

Metacognitive strategies, intercultural communicative competence, and language proficiency among Chinese vocational college students

Feng, Yaling ✉

Graduate School, Lyceum of the Philippines University - Batangas, Philippines (307462698@qq.com)

Mauhay, Romana Celeste A.

Lyceum of the Philippines University - Batangas, Philippines (ramauhay@lpubatangas.edu.ph)



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Abstract

This quantitative descriptive study assessed the metacognitive strategies, communicative competence and language proficiency of 425 college students in a vocational college in China. This research also determined the relationship between these constructs to propose an enhanced language program for students at Chinese vocational colleges. This research administered a researcher-made survey questionnaire during the first semester of school year 2024-2025. The data gathered were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-test, ANOVA and Pearson correlation test. Findings revealed that the respondents exhibited very good level of metacognitive strategies. The overall communicative competence was rated highly across all areas and the respondents generally agreed on their competence, with reading scoring the highest and listening scoring the lowest. Additionally, strong positive correlations were found between metacognitive strategies and both communicative competence and language proficiency. Based on the findings, a comprehensive training program for Chinese vocational students is proposed to emphasize metacognitive strategy development, focusing on self-awareness, goal-setting, and planning. This program may enhance communicative competence by incorporating targeted activities to improve language proficiency across reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Keywords: vocational college students, metacognition, metacognitive strategies, language proficiency, communicative competence

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1. Introduction

In the context of globalized education and increasingly diverse communication demands, the development of effective learning strategies and communicative competence has become critical for students in higher vocational institutions, particularly in non-native English-speaking contexts such as China. This study explores the interplay between metacognitive strategies, intercultural communicative competence (ICC), and language proficiency among Chinese vocational college students, aiming to understand how these variables contribute to successful language learning and communication in multicultural environments. Metacognitive strategies refer to higher-order thinking processes that enable learners to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning activities. These strategies help students take control of their own learning by setting goals, selecting appropriate methods, and reflecting on outcomes (Zhang et al.,2021). In second language acquisition (SLA), metacognitive strategies are recognized as key predictors of language success, allowing learners to adapt and optimize their learning approaches (Rahimi et al.,2021). Research has consistently highlighted the role of metacognition in promoting learner autonomy and enhancing overall academic performance, particularly in self-regulated language learning environments (Teng, 2020).

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) encompasses the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately across different cultural contexts. It integrates linguistic skills with sociocultural awareness, intercultural attitudes, and interpretative abilities (Liu et al.,2023). In recent years, ICC has gained prominence in vocational education as students are expected to engage with diverse professional and social environments. Studies have shown that ICC development positively correlates with learners' adaptability, cross-cultural understanding, and communication effectiveness in globalized workplaces (Wang et al.,2022). Moreover, the integration of ICC into English language instruction has been encouraged in Chinese colleges to prepare students for international collaboration and mobility (Li, 2021). Language proficiency, often measured in terms of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, remains a core outcome of English language education. It reflects a learner's ability to effectively use the target language for academic, professional, and social purposes. language proficiency is not solely a result of formal instruction but is also influenced by learners' strategic behaviors and intercultural engagement. (Wu et al.,2022). In vocational settings, where practical language use is emphasized, proficiency plays a vital role in employability and career readiness (Zhou et al.,2023). Research suggests that students with higher metacognitive awareness and stronger intercultural skills tend to exhibit greater language competence (Gao et al.,2024).

Taken together, these three constructs—metacognitive strategies, intercultural communicative competence, and language proficiency—form a dynamic triad that shapes the language learning experience of vocational students in China. This study sought to examine the relationships among these variables and provide insights into how strategic learning and intercultural preparedness can enhance English language outcomes in vocational education.

This study is significant as it addresses the crucial intersection of metacognitive strategies, intercultural communicative competence (ICC), and language proficiency within the context of Chinese vocational college education. As the demands for effective English communication continue to grow in global and multicultural workplaces, vocational students must be equipped not only with linguistic skills but also with the strategic and cultural competencies necessary for success. For language educators and curriculum developers, the findings will offer practical insights into how metacognitive awareness and intercultural preparedness can enhance language learning outcomes. This can inform the design of more learner-centered and globally relevant language programs. For administrators and policymakers in vocational institutions, the study will provide data-driven evidence to

support the integration of cognitive and cultural dimensions into English language instruction, thereby improving the employability and communication readiness of graduates. Furthermore, students themselves will benefit from a better understanding of how their learning strategies and intercultural skills contribute to language proficiency, encouraging greater autonomy and strategic engagement in their language studies. Finally, for scholars and researchers in the field of second language acquisition and intercultural communication, this study expands the current knowledge base by offering a more holistic view of how cognitive and cultural variables interact to influence language development, particularly in a vocational education setting that has received limited academic attention.

Despite the relevance of metacognitive strategies and intercultural competence in language learning, several gaps remain in the existing literature. First, there is a noticeable lack of research focusing specifically on vocational college students in China, as most previous studies have been conducted in the context of general universities or secondary schools. This leaves the unique needs, challenges, and learning contexts of vocational learners underexplored. Second, although metacognitive strategies and ICC have been studied individually, few empirical investigations have examined how these two variables interact and collectively influence language proficiency. Third, there is a scarcity of comprehensive studies that combine all three constructs—metacognitive strategies, intercultural communicative competence, and language proficiency—within a single research framework. This limits a deeper understanding of how these elements function together in shaping language learning outcomes. Additionally, much of the existing research on intercultural competence is grounded in Western contexts, which may not fully capture the cultural nuances and educational realities of Chinese vocational settings, where exposure to authentic intercultural communication is often limited. Lastly, with ongoing educational reforms and the rapid globalization of vocational education in the post-pandemic era, there is a need for up-to-date empirical evidence to reflect current trends, challenges, and best practices in language education for vocational learners in China.

The findings of this research may directly benefit respondents by identifying specific areas for improvement, guiding them to use metacognitive strategies more effectively, and enhancing their communicative competence and language proficiency.

Objectives of the Study - The main objective of this study was to determine the level of meta-cognitive strategies, communicative competence, and language proficiency among English majors in Chinese vocational colleges, with the goal of cultivating communicative competence. Specifically, the study aimed to assess meta-cognitive strategies across several components, including self-awareness, goal setting and planning, cognitive strategies, self-reflection, use of resources, adaptability and flexibility, motivation and engagement, personal and social aspects, and evaluation. The study sought to identify the respondents' communicative competence in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and skills, and to evaluate their language proficiency in reading, listening, writing, and speaking. It examined the relationship between meta-cognitive strategies, communicative competence, and language proficiency, and ultimately proposed an enhanced language program tailored to improve proficiency of English majors in Chinese vocational colleges.

2. Methods

Research Design - This study is a descriptive research that utilized a quantitative research method. Employing a descriptive design, the researcher in this study investigated the connections among the variables: metacognitive strategies, communicative competence, and language proficiency. Descriptive quantitative research was suitable for this study because it allowed for the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data, which can provide clear insights into the relationships between these variables. According to Kim et al.,(2020), descriptive qualitative research is ideal for health and education studies that seek to capture the essence of experiences without imposing pre-existing theories, and it provides flexibility in data collection and analysis while maintaining rigor and credibility.

This approach facilitated the examination of students' profiles, such as age, sex, and place of origin, while quantitatively measuring their metacognitive strategies, communicative competence and language proficiency. By using a researcher-developed survey, the researcher ensured consistency and reliability in assessing the respondents' metacognitive strategies, communicative competence and language proficiency levels. Furthermore, descriptive quantitative research revealed patterns and trends within the data, helping to identify significant differences among various groups of students based on their profiles. Ultimately, this methodology enabled researchers to make data-driven recommendations for enhancing educational practices and training programs in vocational colleges.

Participants of the Study - The research involved 425 participants from a state-owned vocational college in South China. Among the samples were 108 freshmen, 112 sophomores, and 205 junior students. The number of sample per grade level was calculated using an online sample calculator named Raosoft with the confidence level of 95% and 5 % margin of error. A simple random sampling method was utilized. Each participant's name in the population was electronically encoded and given a number. The sample number calculated for each year level was then used to identify the participants using an online electronic randomizer tool.

Data Gathering Instruments - The study aimed to assess perceptual constructs such as the metacognitive strategies, communicative competence, and language proficiency among Chinese vocational college students. The questionnaire is a 4-point Likert scale that is comprised of four parts: Personal Data Information, the Metacognitive Strategies Scale, the Communicative Competence Scale, and the Language Proficiency Scale. The scale consisted of 62 items, rated on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

The first part of the questionnaire gathered respondents' profile information which included age, sex, place of origin. The second part of the questionnaire was designed to gauge the Metacognitive strategies of the respondents, and it comprised 8 sub-scales: self-awareness, goal-setting and planning, self-regulation, cognitive strategies, self-reflection and evaluation, use of resources, adaptability and flexibility, motivation and engagement, and personal and social aspects. There was a total of 32 statements in this part of the survey questionnaire. The scale was developed based on two sources, study by Feng (2023) and research study by Zhaowen et al. (2020). The third part was the Communicative Competence Scale, developed under the influence of two research studies, a study by Gonçalves et al. (2020) entitled, Intercultural Communication Competence Scale: Invariance and Construct Validation in Portugal and a study by Li-Jung (2021) entitled, Developing intercultural communicative competence in foreign language classrooms. This section included three sub-scales: knowledge, attitudes and skills, with a total 73 statements. The fourth part was the Language Proficiency Scale which consisted of four sub-scales: reading, speaking, listening and writing comprising 40 statements.

Table 1

Summary of Reliability Test

Indicators	Cronbach Alpha	Remarks
Goal Orientation	0.881	Good
Constructivist Teaching	0.854	Good
Learner Autonomy	0.861	Good
Teacher-Student Interaction	0.931	Excellent
Peer Effect	0.892	Good
Student-Student Cooperation	0.905	Excellent
Curriculum Assessment	0.892	Good
Visual Learning Style	0.788	Acceptable
Auditory Learning Style	0.789	Acceptable
Tactile Learning Style	0.820	Good
Kinesthetic Learning Style	0.874	Good
Group Learning Style	0.880	Good
Individual Learning Style	0.870	Good
Self-assessment scale for English reading comprehension	0.891	Good
Self-assessment scale for English written expression	0.901	Excellent
Self-assessment scale for English listening comprehension	0.876	Good
Self-assessment scale for English oral expression	0.915	Excellent

Self-assessment scale for English pragmatic ability	0.880	Good
Self-assessment scale for English organizational competence	0.886	Good

George and Mallery (2003) provide the following rules of thumb: “>.9– Excellent, >.8–Good, >.7–Acceptable, >.6–Questionable, >.5–Poor, and <.5–Unacceptable.”

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, the researcher conducted a preliminary study involving 30 students from both first-year and second-year classes. Data from these participants were gathered using the "Golden Data" questionnaire tool, coded, and entered into SPSS 27.0 for analysis. Data collection primarily relied on a questionnaire, which underwent validation by experts, and a pilot test involving 30 college students to ensure its suitability for the current study. The adjusted questionnaire demonstrated a satisfactory Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .872. Cronbach Alpha coefficients for both the sub-scales and the entire questionnaire were computed to assess reliability. The results in The Reliability Test for Three Variables indicated that the Cronbach Alpha coefficients for all sub-scales ranged from 0.788 to 0.931, which demonstrated that the internal consistency reliability coefficients for both the subscales and the overall questionnaire were deemed acceptable, surpassing the threshold of 0.70. Following pilot study, the questionnaires were administered to 425 participants during the data collection.

Data Gathering Procedures - Data in this study were gathered in two phases: the Pilot Test and the Main Research. The data collection process involved utilizing the questionnaire tool converted to an online survey. The survey questionnaire also included a section where respondents consented to participate. The subsequent step involved contacting English teachers from the Applied English Department. The questionnaire, presented as a QR code, was sent to them with a detailed explanation of its specific purpose. The English teachers were then responsible for distributing the questionnaire to eligible students in their classes during regular sessions. The researcher introduced the survey's aim and procedure, clarified the use and content of the questionnaire, and emphasized the importance of authentic responses. Given the extensive number of questions, the student's cooperation and patience were assumed to be essential for a thorough investigation.

Upon receiving the QR code, interested students could directly scan it in WeChat to access the questionnaire link and respond using their mobile phones. After submitting the questionnaire, respondents received a token as a reward to ensure both quantity and quality of feedback. Participants were assured that the results will be totally irrelevant to their course grades and that all information would be kept confidential. Students based their responses on their learning experiences, and the collected questionnaires were exported using the "Golden Data" application. The researcher entered the questionnaire data into an Excel form, meticulously checking input data for accuracy. The questionnaire was designed with a maximum limit of 500, prompting data collection when this threshold was reached. Subsequently, data were collected and statistically treated using weighted mean through SPSS 27.0 to interpret, analyze, and compare participant responses.

Following data collection, the researcher tabulated, interpreted, and analyzed the information to investigate significant relationships among perceptual constructs like the constructivist learning environment, learning style preferences, and language ability. Based on the analysis, the researcher proposed an enhanced communicative competence training program.

Data Analysis - After collecting data, each survey was carefully reviewed individually, and any incomplete questionnaires were eliminated from the analysis. Of the collected questionnaires, 425 were considered suitable and assigned codes for statistical analysis to address the research inquiries. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized to analyze the gathered data statistically. Pearson correlation analysis was also conducted to explore relationships between metacognitive strategies, communicative competence, and language proficiency. Pearson's correlation, or Pearson's r , is a statistical measure that evaluates the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two continuous variables. It generates a coefficient ranging from -1 to +1, where +1 indicates a perfect positive correlation, -1 indicates a perfect negative correlation, and 0 indicates no correlation. Pearson's correlation is widely used in research to determine how closely two variables are associated.

Ethical Considerations - This current inquiry systematically integrated ethical considerations into the entire survey procedure. Initially, a formal consent letter was drafted to obtain approval from the deans of the English department at the private university. A consent form was incorporated at the beginning of the questionnaire to uphold the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. The individuals under investigation were provided with comprehensive information about the study's objectives and the tasks they were expected to perform. Participants were given the autonomy to decide whether to partake in or withdraw from the study at any stage. Furthermore, students were reassured that the data and discoveries would be exclusively used for research. Throughout the study, researchers ensured that participants thoroughly read and understood all instructions, study procedures, and the purpose of the survey before commencement. A voluntary participation approach was adopted to uphold the rights of the respondents. Throughout this period, the confidentiality of information and gathered data was treated with the utmost discretion. Moreover, the Ethics Review Committee Center affiliated with the University of the Lyceum in the Philippines secured approval for ethical considerations.

3. Results and discussion

Table 2
Metacognitive Strategy in terms of Teaching Clarity

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Self-Awareness	3.13	Agree	1
Goal Setting and Planning	3.11	Agree	2
Composite Mean	3.12	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 2 showcases the application of metacognitive strategies in the context of teaching clarity, focusing specifically on the indicators of Self-Awareness and Goal Setting and Planning. The weighted mean scores for these indicators were 3.13 and 3.11 respectively, both of which fall within the 'Agree' range according to the provided legend. This suggested that respondents generally concurred that these strategies were effectively employed in enhancing teaching clarity. The composite mean for the table, which aggregated the scores of the two indicators, stood at 3.12, solidly placing the overall evaluation within the 'Agree' category. The ranking placed Self-Awareness slightly higher than Goal Setting and Planning, indicating that respondents found self-awareness slightly more critical or effectively implemented in the context of teaching clarity.

This data could suggest that educators acknowledge the importance of understanding their own cognitive processes and setting clear objectives as essential components for clear and effective teaching. The close scores between the two indicators also suggested a balanced view that both self-awareness and effective planning were nearly equally important in contributing to teaching effectiveness. Teachers who are more self-aware are better equipped to reflect on their instructional methods and adjust their teaching to meet student needs, thus fostering an environment conducive to learning (Zhang et al., 2022).

Table 3
Summary Table on Communicative Competence

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Knowledge	3.14	Agree	3
Attitudes	3.19	Agree	2
Skills	3.30	Agree	1
Composite Mean	3.21	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 3 presents a summary of communicative competence broken down into three primary categories: Knowledge, Attitudes, and Skills. Each category has been evaluated and assigned a weighted mean, which collectively forms the composite mean for overall communicative competence. The Skills category scored the highest with a weighted mean of 3.30, ranked first among the three, suggesting that respondents felt most confident in their communicative skills. This might include practical abilities such as adjusting tone, managing misunderstandings, and effectively restarting conversations, which were crucial for effective intercultural communication.

Attitudes were ranked second with a mean of 3.19, indicating a strong, positive disposition towards the value and utility of communicative competence. This reflected a proactive attitude towards learning and using language in diverse settings, underlining the importance of mindset in language acquisition and usage. Knowledge, although slightly lower, still scored well at 3.14 and was ranked third. This suggested that while there was a good foundation of understanding the elements of English-speaking cultures and the technical aspects of language, there may be slightly less confidence in this area compared to skills and attitudes. Composite mean score of 3.21 suggested that respondents generally agreed on their level of communicative competence, particularly regarding knowledge, skills, and attitudes. This balanced competence suggested that while learners were confident in their abilities, more focused educational efforts were needed to enrich their understanding of cultural contexts and non-verbal communication to complement their existing practical skills (Peng et al., 2020). The findings aligned with broader trends in Chinese education, where integrating both cultural learning and language proficiency was seen as vital for students' success in global communication.

Table 4
Summary Table on Language Proficiency

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Reading	3.11	Agree	1
Speaking	3.07	Agree	3
Listening	3.06	Agree	4
Writing	3.08	Agree	2
Composite Mean	3.08	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 4 provides a concise overview of student assessments across four key language proficiency areas: Reading, Speaking, Listening, and Writing. Each area had been evaluated with a weighted mean score, and all indicators were uniformly within the "Agree" range, which reflected general approval or competence in these skills. Reading had the highest weighted mean at 3.11 and ranked first among the assessed skills. This suggests that students felt most confident in their reading abilities, which may imply strong skills in comprehending and interpreting written English materials. Writing follows closely with a mean of 3.08 and was ranked second, indicating a slightly lower but still robust competence in expressing thoughts in written form. Speaking and Listening were rated slightly lower, with means of 3.07 and 3.06, respectively, ranking third and fourth. This indicates that while students were generally capable in these areas, they might experience slightly more challenges in oral communication and auditory comprehension compared to reading and writing.

The composite mean of 3.08 for language proficiency areas highlighted that students generally felt competent across critical language skills. However, the slight gradation in self-assessed proficiency levels indicated that specific areas could benefit from focused educational interventions. Research on Chinese students' language learning showed that while students often demonstrated balanced skills in areas like grammar and vocabulary, there was a need to enhance more specific competencies, such as listening comprehension and creative writing, which were crucial for advanced language use (Zhang et al., 2022). These findings suggested that a tailored approach, which addressed individual skill gaps, could further improve overall language proficiency and self-assurance in communication tasks. Furthermore, reflective practices, such as journaling, have been shown to enhance self-regulation and language skill development, suggesting that integrating these techniques could be beneficial for fostering greater proficiency (Zhang et al., 2022).

Table 5 provides a statistical analysis examining the relationship between metacognitive strategies—specifically self-awareness and goal-setting and planning—and various aspects of communicative competence, including knowledge, attitudes, and skills. The analysis employs correlation coefficients (r -values) to measure the strength of the relationship, and p -values to test the significance of these correlations. The results indicate highly significant correlations ($p < 0.01$) across all domains, with r -values ranging from 0.645 to 0.777. This suggested a strong positive relationship between effective use of metacognitive strategies and enhanced communicative competence. For self-awareness, the correlation with communicative knowledge was particularly strong ($r=0.757$), suggesting that a deeper self-awareness significantly correlated with better knowledge in

communicative contexts. This was closely followed by attitudes ($r=0.762$) and skills ($r=0.645$), indicating that individuals who were more self-aware tended to have more positive attitudes towards communication and were more skilled at it.

Table 5*Relationship Between Metacognitive Strategy and Communicative Competence*

Self-Awareness	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Knowledge	.757**	0.000	Highly Significant
Attitudes	.762**	0.000	Highly Significant
Skills	.645**	0.000	Highly Significant
Goal-Setting and Planning			
Knowledge	.777**	0.000	Highly Significant
Attitudes	.760**	0.000	Highly Significant
Skills	.650**	0.000	Highly Significant

Legend: Significant at $p\text{-value} < 0.01$

Similarly, goal-setting and planning showed very strong correlations with all three aspects of communicative competence. The strongest correlation was with knowledge ($r = 0.777$), followed by attitudes ($r = 0.760$) and skills ($r = 0.650$). This implied that those who regularly set clear goals and plan effectively were likely to know more about, have better attitudes towards, and be more skilled at communication.

Findings underscored the importance of metacognitive strategies in enhancing communicative competence. The significant correlations suggested that interventions aimed at improving self-awareness and goal-setting capabilities could effectively enhance an individual's communicative skills, attitudes, and knowledge. The findings highlighted the critical role of metacognitive strategies, such as self-awareness and goal-setting, in enhancing communicative competence. Research among Chinese learners shows that developing these strategies leads to improved communication skills, attitudes, and knowledge, especially in language learning contexts (Liu, 2020; Zhang et al., 2021). These correlations suggested that integrating metacognitive training into educational practices could significantly bolster communicative competence, making learners more adept at navigating complex communication scenarios. Moreover, training programs that focus on metacognitive regulation, including planning, monitoring, and evaluating communication tasks, are shown to improve overall communication outcomes (Teng et al., 2022). This has practical implications for educators and curriculum designers aiming to enhance communication proficiency through targeted, metacognitive interventions.

Table 6*Relationship Between Metacognitive Strategy and Language Proficiency*

Self-Awareness	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Reading	.817**	0.000	Highly Significant
Speaking	.664**	0.000	Highly Significant
Listening	.752**	0.000	Highly Significant
Writing	.723**	0.000	Highly Significant
Goal-Setting and Planning			
Reading	.844**	0.000	Highly Significant
Speaking	.721**	0.000	Highly Significant
Listening	.755**	0.000	Highly Significant
Writing	.763**	0.000	Highly Significant

Legend: Significant at $p\text{-value} < 0.01$

Table 6 presents the results of a statistical analysis exploring the relationship between metacognitive strategies, specifically self-awareness and goal-setting and planning, and various aspects of language proficiency, including reading, speaking, listening, and writing. The data revealed highly significant correlations ($p < 0.01$) across all areas, suggesting a strong, positive relationship between effective metacognitive strategies and language proficiency levels. For self-awareness, the strongest correlation was observed in reading ($r=0.817$), indicating that individuals with high levels of self-awareness tend to have superior reading skills. This was followed by listening ($r=0.752$), speaking ($r = 0.664$), and writing ($r = 0.723$). The correlation values suggested that self-awareness significantly enhanced an individual's ability to engage with and comprehend language in both oral and written forms.

Similarly, goal-setting and planning showed the highest correlation with reading proficiency ($r=0.844$), underscoring the importance of structured approaches to improving reading skills. The correlations with speaking ($r=0.721$), listening ($r=0.755$), and writing ($r=0.763$) were also robust, demonstrating that clear, well-planned learning objectives were crucial for developing all facets of language proficiency. The high correlation coefficients in the study underscored the integral role that metacognitive strategies, such as self-awareness and goal-setting, play in enhancing the learning process and mastering language skills. Recent studies confirmed that metacognitive strategies not only improve language learning efficiency but also led to measurable gains in language proficiency, particularly in areas like reading comprehension and listening (Liu, 2020; Zhang, 2021). Implementing teaching strategies that focus on developing these metacognitive skills can significantly improve students' overall language competence, making them more effective communicators across various contexts (Chen et al., 2021). This information is invaluable for educators and curriculum developers aiming to design more effective language learning programs that foster both cognitive and linguistic growth (Teng et al., 2022).

Table 7
Relationship Between Communicative Competence and Language Proficiency

Knowledge	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Reading	.913**	0.000	Highly Significant
Speaking	.765**	0.000	Highly Significant
Listening	.845**	0.000	Highly Significant
Writing	.854**	0.000	Highly Significant
Attitudes			
Reading	.891**	0.000	Highly Significant
Speaking	.762**	0.000	Highly Significant
Listening	.831**	0.000	Highly Significant
Writing	.823**	0.000	Highly Significant
Skills			
Reading	.777**	0.000	Highly Significant
Speaking	.651**	0.000	Highly Significant
Listening	.718**	0.000	Highly Significant
Writing	.723**	0.000	Highly Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.01

Table 7 presents a statistical analysis exploring the relationship between communicative competence (divided into knowledge, attitudes, and skills) and language proficiency across different aspects such as reading, speaking, listening, and writing. The data highlighted highly significant correlations in all categories, as evidenced by the correlation coefficients (r-values) and their corresponding p-values, all of which were significantly below the threshold of 0.01. Highest correlation was observed in the knowledge category for reading ($r=0.913$), indicating a very strong relationship between the depth of knowledge in communicative competence and reading proficiency. This suggested that a deeper understanding of communicative principles strongly enhanced reading skills. Similar high correlations were seen across other knowledge aspects, with writing also showing a notably high correlation ($r=0.854$). In the attitudes category, correlations remained strong, with writing ($r=0.823$) and listening ($r=0.831$) displaying robust links. This implied that positive attitudes towards communication significantly contributed to enhanced writing and listening proficiencies. Skills correlations indicated significant relationships, particularly in reading ($r=0.777$) and writing ($r=0.723$). Strong correlation in these areas underscored the impact of practical communicative skills on improving language proficiency, especially in processing and producing text.

The results illustrated that both theoretical understanding and practical skills in communicative competence were closely linked to overall language proficiency. Recent studies from Chinese scholars highlighted that communicative competence encompassed not only linguistic knowledge but also the ability to apply this knowledge effectively in real-world contexts, which significantly enhanced language proficiency across multiple dimensions (Chen et al., 2022). The strong correlations across various language aspects—such as speaking, reading, and listening—suggested that improving communicative competence can have a broad impact on overall language skills, making it an essential focus for language education interventions (Liu et al., 2019). These

insights are particularly valuable for curriculum designers and educators, as they underscore the importance of integrating communication training into language education programs to support comprehensive language development (Zhang et al., 2021). The integration of communicative competence strategies could ultimately foster both academic and professional success for language learners.

Table 8
Enhanced Language Proficiency Program for Chinese Vocational College Students

KRA Results	Objectives	Program Activities	Success Indicators	Persons Involved
Improved Communicative Competence	Understand components of communicative competence (knowledge, attitudes, skills)	- Self-assessment of language proficiency - Language learning journals - Group discussions	Students can identify strengths/weaknesses in communication skills	Instructors, Students
	Develop self-awareness in language learning	- Reflective journaling - Peer group sharing	Increased reflective entries; student engagement in discussion	Instructors, Students
Effective Goal-Setting and Learning Planning	Set SMART goals for language development	- Goal-setting workshop - Personalized study planning - Weekly peer review	Submission of individual plans; visible goal progress	Instructors, Students, Peer Mentors
Enhanced Speaking and Listening Proficiency	Improve fluency, clarity, and comprehension	- Role-playing and debates - Listening exercises - Peer feedback sessions	Improved clarity in speaking tasks; accurate listening comprehension	Language Trainers, Peers
Increased Intercultural Awareness	Understand cultural norms and non-verbal cues	- Cultural workshops - Intercultural case analysis - Role-playing with diverse cultural contexts	Ability to demonstrate appropriate cultural communication in role plays	Instructors, Cultural Resource Persons
Academic and Functional Reading & Writing	Strengthen reading comprehension and writing accuracy	- Reading workshops with academic texts - Writing tasks (emails, reports, essays) - Peer editing sessions	Improved scores in reading/writing tasks; grammatical accuracy in writing	Writing Coaches, Instructors
Real-world Communication Practice	Apply all acquired skills in practical tasks	- Group presentation project - Final reflective essay - One-on-one final assessment	Completion of integrated communication tasks; positive instructor feedback	All Instructors, Students
Sustainable Language Learning Habits	Foster ongoing reflective and goal-setting practices	- Final reflection and future learning goal planning	Clear articulation of growth areas; goal setting for continued learning	Students, Instructors
Comprehensive Evaluation and Feedback	Evaluate student progress and proficiency	- Ongoing formative assessment (journals, peer reviews) - Summative assessment (final project, individual evaluation)	Evidence of growth from pre- to post-assessments; instructor rubric results	Assessment Team, Instructors

The table presents a structured summary of a 14-week hybrid language development program designed to enhance communicative competence, intercultural awareness, and sustainable learning habits among students. Each Key Result Area (KRA) is aligned with specific objectives, targeted activities, success indicators, and involved stakeholders.

The program begins by promoting self-awareness through self-assessments, reflective journaling, and group discussions to help learners identify their communication strengths and weaknesses. This foundation is followed by goal-setting workshops where students create SMART goals and personalized study plans, encouraging learner autonomy and accountability. In the mid-phase, the focus shifts to developing fluency in speaking and listening through practical exercises like role-plays and debates. Listening comprehension is enhanced using authentic audio materials. Cultural competence is developed through workshops, case studies, and intercultural role-playing to foster awareness of norms and non-verbal cues in English-speaking contexts. Further, the program strengthens reading and writing skills through workshops on academic texts, structured writing tasks, and peer editing. These activities ensure grammatical precision and critical comprehension. Finally, students

apply their cumulative learning in real-world tasks such as group presentations and reflective essays. Continuous formative and summative assessments, including peer and instructor feedback, support ongoing evaluation.

Overall, the program not only aims for improved language proficiency but also cultivates lifelong learning habits through reflective and goal-oriented practices. The involvement of instructors, peers, and cultural experts ensures comprehensive support throughout the learning journey.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

With the results obtained from the data gathered, the following conclusions were drawn: The respondents exhibited a strong agreement on their use of metacognitive strategies, with self-awareness and goal-setting ranking highly. There was a good level of engagement in these strategies. The overall communicative competence was rated highly across all areas, with skills receiving the highest score, followed by attitudes and knowledge. Across all aspects of language proficiency, the respondents generally agreed on their competence, with reading scoring the highest and listening scoring the lowest. Strong positive correlations were found between metacognitive strategies and both communicative competence and language proficiency. Based on the findings, a comprehensive Language Proficiency program for Chinese vocational students was proposed to emphasize metacognitive strategy development, focusing on self-awareness, goal-setting, and planning.

Instructors may Integrate structured metacognitive activities—such as goal-setting workshops, self-assessment tools, and reflective journaling. Students may engage in self-monitoring strategies, such as maintaining language learning journals and setting SMART goals, to enhance personal accountability and continuously improve across all areas of language proficiency. Peer Mentors may share learning strategies, provide mutual feedback and encourage reflective practices that promote language improvement and intercultural competence. Language trainers may design training modules that emphasize real-life communication tasks and integrate metacognitive strategy instruction—particularly in listening skills, which students identified as an area of weakness. Writing Coaches may guide students through reflective writing activities and provide personalized feedback aimed at improving grammar, coherence, and goal-setting in writing tasks to foster both linguistic accuracy and self-awareness. Future researches may investigate the long-term impact of metacognitive strategy training on language proficiency across different contexts and student populations to validate and expand the findings of this study.

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