of service and highest educational attainment?
2. What is the level of English communication competencies of Alternative Learning System (ALS) students as assessed by the teacher-respondents in terms of listening, speaking, viewing, reading, and writing?
3. Is there a significant difference in the level of English communication skills of Alternative Learning System (ALS) students as assessed by the teacher-respondents when profile is used as test factor?

## III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilized a descriptive comparative research design to evaluate the communication skills of students in the Alternative Learning System (ALS). This method was chosen as it allowed for a detailed analysis and comparison of communication abilities among different student subgroups within the ALS program.

The study focused on ALS teachers from three division offices in Ilocos Norte: the Schools Division of Ilocos Norte, the City Schools Division of Laoag, and the City Schools Division of Batac. Since the number of ALS teachers was limited, a total enumeration approach was applied to ensure full participation from all eligible educators in these divisions.

A total of 54 ALS teachers actively teaching in the program participated in the study. These respondents were selected based on their direct role in ALS instruction, ensuring that the research gathered insights from experienced educators who regularly evaluate and support students' English communication skills. Data collection was conducted using a researcher-made questionnaire designed to assess students' communication skills as perceived by their teachers.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presented the analysis and interpretation of the data collected in the study, focusing on the English communication competencies of Alternative Learning System (ALS) students. The findings were categorized into key competencies: listening, speaking, viewing, reading, and writing. Additionally, differences in communication skills based on demographic factors such as sex, length of service, and highest educational attainment of teacher-respondents were analyzed.

**Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution of the profile of respondents**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	27	50.0%
	Female	27	50.0%
Length of Service	1-5	23	42.6%
	6-10	10	18.5%
	11-15	17	31.5%
	15 above	4	7.4%
Highest Educational Attainment	Bachelor's	33	61.1%
	Master's	21	38.9%

The demographic profile revealed an equal distribution of male and female respondents (50% each). In terms of length of service, the majority (42.6%) had 1-5 years of teaching experience, followed by 31.5% with 11-15 years, 18.5% with 6-10 years, and 7.4% with more than 15 years. Regarding educational attainment, 61.1% held a bachelor's degree, while 38.9% had a master's degree. This diversity ensured a balanced perspective in the assessment of students' English communication skills.

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**Table 2.1. Mean and standard deviation on the level of English communication skills of alternative learning system (ALS) students as assessed by the teacher-respondents in terms of listening**

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Description	Verbal Interpretation
1. The student can accurately repeat information given during lectures.	3.52	.57	Strongly Agree	Highly Skilled
2. The student demonstrates understanding by asking relevant questions.	3.33	.61	Agree	Skilled
3. The student can summarize the main points of the discussion.	3.19	.64	Agree	Skilled
4. The student shows attentiveness by maintaining eye contact.	3.26	.65	Agree	Skilled
5. The student follows spoken instructions without needing them to be repeated.	3.41	.63	Agree	Skilled
6. The student responds appropriately during conversations.	3.31	.46	Agree	Skilled
7. The student can identify the key ideas in spoken messages.	3.19	.80	Agree	Skilled
8. The student actively listens and provides feedback during class discussions.	2.46	.66	Disagree	Slightly Skilled
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.20</b>	<b>.24</b>	Agree	Skilled

Legend: 3.51 – 4.00 (Strongly Agree-Highly Skilled); 2.51 – 3.50 (Agree- Skilled); 1.51 – 2.50 (Disagree-Slightly Skilled); 1.0-1.50 (Strongly Disagree-Not All Skilled)

The overall mean score for listening skills was 3.20 (SD = 0.24), indicating that students are generally "Skilled." The highest-rated skill was the ability to accurately repeat information (M = 3.52, SD = 0.57), classified as "Highly Skilled." However, active listening and providing feedback were rated the lowest (M = 2.46, SD = 0.66), suggesting an area for improvement.

**Table 2.2. Mean and standard deviation on the level of English communication skills of alternative learning system (ALS) students as assessed by the teacher-respondents in terms of speaking**

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Description	Verbal Interpretation
1. The student articulates thoughts clearly and effectively during presentations.	3.33	.72	Agree	Skilled
2. The student uses appropriate vocabulary when speaking.	3.13	.82	Agree	Skilled
3. The student speaks with correct grammar and sentence structure.	3.24	.67	Agree	Skilled
4. The student maintains a fluent and coherent speech pattern.	2.98	.81	Agree	Skilled
5. The student participates actively in class discussions.	3.20	.73	Agree	Skilled
6. The student can express ideas logically and persuasively.	3.11	.71	Agree	Skilled
7. The student uses an appropriate tone of voice for different situations.	2.76	.79	Agree	Skilled

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8. The student can effectively convey messages in both formal and informal settings.	2.87	.70	Agree	Skilled
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.07</b>	<b>.42</b>	Agree	Skilled

Legend: 3.51 – 4.00 (Strongly Agree-Highly Skilled); 2.51 – 3.50 (Agree- Skilled); 1.51 – 2.50 (Disagree-Slightly Skilled); 1.0-1.50 (Strongly Disagree-Not All Skilled)

The mean score for speaking skills was 3.07 (SD = 0.42), categorized as "Skilled." The highest-rated indicator was articulating thoughts effectively during presentations (M = 3.33, SD = 0.72). The lowest-rated indicator was the use of appropriate tone of voice (M = 2.76, SD = 0.79), emphasizing the need to develop adaptability in speech delivery.

**Table 2.3. Mean and standard deviation on the level of English communication skills of alternative learning system (ALS) students as assessed by the teacher-respondents in terms of viewing**

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Description	Verbal Interpretation
1. The student can interpret information presented in charts and graphs.	3.24	.61	Agree	Skilled
2. The student understands the message conveyed through visual media.	3.24	.58	Agree	Skilled
3. The student can analyze and critique visual content.	3.48	.63	Agree	Skilled
4. The student integrates information from visual aids into their understanding.	3.35	.48	Agree	Skilled
5. The student accurately describes what is depicted in images or videos.	3.26	.62	Agree	Skilled
6. The student can infer meanings from visual cues.	3.19	.58	Agree	Skilled
7. The student relates visual content to accompanying text or spoken information.	3.11	.69	Agree	Skilled
8. The student uses visual aids effectively in presentations.	3.13	.70	Agree	Skilled
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.25</b>	<b>.25</b>	Agree	Skilled

Legend: 3.51 – 4.00 (Strongly Agree-Highly Skilled); 2.51 – 3.50 (Agree- Skilled); 1.51 – 2.50 (Disagree-Slightly Skilled); 1.0-1.50 (Strongly Disagree-Not All Skilled)

Viewing skills received the highest rating among all competencies, with a mean score of 3.25 (SD = 0.25), categorized as "Skilled." The ability to analyze and critique visual content was rated the highest (M = 3.48, SD = 0.63). However, relating visual content to accompanying text or spoken information was rated the lowest (M = 3.11, SD = 0.69), suggesting that students may struggle with integrating visual and textual information.

**Table 2.4. Mean and standard deviation on the level of English communication skills of alternative learning system (ALS) students as assessed by the teacher-respondents in terms of reading**

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Description	Verbal Interpretation
1. The student comprehends the main ideas of written texts.	3.15	.62	Agree	Skilled
2. The student can summarize the content of reading materials.	2.98	.73	Agree	Skilled

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3. The student identifies supporting details in written passages.	3.26	.70	Agree	Skilled
4. The student understands and uses new vocabulary encountered in texts.	3.00	.70	Agree	Skilled
5. The student analyzes and interprets written information critically.	2.96	.75	Agree	Skilled
6. The student distinguishes between fact and opinion in reading materials.	2.96	.72	Agree	Skilled
7. The student follows written instructions accurately.	3.17	.81	Agree	Skilled
8. The student reads a variety of genres and formats effectively.	3.19	.67	Agree	Skilled
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.08</b>	<b>.35</b>	Agree	Skilled

Legend: 3.51 – 4.00 (Strongly Agree-Highly Skilled); 2.51 – 3.50 (Agree- Skilled); 1.51 – 2.50 (Disagree-Slightly Skilled); 1.0-1.50 (Strongly Disagree-Not All Skilled)

The mean score for reading skills was 3.08 (SD = 0.35), indicating that students are "Skilled." The highest-rated skill was identifying supporting details in written passages (M = 3.26, SD = 0.70). However, critical analysis of written content and distinguishing between fact and opinion received the lowest scores (M = 2.96, SD = 0.75 and 2.96, SD = 0.72, respectively), highlighting the need for improvement in higher-order thinking skills.

**Table 2.5 Mean and standard deviation on the level of English communication skills of alternative learning system (ALS) students as assessed by the teacher-respondents in terms of writing**

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Description	Verbal Interpretation
1. The student writes clear and coherent essays.	2.67	.75	Agree	Skilled
2. The student uses correct grammar and punctuation in writing.	2.87	.84	Agree	Skilled
3. The student organizes ideas logically in written work.	2.80	.73	Agree	Skilled
4. The student demonstrates a strong vocabulary in writing assignments.	3.02	.76	Agree	Skilled
5. The student writes with a clear purpose and audience in mind.	2.76	.82	Agree	Skilled
6. The student revises and edits written work for clarity and accuracy.	2.61	.73	Agree	Skilled
7. The student supports arguments with appropriate evidence in writing.	2.85	.71	Agree	Skilled
8. The student uses different writing styles appropriately for various tasks.	3.33	.75	Agree	Skilled
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>2.86</b>	<b>.29</b>	Agree	Skilled

Legend: 3.51 – 4.00 (Strongly Agree-Highly Skilled); 2.51 – 3.50 (Agree- Skilled); 1.51 – 2.50 (Disagree-Slightly Skilled); 1.0-1.50 (Strongly Disagree-Not All Skilled)

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Writing skills received the lowest overall rating, with a mean score of 2.86 (SD = 0.29), but still within the "Skilled" category. The highest-rated indicator was the ability to use different writing styles appropriately (M = 3.33, SD = 0.75). However, students struggled with revising and editing written work for clarity and accuracy (M = 2.61, SD = 0.73), indicating an area for instructional focus.

**Table 2.6. Mean and standard deviation on the summary table on the level of English communication skills of alternative learning system (ALS) students as assessed by the teacher-respondents**

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Description	Verbal Interpretation
1. Listening	3.20	.24	Agree	Skilled
2. Speaking	3.07	.42	Agree	Skilled
3. Viewing	3.25	.25	Agree	Skilled
4. Reading	3.08	.35	Agree	Skilled
5. Writing	2.86	.29	Agree	Skilled
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.09</b>	<b>.14</b>	Agree	Skilled

Legend: 3.51 – 4.00 (Strongly Agree-Highly Skilled); 2.51 – 3.50 (Agree- Skilled); 1.51 – 2.50 (Disagree-Slightly Skilled); 1.0-1.50 (Strongly Disagree-Not All Skilled)

Across all competencies, the overall mean score was 3.09 (SD = 0.14), categorizing ALS students as "Skilled." Viewing skills were rated the highest, while writing skills were the lowest. These findings suggest that while ALS students demonstrate competence in English communication, targeted interventions are necessary to strengthen weak areas, particularly in writing and critical analysis.

**Table 3.1. T-test on the differences in the level of English communication skills of alternative learning system (ALS) students as assessed by the teacher-respondents in terms of sex**

Indicator	Sex	Mean	t	Sig.	Decision On Ho	Interpretation
1. listening	Male	3.24	.96=	.18	Accepted	Not Significant
	Female	3.17				
2. speakin g	Male	2.88	-3.73	.86	Accepted	Not Significant
	Female	3.27				
3. viewing	Male	3.31	1.90	.54	Accepted	Not Significant
	Female	3.18				
4. reading	Male	3.06	-.38	.41	Accepted	Not Significant
	Female	3.10				
5. writing	Male	2.93	1.79	.18	Accepted	Not Significant
	Female	2.79				
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>3.08</b>	<b>-.44</b>	<b>.26</b>	<b>Accepted</b>	<b>Not Significant</b>
	<b>Female</b>	<b>3.10</b>				

The t-test analysis revealed no significant differences in English communication skills based on sex ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that both male and female students demonstrate comparable proficiency across all competencies.

**Table 3.2. ANOVA on the differences in the level of English communication skills of alternative learning system (ALS) students as assessed by the teacher-respondents in terms of length of service**

Indicator	Length of Service	Mean	F	Sig.	Decision On Ho	Interpretation
1. listening	1-5	3.20	.28	.83	Accepted	Not Significant
	6-10	3.21				
	11-15	3.18				
	15 above	3.31				

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2. speaking	1-5	3.04	2.03	.12	Accepted	Not Significant
	6-10	2.91				
	11-15	3.26				
	15 above	2.87				
3. viewing	1-5	3.29	.62	.60	Accepted	Not Significant
	6-10	3.28				
	11-15	3.18				
	15 above	3.21				
4. reading	1-5	3.12	2.03	.12	Accepted	Not Significant
	6-10	2.85				
	11-15	3.16				
	15 above	3.06				
5. writing	1-5	2.86	.05	.98	Accepted	Not Significant
	6-10	2.83				
	11-15	2.86				
	15 above	2.90				
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>1-5</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>1.40</b>	<b>.25</b>	<b>Accepted</b>	<b>Not Significant</b>
	<b>6-10</b>	<b>3.02</b>				
	<b>11-15</b>	<b>3.13</b>				
	<b>15 above</b>	<b>3.07</b>				

ANOVA results showed no significant differences in students' English communication skills based on the length of service of their teachers ( $p > 0.05$ ). This suggests that teaching experience does not have a direct impact on the students' competency levels.

**Table 3.3. ANOVA on the differences in the level of English communication skills of alternative learning system (ALS) students as assessed by the teacher-respondents in terms of highest educational attainment**

Indicator	Highest Educational Attainment	Mean	F	Sig.	Decision On Ho	Interpretation
1. listening	Bachelor's	3.17	.11	.73	Accepted	Not Significant
	Master's	3.26				
2. speaking	Bachelor's	3.04	.56	.45	Accepted	Not Significant
	Master's	3.13				
3. viewing	Bachelor's	3.26	1.30	.25	Accepted	Not Significant
	Master's	3.22				
4. reading	Bachelor's	3.08	1.58	.21	Accepted	Not Significant
	Master's	3.07				
5. writing	Bachelor's	2.81	.00	.96	Accepted	Not Significant
	Master's	2.94				
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>Bachelor's</b>	<b>3.07</b>	<b>5.00</b>	<b>.03</b>	Rejected	Significant
	<b>Master's</b>	<b>3.12</b>				

While individual skills did not show significant differences, the overall assessment of English communication competencies differed significantly based on the teacher's highest educational attainment ( $F = 5.00, p = 0.03$ ). This finding implied that teachers with higher educational qualifications might have a slightly different perspective in assessing students' overall communication skills.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The study found an even distribution of male and female students, enabling a balanced evaluation of English communication skills across genders. Most students were relatively new to the Alternative Learning System (ALS), with a significant portion having 1-5 years of experience. Additionally, the prevalence of students with a bachelor's degree highlighted the diversity in educational backgrounds within the ALS program.

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The assessment of English communication skills indicated that while ALS students generally showed proficiency in listening, speaking, viewing, and reading, some areas required improvement. Strengths included articulating thoughts effectively and analyzing visual content, while challenges lay in maintaining fluency, using appropriate tone, and refining written work. Writing was the weakest skill, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to enhance students' writing abilities.

Demographic factors such as sex, length of service, and highest educational attainment did not significantly affect students' English communication skills. The consistency in proficiency levels across various groups suggested that the ALS curriculum effectively delivered standardized language education, ensuring equitable skill development for all students.

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