

**Sociolinguistic challenges, grit in English language learning, and linguistic competence
of college students: Basis for intervention strategies**

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ABSTRACT

This mixed-method study aimed to determine the sociolinguistic challenges, grit in English language learning, and linguistic competence of college students in the province of Capiz, which served as the basis for developing intervention strategies for Academic Year 2025–2026. The respondents were undergraduate college students enrolled in various Higher Education Institutions in Capiz, with a total population of 37,802. A representative sample of 396 students was selected through stratified random sampling. The instruments utilized include a researcher-made 70-item Sociolinguistic Challenges Questionnaire, an adapted L2 Grit Scale by Teimouri et al. (2020) and Duckworth et al. (2007), and a 30-item adapted Linguistic Competence Test (CEFR English Level Test by International English Test, 2025). For the qualitative phase, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with five English language teachers and ten college students to provide contextual insights. The statistical tools employed were descriptive statistics (mean, frequency count, percentage, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson Correlation Coefficient and ANOVA), with the level of significance set at 0.05 alpha. Findings revealed that the level of sociolinguistic challenges faced by college students in Capiz was high across different domains, with Language and Interaction as the highest challenge. The level of grit in English language learning was moderate, with Consistency of Interest (CoI) rated high and Perseverance of Effort (PoE) rated moderate. The level of linguistic competence was high overall, with reading and listening comprehension rated high, while grammar and vocabulary were moderate. Inferential analyses showed no significant difference in linguistic competence among the levels of sociolinguistic challenges and grit, and no significant relationships among sociolinguistic challenges, grit in English language learning, and linguistic competence. These findings underscore the need for targeted intervention strategies to address sociolinguistic barriers, strengthen perseverance of effort, and balance receptive and productive language skills.

Keywords: Sociolinguistic challenges, english language learning grit, linguistic competence.

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INTRODUCTION

Across contemporary global society, English continues to function as one of the most influential languages in domains such as politics, business, technology, and education, particularly within an increasingly interconnected world (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021; Schneider, 2020). As a result, English proficiency has become a critical determinant of academic achievement and global competitiveness (Fadhil et al., 2025). In the Philippine context, however, college students navigate a complex and uneven linguistic landscape shaped by disparities in educational access, sociocultural background, and institutional preparation (Lamorinas et al., 2025; Pagulayan et al., 2021). Students entering higher education come from varied linguistic environments, ranging from urban settings with greater exposure to English to rural communities where English use is limited and primarily academic in nature (Hossain, 2016; Cota, 2013). Although English is mandated as a medium of instruction in many Philippine educational institutions, students often continue to experience persistent difficulties in achieving the level of proficiency required for academic and professional success (Santos et al., 2022).

This concern is reinforced by recent national data that signal a deepening literacy crisis in the Philippines. A report published by *Inquirer.net* on July 7, 2025, citing findings from the Philippine Business for Education, highlights that a significant proportion of graduates remain unemployable due to inadequate English communication skills, with systemic fragmentation across education agencies contributing to poor literacy outcomes where a large majority of learners struggle with basic text comprehension. Similarly, the Philippine Statistics Authority reported that approximately 18.9 million secondary education graduates from 2019 to 2024 demonstrate functional illiteracy, reflecting persistent deficiencies in reading comprehension despite formal schooling (Ramos, 2025). These findings align with earlier warnings regarding declining educational outcomes, including reports indicating that a substantial proportion of Filipino students fail to meet minimum learning standards (Deiparine, 2021). Within this broader national context, English language education in higher education institutions remains challenged by sociolinguistic barriers that affect learners' confidence, motivation, and sustained engagement in language learning (White, 2019; Hu et al., 2022).

In the province of Capiz, these national challenges take on a more localized and contextualized form. Observations among tertiary students reveal wide disparities in English language proficiency, ranging from highly competent learners to those performing significantly below expected standards. Despite this variability, learners often demonstrate notable motivation and persistence in language learning, shaped by their sociocultural environments and personal aspirations (Lachica, 2024). The linguistic profile of Capiz is closely tied to its predominantly agricultural and fishing economy, where Hiligaynon serves as the primary medium of daily communication. This creates a pronounced linguistic transition from home-based mother tongue use to the formal academic English register required in higher education. For many students, English is perceived as a distant and prestigious linguistic code associated with urban mobility and global employment opportunities, yet one that is seldom practiced outside the classroom.

The diversity of higher education institutions in Capiz, including state universities and private colleges, further contributes to variations in student preparedness. Educators in the province have noted that students from well-resourced schools often demonstrate greater confidence in English use, while those from under-resourced rural schools frequently experience communicative hesitation. This hesitation is not indicative of cognitive deficiency but is better understood as sociolinguistic anxiety rooted in fear of negative evaluation, peer judgment, and linguistic insecurity. Such conditions highlight the importance of examining

how local cultural values, particularly communal resilience and solidarity, interact with learners' perseverance in language learning contexts.

The growing economic opportunities in Capiz, particularly in the Business Process Outsourcing and tourism sectors, further intensify the demand for high levels of English proficiency. However, anecdotal evidence from academic leaders and human resource practitioners suggests a mismatch between graduates' perceived proficiency and workplace expectations. This gap raises critical questions about the effectiveness of existing language instruction in translating student effort and motivation into measurable communicative competence. Sociolinguistic competence, understood as the ability to use language appropriately within social and cultural contexts through mastery of norms, values, and registers of speech, is therefore central to addressing these concerns (Mede & Dililitaş, 2015). Difficulties in this domain are often exacerbated by first language interference, cultural negotiation, and identity-related tensions within academic settings (Bakun et al., 2023).

These challenges are conceptualized as sociolinguistic challenges, referring to the inability to appropriately navigate the social rules governing language use (Mallinson, 2025). Such challenges contribute to linguistic insecurity, reduced self-efficacy, and difficulty in adapting to academic English registers. These factors ultimately affect linguistic competence, which encompasses core language skills such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension (Ergasheva, 2025). Within second language acquisition literature, language learning is recognized as a complex and long-term process requiring sustained effort and persistence (Larsen-Freeman, 2007; Lowie et al., 2010). This sustained effort is closely associated with the construct of grit, defined as perseverance and passion toward long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2007), which has been widely recognized as a key predictor of success in educational contexts (U.S. Department of Education, 2013, as cited in Changlek & Palanukulwong, 2015).

In second language learning specifically, L2 grit refers to sustained passion and perseverance in language acquisition tasks (Teimouri et al., 2020). Learners with higher levels of grit are more likely to persist in the face of language anxiety, difficult texts, and academic challenges by actively seeking strategies and support systems to improve their performance (Sudina et al., 2020; Teimouri et al., 2020). Research further suggests that grit may serve as a compensatory mechanism for learners with lower ability, enabling continued progress despite linguistic challenges (Light & Nencka, 2019, as cited in Johansson & Hansen, 2021). This positions grit as a crucial psychological factor in understanding how learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds overcome sociolinguistic barriers in language learning.

Despite the growing body of literature on sociolinguistic challenges, grit, and linguistic competence as separate constructs, there remains a notable gap in studies that integrate these variables within the Philippine higher education context, particularly in relation to intervention development. Existing literature has not sufficiently explored how sociolinguistic challenges interact with L2 grit to influence linguistic competence among college students, nor how these relationships can inform targeted instructional strategies. This gap becomes more pronounced in the context of increasing enrollment in higher education institutions in Capiz, where understanding the dynamics of language learning is essential for improving educational outcomes. Addressing this gap aligns with the goals of Sustainable Development Goal 4, which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education for all learners (UNESCO, 2030).

The theoretical foundation of this study is anchored on the integration of three major frameworks. Interactional Sociolinguistics, developed by John Joseph Gumperz, explains how meaning is constructed and interpreted in social interaction, emphasizing the role of cultural norms, linguistic cues, and contextual understanding in communication (Toomaneejinda &

Saengboon, 2022). This framework clarifies the external sociolinguistic barriers that students face in using English appropriately within academic and social settings. Complementing this, Grit Theory, advanced by Angela Duckworth, emphasizes perseverance and sustained passion toward long term goals as central drivers of success (Duckworth et al., 2007; Anderson, 2024). In this study, grit functions as the internal psychological mechanism that enables learners to persist despite sociolinguistic difficulties. Finally, Chomsky's Theory of Linguistic Competence provides the outcome-based framework, distinguishing between internalized linguistic knowledge and actual language performance, thereby defining linguistic competence as the ultimate measure of language mastery (Jumanazarov, 2021).

Collectively, these theories form an integrated conceptual framework in which sociolinguistic challenges represent external barriers, grit functions as the internal mediating force, and linguistic competence serves as the measurable educational outcome. This model proposes that students' perseverance and passion for language learning may mitigate the effects of sociolinguistic difficulties and lead to improved linguistic competence. Guided by this framework, the study employs a mixed sequential explanatory design in which quantitative data on sociolinguistic challenges, L2 grit, and linguistic competence are first collected and analyzed, followed by qualitative data from focus group discussions to contextualize and deepen the interpretation of findings. The integration of both data sets provides a comprehensive basis for developing targeted intervention strategies aimed at enhancing English language learning outcomes among college students in Capiz.

Statement of the problem

Generally, this study aimed to determine the sociolinguistic challenges, grit in English language learning, and linguistic competence of college students at the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the province of Capiz, which was the basis in developing intervention strategies for the Academic Year 2025-2026.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of sociolinguistic challenges of college students as a whole and in terms of language variation and change, language attitudes and ideologies, multilingualism, language planning and policy, language and identity, and language and social interaction?
2. What is the level of grit in English language learning of college students as a whole and in terms of perseverance of effort and consistency of interest?
3. What is the level of linguistic competence of college students as a whole and in terms of grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension?
4. Is there a significant difference in the linguistic competence among the levels of sociolinguistic challenges of college students?
5. Is there a significant difference in the linguistic competence among the levels of grit in English language learning of college students?
6. Are there significant relationships among the sociolinguistic challenges, grit in English language learning, and linguistic competence of college students?
7. Based on the findings, what intervention strategies can be proposed to address the identified needs?

METHODOLOGY

This chapter is organized into three interconnected parts that collectively constitute the complete methodological framework of the study. The first part restates the purpose of the study and describes the research design, including the variables and conceptual orientation

guiding the inquiry. The second part describes the participants, the research instruments employed, and the procedures followed in gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. The third part discusses the statistical tools used to analyze the quantitative data, the scoring and interpretive procedures applied to each instrument, and the qualitative analytical approach used to process the Focus Group Discussion data.

The goal of this study was to determine the sociolinguistic challenges, grit in English language learning, and linguistic competence of college students at the public and private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the province of Capiz, which served as the basis for developing intervention strategies. To achieve this objective, a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design was utilized, consisting of two distinct phases: quantitative followed by qualitative (Creswell, 2014). In this design, the researcher first collected and analyzed the quantitative or numeric data, after which the qualitative or textual data were collected and analyzed to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results obtained in the first phase. The second, qualitative phase built on the first, quantitative phase, and the two phases were connected in the intermediate stage of the study. The rationale for this approach is that the quantitative data and their subsequent analysis provide a general understanding of the research problem, while the qualitative data and their analysis refine and explain those statistical results by exploring participants' views in greater depth (Tenny et al., 2022).

In the quantitative component of the study, three survey questionnaires were utilized for the survey-correlational aspect, namely the adapted L2 Grit Scale (Teimouri et al., 2022; Duckworth et al., 2007), the adapted Linguistic Competence Test named CEFR English Level Test by International English Test (2025), and a researcher-made Sociolinguistic Challenges Questionnaire. A correlational picture describes and assigns significance to events in this research design, and it is relevant to the current situation as it relates to the circumstances and relationships of what is happening. According to Best (2019), the correlational picture is intended to determine the circumstances surrounding a current event. It is a study that describes and contextualizes a thing or issue, and it has to do with the circumstances of the connections and actions, the beliefs and processes, the outcomes, or the habits that are formed. Its goal is to identify related factors in the target population. The data obtained from the surveys were subjected to statistical analysis to determine the overall and top five levels of perspectives and practices related to constructive feedback.

On the other hand, the qualitative component of the study involved conducting Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with students. FGDs provide a platform for participants to engage in guided discussions on the topic of interest. Through these discussions, the experiences, perceptions, and opinions of the participants regarding sociolinguistic challenges, grit in English language learning, and linguistic competence of college students were explored. The FGD was audio-recorded, transcribed, and thematically analyzed to identify common themes and patterns. By employing a mixed-methods approach, this study aimed to complement the quantitative data with qualitative insights, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The quantitative data provided a broad overview and statistical evidence, while the qualitative data offered detailed narratives and contextual information, thereby enriching the findings.

The data collected from the survey were analyzed using various statistical tools. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentage, weighted mean, and standard deviation were employed to summarize and describe the quantitative data. Additionally, inferential statistics were conducted to examine relationships and differences between variables. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Pearson correlation coefficient were utilized to explore these relationships and differences and to determine their statistical significance. The

statistical significance of the findings was set at a significance level of 5%, meaning that a p-value of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant, indicating a strong likelihood that the observed results are not due to chance.

The participants of this study were 396 college students enrolled across all nine campuses and satellite colleges of Capiz State University and seven private colleges and universities in the province of Capiz. The participants were identified using stratified random sampling, which is a probability sampling method wherein a population is divided into smaller, non-overlapping subgroups called strata based on shared characteristics. The goal of this method is to ensure that every specific subgroup is adequately represented in the final sample, which improves overall accuracy and reduces sampling bias compared to simple random sampling. The researcher clearly defined the target population as college students enrolled during the academic year 2025-2026, and the desired sample size was determined using the formula of Yamane (1967) with a 5% margin of error. Proportional sample sizes were then allocated and drawn from each stratum based on its relative size or importance within the population, ensuring that each stratum was adequately represented in the final sample.

The demographic profile of the 396 college student participants revealed a population predominantly composed of young adults, with 57.83% ($f=229$) belonging to the 18-20 years old age bracket, 35.61% ($f=141$) in the 21-23 years old range, and 6.57% ($f=26$) aged 24 years old and above. In terms of sex distribution, the population was significantly skewed toward females, who comprised 79.80% ($f=316$) of the total sample, while males accounted for the remaining 20.20% ($f=80$). With respect to geographical background, most respondents were from Rural (Provincial) areas, accounting for 87.88% ($f=348$) of the participants, while those from Urban (City) areas comprised 12.12% ($f=48$). Institutionally, 56.00% ($f=221$) were students at Capiz State University, while the remaining 44.00% ($f=175$) were affiliated with other private institutions. In terms of academic program, the participants were largely concentrated in Education (BSED/BEED) programs, representing 84.09% ($f=333$) of the cohort, while those enrolled in other courses comprised 15.91% ($f=63$).

Socioeconomically, the population was characterized by lower income levels, with 72.47% ($f=287$) reporting a monthly family income of ₱12,082.00 and below, followed by 17.68% ($f=70$) in the ₱12,082.00 to ₱24,164.00 bracket, 6.82% ($f=27$) in the ₱24,164.00 to ₱48,328.00 range, and 3.03% ($f=12$) earning ₱48,328.00 and above. Regarding parental educational attainment, the educational profile of the participants' parents indicated that 58.33% ($f=231$) of fathers had achieved college graduate or college level education, 24.49% ($f=97$) had attained high school graduate or high school level, and 17.17% ($f=68$) had reached elementary graduate or elementary level. Among mothers, a higher proportion of 68.18% ($f=270$) had achieved college graduate or college level education, while 22.47% ($f=89$) had attained high school graduate or high school level, and 9.34% ($f=37$) had reached elementary graduate or elementary level. With respect to linguistic and cultural identity, Hiligaynon served as the primary language for nearly half of the participants at 46.21% ($f=183$), followed by Kinaray-a at 19.44% ($f=77$), Tagalog at 5.05% ($f=20$), and others at 29.30% ($f=116$). Regarding ethnic identity, 88.13% ($f=349$) of the respondents were not members of Indigenous Peoples (IPs), while 11.87% ($f=47$) identified as members of Indigenous Peoples.

After establishing the overall sample size, proportional allocation was applied to determine the number of participants from each stratum based on its relative size within the population, after which participants were randomly selected from each stratum using random selection software. Using this procedure, the number of participants was systematically determined from each of the sixteen universities and colleges. Capiz State University-Main Campus had a population of 6,626, a proportion of 0.1753, and a stratified sample size of 69. Capiz State University-Dayao Satellite College had a population of 3,156, a proportion of 0.0835, and a stratified sample size of 33. Capiz State University-Pontevedra Campus had a

population of 3,352, a proportion of 0.0887, and a stratified sample size of 35. Capiz State University-Mambusao Satellite College had a population of 1,099, a proportion of 0.0291, and a stratified sample size of 12. Capiz State University-Burias Campus had a population of 1,587, a proportion of 0.042, and a stratified sample size of 17. Capiz State University-Dumarao Satellite College had a population of 1,252, a proportion of 0.0331, and a stratified sample size of 13. Capiz State University-Sigma Satellite College had a population of 1,797, a proportion of 0.0475, and a stratified sample size of 19. Capiz State University-Tapaz Satellite College had a population of 764, a proportion of 0.0202, and a stratified sample size of 8. Capiz State University-Pilar Satellite College had a population of 1,462, a proportion of 0.0387, and a stratified sample size of 15. Filamer Christian University (FCU) had a population of 5,933, a proportion of 0.157, and a stratified sample size of 62. Colegio De La Purisima Concepcion (CPC) had a population of 3,711, a proportion of 0.0982, and a stratified sample size of 39. Hercor College, Inc. had a population of 2,514, a proportion of 0.0665, and a stratified sample size of 26. St. Anthony College of Roxas City, Inc. had a population of 2,624, a proportion of 0.0694, and a stratified sample size of 28. College of St. John-Roxas had a population of 1,112, a proportion of 0.0294, and a stratified sample size of 12. St. Vincent College of Business and Accountancy, Inc. had a population of 609, a proportion of 0.0161, and a stratified sample size of 6. The University of Perpetual Help System had a population of 204, a proportion of 0.0054, and a stratified sample size of 2. The total population across all sixteen institutions was 37,802, with a total proportion of 1 and a total stratified sample size of 396.

For the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), the researcher developed specific selection criteria to identify student and teacher participants. The selection criteria established were the following: varying levels of English proficiency, representation from different year levels, demonstrated interest and active engagement in the topic, diversity in social backgrounds, open-mindedness, and respect for confidentiality. This carefully defined set of criteria resulted in a diverse group of participants who facilitated dynamic and productive discussions, yielding valuable insights into the sociolinguistic challenges they encountered, their grit in English language learning, and their overall linguistic competence. Separate FGDs were conducted for ten students and five teachers using an online platform, specifically Google Meet, held on March 7 for students and March 20 for teachers. These sessions enabled structured and interactive discussions among participants who were geographically dispersed. By conducting the FGDs online, the approach offered practical advantages, particularly in overcoming logistical and situational constraints associated with face-to-face gatherings.

The quantitative data were collected through a combination of researcher-made and adapted survey questionnaires and a test validated by the panel members, while the qualitative data were gathered through the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). In the process of gathering, the survey questionnaire and test were distributed through Google Forms (86%=340) and face to face (14%=56). The respondents answered by providing the necessary information and checking the appropriate data box that best described their answer.

The first instrument was a Demographic Profile Questionnaire intended to collect the demographic profile of the respondents, covering age, sex, institution, province, area, degree program, monthly family income, parents' educational attainment, language use, and possible affiliation to a specific ethnic group. The second instrument was a Sociolinguistic Challenges Survey Questionnaire designed to analyze the level of sociolinguistic challenges experienced by college students in Capiz. A 70-item questionnaire was designed to measure their difficulties in this aspect, using a 5-point Likert scale to measure six distinct dimensions of language difficulty. The first dimension, Language Variation and Change, focuses on the student's ability to understand different accents and their struggle with slang or local English versus academic

standards. The second dimension, Language Attitudes and Ideologies, explores beliefs about language hierarchy, such as whether students feel inferior to native speakers or if they believe English is the only path to social progress. The third dimension, Multilingualism, investigates Taglish code-switching as a coping mechanism for anxiety and whether students feel their mother tongue interferes with English fluency. The fourth dimension, Language Planning and Policy, assesses student perceptions of the school curriculum, specifically whether they feel it focuses too much on technical grammar rather than practical, real-life communication. The fifth dimension, Language and Identity, measures how English usage affects a student's sense of belonging and their ability to express their cultural identity. The sixth dimension, Language and Social Interaction, looks at peer dynamics, the fear of being judged during conversation, and whether the current testing system fails to capture social communication skills.

Using a five-point Likert scale, each item in the Sociolinguistic Challenges Survey Questionnaire was answered with one of the following responses: a score of 5 corresponding to Strongly Agree, 4 to Agree, 3 to Neutral, 2 to Disagree, and 1 to Strongly Disagree. To determine the level of sociolinguistic challenges, the following scale was used: a range of 4.21 to 5.00 was described as Very High, 3.41 to 4.20 as High, 2.61 to 3.40 as Moderate, 1.81 to 2.60 as Low, and 1.00 to 1.80 as Very Low.

The third instrument was an Adapted L2 Grit Scale designed to analyze the level of grit in English language learning experienced by college students in Capiz. An 8-item questionnaire was modified to measure Consistency of Interest (CoI) and Perseverance of Effort (PoE) in learning the English language, adapted from the Short Grit Scale by Duckworth and Quinn (2009) and Teimouri et al. (2022). This section measures the non-cognitive traits required for long-term success and is divided into two areas. Area 1, Consistency of Interest, evaluates how stable a student's passion for English remains over time and whether they tend to lose motivation. Area 2, Perseverance of Effort, measures hard work, diligence, and the ability to work through obstacles to reach English language goals. Using a five-point Likert scale, each item was answered with one of the following responses: a score of 5 corresponding to Very much like me, 4 to Mostly like me, 3 to Somehow like me, 2 to Not much like me, and 1 to Not like me at all. To determine the level of grit in English language learning, the following scale was used: a range of 4.21 to 5.00 was described as Very High, 3.41 to 4.20 as High, 2.61 to 3.40 as Moderate, 1.81 to 2.60 as Low, and 1.00 to 1.80 as Very Low.

The fourth instrument was a Linguistic Competence assessment using the CEFR English Level Test by International English Test, which assessed the linguistic competence of the respondents on grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension. This section was composed of 60 items in multiple choice format. The tool generally focused on the target receptive, productive, and structural skills in the English language. To determine the overall level of linguistic competence, the following scale was used: a score range of 26 to 30 was described as Very High, 21 to 25 as High, 16 to 20 as Moderate, 11 to 15 as Low, and 0 to 10 as Very Low. To determine the level of linguistic competence in each language domain, separate scales were established. For Grammar, a range of 14.4 to 16.0 was described as Very High, 11.5 to 14.4 as High, 8.5 to 11.4 as Moderate, 5.5 to 8.4 as Low, and 0.0 to 5.4 as Very Low. For Vocabulary, a range of 5.5 to 6.0 was described as Very High, 4.5 to 5.4 as High, 3.5 to 4.4 as Moderate, 2.5 to 3.4 as Low, and 0.0 to 2.4 as Very Low. For Reading, a range of 2.7 to 3.0 was described as Very High, 2.1 to 2.6 as High, 1.5 to 2.0 as Moderate, 0.9 to 1.4 as Low, and 0.0 to 0.8 as Very Low. For Listening, a range of 4.5 to 5.0 was described as Very High, 3.5 to 4.4 as High, 2.5 to 3.4 as Moderate, 1.5 to 2.4 as Low, and 0.0 to 1.4 as Very Low.

The survey questionnaires and the test underwent content validation and reliability testing. They were pilot-tested on 30 sample college students in the province of Iloilo to identify any issues or areas of confusion. The final versions of the questionnaires were administered to

a larger sample of students to gather data for analysis. The result of the pilot testing was used in determining the computer-processed factor analysis, construct validation, and reliability testing of research instruments using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Software. Items with factor analysis of .70 and above were included in the instrument, while those below .70 were discarded. MsDaniel (1992) contends that an instrument with a reliability index of .70 and above is considered reliable. The first tool on Sociolinguistic Challenges had an overall Cronbach's Alpha of 0.956, the second tool on L2 Grit had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.892, and the third and last tool, the 60-item linguistic competence test, yielded a total of 30 dependable items after the reliability test.

Factor analysis was also used to support the reliability of each instrument by determining whether the items appropriately measured their intended constructs. Items with factor loadings below .50 were discarded, while those with factor loadings of .50 and above were retained and considered acceptable. For the Sociolinguistic Challenges scale, the instrument exhibited excellent internal consistency with an overall Cronbach's Alpha of 0.956. Preliminary assumption testing indicated that the data were well-suited for factor extraction, yielding a structure that accounts for a significant portion of the total variance. The high reliability coefficient suggests that the identified factors represent a cohesive and stable construct of the sociolinguistic hurdles faced by the participants. The L2 Grit scale underwent factor analysis to validate the alignment of its items with the theoretical constructs of consistency of interest and perseverance of effort in a second language context. The analysis confirmed a robust factor structure, supported by a high reliability estimate of 0.892, and all items within the identified factors displayed strong factor loadings, indicating that the instrument is a psychometrically sound measure for assessing the sustained effort and passion of learners in L2 acquisition. For the Linguistic Competence instrument, an initial pool of 60 items was subjected to factor analysis and reliability screening. Following the extraction process and item-total correlation analysis, the scale was refined to 30 dependable items that demonstrated the strongest factor loadings and conceptual relevance. This streamlined version of the tool ensures a parsimonious yet comprehensive measurement of linguistic proficiency, maintaining high construct validity by eliminating redundant or low-loading variables identified during the testing phase.

Before initiating the study, a formal letter of permission was prepared and submitted to the relevant authorities. The letter outlined the purpose of the study, the methods employed, and the expected benefits. It also emphasized the voluntary nature of participation and assured confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Alongside obtaining permission, ethical approval was sought from the appropriate ethics committee or review board. This step ensured that the study adhered to ethical guidelines and protected the rights and well-being of the participants. The ethical approval process involved submitting a detailed research proposal and addressing any concerns raised by the committee. Participants aged 18 and above were required to provide informed consent, while participants below 18 years of age were required to provide parent consent and assent.

The researcher developed and adapted two survey questionnaires and adapted one language test to determine the sociolinguistic challenges, grit in English language learning, and linguistic competence of college students, respectively. The survey instrument was administered both online, yielding 340 responses, and in-person, yielding 56 responses. For the online survey, participants were sent an email containing a link to the survey platform. Corresponding student emails were assured to have been gathered ethically through proper channels with the help of each institution's Office of the Registrar. For the in-person survey, arrangements were made prior to conducting the survey during class time or by scheduling

appointments, and clear instructions were provided to participants regarding the purpose of the survey, the expected duration, and any confidentiality measures in place.

In accordance with established research ethics and to acknowledge the participants' valuable time and contribution, tokens of recognition were provided to all individuals involved in the study. Face-to-face participants received a complimentary pen, while those who engaged via online platforms were sent a 20 pesos mobile load. Furthermore, participants in the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were formally recognized with certificates of participation and an additional monetary incentive sent via GCash. These tokens were intended as a gesture of appreciation and were calibrated to ensure they did not constitute undue influence or coercion, thereby maintaining the voluntary nature of the study.

For retrieval of online data, the data from the online survey were safely kept, and the link of all responses was bookmarked for easy access, after which the file was exported into an Excel format in preparation for data analysis. For the hard copies of the questionnaires, participants were requested to submit the completed forms as soon as they finished answering; however, for those requiring more time, a 48-hour window was provided, after which the researcher personally collected the remaining instruments from the designated sites. Data cleaning procedures were implemented to identify and rectify any missing or inconsistent data through a thorough review of the collected survey responses to address any discrepancies or errors. The data cleaning process was conducted systematically to maintain the integrity and accuracy of the dataset.

To uphold the right to privacy of the participants, the researcher implemented a strict no-name policy on all survey forms. All retrieved online instruments were kept in a password-protected database, and the hard copies were kept in a secure, locked container. In compliance with data protection standards, all collected information was used solely for the purpose of this research and will be permanently destroyed three years after the study's completion.

The collected survey data were analyzed using appropriate statistical methods to test hypotheses and draw conclusions, while inferential statistics such as t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson's *r* were employed to explore relationships and differences among variables. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows Version 21 was utilized to facilitate the analysis. In addition to the survey instrument, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted via Google Meet after analyzing the results of the quantitative data, with the aim of deepening the understanding of the sociolinguistic challenges, grit in English language learning, and linguistic competence of college students. A diverse group of participants were selected, and an FGD guide consisting of open-ended questions and prompts was prepared. The FGD provided an interactive platform for participants to express their thoughts and opinions, generating qualitative insights to complement the data from the quantitative survey. To ensure reliability of results for all data gathered, the participants were reminded of the value of honesty and truthfulness in every aspect of the survey, test, or interview, which warranted consistency of results.

The data obtained were examined and interpreted, and implications were determined using both descriptive and inferential statistics, with results interpreted at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. Frequency count was used to determine the exact number of respondents falling into specific categories, such as the demographic profile variables and individual questionnaire item responses, thereby providing a solid numerical foundation of the data before any further calculations were made. Percentage was calculated by taking the frequency of a specific category, dividing it by the total number of respondents (*N*), and multiplying by 100, allowing for a fair comparison across groups of different sizes and showing the weight of a response relative to the whole. Percentage distribution was employed to determine the relative proportion of the frequencies, enabling the researcher to identify the prevalence of certain trends or characteristics within the sample and making the data easier to interpret and compare.

Mean was used to determine the overall level of sociolinguistic challenges and its sub-variables experienced by students, the overall level of grit and in each of its subcomponents, and the overall and dimensional levels of students' linguistic competence in grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension. Standard deviation indicated the consistency or variability of the responses of respondents in the levels of sociolinguistic challenges, level of grit in English language learning, and level of linguistic competence of college students.

One-way ANOVA was employed to determine if there were significant differences in the level of linguistic competence among the levels of sociolinguistic challenges and grit in English language learning of the respondents, using a probability value (p-value) of less than 0.05 as the threshold for statistical significance. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to measure the strength and direction of the relationship among sociolinguistic challenges, grit in English language learning, and linguistic competence, determining whether increases or decreases in one variable are associated with similar or opposite changes in another and helping to establish meaningful linkages between the constructs.

For the qualitative component, analyzing data from the Focus Group Discussion involved a structured qualitative analysis approach. The researcher first transcribed the audio or video recording of the FGD session verbatim, converting spoken words into written text and capturing participants' responses, interactions, and non-verbal cues to ensure that the data were in a readable and analyzable format. The researcher then thoroughly read and listened to the transcribed data multiple times to gain familiarity with the content, paying attention to the context, key themes, and recurring patterns that emerged from the discussions and that were used to support and strengthen the results of the quantitative data. The researcher subsequently compared the findings from the FGD analysis with other data sources, such as survey data or existing literature, in a process of triangulation that helped validate and strengthen the interpretation of the data by examining consistency or discrepancies across different sources of information. Finally, the researcher presented the FGD findings in a clear and concise manner in the research report, using quotes or excerpts from the FGD data to illustrate and support the identified themes, and providing a coherent narrative that highlights the key findings, insights, and implications of the analysis. Overall, the data gathering procedure and statistical data analysis procedures were carefully planned and executed to ensure that the data collected were of high quality and provided valid and reliable information on the sociolinguistic challenges, grit in English language learning, and linguistic competence of college students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the study, which investigated the sociolinguistic challenges, grit in English language learning, and linguistic competence of college students at public and private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the province of Capiz, with the findings serving as the basis for developing intervention strategies. A total of 396 college students drawn from all nine campuses and satellite colleges of Capiz State University and seven private colleges and universities participated in the study. Participants were identified through stratified random sampling, with proportional allocation applied across sixteen institutions to ensure adequate representation of each stratum relative to its size within the total population of 37,802 students. Quantitative data were collected using three instruments: a researcher-made Sociolinguistic Challenges Survey Questionnaire, the adapted L2 Grit Scale (Teimouri et al., 2022; Duckworth et al., 2007), and the adapted CEFR English

Level Test by International English Test (2025). To deepen and contextualize the quantitative findings, qualitative data were gathered through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted via Google Meet on March 7 for ten student participants and March 20 for five teacher participants. The quantitative data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient, while the qualitative data were processed through verbatim transcription, familiarization, thematic analysis, and triangulation. Results are interpreted at the 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. All findings presented in this chapter are grounded in the data gathered and are interpreted in direct relation to the objectives of the study.

Sociolinguistic challenges of college students

The analysis of sociolinguistic challenges was conducted using the mean and standard deviation across six domains, with the following interpretive scale applied: 4.21 to 5.00 described as Very High, 3.41 to 4.20 as High, 2.61 to 3.40 as Moderate, 1.81 to 2.60 as Low, and 1.00 to 1.80 as Very Low. The result shows that the overall sociolinguistic challenges faced by college students in Capiz is High across different domains ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.24$). Among the six subcategories, Language and Interaction ranked first as the highest level of sociolinguistic challenge ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.42$), indicating that respondents are highly challenged in this area of sociolinguistics. Language Planning and Policy ranked second ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.38$), followed by Multilingualism in third rank ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.34$). Both Language Variation and Change ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.37$) and Language Attitude and Ideologies ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.44$) shared the fourth rank. Language and Identity recorded the fifth and lowest rank ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.47$), though it still falls under the High category. The High rating across all domains indicates a prevalent state of linguistic insecurity when navigating the social contexts of English. This entails that college students in Capiz may not have a very high level of sociolinguistic challenges, but they are sufficiently challenged in certain social situations involving language use. Furthermore, this finding indicates that there is still a lack of sociolinguistic competence among college students in Capiz within various domains including language variation and change, language attitudes and ideologies, multilingualism, language planning and policy, language and identity, and language and interaction.

While it is distressing to observe that college students in Capiz are highly challenged in the field of sociolinguistics, it is important to recognize that this is not universally true for all students, as there are still others who do not share the same reality. Nevertheless, promoting inclusivity, cultural understanding, and academic support for students remains a crucial goal for creating safe and welcoming educational environments where everyone can express themselves and communicate freely without the fear of judgment. These findings support Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) theory, which posits that communication is not just about grammar but about signaling and interpreting meaning through social cues. The high level of challenge in Language and Interaction aligns with Mallinson's (2025) assertion that the inability to navigate social rules causes linguistic uncertainty. The result is also supported by the study of Tawfic (2020), who emphasized that language use is profoundly influenced by cultural norms, such that even within groups who are ethnically and culturally similar, students can hold different opinions and views that affect how they interpret and use language. This was further confirmed by the studies of Nguyen (2025) and Petrocelli (2025), who noted that the most significant challenge for students centers on ensuring that utterances are socio-culturally appropriate. Meanwhile, several studies cited in Riaza et al. (2024) demonstrated that while linguistic competence is a prerequisite for pragmatic success, it is not in itself sufficient to guarantee it, because a learner may produce a perfectly grammatical sentence but fail to convey their message appropriately within the social context, resulting in a pragmatic and

sociolinguistic failure. It is therefore agreeable when Yan (2023) suggested that to effectively teach English communicatively and develop sociolinguistic competence, teachers should expose learners to authentic language use through resources like social media, songs, and literature, design classroom practices that engage students in real-life contexts, and encourage interaction with native speakers, while crucially integrating sociolinguistic norms into both the existing curriculum and assessment.

In the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), student participants shared their experiences on the sociolinguistic challenges they encountered more specifically in terms of Language Variation and Change, Language Attitude and Ideologies, Multilingualism, Language Planning and Policy, Language and Identity, and Language and Interaction. In the context of higher education, language is often tied to professional identity. For a Political Science student (Student Discussant 1), English is not just a tool but a requirement for classroom survival; however, the shift from theory to practice creates a politeness paradox involving the anxiety of whether one's tone is too rude or too formal. Student Discussant 1 described the experience as knowing the words but being uncertain whether speaking to professors in English comes across as too rude or too formal, acknowledging the diverse culture and dialects of Capiz and the importance of learning to adjust, self-rating at 3 out of 5 and describing himself as gutsy but knowing when out of his depth. This highlights the sociolinguistic implication that language proficiency is not just about vocabulary but about navigating the delicate social hierarchies between student and teacher. This professional pressure is resonated by those already in the workforce. Even an ESL teacher and former call center agent (Student Discussant 2) admits that the regional dialect, like the Hiligaynon word "huo" for yes, can take over in professional settings, and she shared that despite her background as an English major, former call center agent, and current ESL teacher, she still encounters difficulties in sociolinguistics, self-rating at 2 out of 5 as someone bubbly who has conquered much of the challenge. These experiences suggest that even high-level speakers face L1 interference, where the native tongue provides a comforting though subconscious anchor against the demands of a second language.

For many students, the challenge moves beyond professional decorum and into the territory of deep-seated fear. For a Filipino major (Student Discussant 3), the fear of being mocked or judged acts as a linguistic barrier, describing being too scared to speak in front of the class because of fear of being judged by the way she talks and pronounces words, while noting that professors in English subjects allow Filipino use to practice national language fluency, and self-rating at 5 out of 5, saying that the fear of judgment makes every social interaction feel like a mountain to climb. When a student describes speaking as a mountain to climb, the difficulty is no longer academic but emotional. Interestingly, the narrative shifts when professors allow for translanguaging or using Filipino or dialect in English contexts, providing a sanctuary where students can prioritize fluency over the fear of a non-standard accent. Despite these hurdles, a significant portion of the student participants adopts a philosophy of functionalism. For the Social Work major (Student Discussant 4), the priority is not linguistic perfection but getting the message across, describing the experience as a working student who is fortunate to have supportive teachers, noting that perfect English is not required from Social Work majors so there is no pressure, self-rating at 3 out of 5 as someone who is average and just multitasks to get the message across. For Student Discussants 5 and 6, the fear of not having a standard accent and the fear of being mocked make it difficult to express themselves completely, with Student Discussant 5 describing being scared of being mocked or judged while speaking in English because of the absence of a standard accent and self-rating at 4 out of 5, while Student Discussant 6 described always thinking more than twice before speaking due to fear of being mocked when committing mistakes, feeling happy that friends

never made her feel different despite a speaking difficulty, rating the sociolinguistic challenges at 5 out of 5 and describing speaking as a real problem. Student Discussant 9 shared that there is no time to overthink because of multitasking demands and that as long as the message in conversations comes across, that is all that matters, rating the difficulty at 4 out of 5 and acknowledging that even with confidence, the multitasking of languages is exhausting.

Building on the student narratives, the perspectives of educators reveal a startling irony: the barrier to communication is rarely a lack of knowledge but rather the weight of social geography. As a veteran educator of two decades (Teacher Discussant 1) notes, students often possess the vocabulary but remain silent due to fear of peer judgment arising from their diverse, often rural backgrounds, rating the sociolinguistic challenges at 4 out of 5 and observing that after two decades, the social application of vocabulary remains the real hurdle. This suggests that sociolinguistic challenge is less a cognitive hurdle and more an emotional one, where English is viewed not just as a language but as a marker of social class. The pressure for globalization creates a unique tension in specialized fields, with Teacher Discussant 2 noting that Food Technology students are not required to speak English well but are strongly encouraged by the university's global orientation to overcome their fear of communicating in English, rating them as Moderate-to-High and observing that while linguistically capable, they are socially hesitant. The most severe assessment comes from Teacher Discussant 3, who rates the challenge at 5 out of 5 and observes that students lack the readiness to communicate in English because of fear of failure, emphasizing the need to ensure students do not feel inferior when expressing themselves. Teacher Discussant 4 points out that students often struggle with the seriousness of specific situations, failing to adjust their tone when moving from peer-to-peer chat to professional discourse, rating the challenge at 4 out of 5. Teacher Discussant 5 offers a more fluid solution through code-switching, stating that students are fond of code-switching in English classes and that as long as they can fully explain and discuss concepts confidently, that is what matters most, rating the challenge at 4 out of 5 and noting that the emotional weight of identity and belonging is a lot for a college student to carry.

The statements of both student and teacher participants primarily imply that affective filters, specifically the fear of social judgment and perceived inadequacy, act as significant barriers to communicative competence in the academic environment. While students across various majors demonstrate a high level of sociolinguistic awareness as depicted by the consistent high rating of 4 or 5 by the participants, their performance is frequently inhibited by face-saving concerns. This is evident in the recurring mentions of being terrified of social judgment (Teacher Discussant 1) and scared of being mocked (Student Discussant 6). The transcripts suggest that for many students, the challenge is not necessarily a lack of vocabulary or grammatical knowledge but rather a struggle with register and social positioning, knowing how to calibrate their language to be neither too rude nor too formal (Student Discussant 1). The responses also highlight a clear divergence between institutional expectations and the practical, multilingual reality of the student body. While institutions aim for global skills and English proficiency (Teacher Discussant 2), the student's lived experiences are rooted in diverse culture and diverse dialects (Student Discussant 1), leading to frequent code-switching and the intrusion of regional languages like Hiligaynon (Student Discussant 2). This suggests a shift toward communicative functionalism, where the successful transmission of a message is prioritized over linguistic purity, supported by both students who value getting the message across (Student Discussant 9) and teachers who accept code-switching as a tool for confidence (Teacher Discussant 5). It is also important to highlight that during the FGD, the majority of student and teacher participants agreed to the High rating that emerged from the data analysis, with some not even surprised at all. Ultimately, these responses imply that encouraging a safe sociolinguistic environment, where errors are viewed as part of the adaptive process rather than

a social failure, is essential for students to transition from being passive observers to active, confident communicators.

With respect to Language and Interaction as the highest sociolinguistic challenge, the result suggests that college students in Capiz struggle significantly with the social rules of engagement, such as knowing when to interrupt or using appropriate politeness strategies in English. Language instruction should therefore deliberately include activities that strengthen sociolinguistic skills, such as role-plays, debates, and intercultural communication exercises that help students practice conversational norms, while guided feedback can make them more aware of how their linguistic choices affect interaction. In the FGD, Student Discussant 3 captured the performance paradox perfectly by noting that while testing is acceptable because it is written, oral assessment is described as a nightmare. Student Discussant 5 shared that the pressure of evaluation is never-ending, confessing to always feeling tested even in casual talk. Student Discussant 1 admitted to a constant state of self-correction, stating confidence in testing but a constant need to check in real interaction whether the tone is too bold or too much. Teacher Discussant 1 provided a sharp pedagogical analysis, observing that in testing students excel, but in spontaneous communication they crumble, and advocating for the assessment of social competence rather than just grammatical competence. The narrative formed by these statements suggests that the high level of sociolinguistic challenges faced by students is not a failure of intelligence but a failure of interactional competence, as students are likely struggling with social norms and perceived power imbalances rather than just vocabulary. The result of the study is supported by the findings of Sharif and Osterling (2011), who found that language and communication were the most challenging areas for respondents due to differences in accents, enunciation, and the use of slang, with respondents specifically struggling with interactional tasks like participating in class discussions and seminars. Al Dilaimy (2024) also strengthens the result by defining sociolinguistic challenges as occurring when a speaker's linguistic knowledge is insufficient to meet the social, cultural, and contextual demands of communication, leading to breakdowns in interaction. In the same way, Fahad (2015) identified that the lack of fluency in interactional settings like learner-centered classrooms created major obstacles for graduate students, leading to embarrassment and shaken self-confidence, while Kramsch (2014) noted that the primary problem for learners is a weakness in situational context, particularly in cross-cultural interactions where social norms vary.

In contrast to the prevalent linguistic anxiety observed in other FGD statements, a significant subset of the student population demonstrates a high degree of communicative resilience and interactional agency. Student Discussant 2 exemplifies this proactive stance by asserting that interaction is a strength and assessing herself as high performing in this area because she is always on the go. Student Discussant 4 highlights a pragmatic mindset, stating the ability to communicate well enough to be understood and that assessment does not cause fear. Teacher Discussant 4 validates this high-performance group by noting that interactive testing through roleplays and debates shows how well students handle social pressure. Sawir et al. (2012), while supporting the idea of communication difficulties, found that the experience of students on interactional challenges was not universal and that it varies from one group to another. Overall, the coexistence of high sociolinguistic challenges and positive experiences among college students indicates the need for continued efforts to address discrimination, promote inclusive environments, and provide support for students who encounter such difficulties.

Regarding Language Planning and Policy, the result revealing a High level of difficulty suggests a substantial disconnect between formal institutional mandates and the actual sociolinguistic realities of the respondents. The FGD discussions revealed a complex dialectic

between institutional mandates and the lived sociolinguistic realities of students. A recurring theme among participants was the perceived resistance between standardized syllabi and local linguistic nuances. Student Discussant 1 articulated tension with a curriculum described as rigid and sometimes disconnected from local speech, reinforced by Student Discussant 8, who suggested that the policy could be more inclusive of local nuances while still attempting to adapt. Teacher Discussant 4 acknowledged this pedagogical challenge, admitting that the curriculum can be a bit stiff sometimes, necessitating a personal effort to make the syllabus more conversational and less policy-driven. For some students, the existing policy provides a necessary though restrictive framework, with Student Discussant 2 noting clear policy that she follows, viewing the institution as supportive, and Student Discussant 3 admitting strict adherence because it is safe while desiring more support for shy students. Student Discussant 5 confessed to finding the curriculum challenging and expressed a direct need for more remedial support from the institution. Teacher Discussant 1 provided a critical sociolinguistic analysis, noting that while the curriculum is robust, institutional support needs to bridge the gap for students coming from rural areas where English is not the home variety. Teacher Discussant 3 argued that the efficacy of language planning and policy is dependent on environmental implementation and advocated for English-only zones to provide tangible institutional reinforcement.

Despite the efforts of HEIs to cater to the needs of all students, the responses of the participants revealed that more determination still needs to be done to minimize the challenges encountered by college students in Capiz regarding the language decisions and policies of the institutions. The feedback from students and teachers indicates that the current rigid or stiff curriculum creates a sociolinguistic barrier, particularly for those whose home variety of English differs from the academic standard. Similarly, Mede and Dililitas (2015) highlighted that sociolinguistic competence is frequently excluded from instruction because teachers lack the time or confidence to address sociocultural aspects within the established syllabus, aligning with students' feelings that the curriculum is rigid or disconnected. Asghar and Shehzad (2018) also noted that while tolerance is often a curricular objective, it is usually treated as an abstract or theoretical concept rather than a functional part of the school environment. In contrast to those who perceive the institutional framework as an obstacle, a segment of the student and faculty population experiences a harmonious alignment with current academic structures. Student Discussant 10 highlighted the view that the curriculum is well-designed and the structure it provides is appreciated, while Student Discussant 7 noted that the syllabus is followed without much fuss. Teacher Discussant 5 offered a transformative view of institutional support, describing the syllabus as a living document that grows with the specific sociolinguistic needs of students. Park et al. (2021), citing Sawir et al. (2012), highlighted a major discrepancy in how policies are experienced, noting that while Asian students felt prejudicial attitudes, students from Brazil and Europe believed that negative attitudes toward them within the boundaries of education did not exist, suggesting that for some groups the institutional policy is not perceived as a challenge at all. Overall, the finding that college students in Capiz face significant sociolinguistic challenges within the context of language planning and policy proves there is still a need for increased awareness, education, and dialogue to promote sociolinguistic competence and establish programs to better the current situation of these learners.

With respect to Multilingualism, the high result entails that in many instances the respondents have experienced a great level of difficulties in terms of navigating how the English language is used, valued, and maintained in interactions, implying that students find imbalance in language hierarchy and power, code-switching and communication norms, and negative encounters in language shift and endangerment. Students often experience a double burden where they must master English while navigating its perceived superiority over their

native dialects. The finding that students perceive an imbalance in language power is supported by Asghar and Shehzad (2018), who argue that educational institutions often operate in sociopolitical contexts where a student's first language is thrown overboard in favor of English, creating asymmetrical social configurations and a power imbalance. Another similar study by Sharif and Osterling (2011) provides a direct academic parallel to these findings, with their participants encountering significant obstacles in understanding lectures, making oral presentations, and engaging in class discussions, and identifying language and communication as the most challenging areas due to sociolinguistic variations such as differing accents, enunciation, and the use of slang.

The FGD revealed that for many students, English remains confined to the classroom and surrounded by psychological tension. Student Discussant 3 highlighted environmental isolation, stating that contact with English is limited to the classroom and expressing the experience of freezing when having to switch. Student Discussant 5 confessed that code-switching is the only way to survive a conversation and that anxiety is very high. Teacher Discussant 1 provided a moving analysis of this behavior, noting that anxiety is the silent killer of fluency and clarifying that students code-switch not because they are lazy but as a survival mechanism against linguistic stage fright. Student Discussant 6 admitted that contact with near-native speakers is intimidating but expressed a refusal to give up. The qualitative data gathered from the FGD underscores a deep psychological dimension to multilingualism, wherein elevated levels of linguistic anxiety serve as a primary deterrent to authentic communication and academic engagement, a finding that aligns with the socio-cultural stressors of integration identified by Sharif and Osterling (2011). This linguistic stage fright necessitates the adoption of code-switching as a critical survival mechanism rather than a symptom of cognitive deficit, thereby validating the assertions of Asghar and Shehzad (2018) regarding the asymmetrical power structures that marginalize a learner's primary language. While the silent killer of anxiety pervades much of the linguistic experience in Capiz, a significant counter-narrative exists among students who have successfully reframed multilingualism. Student Discussant 9 exemplifies this mindset, stating that languages are switched like tasks with zero anxiety because of being too busy to be nervous. Student Discussant 10 shares that code-switching is used when necessary to be inclusive, describing average challenges due to introversion. The presence of a resilient group of participants who deal with multilingualism with minimal anxiety despite the high prevailing sociolinguistic challenges indicates that these barriers are not impossible to overcome.

Regarding Language Variation and Change, the high mean implies that students experience significant pressure when moving between different dialects or registers of English. As noted in the study of Fahad (2015), encountering various accents and non-standard forms can lead to shaken self-confidence. Because students find language variation challenging, they likely expend significant mental energy determining which version of English is appropriate for a given social or academic context, supporting the FGD findings that students use code-switching as a survival mechanism. The difficulty in navigating variation also suggests a tension between the Standard English promoted by institutions and the natural evolution of language used by the students, reflecting Asghar and Shehzad's (2018) view on asymmetrical social configurations. In the FGD, Student Discussant 1 captured this tension by describing flexibility but a struggle when moving from casual Hiligaynon to formal Academic English, acknowledging an awareness of accent slips and the pressure of Standard English ideologies, and self-assessing as capable but still learning proper values. Student Discussant 3 shared an understanding of the variations but an unwillingness to use them due to fear of being judged, preferring silence and believing that broken English defines intelligence in others' eyes. Student

Discussant 5 expressed trying hard to adapt to different accents but often failing, feeling looked down upon for not sounding professional and describing this as hurting confidence. Teacher Discussant 1 observed that after 20 years, students struggle to code-mesh, knowing the variations but struggling to adapt to the formal prestige variety required in research, and described the need to dismantle daily the belief that not sounding like a news anchor means not being smart. Teacher Discussant 3 noted that adaptation is slow because students are aware of different varieties but lack the exposure to practice switching between them effectively, framing language as a tool for power and professional growth.

The responses indicate that students often perceive English proficiency not merely as a functional skill but as a direct reflection of their innate intelligence. By internalizing a deficit model, many students believe that broken English signifies a lack of intellectual capability, leading to a profound sense of linguistic stage fright. The struggles mentioned by Student Discussant 5 and Student Discussant 1 regarding accents and sounding professional are directly supported by Fahad (2015), who notes that students often face high levels of stress when encountering various native English varieties and that a lack of fluency or a non-standard accent can lead to embarrassing situations and shaken self-confidence. The observation of Teacher Discussant 3 that language is a tool for power and the battle against standard language ideology by Teacher Discussant 1 are mirrored in the work of Asghar and Shehzad (2018), who argue that educational institutions exist within asymmetrical social configurations where English is positioned at the top of a hierarchy. The feeling of Student Discussant 3 that their English defines their intelligence is a sign of what Pennycook (2017) describes as the first-culture loss that follows language shift. In contrast, Student Discussant 4 exemplified a task-oriented approach by stating the use of whatever works, viewing language as just a tool for social work without holding strong ideologies. Student Discussant 7 described adapting as normal, viewing it as just normal to change how you talk depending on who you are with and rejecting language as a status symbol. Teacher Discussant 2 observed that students in technical fields like Food Technology understand variation well but find it difficult to adapt their terminology for global audiences, with humble values creating a supportive classroom atmosphere. These contrasting results suggest that while sociolinguistic challenges are statistically High for the majority, a subset of students and teachers has successfully decoupled language from social status.

Concerning Language Attitudes and Ideologies, the high score in this domain suggests that students are acutely aware of the prestige attached to certain ways of speaking, implying that many students may have internalized a deficit model and view their native linguistic habits as obstacles rather than assets. The result of the study is supported by Mayo (2015), as cited in Asghar and Shehzad (2018), who noted that in multicultural milieus, attitudes like bigotry and inequity when expressed toward minority students can considerably affect their success in school, which is also applicable because some of the participants have Indigenous Peoples (IPs) roots. In the FGD, Student Discussant 1 reflected on feeling the pressure of Standard English ideologies while trying not to judge others, assessing himself as capable but still learning proper values. Student Discussant 3 shared that English is valued but that judgment is feared, with the belief that broken English defines intelligence in others' eyes. Student Discussant 5 articulated the feeling of people looking down for not sounding professional and described the impact on confidence. Student Discussant 6 admitted the belief of needing to speak better while being the harshest self-critic. Teacher Discussant 1 observed that students harbor a standard language ideology, thinking that not sounding like a news anchor means not being smart, and described the need to dismantle that belief daily. Teacher Discussant 3 took a direct approach, stating that society judges by how one speaks and that students are starting to realize that language is a tool for power and professional growth.

In contrast, Student Discussant 2 asserted that all dialects have value and does not let prestige languages cause feelings of inferiority. Student Discussant 7 expressed not judging

and not seeing language as a status symbol. Student Discussant 4 admitted average challenges and holds the view that language is just a tool for social work. Students Discussants 8 and 10 both emphasized depth over proper grammar and valued clear, honest communication. Student Discussant 9 expressed confidence and the belief that personal drive is more important than following strict linguistic ideologies. These responses imply that not all students internalize the pressure of standard language ideologies in the same way, and some demonstrate a more inclusive and pragmatic view. Asghar and Shehzad (2018) support these more inclusive perspectives, affirming that validating learners' identities and their first languages can greatly facilitate their educational experience. Levinson (2009, as cited in Asghar and Shehzad, 2018) also argued for a critical pedagogy that empowers students from varied backgrounds, ensuring that language is seen as a tool for participation rather than exclusion.

With regard to Language and Identity, the high result reveals that students experience significant difficulty in maintaining their cultural and linguistic heritage while attempting to integrate into an English-dominant academic environment, suggesting that as students strive for English proficiency, they face a first-language loss which is often followed by a first-culture loss, leading to a fragmented sense of self. The finding is substantiated by Pennycook (2017), who argues that as the global influence of English spreads, students often suffer from first-language loss invariably followed by the loss of their first culture. Asghar and Shehzad (2018) describe educational institutions as asymmetrical social configurations where the dominance of one language often forces learners to abandon their primary linguistic identity. Reese and Robertson (2019) further illuminate this by explaining how cultural values shape autobiographical memory, the core of one's identity, and that in collectivist cultures like the Philippines, identity is relational and communal, while the English academic system often promotes Western individualistic narratives.

In the FGD, Student Discussant 3 captured the internal struggle by noting often feeling like an outsider with a bit of low self-concept from not feeling cultured enough in English. Student Discussant 5 articulated the barrier of struggling to feel belonging in high-level academic circles because of language. Teacher Discussant 1 observed the longitudinal struggle of students whose self-concept is tied to their dialect, seeing a struggle between staying true to Capiznon roots and acting academic. Teacher Discussant 3 emphasized that identity is about belonging and that if a student feels they do not belong in an English-speaking circle, they will not try, advocating for a change in that self-concept. The low self-concept and negative feeling of not being cultured enough among students align with Pennycook (2017), and the call to change that self-concept is supported by the study of Cummins, which emphasizes that affirming the identity of learners is essential for academic success.

In contrast, Student Discussant 8 illustrated internal stability by noting that identity is internal and that a strong sense of belonging to culture gives peace. Student Discussant 9 demonstrated a bold assertion of belonging wherever she is because she makes herself belong. Teacher Discussant 2 observed students gaining cultural awareness, explaining that as they learn English they do not lose their identity but add a new layer to who they are. Teacher Discussant 4 expressed wanting students to feel proud, whether they speak Hiligaynon, Tagalog, or English, advocating for cultural awareness as key. The observation of Teacher Discussant 2 that students add a new layer to their identity aligns with the ideal of a pluralist and inclusive social order described by Hemer (2017). The strong emphasis of Teacher Discussant 4 on cultural awareness as the key to confidence is corroborated by the study of Cummins, who asserts that affirming the identity of learners is a fundamental prelude to successful teaching.

Grit in English language learning of college students

The level of grit in English language learning was measured using the mean and standard deviation, with the following interpretive scale applied: 4.21 to 5.00 described as Very High, 3.41 to 4.20 as High, 2.61 to 3.40 as Moderate, 1.81 to 2.60 as Low, and 1.00 to 1.80 as Very Low. The overall level of grit in English language learning among the respondents is Moderate ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.28$). While students exhibit a High level of Consistency of Interest ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.37$), their Perseverance of Effort is significantly lower ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.41$), falling into the Moderate range.

The moderate level of grit in English language learning among the respondents suggests a steady but cautious approach to language acquisition. While these learners are not giving up, they are not necessarily pushing through the intermediate plateau with high intensity either. This indicates that students possess enough perseverance to handle routine classroom tasks but may lack the passion and persistence required for long-term mastery. Respondents likely attend classes and complete assignments but may avoid high-stakes challenges such as spontaneous conversation with native speakers or tackling complex literature. In language learning, a moderate level of grit often leads to functional literacy but stops short of fluency. The notably low standard deviation ($SD = 0.28$) suggests a high level of homogeneity among the group, meaning that most scores are clustered tightly around the mean, and there are few outliers such as high-grit peers who might act as natural motivators or role models within the peer group. Because the grit level is only moderate, a sudden increase in curriculum difficulty or a string of failures could easily discourage this group, as they lack the gritty reserve to bounce back quickly. The most significant data point is the disparity between the mean of Consistency of Interest (High) and Perseverance of Effort (Moderate), indicating a passion-persistence gap where students maintain a steady interest in learning English but struggle to translate that interest into sustained hard work or resilience against challenges.

In line with this, the study of Augusto (2021) also found that 52% of students have a moderate level of grit and that it has been influenced by their characteristics, attitudes, and culture. In addition, integrative and holistic teaching are recommended to focus not only on the intellectual aspect of students but also the behavioral aspects. The result slightly contradicts the article by Cabigon (2015), who reiterated that Filipinos have strong spirit, grit, and courage and are known for their unwavering resolve to face the myriad of crises. The result is supported by the study of Wang et al. (2021), who said that enjoyment and grit are recognized as critical in language learning and linguistic performance. Changlek and Palanukulwong (2015), as cited in Johansson and Hansen (2021), showed that high achievers tended to have higher levels of grit, which is positively related to motivation in L2 learning. The results, however, also run counter to Wu et al. (2024), who suggested that Perseverance of Effort (PoE) has a stronger correlation with language learning than Consistency of Interest (CoI), contending that persistent effort is more likely to be adopted by those with high grit. While the study of Mede and Dililitas (2015) suggests teachers find student attitudes challenging, these results show the students have the right interest but the environment, such as rigid institutional policies, fails to support their perseverance.

In the FGD, student and teacher participants shared remarks on their overall passion and perseverance in English language learning. Student Discussant 1 described having the drive but admitting that focus is not always 100% on English language learning, observing that many start strong but lose interest when technical grammar becomes boring or repetitive, which suggests that grit is not a static trait but a fluctuating resource that can be depleted by unengaging pedagogy. Student Discussant 2 described her grit as high and steady, viewing English language learning as a lifestyle and not just a subject, and observing that it is moderate for others because they do not see the fun and see it as a chore. Student Discussant 3 rated

personal grit as low, sharing that fear of judgment kills the stamina to keep going and that negative feedback ruins the will to keep trying. Student Discussant 4 described the level as average, noting that as a multitasker, English language learning is just one of many things being pushed through, with students like herself being exhausted and demotivated from balancing work and study. Student Discussant 5 described being challenged, acknowledging that a lack of progress makes the desire to continue drop and linking moderate to low grit to low self-esteem and the feeling of being destined to fail. Student Discussant 6 described the self as resilient but hesitant and slow to speak but not having given up on the language, identifying a burnout issue where high sociolinguistic challenges drain grit reserves. Student Discussant 7 described being balanced and only doing what is required without over-extending, observing that most students just want to pass with no deep connection to the language. Student Discussant 8 described being deep but silent, with a steady inner drive that is not always visible to others, arguing that effort does not always have to be loud and that silent grit is not always measured by tests. Student Discussant 9 described personal grit as high, driven by a strong desire to succeed, but disagreeing with the low rating for others due to their lack of a clear goal, noting that without a "why," there is no grit in English language learning. Student Discussant 10 described a steady and modest grit, noting that intelligence and consistent effort are present but that the environment matters and that if the institution does not spark interest, grit will naturally stay low.

Teacher Discussant 1 described student grit as fragile, noting sparks of brilliance that flicker out when social pressure gets too high and agreeing that high sociolinguistic anxiety effectively kills grit because it is hard to stay persistent when feeling judged every time one speaks. Teacher Discussant 2 rated student grit as low to moderate, describing students as nice but lacking the hunger to master English as a second language, and framing the low grit as a symptom of Linguistic Fatigue in a multilingual place like Capiz where the mental energy needed to switch is exhausting. Teacher Discussant 3 rated grit as critically low, observing a lack of professional discipline required to push through the discomfort of language learning and agreeing that the low result reflects a lack of urgency because students do not see the why and so do not put in the how. Teacher Discussant 4 described grit as energetic but short-lived, observing that students love the idea of speaking English but the work of English is a different story, and attributing the pattern to a digital divide where students prefer quick, informal communication over the persistent effort academic English requires. Teacher Discussant 5 noted that grit is present but buried under anxiety, observing that students are persistent in other areas but English intimidates them, and linking low grit to self-concept by noting that if a student does not see themselves as a speaker, they will not put in the effort to become one.

Based on the FGD statements, there is a significant perceptual gap between how students view their own persistence and how teachers evaluate student grit, with students describing themselves using nuanced terms like balanced, steady, or resilient while teachers tend to view student grit as fragile, short-lived, or critically low. Several students view the ability to multitask as a sign of grit; however, language acquisition requires sustained, focused attention, and curriculum design needs to move away from bite-sized tasks and encourage longer periods of focused linguistic engagement. The fear of judgment mentioned by Student Discussant 3 and the observation of Teacher Discussant 1 that brilliance flickers out under social pressure suggest that for many learners, grit is not a lack of character but a lack of psychological safety. Students like Student Discussant 4 and Student Discussant 5 both highlight a common ELL phenomenon: the initial spark of energy that dies when progress slows down. Student Discussant 7 described doing only what is required, while Teacher Discussant 3 sees a lack of professional discipline, revealing a definitional gap where students

define grit as compliance while teachers define it as hunger. During the FGD, the majority of student and teacher participants agreed to the Moderate rating that came out in the data analysis.

Regarding Consistency of Interest, Student Discussant 1 illustrated that grit is domain-specific and context-dependent, noting that interest is high when the topic is relevant to Political Science but fluctuates with other subjects, implying that academic resilience is most stable when students perceive a direct bridge between their current tasks and their ultimate aspirations. Student Discussant 8 described consistency as very high, enjoying the logic and deep side of language variation and change, while Student Discussant 9 added that every conversation is seen as a chance to practice and that interest is always high, with both perspectives aligning with the deliberate practice characteristic of gritty individuals. Student Discussant 2 described her interest as very high, always looking for new ways to express herself due to her naturally bubbly temperament, suggesting that when a student's temperament matches the communicative and pedagogical style of a language course, the effort required to remain gritty is lowered because the interest becomes self-reinforcing.

Among participants with lower consistency, Student Discussant 3 shared that interest fades the moment people seem to be mocking the accent, while Student Discussant 5 added that comparing to standard speakers causes loss of heart, suggesting that grit requires an environment that minimizes identity threat. Student Discussant 4 expressed interest only when practical, needing work English, while Student Discussant 7 admitted to not having a deep passion but recognizing the need for English to graduate, with Teacher Discussant 2 confirming that interest is mostly academic and only extrinsic. Student Discussant 6 described interest as wavy, with some days feeling too heavy, supported by Teacher Discussants 1 and 4, who described interest as seasonal or like a roller coaster, flourishing during fun activities but waning during long grammar lectures. Teacher Discussant 5 articulated a dual-identity conflict, observing that students are interested in belonging to the global community but are consistently afraid of losing their local identity in the process. Teacher Discussant 3 noted that for many, interest is non-existent because students see English as a foreign requirement rather than a tool for the future.

Regarding Perseverance of Effort, affirmative responses from students revealed diverse cognitive and situational drivers. Student Discussant 1 emphasized flexibility and the refusal to let a bad grade stop progress, echoed by Student Discussant 9, who noted high persistence and the refusal to let mistakes cause slowing down, both suggesting a high level of emotional regulation and a non-punitive view of mistakes. Student Discussant 6 highlighted duty and responsibility as drivers, always submitting written work on time even when scared to speak, while Student Discussant 8 relied on internal processing through reading and analyzing, presenting examples of quiet grit that suggest grit should be measured across multiple modalities. Student Discussant 4 identified as an average thinker but hard worker driven by survival as a Student Assistant, while Student Discussant 2 managed fatigue from work by finding time to read or watch English media. Student Discussant 10 exemplified metacognitive grit by explicitly recognizing that persistence is the only way to improve, aligning with the growth mindset component of grit.

Negative feedback on Perseverance of Effort revealed significant barriers. Student Discussant 3 admitted giving up easily after bad experiences of being mocked, which can ruin confidence for years, while Teacher Discussant 1 observed the phenomenon of perfectionist paralysis where students would rather not say something at all if they cannot say it perfectly. Student Discussant 5 described a lack of confidence and the feeling of running in place without moving forward, reflecting a breakdown in self-efficacy. Student Discussant 7 admitted putting in only enough effort to pass, confirmed by Teacher Discussants 2 and 3, who observed that students rarely go beyond what is asked and wait for teachers to provide everything. Teacher Discussant 4 identified a TikTok-era challenge where students try but get distracted easily and

their attention span for deep learning is very short. Teacher Discussant 5 observed that student effort is often silent, with students studying hard in private but too scared to show that effort in a social interaction setting, revealing a gap between private persistence and public performance.

In general, the participants agreed about the result that students' grit in English language teaching is moderate, with their statements consistently leading to the idea that college students in Capiz are not gritty enough when it comes to learning the language considering all the social factors. If Duckworth et al.'s (2007) grit constructs are valid, they carry significant weight for educators in language learning. To cultivate grit, teachers must first emphasize its universal value across all ages and skill levels, de-emphasizing innate talent or giftedness and instead teaching that persistent effort and focus can bridge the gap in natural linguistic ability (Keegan, 2017). Teachers should actively validate students who fail publicly by framing incorrect answers as acts of bravery and normalizing disappointment while rewarding risk-taking (Keegan, 2017).

Linguistic competence of college students

The level of linguistic competence was measured across four domains using the mean and standard deviation. The overall linguistic competence of college students in Capiz is High ($M = 21.80$, $SD = 4.63$), assessed using the overall scale where 26 to 30 is described as Very High, 21 to 25 as High, 16 to 20 as Moderate, 11 to 15 as Low, and 0 to 10 as Very Low. Among the subcategories, Reading Comprehension ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 0.73$) and Listening Comprehension ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.68$) both received High descriptions. Meanwhile, Grammar ($M = 10.67$, $SD = 3.84$) and Vocabulary ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.85$) both received Moderate descriptions. The grammar domain was assessed using its own scale where 14.4 to 16.0 is Very High, 11.5 to 14.4 is High, 8.5 to 11.4 is Moderate, 5.5 to 8.4 is Low, and 0.0 to 5.4 is Very Low. The vocabulary domain was assessed using the scale where 5.5 to 6.0 is Very High, 4.5 to 5.4 is High, 3.5 to 4.4 is Moderate, 2.5 to 3.4 is Low, and 0.0 to 2.4 is Very Low. The reading comprehension domain was assessed using the scale where 2.7 to 3.0 is Very High, 2.1 to 2.6 is High, 1.5 to 2.0 is Moderate, 0.9 to 1.4 is Low, and 0.0 to 0.8 is Very Low. The listening comprehension domain was assessed using the scale where 4.5 to 5.0 is Very High, 3.5 to 4.4 is High, 2.5 to 3.4 is Moderate, 1.5 to 2.4 is Low, and 0.0 to 1.4 is Very Low.

Students performed best in Reading Comprehension and Listening Comprehension, indicating that college students in Capiz are generally effective in processing and understanding input in English. However, Grammar and Vocabulary were only at a moderate level, pointing to gaps in productive skills and the structural aspects of language. This imbalance implies that students may excel at receptive tasks but encounter challenges when required to construct accurate and varied expressions in English. This implies that language instruction should place greater emphasis on strengthening grammar and vocabulary without neglecting the already strong comprehension skills in reading and listening. The overall High level of linguistic competence aligns with several studies that emphasize the multidimensional nature of language proficiency. Riaza et al. (2024) argued that while linguistic competence is a prerequisite for successful communication, it does not automatically guarantee pragmatic success. Abdulrahman and Abu-Ayyash (2019) highlighted that linguistic competence must be understood alongside communicative and interactional competences, emphasizing that high scores in comprehension do not necessarily translate into balanced proficiency across all areas. Mede and Dililitaş (2015) stressed that teachers must design lessons that prepare students not only for examinations but also for confident language use in real contexts. Asghar and Shehzad

(2018) emphasized the importance of bilingual and multilingual approaches to strengthen linguistic competence by affirming students' identities and providing comprehensible input.

In the FGD, student participants shared their personal views on linguistic competence. Student Discussant 1 described competence as functional but inconsistent, knowing the rules but struggling to apply them in real-time, rating herself at 3 out of 5 and acknowledging studying for tests rather than for real life, highlighting that a high command of grammar rules does not inherently translate into communicative competence. Student Discussant 2 described being above average because the job forces professional sharpness, expressing surprise at a beginner reading score and suggesting possible boredom or irrelevance with academic texts. Student Discussant 3 described competence as relatively low and noted that the fear of judgment causes forgetting of grammar rules that are actually known, agreeing that Basic Proficiency sounds right and attributing the situation to insufficient exposure. Student Discussant 4 described an average competence, using survival English that is enough to get the task done, and noting that grammar is prioritized in school which is why it is the highest area while reading for fun is absent. Student Discussant 5 described a struggling competence, acknowledging a very weak foundation and attributing the beginner level in reading to not having been taught to love reading in early years. Student Discussant 6 described being challenged but resilient, being a slow learner but a responsible student, agreeing that having the resilience to learn is honest but the competence is still low. Student Discussant 7 described an average level of competence, able to navigate a classroom discussion, and agreeing that the focus on grammar because of what is on exams is the number one reason that other skills stay basic. Student Discussant 8 described competence as strong in theory but weak in performance, catching everything but not responding, and expressing frustration at the inability to produce language. Student Discussant 9 described being confident and highly functional and attributing the basic proficiency of the broader student body to seeing English as a hurdle rather than a tool. Student Discussant 10 described a smart and steady competence with a solid foundation from diligent high school study and identifies the weak reading foundation as the root of the problem because if reading is poor, vocabulary cannot be learned.

Teacher Discussant 1 described student competence as fragmented, possessing the parts of the language but unable to assemble the machine for real use. Teacher Discussant 2 described competence as functional but limited, able to follow instructions in a lab but struggling with abstract academic discussion. Teacher Discussant 3 described competence as unsatisfactory for the college level, identifying a wide gap between what the syllabus requires and what students can actually produce. Teacher Discussant 4 framed the struggle as A1/A2 learners trying to do B2 work. Teacher Discussant 5 viewed students as emergent, on the verge of proficiency but held back by a weak reading foundation. These FGD responses highlight a complex picture of linguistic competence with self-assessments ranging from confidence and functionality to insecurity and struggle, while teachers consistently described competence as fragmented, surface-level, or below college expectations. This echoes Hoffman-Hicks' assertion, as cited in Riaza et al. (2024), that linguistic competence alone does not guarantee pragmatic success. The findings also resonate with Mede and Dililitaş (2015), who emphasized that teachers must design lessons that prepare students for confident language use beyond examinations. Sharif and Osterling (2011) reported students struggled with both oral and written English proficiency, finding their competence insufficient for academic participation, while Fahad (2015) observed that students faced significant linguistic and social challenges, particularly with grammar in context and accent comprehension. Abdulrahman and Abu-Ayyash (2019) noted that linguistic competence, when viewed alongside communicative and interactional competences, provides a strong foundation for language use. Yamashita (2018) found that grit and perseverance could positively influence learners' self-perceived improvement in language skills, aligning with the resilience expressed by students.

Among the four domains of linguistic competence, Reading Comprehension has the highest mean ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 0.73$), suggesting that students in Capiz are generally effective in processing written input. In the FGD, Student Discussant 8 stated that reading is the strongest point, Student Discussant 9 expressed reading speed as a strength, and Student Discussant 10 noted enjoying reading and being better than a beginner. These statements align with Abdulrahman and Abu-Ayyash (2019), who emphasized that reading comprehension serves as a critical component of the multidimensional construct of linguistic competence, and with Riaza et al. (2024), who argued that strong reading comprehension equips learners with the ability to interpret meaning accurately. However, on the other hand, the majority of participants had opposite responses suggesting a surface-level reading culture where speed and stamina are primary barriers to deep comprehension. Students like Student Discussant 3 and Student Discussant 5 mentioned struggling with long sentences and reading very slowly, with Student Discussant 6 noting a long time needed to finish a chapter, indicating that working memory is prematurely exhausted by the mechanical act of decoding. Student Discussant 7 admitted reading only what is required, while Teacher Discussant 3 described the levels as alarmingly low, pointing toward a Matthew Effect in education where those who read less gain less vocabulary, making future reading even harder. Teacher Discussant 4 noted that students scan but do not comprehend, a byproduct of digital-age reading habits. Teacher Discussant 2 observed that students struggle with non-technical texts. Teacher Discussant 5 identified this lack of depth as the students' biggest hurdle to academic success. The difficulty of students with long sentences and slow reading is explained by Lozano et al. (2020), who define linguistic competence as the subconscious knowledge required to construct and comprehend words and sentences and note that this competence is directly linked to academic performance. Riaza et al. (2024) further demonstrates that while linguistic competence is a prerequisite for success, it is not in itself sufficient to guarantee it, implying that students might recognize the words through scanning but fail to achieve deep meaning. The low stamina and long time needed to finish a chapter are addressed by Duckworth et al. (2007), who define grit as perseverance and passion for long-term goals, and by Wu et al. (2024), who found that Perseverance of Effort (PoE) is more critical for language success than initial interest.

Listening Comprehension also received a High verbal interpretation ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.68$). The relatively low standard deviation indicates a high degree of homogeneity among the students, suggesting that listening competence is consistent across the group with very little performance gap between individuals. In the FGD, Student Discussant 2 attributed high listening skills to a call center background, Student Discussant 9 demonstrated cognitive flexibility through multitasking while listening, Student Discussant 10 simply affirmed being a good listener, Student Discussant 4 remarked on understanding professors well enough, and Student Discussant 7 added understanding most of what is heard in class. The statements highlight the Self-Efficacy Theory of Bandura as a foundational support for the belief that a person's own capability to execute actions profoundly affects performance. Solina (2022) and Lozano et al. (2020) support these statements by stating that linguistic competence is a significant predictor of academic performance. The findings revealed support the study of Rico (2016), which specifically highlights that linguistic oral competence is a vital element in achieving effective communication within the school setting, while Mede and Dililitas (2015) emphasized that the goal of developing sociolinguistic and linguistic competence is to make students confident users of the language. On the other hand, participants who expressed opposite responses highlighted a consistent struggle with listening comprehension. Student Discussant 1 characterized listening skills as average, getting the gist but missing the tone, echoed by Teacher Discussant 3, who noted that students often miss nuance and tone. Student

Discussant 3 admitted being overwhelmed by fast speakers, leading to the functional barrier described by Student Discussant 5 of often having to ask people to repeat. Student Discussant 6 explicitly stated listening as the biggest challenge, pointing to low linguistic self-efficacy. Sharif and Osterling (2011) support these statements as their respondents also struggled with academic English particularly in listening to lectures, participating in discussions, and making oral presentations, with participants reporting difficulties with accents, enunciation, and slang. Park et al. (2021) also highlighted communication difficulties linked to accent stereotyping and linguistic discrimination.

The linguistic competence of college students in terms of Grammar is Moderate ($M = 10.67$, $SD = 3.84$), suggesting that students might know what a rule is but fail to apply it correctly in spontaneous speech or writing, and that they are at a threshold level where they have enough grammar to survive basic interactions but not enough to achieve professional or academic fluency. The research finding that grammar influences academic outcomes is supported by Solina (2022), who discovered a strong correlation between linguistic proficiency and academic achievement, verifying that many pupils are vulnerable to higher-order tasks due to a moderate grammar mean. Efremova et al. (2015) also introduced that task-based interventions raise applied grammar. In the FGD, students like Student Discussant 1 and Student Discussant 7 identified their competence as intermediate or in-between, while Student Discussant 4 believed they know at least the basics. Student Discussant 3 provided a critical insight by admitting knowing the rules but easily freezing, suggesting that linguistic data is stored in long-term memory but students lack the communicative confidence or processing speed to retrieve it during spontaneous interaction. From an instructional standpoint, Teacher Discussant 2 described student competence as steady and Teacher Discussant 1 concurred with the intermediate label, while Teacher Discussant 3 pointed to a deeper cognitive issue of students knowing rules but missing the logic and Teacher Discussant 4 identified the academic proficiency as being good at fill-in-the-blanks, a classic sign of mastering grammar as isolated puzzles. Teacher Discussant 5 attributed the intermediate status to the work of dedicated teachers. The studies cited in Riaza et al. (2024) support the claim that linguistic competence alone is insufficient for pragmatic success, explaining why rule knowledge does not guarantee communicative logic. Turdimuradova (2025) and Mede and Dililitaş (2015) emphasized that teachers' preparedness and curriculum choices determine whether grammar is taught as isolated rules or as a coherent system for meaning. On the other hand, Student Discussant 2 described grammar as strong, Student Discussant 6 described studying hard in terms of grammar, Student Discussant 8 described it as very high and analyzed, Student Discussant 9 described grammar as good enough, and Student Discussant 10 described it as kind of solid, suggesting a subset of learners who have moved beyond rote memorization into a stage of metacognitive awareness.

In terms of Vocabulary competence, the total mean indicates Moderate ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.85$). This implies that students possess a functional but limited survival vocabulary, likely with a firm grasp of high-frequency words for general classroom instructions or everyday conversations but lacking the lexical precision required for advanced academic or professional discourse. The remarkably low standard deviation indicates a unified vocabulary plateau across the entire group, implying that the group shares an almost identical word bank, likely derived from the same curriculum or shared media environment. The study of Yan (2023) and Yamashita (2018) support the result as they revealed that exposure to authentic materials and extensive reading supports vocabulary growth beyond high-frequency survival words. Efremova et al. (2015) also supports interventions that embed vocabulary in meaningful content and provide comprehensible input and repeated encounters. In the FGD, Student Discussant 1 and Student Discussant 7 admitted their vocabulary is just basic, Student Discussant 3 described it as very limited, Student Discussant 4 characterized it as practical but small, and Student Discussant 5 noted often lacking the words to explain oneself. Teacher

Discussant 1 labeled the level as Basic, Teacher Discussant 3 described it as Weak, Teacher Discussant 4 observed that vocabulary is limited to Social Media English, and Teacher Discussant 5 described the status as improving but still basic. Student Discussant 6 noted vocabulary growing slowly and Student Discussant 10 assessed it as merely average. In contrast, Student Discussant 2 described vocabulary as expanding daily, Student Discussant 8 described it as academic, and Student Discussant 9 described a wide range with a liking for learning new phrases, representing positive outliers who actively pursue linguistic growth and demonstrating that the Moderate average is not a fixed ceiling but a controllable threshold.

Difference in linguistic competence among the levels of sociolinguistic challenges

The difference in linguistic competence among the levels of sociolinguistic challenges of college students in Capiz was analyzed using a one-way Analysis of Variance. The results show that there is no significant difference in linguistic competence among the levels of sociolinguistic challenges, $F(1,42) = \text{sig. } 0.24, p > .05$. The sum of squares between groups was 60.811 with 2 degrees of freedom and a mean square of 30.405, while the sum of squares within groups was 8416.43 with 393 degrees of freedom and a mean square of 21.416, yielding a total sum of squares of 8477.24 with 395 degrees of freedom. Since the p-value of 0.24 is greater than the 0.05 alpha level, the result is not significant. This indicates that the level of sociolinguistic challenges a student faces, whether low, moderate, or high, does not significantly dictate their overall linguistic competence. In other words, the reported sociolinguistic challenge level does not explain meaningful variance in measured linguistic competence in this sample.

Because competence scores do not differ by sociolinguistic challenge category, interventions should not be allocated solely based on those categories. Instead, there is a need to use individual diagnostics like skills tests, performance tasks, and affective measures to identify who needs remediation or enrichment. Program design should combine universal supports like curriculum that embeds sociolinguistic norms with targeted follow-ups for students who show skill gaps or affective barriers. The result therefore debunks the study of Turdimuradova (2025), who emphasized that effective instruction requires understanding learners' sociolinguistic profiles and contexts. The result does not also support the study of Sharif and Osterling (2011), who documented that cultural and linguistic backgrounds affect participation and comprehension even when measured competence is similar.

In the FGD, Student Discussant 5 shared that when feeling without a standard accent, the desire to learn new vocabulary does not stop and that challenges do not limit competence. Student Discussant 9 shared that challenges are just hurdles and that if one has a high drive, sociolinguistic barriers will not stop competence from growing. These statements entail that sociolinguistic challenges do not serve as absolute deterrents to the development of linguistic competence for students who possess high levels of personal agency and resilience. The internal drive described by the participants is consistent with the definition of grit provided by Duckworth et al. (2007), which involves sustaining effort and interest over a prolonged period despite obstacles and adversity. Crystal (2008) noted that while learners may experience language anxiety due to accents, high language proficiency and accent strength are not necessarily correlated. However, there were also participants who expressed opposite sentiments. Student Discussant 1 explicitly admitted that fear of being too formal or too rude causes a stop in using complex English and that competence stays basic because of playing it safe. Teacher Discussant 2 noted that sociolinguistic challenges act as a filter and that even a smart student will appear incompetent if they cannot navigate the social rules of the

conversation. Student Discussant 6 remarked that challenges make competence look lower despite being responsible and smart, with a speaking difficulty making her seem a beginner. Student Discussant 3 explained that fear of judgment causes forgetting of grammar that is actually known, making the student look less competent than in reality. Teacher Discussant 3 stated that language is 10% grammar and 90% social context, and that if a student fails at the 90%, intermediate grammar competence is practically useless in the real world. Teacher Discussant 1 warned that a student paralyzed by fear of social judgment never produces language, so without production, competence remains purely theoretical and never becomes functional. Teacher Discussant 4 outlined a direct downward spiral where worrying about accent leads to not talking, not talking leads to no practice, and no practice leads to staying basic. Teacher Discussant 5 noted that identity and belonging dictate how much of the language a student is willing to own and that one will not master a language one does not feel one belongs to. This aligns with Al Dilaimy (2024), who states that sociolinguistic challenges arise when a speaker's linguistic knowledge is insufficient to navigate the social and contextual demands of communication, and with Fahad (2015), who found that a lack of fluency in the classroom leads to embarrassment and shaken self-confidence. Based on this result, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in language competence among the levels of sociolinguistic challenges of college students is accepted.

Difference in linguistic competence among the levels of grit in English language learning

The difference in linguistic competence among the levels of grit in English language learning of college students in Capiz was also analyzed using a one-way Analysis of Variance. The results show that there is no significant difference in linguistic competence among the levels of grit in English language learning, $F(1.195) = \text{sig. } 0.304, p > .05$. The sum of squares between groups was 51.221 with 2 degrees of freedom and a mean square of 25.61, while the sum of squares within groups was 8426.02 with 393 degrees of freedom and a mean square of 21.44, yielding a total sum of squares of 8477.24 with 395 degrees of freedom. Since the p -value of 0.304 is greater than the 0.05 alpha level, the result is not significant. While grit is pedagogically important, instructional design such as task type, autonomy, and input quality appears necessary to convert perseverance into measurable competence gains. Similarly, Yamashita (2018) and Zhang and Zhang (2023) show that grit's effect is task-dependent and often stronger in autonomy-rich contexts such as extensive reading than in standard classroom assessments. Changlek and Palanukulwong (2015) also report that high achievers often show higher grit, but the relationship is not uniform.

In the FGD, Student Discussant 5 shared that other factors beyond grit may be at play. Student Discussant 9 shared that grit is not the most important factor and that what builds vocabulary and confidence is not just passion and perseverance in English language learning but also a personal belief of must. These remarks imply that while grit plays a role in English language learning, it is not the sole determinant of linguistic competence, and that linguistic competence is multifactorial, shaped not only by grit but also by identity, cultural context, and learner autonomy. Zhang and Zhang (2023) found that grit's influence on L2 performance is highly task-dependent. Yamashita (2018) reported that grit scores were not consistently related to performance and in some cases, perseverance was negatively correlated with achievement. Holmes (2004), as cited in Sharif and Osterling (2011), emphasized that students succeed by reconstructing and renegotiating their cultural learning styles, showing that adaptability and cultural responsiveness matter as much as grit.

However, there were participants who had the opposite stance, illustrating how grit serves as the functional engine for advancing beyond a proficiency plateau. Student Discussant 2 stated that grit is the engine and that the on-the-go attitude is the reason for being above

average, asserting that without persistence one is just a student with a textbook. Teacher Discussant 3 asserted that grit is the only predictor of success trusted, having seen beginner students become proficient simply because they refused to stop trying. Teacher Discussant 1 framed grit as stamina, noting that a student with low grit quits after the first red mark on a paper and that competence is a marathon requiring endurance. Student Discussant 3 admitted that because of a lack of grit, practice does not happen, and if you do not practice because you are scared, competence stays at beginner level. Teacher Discussant 5 described persistence as the bridge, assessing it as the most significant factor because language acquisition is slow and without grit students get discouraged by the plateau of learning. Student Discussant 8 highlighted the efficacy of silent effort, noting that silent persistence in reading is what built intermediate grammar and high comprehension. Student Discussant 4 explained that persistence is everything for a working student and that without effort, English would not even be basic. Teacher Discussant 2 explained the concept of Intelligent Failure, noting that students with grit learn from grammar mistakes and turn those errors into competence over time. Student Discussant 7 stated that effort equals results. Duckworth et al. (2007) defined grit as perseverance and passion for long-term goals, emphasizing its role in sustaining effort despite obstacles. Changlek and Palanukulwong (2015), as cited in Johansson and Hansen (2021), found that high achievers tended to have higher levels of grit positively related to motivation in L2 learning. Feng and Papi (2020), as cited in Johansson and Hansen (2021), reported that perseverance of effort predicted motivational intensity and persistence in second language learning. Based on this result, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in language competence among the levels of grit in English language learning of college students is accepted.

Relationships among sociolinguistic challenges, grit in English language learning, and linguistic competence of college students

The relationships among the sociolinguistic challenges, grit in English language learning, and linguistic competence of college students in Capiz were examined using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. Generally, the results indicate no significant relationships among these three variables. For the relationship between sociolinguistic challenges and grit in English language learning, the correlation coefficient is -0.011 and the p-value is 0.828, suggesting an inverse and no significant relationship. For the relationship between sociolinguistic challenges and linguistic competence, the correlation coefficient is 0.000 and the p-value is 0.987, entailing no significant relationship between the variables. For the relationship between grit in English language learning and linguistic competence, the correlation coefficient is -0.066 and the p-value is 0.191, showing a negative relationship and no significant relationship between the variables.

The correlation coefficient of -0.011 and p-value of 0.828 between sociolinguistic challenges and grit in English language learning indicate no significant relationship, suggesting that a student's internal toughness or character traits are independent of the external sociolinguistic hurdles they face. Even the most high-grit students are just as likely to struggle with dialect interference, social prestige of languages, or cultural nuances as low-grit students. The negative or inverse relationship implies that a student can be incredibly gritty but still struggle deeply with social nuances, or they could have zero grit and still find social integration easy. This suggests that the social and cultural obstacles faced by English language learners are external or systemic in nature and are not mitigated by the individual's internal level of perseverance. Moreover, when students face high levels of social anxiety, fear of being judged

for their accent, or a disconnect between their culture and language, it acts as a drain on mental energy, making it much harder to stay motivated over the long term. This result is in line with the study of Liu (2022), who reported that grit does not necessarily respond to sociolinguistic difficulties.

The coefficient of 0.000 and p-value of 0.987 between sociolinguistic challenges and linguistic competence show no significant relationship, suggesting that experiencing sociolinguistic challenges does not directly affect students' linguistic competence and that competence in grammar, vocabulary, reading, and listening may develop independently of sociocultural pressures. In support, Riaza et al. (2024) argued that linguistic competence alone does not guarantee pragmatic success, meaning that competence can exist even when sociolinguistic challenges persist. Sharif and Osterling (2011) also reported that international students struggled with sociocultural integration but their linguistic proficiency varied independently, confirming that challenges do not always predict competence. In contrast, Fahad (2015) found that social challenges were largely caused by linguistic struggles, suggesting a closer link between sociolinguistic difficulties and competence. Asghar and Shehzad (2018) also emphasized that sociocultural support enhances competence, implying that challenges could hinder linguistic growth.

The coefficient of -0.066 and p-value of 0.191 between grit in English language learning and linguistic competence indicate a negative relationship and no statistical significance, suggesting that students' linguistic competence appears to be negatively shaped when grit in English language learning becomes higher. This can happen when students have misaligned English language learning goals or when teachers employ ineffective strategies. Anxiety and pressure from high expectations are also seen as possible factors, as well as contextual or environmental constraints, measurement and definition factors, and cultural or social tradeoffs. Yamashita (2018) found no consistent correlation between grit and language performance, and in some cases perseverance negatively affected achievement. Bahník and Vranka (2017) and Bazelais et al. (2018), as cited in Liu (2022), also reported no significant correlations between grit and academic achievement, confirming that grit is not a strong predictor of competence. However, Duckworth et al. (2007) emphasized grit as essential for long-term success, and Feng and Papi (2020), as cited in Johansson and Hansen (2021), found that perseverance of effort predicted motivational intensity and persistence in L2 learning, suggesting that grit should matter even though the findings show otherwise.

The overall result shows no significant relationships among sociolinguistic challenges, grit in English language learning, and linguistic competence, implying that these constructs, while theoretically interconnected, operate independently in the context of college students in Capiz. The study of Hoffman-Hicks confirmed that linguistic competence is necessary but insufficient for pragmatic success, showing independence between competence and sociolinguistic challenges. Yamashita (2018) and Bazelais et al. (2018) also found weak or no correlations between grit and performance, supporting the overall finding of no significant relationships. Duckworth et al. (2007) and Changlek and Palanukulwong (2015) emphasized grit as a predictor of success, while the study of Cummins highlighted sociocultural support as essential for competence, with these perspectives suggesting that relationships should exist but the data showing otherwise, highlighting the uniqueness of the Capiz context.

In the FGD, Student Discussant 5 noted that if someone feels like they do not belong, there will still be other ways to improve skills, while Student Discussant 9 shared that grit does not guarantee overcoming sociolinguistic challenges and that linguistic competence is not directly influenced by one's drive or sociolinguistic challenges. These remarks imply that students perceive sociolinguistic challenges, grit, and linguistic competence as relatively independent constructs and that language learning outcomes are shaped by multiple factors such as instructional quality, exposure to comprehensible input, and personal motivation.

Yamashita (2018) supports these statements, and Riaza et al. (2024) argued that linguistic competence is necessary but insufficient for pragmatic success, confirming the FGD participants' insights. On the other hand, there were participants who had opposite responses. Student Discussant 8 described the three constructs as a system, noting that awareness of challenges and steady grit are the only ways to build true linguistic competence. Student Discussant 10 asserted that competence is the result while grit and sociolinguistic factors are the variables that decide the score. Student Discussant 1 used a triangle metaphor, noting that if challenges are high and grit is low, competence will always suffer. Student Discussant 3 admitted that high challenges and low grit keep competence low, describing it as a cycle that is hard to break. Student Discussant 2 believed that high competence usually comes from someone with the grit to face social judgment without quitting. Teacher Discussant 4 explained that if the sociolinguistic vibe is scary, grit drops and competence stalls, emphasizing the need to keep the vibe positive. Teacher Discussant 2 noted that even a smart student will appear incompetent if they cannot navigate the social rules of the conversation. Teacher Discussant 1 described the three as deeply intertwined, noting that high challenges drain grit and low grit results in basic competence. Teacher Discussant 3 described it as a linear path where grit helps overcome sociolinguistic challenges, which eventually leads to higher linguistic competence. Teacher Discussant 5 referred to the three as the three legs of the stool. Duckworth et al. (2007), Changlek and Palanukulwong (2015), and Feng and Papi (2020), as cited in Johansson and Hansen (2021), and Asghar and Shehzad (2018) all support this integrated view from different angles. Based on this result, the null hypothesis stating that there are no significant relationships among the sociolinguistic challenges, grit in English language learning, and linguistic competence of college students is accepted.

Collectively, the findings of this study present a comprehensive portrait of the linguistic and socio-emotional realities of college students in public and private Higher Education Institutions in the province of Capiz. The overall sociolinguistic challenges were found to be High ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.24$) across all six domains, with Language and Interaction emerging as the most pronounced challenge ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.42$) and Language and Identity as the lowest though still High ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.47$). The overall level of grit in English language learning was found to be Moderate ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.28$), characterized by a passion-persistence gap reflected in a High Consistency of Interest ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.37$) but only a Moderate Perseverance of Effort ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.41$). The overall linguistic competence was found to be High ($M = 21.80$, $SD = 4.63$), with Reading Comprehension ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 0.73$) and Listening Comprehension ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.68$) achieving High descriptions, while Grammar ($M = 10.67$, $SD = 3.84$) and Vocabulary ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.85$) received only Moderate descriptions. The inferential analyses revealed no significant difference in linguistic competence among the levels of sociolinguistic challenges, $F(1,42) = \text{sig. } 0.24$, $p > .05$, and no significant difference in linguistic competence among the levels of grit in English language learning, $F(1,195) = \text{sig. } 0.304$, $p > .05$, with both null hypotheses accepted. The Pearson correlation analyses similarly revealed no significant relationships among sociolinguistic challenges and grit ($r = -0.011$, $p = 0.828$), sociolinguistic challenges and linguistic competence ($r = 0.000$, $p = 0.987$), and grit in English language learning and linguistic competence ($r = -0.066$, $p = 0.191$), with all null hypotheses accepted. These findings collectively demonstrate that sociolinguistic challenges, grit in English language learning, and linguistic competence operate as relatively independent constructs in the Capiz context, suggesting that linguistic competence is influenced more by instructional quality, exposure to authentic input, and individual learner autonomy than by sociolinguistic pressures or grit levels alone. These results address the research objectives of the study by providing both quantitative evidence and

qualitative depth, contributing to the growing body of literature on language learning in multilingual, provincial higher education contexts in the Philippines. The findings directly inform the development of the proposed LIFE Framework intervention strategies, which are designed to address the specific needs of college students in Capiz through linguistically grounded, identity-affirming, grit-building, and institutionally sustainable approaches. The details of this proposed intervention framework and its practical implications for educators, administrators, and policymakers are presented in the succeeding chapter.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the interrelationships among sociolinguistic challenges, grit in English language learning, and linguistic competence among college students in the Province of Capiz, with the aim of generating empirically grounded intervention strategies for English language education. Using a mixed methods sequential explanatory design, quantitative data were gathered from 396 college students selected through stratified random sampling across public and private higher education institutions. The quantitative phase employed a pilot tested survey questionnaire and standardized tests to measure sociolinguistic challenges, L2 grit in terms of perseverance of effort and consistency of interest, and linguistic competence in grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension. These were supplemented by focus group discussions with students and English language teachers to contextualize the statistical findings and deepen interpretation. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency count, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, and inferential statistics using Spearman rho and one way analysis of variance at a 0.05 level of significance.

The results revealed that college students in Capiz experience a high level of sociolinguistic challenges across multiple domains, with language and interaction emerging as the most significant concern. These challenges were characterized by communicative hesitation, fear of judgment, register uncertainty, and difficulties associated with navigating code switching and sociocultural expectations in academic English use. In terms of L2 grit, the overall level was found to be moderate, with consistency of interest rated high while perseverance of effort was only moderate, indicating that while students maintain interest in English learning, sustained effort over time remains inconsistent. Linguistic competence was generally high, particularly in reading and listening comprehension, while grammar and vocabulary skills were assessed at a moderate level, suggesting stronger receptive abilities compared to productive and form focused competencies.

Inferential analyses further showed that there were no significant differences in linguistic competence when grouped according to levels of sociolinguistic challenges or levels of grit in English language learning. Likewise, no significant relationships were found among sociolinguistic challenges, grit, and linguistic competence. These findings suggest that the three constructs may function relatively independently within the context of the respondents, and that high sociolinguistic difficulty does not necessarily correspond to lower linguistic competence. This may be attributed to compensatory strategies such as translanguaging, classroom based support systems, and assessment formats that emphasize receptive skills. Similarly, the absence of a significant relationship between grit and linguistic competence indicates that interest and motivation alone may not be sufficient to produce measurable language gains without sustained and structured practice.

Based on these findings, it is concluded that college students in Capiz experience substantial sociolinguistic barriers that primarily affect interactional confidence rather than foundational competence, and that while students demonstrate motivation toward English learning, this motivation is not consistently translated into sustained effort or measurable

improvement across all language domains. Their linguistic competence appears to be relatively strong in comprehension skills but less developed in vocabulary and grammar production, indicating an imbalance between receptive and productive language abilities. Furthermore, the lack of significant relationships among the variables suggests that linguistic development in this context is shaped by a more complex interplay of institutional, instructional, and contextual factors rather than by single isolated constructs such as grit or sociolinguistic difficulty alone.

In response to these findings, it is recommended that higher education institutions implement more inclusive and supportive language learning environments that directly address sociolinguistic barriers while promoting sustained engagement in English learning. Institutional policies may be revised to move away from rigid language restrictions and instead promote flexible, culturally responsive practices that recognize translanguaging and communicative effectiveness. Investment in learning support structures such as sociopragmatic laboratories, safe speaking environments, and performance based assessment tools is also encouraged to strengthen real world communicative competence. At the curriculum level, the integration of sociolinguistic awareness, structured practice pathways, and portfolio based learning is recommended to bridge the gap between motivation and sustained language development. Language instruction should prioritize frequent low stakes interaction, contextualized grammar and vocabulary learning, and feedback approaches that reduce anxiety while encouraging gradual improvement.

Students are likewise encouraged to take active responsibility for their language development by engaging in deliberate practice, maintaining personal language portfolios, and participating in authentic communication opportunities that extend beyond the classroom. Sustained exposure to reading and listening materials, combined with reflective learning practices, may further strengthen both receptive and productive skills. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct longitudinal and intervention based studies to further examine how sociolinguistic challenges, grit, and linguistic competence evolve over time and to test the effectiveness of proposed instructional strategies. Further validation of measurement tools and expansion of contextual variables are also recommended to deepen understanding of English language learning dynamics in similar higher education settings.

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