AN INVESTIGATION ON THE LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY OF CRIMINOLOGY STUDENTS: A NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR SYLLABUS DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the importance of developing effective reading skills among Criminology students at Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences, and Technology. This research aimed to improve students' reading skills and provide them with the necessary skills to comprehend and analyze complex legal texts, case studies, and criminal justice literature, leading to academic and professional success in their respective field. The study utilized two components to collect information such as survey questionnaire and interview, focusing on students from first to third year level. A survey questionnaire was employed to one hundred (100) criminology students enrolled in the A.Y 2024-2025 second semester. After conducting the survey, an interview was conducted to ten (10) random criminology student to gather more information. The result of the study may help identify specific areas where students struggle in reading academic text, thereby help educators and curriculum developers in making informed decisions regarding English language needs in the criminology discipline, specifically in the syllabi and teaching materials development.

KEYWORDS: *Criminology Students, Needs Analysis, Reading Skills, English for Academic Purpose, Syllabus Development*
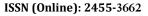
RATIONALE

In today's increasingly globalized environment, recognizing the criminology students' language needs is crucial, as they are expected to utilize the language effectively both to their academic works and their future roles in the criminal justice field (Genelza, 2022). Being proficient at the four macro skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening is crucial in criminology students as it helps them analyze legal texts, and prepare for academic and professional roles in the future (Romig & Burge, 2020). Moreover, effective language use enhances their capacity to communicate clearly and precisely in high-stakes scenarios such as courtroom testimonies, police reporting, conflict resolution, and inter-agency collaboration, which are integral to criminal justice professions (Dunggo-an et al., 2025). Therefore, addressing the language proficiency of criminology students is not only an academic concern but also a professional imperative that supports the development of competent and articulate future law enforcers and justice advocates.

In Mexico, a study conducted at the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla revealed that criminology students face significant challenges in acquiring the English language skills necessary for their professional field. The research highlighted a substantial gap between the students' English proficiency and the requirements of their curriculum, indicating that existing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses do not adequately meet their needs (Pliego & Mendoza, 2021). Similarly, in the United States, a study have shown that language barriers pose

considerable obstacles for students in higher education, particularly for those whose first language is not English. These students often struggle with academic communication, which can impede their learning and professional development (Stockdale et al., 2021). In addition, in the United Kingdom, a study found that non-native speakers in criminal justice education or early-career practice often lack sufficient English proficiency to "participate effectively in criminal justice processes," due to inconsistent standards and inadequate EFL support (Hunter et al., 2022). These findings underscore a broader international issue: criminology students in non-English-speaking countries often lack the necessary language proficiency to effectively engage with complex legal texts, communicate in professional settings, and perform critical analyses, all of which are essential skills in the criminal justice field.

In the Philippines, specifically in Manila, the issue of low English proficiency among criminology students has become increasingly evident. A study conducted at the Philippine College of Criminology revealed that the majority of its students only reached the A2 level in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), which corresponds to an elementary level of proficiency. This level is insufficient for the academic and professional communication demands required in the field of criminal justice (Diaz et al., 2024). Meanwhile, in Pagadian City, a study conducted at Saint Columban College found that criminology students exhibited poor reading comprehension, with an average score of only 35.58%, despite

claiming to use effective reading strategies (Dunggo-an et al., 2025). Furthermore, in Misamis Oriental, a study investigated morphological awareness and its impact on reading comprehension among third-year criminology students at Initao College. The study found that moderate proficiency in morphological awareness which correlated positively with deeper comprehension levels indicates that an underdeveloped understanding of word structures continues to hamper effective reading of complex texts (Villarin & Patlunag, 2023). These findings from the three distinct regions point to a broader issue in the country's criminology programs in which language skills are not being developed to the level needed for success in both academic settings and real-world law enforcement contexts.

In Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology, criminology students struggle to develop their language skills, particularly to technical materials related to their field. This difficulty in reading reflects a broader issue in their overall language proficiency, which hinders their academic performance and their preparedness in real-world scenarios that needs critical and analytic thinking. The researchers, therefore, decided to carry out this needs analysis to identify the specific needs of these students in their reading abilities. Conducting needs analysis focused on reading skill proficiency is essential to identify specific gaps and inform the development of a more responsive and effective syllabus. This study is timely and relevant to ensure that the criminology students of KCAST are equipped with the right literacy tool they need to succeed academically and professionally.

Several studies have explored the language skills of students in higher education, but there is still a noticeable lack of research that specifically focuses on the criminology students. Studies entitled *"The English Language Needs of Agriculture Undergraduate Students Focusing on Reading Skills"* conducted by Edrada et al. (2024), *"The English Language Needs of Bachelor of Science in Business Administration– Marketing Management Second-Year Students Focusing on Reading Skills"* by Escandallo et al. (2024), and *"The English Language Needs of Business Administration Major in Financial Management Focusing on Reading Skills"* by De Vera (2024) have successfully assessed the English reading skill needs of students in various academic disciplines at Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology, emphasizing the importance of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and the role of needs analysis in curriculum development. Also, there are studies conducted in the same locale (Botohan et al., 2024; Sodoy et al., 2024; Watin et al., 2024) but all just focused with reading skill and not all the four macro skills. However, none of these studies focus on the language needs of criminology students such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Therefore, this study fills the gap by conducting a focused needs analysis on Criminology students that will inform the development of a more responsive and context-specific syllabus, ultimately supporting their academic and professional success.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. What is the level of language proficiency in terms of the four macro skills among Criminology students?

2. What are the insights of the students based on the results and findings of their language proficiency?
3. Based on the results, what syllabus can be proposed as essential program to develop the language proficiency of the students?

NEEDS ANALYSIS
A. Purpose of the Needs Analysis
The purpose of this Needs Analysis was to evaluate the present level of English language competence among Criminology students, paying particular attention to their reading ability. Data obtained from the questionnaire survey served as the bedrock for creating a curriculum that is specifically designed to cater to the students' real language needs. By knowing where students struggled or excelled, course developers were able to make sound judgments regarding content, activities, and materials for the course.

Conducting the needs analysis involved more than identifying what language elements would be taught; it also established how best to proceed with strategies, exercise types, and materials that were appropriate for the learners' ability and intellectual level. The outcome clarified which components of the English language the students were better equipped at and where they needed further help. Finally, this process ensured that the curriculum was aligned with the students' academic and professional needs, providing a rational buildup in difficulty and applicability to their area of study.

B. Target Population
The target group for this Needs Assessment was the Criminology students of Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences, and Technology, particularly those in the first, second, and third-year levels. One hundred (100) students were chosen as respondents to answer the survey questionnaire prepared by the researchers. Afterwards, a follow-up interview was conducted by selecting random students in the program to achieve a wider scope of student responses. Using surveys and interviews together ensured that the data collected was well-rounded and representative of the students' true language acquisition needs, especially in reading. The varying year levels of the participants also provided a more balanced representation of language issues and competencies at different stages of their academic lives.

C. Framework of the Target Situation Analysis
1. Why is the Language needed?
Language was a vital tool in communication. It helped people communicate, express ideas, and function effectively in academic and professional settings. In any aspect, especially in situations involving formal communication, documentation, and presentation, the utilization of the English language was important. Having good communication skills as students built confidence, supported learning, and prepared them for real-world responsibilities. In this context, for criminology students, language played a crucial role as they were expected to read and write legal reports in their future job field, interact with professionals, and handle cases that required accurate and clear communication.

2. How will the language be used?

Language, specifically the English language, was useful in criminology students' academic and field-related studies. In the classroom, they utilized it to read books and laws, complete written tasks, and participate in oral reports and discussions. Drafting incident reports, communicating with enforcers or the public, and answering interview questions during field exposure required the use of English as the mode of communication. In their future careers, they used the English language to write affidavits, give witness statements, attend seminars, or even testify in court. That was why being equipped with the correct use of the language, in both written and spoken forms, was necessary for effective law enforcement practice.

3. What will the content areas be?

The possible content areas were focused on academic and professional language tasks that aligned with the criminology students' field, including learning legal and technical vocabularies, enhancing reading comprehension of laws and reports, and practicing formal writing skills using the English language. Also, students benefited from grammar improvement and speaking activities such as role plays and mock interviews. These content areas were designed to prepare criminology students for various situations such as police report writing, conducting investigations, and presenting findings both in school and in their future professional field.

4. Where will the language be used?

The students used the language in lectures, assignments, group work, and oral presentations. Outside the school, they applied their language skills during internships or on-the-job training in police stations, courts, or government offices. In their future work as criminology professionals, they used English in meetings, report writing, courtroom communication, and public interactions. Mastery of the language helped them carry out their duties properly and professionally.

D. Framework of Learning Needs Analysis
1. Why are the learners taking the course?

Criminology students took this course because it was a required subject in their program. Even though it was not their major subject, they understood the importance of learning the English language, since it was necessary, especially for their future profession. Criminology students were expected to be able to write clear reports, speak properly in a courtroom, and communicate during investigations, and having the skill in utilizing the English language also helped them work with people from different backgrounds. So, while this subject was a part of their curriculum, criminology students also saw it as a tool to help them succeed in their future careers in law enforcement.

2. How do learners learn?

Consequently, there were many criminology students who learned better when they were active during discussions. They also preferred practical activities instead of just listening to long lectures, such as group work and role playing. Some students tended to lose interest more easily and didn't participate if the class relied only on lectures. They learned effectively when they were involved and when the lesson applied to real-life situations. To help them learn the English language effectively, the course included activities related to their field such as writing police reports, giving oral presentations, and simulating interviews.

3. What resources are available?

Available resources that the learners used included online materials, textbooks, and the teacher. A teacher who was trained in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) was important because they served as a guide in the learning journey and as a source of knowledge. Other useful tools included reading materials related to law and crime, digital tools that supported learning, and grammar books. With the right choice of resources, criminology students were able to enhance their language skills and become more confident in utilizing the English language in their future career path.

4. Who are the learners?

The learners were first to third year criminology students at Kapalong College of Agriculture and Technology who came from different backgrounds, but most of them already had basic skills in using the English language. Their interests were focused on public safety, law enforcement, and understanding criminal behavior. They often did schoolwork that involved reading and writing, but many students still struggled with speaking confidently or choosing the right words when explaining ideas orally. Since English was not their main subject, they saw it as a challenge, but they also knew it was important for their future career in the field of criminology.
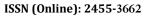
5. Where will the ESP course take place?

The learners were first to third year criminology students at Kapalong College of Agriculture and Technology who came from different backgrounds, but most of them already had basic skills in using the English language. Their interests were focused on public safety, law enforcement, and understanding criminal behavior. They often did schoolwork that involved reading and writing, but many students still struggled with speaking confidently or choosing the right words when explaining ideas orally. Since English was not their main subject, they saw it as a challenge, but they also understood that it was important for their future careers in the field of criminology.

6. When will the ESP course take place?

The ESP course was scheduled consistently. If possible, it should be every day or at least a few times a week. Regular classes helped students practice the English language and improve their skills. With more practice, they became more confident in using English for school and real-life events like writing reports, job interviews, and communicating with their peers. Consistent interaction with English was essential in helping them become good communicators in their profession.

E. Methods of Needs Analysis

In conducting the Needs Analysis, the instruments employed consisted of two primary methods: structure questionnaires covering reading, writing, and speaking skills, and in depth interviews with selected participants.

i. Questionnaire

The tool used was a questionnaire given to one hundred (100) criminology students including question about their skills in reading, writing, and speaking. The ultimate goal was to locate which areas the students needed help. After checking the result, it was found that most of criminology students struggle more in reading aspect.

ii. Interview

The second method utilized was an in-depth interview with ten (10) randomly selected criminology students. These interviews helped the researchers get more detailed answers about the criminology student's learning experiences. The students shared what they find difficult when reading and what kind of help they need to improve. They also gave suggestions on how their English classes can be made more helpful, informative, and interesting at the same time.

F. Procedure of the Needs Analysis

At first, the class that conducted the needs analysis was divided into different groups according to their seating arrangement and then assigned to different classes or sections, where each group conducted their respective needs assessment. In order to understand the respondents holistically, the researchers used questionnaires and interviews to evaluate their target group. The questionnaires and interview questions were based on the respondents' field of interest.

The questionnaire was divided into four tables. The first table focused on Listening Skills, which was composed of 15 questions. The second table addressed Reading Skills, also composed of 15 questions. The third table covered Writing Skills, with 15 questions, and the last table, Speaking Skills, likewise consisted of 15 questions. The fifth table in this study was the summary of the level of language proficiency in the four macro skills.

One hundred (100) students from the first, second, and third-year levels were selected as respondents to answer the four-part questionnaire prepared by the researchers. After completing the questionnaire, 10 random students were selected and interviewed by the researchers regarding their field of interest.

During the interview, the 10 respondents were asked how they felt about their current English language skills in the four macro skills, what they believed were the main reasons and factors contributing to their weak English skills, what made it difficult for them to use the English language across the four macro skills, how their English skills affected their confidence in completing school tasks, what they were willing to do to improve their deficiencies, and their suggestions for designing an English course for criminology students, including recommended topics and activities.

After conducting the Needs Analysis, the researchers summarized the responses from both the survey and the interviews. Using the gathered data, they tabulated the results for easier presentation and interpretation. The tables included the frequency of responses for each question, which the researchers thoroughly examined. From this examination, the

course designers who were also the researchers, determined the learners' needs, wants, and lacks. Applying these findings, they went on to develop a syllabus designed to address the identified gaps. The suggested syllabus served as a proposal for revising the existing curriculum.

G. Data Collection

The researchers went to the allocated classrooms where Needs Analysis was to be carried out. When they arrived, they gave the questionnaires to the 100 responding participants, who were all seated and eager to respond. The process of distributing the questionnaires went on smoothly, and each respondent was afforded enough time to fill out the form. Upon collection, the data were compiled and analyzed by the researchers. The outcomes from the replies were ordered systematically and given in a tabular format to enable easier interpretation and reference throughout the analysis process.

i. Questionnaires

The answered questionnaires with 60 items that were separated into four subjects/topics were collected from the respondents and checked. The scores of the respondents were listed according to their choices, which were separately categorized as single-point answer questions.

ii. Interview

After interviewing the 10 respondents through random sampling/selection, the answers of the students are consolidated to have fixed and concrete presentations of the results.
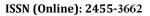
RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presented the results and discussion of the study, focusing on the language proficiency levels of Criminology students in the four macro skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Data were gathered through a survey questionnaire to measure proficiency levels and were supported by interviews to gain deeper insights into the students' experiences and perspectives. The findings provided both quantitative and qualitative understanding of their language abilities, which served as the basis for the proposed syllabus designed to address their specific language needs.

Level of Language Proficiency in terms of the Four Macro Skills

Research Question No. 1: What is the level of language proficiency in terms of the four macro skills among Criminology students?

To answer the first research question, the researchers administered a carefully crafted survey questionnaire to suit the context of the study. It sought to measure proficiency of Criminology students in listening, reading, writing, and speaking.

Table 1
Level of Proficiency in Listening Skills

Test I. Listening	Mean	Description
1	76%	High
2	73%	High
3	25%	Very Low
4	60%	Average
5	68%	Average
6	61%	Average
7	60%	Average
8	61%	Average
9	46%	Low
10	43%	Low
11	56%	Average
12	53%	Average
13	48%	Low
14	45%	Low
15	61%	Average
Overall Mean	**56%**	**Average**

In Table 1, the students' listening proficiency levels showed a relatively better outcome compared to other skills. In Item 1, it had a mean of 76%, followed by Item 2 with a mean of 73%, both with a high equivalent description. However, Item 3 got the lowest mean with only 25%, which is very low in its equivalent description. The overall mean of 56% suggested an average level of proficiency, which means that their overall proficiency in listening skill is satisfactory. This illustrated a moderate level of proficiency in the listening skills of the Criminology students. The data showed that while some students excelled in listening, a notable percentage still struggled with tasks that likely involved retaining detailed auditory information or understanding spoken arguments. This could hinder performance in interviews, interrogations, or legal proceedings.

Moreover, Diaz et al. (2024) supported these results by revealing that a significant number of criminology students demonstrated an elementary level (A2) of English proficiency. This limited proficiency could impede students' ability to comprehend complex auditory information, which is crucial in criminology for tasks such as understanding legal proceedings and conducting interviews. Similarly, Lopate (2025) examined the learning styles of criminology students and found that while visual learning was predominant, auditory learning was less developed. This suggested that students might struggle with tasks requiring effective listening skills, further emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to enhance auditory comprehension in criminology education.

Table 2
Level of Proficiency of Reading Skills

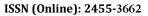| Test II. Reading	Mean	Description
1	76%	High
2	69%	Average
3	56%	Average
4	49%	Low
5	54%	Average
6	50%	Average
7	60%	Average
8	45%	Low
9	39%	Low
10	44%	Low
11	39%	Low
12	40%	Low
13	51%	Average
14	45%	Low
15	39%	Low
Overall Mean	**50%**	**Average**

In Table 2, students presented their level of proficiency in reading skills with the highest score recorded in Item 1, which had a mean of 76% with a high equivalent description. The lowest was found in several items including Item 9, 11, and 15, each with a mean of 39% and a low equivalent description. The overall mean score of 50% placed the group's reading proficiency at an average level. It means that their level of proficiency in reading is satisfactory. This also indicated that students showed a moderate level of proficiency in reading. The multiple low scores suggested that while students could perform well in basic reading tasks, many struggled with comprehension tasks that required higher-order thinking. This weakness might negatively affect the criminology students' ability to understand case laws, legal procedures, and tasks that require reading comprehension.

Correspondingly, Villarin and Patlunag (2023) supported these results by linking low reading comprehension to weak morphological awareness, which affected the ability to decode legal and academic texts. Similarly, Idulog et al. (2023) examined the reading abilities of Filipino students and found that many learners faced difficulties in reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and critical thinking skills. These challenges were attributed to factors such as lack of resources and socioeconomic conditions, which could impede students' ability to engage with and understand complex texts.

Table 3
Level of Proficiency in Writing Skills

Test III. Writing	Mean	Description
1	66%	Average
2	51%	Average
3	45%	Low
4	54%	Average
5	52%	Average
6	53%	Average
7	47%	Low
8	31%	Low
9	56%	Average
10	58%	Average
11	48%	Low
12	64%	Average
13	43%	Low
14	63%	Average
15	54%	Average
Overall Mean	**52%**	**Average**

In Table 3, the overall mean rating was 52%, with an average equivalent description. It means that their language proficiency in writing is satisfactory. The highest score was found in Item 1, which had a mean of 66% and was described as average. The lowest score, with a mean of 31%, appeared in Item 8 and had

a low equivalent description. This overall mean suggests that the Criminology students demonstrated a moderate proficiency level in writing. As shown in the data, this reflects a need for improved instructional strategies and more opportunities for writing practice.

In relation to this, the results aligned with the findings of Emperador (2020), and the study of Manatad and Escandallo (2024) which showed that Criminology students were generally deficient in discourse writing, including aspects such as content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Additionally, a study by Budjalemba and Listyani (2020), and Rosas and Escandallo (2024) provides further insight into the factors contributing to students' difficulties in academic writing. Their research identified both internal and external factors that hinder writing proficiency. Internal factors included self-motivation, self-confidence, lack of knowledge, and feelings of pressure, while external factors encompassed the teacher's teaching style, classroom atmosphere, materials, and specific writing requirements.

Table 4
Level of Language Proficiency of Speaking Skills

Test IV. Speaking	Mean	Description
1	71%	High
2	58%	Average
3	32%	Low
4	57%	Average
5	55%	Average
6	36%	Low
7	56%	Average
8	53%	Average
9	66%	Average
10	40%	Low
11	48%	Low
12	20%	Very Low
13	50%	Average
14	59%	Average
15	64%	Average
Overall Mean	**51%**	**Average**

In Table 4, Item 1 achieved the highest score with a mean of 71%, earning a high equivalent description. This indicates that some students demonstrated strong oral communication skills. However, this was sharply contrasted by Item 12, which scored the lowest at 20%, with a very low equivalent description, which suggests significant difficulties in certain aspects of the students' speaking abilities. The overall mean of 51% classifies the general speaking proficiency as average, indicating a moderate level of speaking competence among the students. This also means that their language proficiency in speaking is satisfactory.

To further elaborate, this inconsistency suggests that while some students are confident in basic oral communication, others face significant challenges, possibly in formal or structured speaking situations. These findings align with the study of Ayawan et al. (2022), who identified barriers such as limited vocabulary, grammatical lapses, and anxiety as major obstacles in criminology students' oral communication. Furthermore, a study by Cagas (2022) and Escandallo and Baradillo (2024) provides additional support for the observed

challenges. The research focused on enhancing the speaking and grammar skills of higher education students through the use of TikTok videos. The findings revealed that integrating micro-videos from the TikTok app into English language instruction significantly improved students' speaking abilities and grammatical proficiency. This suggests that incorporating technology-based interventions can be an effective strategy to address the inconsistencies in oral proficiency observed among criminology students, particularly in formal or structured speaking scenarios.

Table 5
Level of Language Proficiency of the Four (4) Macro Skills

Macro Skill	Overall Mean	Description
Listening	56%	Average
Reading	50%	Average
Writing	52%	Average
Speaking	51%	Average

In Table 5, the data revealed that the Criminology students of Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology demonstrated an average level of proficiency in the four macro skills, which means that their performance in these skills was satisfactory. Among these skills, listening emerged with the highest overall mean score of 56%, indicating that students are relatively more adept at understanding spoken English. Conversely, reading showed the lowest overall mean score of 50%, suggesting a weakness in comprehension tasks that require students to decode and analyze written texts. This skill is crucial in understanding legal documents and case-related materials. Although all skills fall within the average range, the disparity highlights the need for targeted interventions, especially in reading, to strengthen students' overall language competence in preparation for the academic and professional demands of the Criminology field.

The findings implied that while Criminology students possessed a generally adequate command of the four macro skills, the noticeable gap between listening and reading proficiency may have had significant consequences for their academic and future professional performance. Since reading was integral to interpreting legal texts, case studies, and other documentation vital to criminology, the lower proficiency in this area could have hindered their ability to fully engage with course materials or accurately interpret critical information in real-world scenarios. This suggested a need for curriculum enhancements that focused on improving reading strategies, such as critical reading, vocabulary development, and analytical comprehension. Strengthening this skill would not only have balanced their language competence but also prepared them for the linguistic demands of law enforcement, criminal investigations, and courtroom procedures.

Insights of the Students on the Results and Findings of their Language Proficiency
Research Question No. 2: What are the insights of the students based on the results and findings of their language proficiency?
To answer the second research question, the researchers administered an in-depth interview to suit the context of the study. This method allowed for the collection of rich and

detailed responses that provided deeper insights into the participants' experiences and perspectives.

Table 6
Emerging Themes from Student Interviews on English Language Proficiency

Identified Needs	Sample Statements
Low Confidence in Using English	*"I feel embarrassed when I talk in English because I think I sound wrong."* (IDI_02) *"For me It's hard to speak or write because I'm scared that others might laugh if I pronounce or write something wrong"* (IDI_03) *"The fear of making mistakes and being judged has kept me from using the language more often."* (IDI_05) *"I often find myself avoiding tasks that involve English because I don't feel confident enough."* (IDI_09)
Lack of Prior Practice	*"I think it's because in high school, our focus was more on memorizing facts, not really on practicing English through real communication."* (IDI_01) *"Most of my previous education was not in English, so I didn't get much practice. Also, English is not commonly spoken in my home or community."* (IDI_08) *"We were not really trained to use English in practical ways. Most of our exposure to the language was limited to textbooks."* (IDI_09) *"We don't get to practice speaking English outside of class. At home, we don't use English, so it's hard to get used to it."* (IDI_10)
Vocabulary Limitations	*"I also struggle with reading long texts because I don't understand some words."* (IDI_01) *"For me, what makes it difficult is the lack of vocabulary and the pressure to be grammatically correct."* (IDI_05) *"Sometimes I don't understand technical terms or how to express my thoughts clearly."* (IDI_07)
Grammar Anxiety	*"Speaking is hard because I overthink grammar and pronunciation."* (IDI_03) *My writing lacks proper grammar and structure, and I get nervous when I have to speak or present in class.* (IDI_08) *"Writing assignments take longer for me because I need to double-check my grammar and sentence structure."* (IDI_10)
Willingness to Improve through Self-Initiatives	*"I'm willing to read more English materials, practice speaking with my classmates, watch English documentaries, and even ask for feedback from my instructors so I can slowly build my confidence and skills."* (IDI_05) *"I'm willing to read more, practice speaking regularly, and actively seek help to improve my English skills."* (IDI_06) *"I'm willing to read more English books, join study groups, speak English more often, and use apps or videos to help me practice and learn step by step."* (IDI_07) *"I'm willing to spend extra time practicing English, like reading criminology articles, watching English videos related to crime and law, and joining English-speaking groups."* (IDI_08)

The results from the table above reveals the personal and educational factors that affects the students English Language Proficiency. One of the identified theme is the Low Confidence in English language usage, which shows that many students tend to experience anxiety and fear of judgement when using the language. In align with this, Gürbüz and Cabaroğlu (2021) and Awatin and Escandallo (2024) explored EFL students' perceptions of oral presentations and found that learners with lower confidence often associated it with limited language ability. This lack of confidence negatively affected their motivation and overall speaking performance, highlighting the psychological barriers students face in using English. Furthermore, Asnaini et al. (2025) explored more the psychological and emotional factors that affects EFL students speaking skills confidence in English language usage. Their study revealed that students with low confidence is shaped by a combination of various experiences and the presence of anxiety

and negative emotions in a students' mind. Therefore, building a supportive learning environment that strengthens the students' self-esteem is essential in promoting English language proficiency.

Furthermore, the theme about the lack of prior practice, shows how students past experiences in educational aspect did not provide sufficient practical engagement with English. This lack of real world experience led to weak ability when it comes the four macro skills, particularly because they belong to a home and community where English is a foreign language. Moreover, Fachrunnisa and Nuraeni (2022) revealed that Indonesian EFL students often face difficulties in speaking due to a lack of prior practice. This limited exposure results in hesitation, reduced fluency, and a noticeable lack of confidence during English communication. Furthermore, the study of Ngo et al. (2024) revealed that students often lack foundational experience due to

an academic background that focuses more on theoretical knowledge rather than on actual language use. Their study findings emphasizes that students, specifically in tertiary education tend to struggle with receptive skills like reading and productive skills such as speaking and writing, especially, when previous instructions failed to include practical and interactive application of English. It shows that limited English exposure hinders students' readiness, stressing the need for tailored support and consistent practice in all language skills.

Also, the result of the table above shows that Vocabulary Limitations can also hinder and limits affect the students' performance. When students struggle in reading and understanding long texts and technical terms, it can also affect their listening when they cannot catch or interpret unfamiliar words. Additionally, the study of Afidah and Machfudi (2022) shows that many students struggle with understanding, pronouncing, and using vocabulary correctly. These challenges limit their ability to express themselves fluently, often leading to hesitation and lower confidence in using English. Consequently, the study of Ortega Dela Cruz (2023) emphasized how various forms of English exposure like listening to English songs, watching movies, reading English books, and utilizing social network site can significantly enhance the students four macro skills such as in reading, writing, speaking and listening. These implies that that vocabulary and language input gained through these activities it helps students build their confidence and fluency in expressing ideas with the utilization of the English language. This aligns with the challenges encountered by the criminology students where vocabulary limitations affects the students four macro skills.

Additionally, one of the result of the responses above emphasizes that Grammar Anxiety can significantly affect the students well-being, as well as the students struggles with the four macro skills. This anxiety affect the overall performance of the students, affecting their fluency and confidence making the communication less effective and stressful. Moreover, Bayar et al. (2021) and Ca-as and Escandallo (2024) found that many EFL learners experience increased anxiety when speaking due to fear of making grammatical errors. This anxiety often leads to hesitation and reduced fluency, showing how grammar-related worries can negatively affect learners' confidence in using English. Furthermore, CeliKpazu and TasdiR (2022), they emphasizes how grammar anxiety can hinder language learning. The study showed that grammar anxiety is an affective factor and is influenced by learners' previous experiences, beliefs and attitude that can contribute to their level of discomfort and hesitation when utilizing the language. The study also confirms through the development of a reliable grammar anxiety scale that this kind of anxiety type is not just emotional, it can significantly affect the students' performance and confidence.

Despite the challenges a criminology students encounter, the willingness to improve through self-initiatives, shows a strong desire among criminology students to take responsibility for their own learnings. Many expressed openness to wanting to explore various strategies like reading English materials,

engaging in group study session, and watching videos that helps to enhance their skills in the language usage. This proactive attitude suggest a growth mindset that can be nurtured through various right choice of academic supports. In support to that, Syafiqurrakhman et al. (2024) found that students who take charge of their learning by setting goals, finding resources, and tracking progress often improve more in English. Their study highlights how motivation and self-initiated actions, like watching English media or asking for feedback, play a key role in language development. Additionally, Qarani (2024) found that learners who take initiative in their own study, like setting goals and choosing materials, are more willing to communicate in English. This supports the idea that self-initiated efforts help improve language skills.

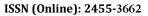### Proposed Syllabus as Program to Develop the Language Proficiency of the Students
Research Question No. 3: Based on the results, what syllabus can be proposed as essential program to develop the language proficiency of the students?
This proposed syllabus was a specific instructional curriculum that aimed to cultivate the reading skills of students pursuing the Bachelor of Science in Criminology program at Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology. Grounded in the actual linguistic needs of law enforcement, criminal investigations, and the justice system, this syllabus went beyond reading instruction per se to provide students with the critical skills required for comprehension, interpretation, and analysis of written texts typically found in the study of criminology.

The foremost objective of this syllabus was to develop the students' capacity to read and understand a diverse body of criminology-related texts, including crime reports, legal reports, case studies, forensic reports, statutes, court rulings, and media accounts. Through the incorporation of basic and advanced reading techniques such as skimming, scanning, inferencing, summarizing, annotating, and critical analysis, this course ensured that students were trained to be active, reflective, and autonomous readers with the capacity to interact with texts at a professional level. This design followed the principles of Cognitive Learning Theory, which emphasized structured learning for developing comprehension and analytical thinking, and Sociocultural Theory, which valued the role of social interaction and context in the learning process.

One of the primary elements of this syllabus was its focus on reading for application, analysis, and accuracy. In criminal justice practice, the ability to glean useful information from a written document or legal report could make or break a case or the validity of an investigation. Hence, the lessons were designed to mimic actual reading situations such as reviewing a police blotter, reading an affidavit, or reading a court decision. Students were provided with repeated opportunities to practice reading for fact-finding purposes, comprehension of legal terminology, assessment of credibility and bias, and making sense of information based on multiple sources.

In addition, the syllabus also sought to reinforce criminological vocabulary development, an important aspect of academic

achievement and communication skills in the criminology field. Students were exposed to specialized vocabulary and legal jargon found in police reports, investigation reports, and court submissions. Through consistent exposure, vocabulary exercises, and context-based activities, learners acquired the linguistic skills to comprehend and generate text related to law enforcement.

The syllabus also acknowledged the need for 21st-century learning resources and multimodal texts. Digital reading assignments, engagement with news articles, documentary transcripts, and online access to legal resources were included in the lessons. These features made the program dynamic, relevant, and aligned with modern education practices. In line with this, the syllabus applied Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) by incorporating real-world language activities such as role-plays, simulations, and case presentations to strengthen the students' communication and critical reading skills.

In the end, this syllabus furthered the mission of the institution to graduate competent practitioners of criminology theory and practice, as well as thinkers with sound judgment and ethical responsibility, abilities that rooted in skillful reading. Throughout the course, students not only mastered the art of reading but also became more enlightened, judicious, and assertive future law enforcers, investigators, and public servants.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study revealed that Criminology students at Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology demonstrated an average or satisfactory level of proficiency in all four macro skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Among these, listening emerged as the strongest skill, while reading was the weakest, highlighting the need for more support and instruction in understanding and analyzing written texts. While the scores suggest that students can manage basic language tasks, the gaps in higher-order comprehension, formal writing, and structured speaking suggest that their language foundation still needs strengthening, especially in areas that directly connect to their future roles in law enforcement and criminal justice.

The students' own insights during interviews brought the data to life. Many of them shared feelings of low confidence, grammar anxiety, and limited exposure to practical English use. Despite these challenges, a recurring theme was their willingness to improve. Students expressed a desire to read more, seek feedback, practice speaking, and use tools like videos and apps to enhance their skills. These insights emphasized that, beyond their academic requirements, students understand the real-world value of strong language proficiency. Their openness and motivation underscore the importance of creating learning environments that are supportive, practical, and aligned with their actual needs and experiences. To answer these needs, the proposed syllabus was developed to directly target the reading and communication skills most essential in the criminology field. Rooted in Cognitive Learning Theory and Sociocultural Theory, and guided by Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), the course is designed to make language learning both meaningful and field-specific. Through simulated legal tasks, real-world documents, vocabulary development, and critical reading activities, the syllabus ensures that students don't just learn English but they also use it. Ultimately, the goal is not only to boost proficiency but also to empower future criminologists to be confident communicators, analytical thinkers, and responsible professionals who are ready for the demands of justice work.
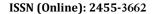
RECOMMENDATION

Considering the identified needs of the criminology students at Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology (KCAST), the researchers strongly recommended that the proposed English syllabus, which focused on reading comprehension development and language use, be formally integrated into their academic program. The needs analysis conducted had shown that many criminology students still lacked the reading comprehension and language proficiency needed for their success in dealing with legal and criminal justice contexts. This gap not only affected their academic performance but also their preparedness for real-life communication in their future professional tasks.

To address this gap, the proposed syllabus helped guide students through structured lessons and engaging activities that strengthened both their ability to utilize the English language in professional settings and their skills in reading comprehension. The proposed syllabus emphasized the development of accurate grammar usage, appropriate vocabulary, and a formal tone in writing and speaking, elements that were important for producing effective reports, understanding legal texts, and participating in official communication.

Additionally, the course integrated essential learning approaches to make the lessons more meaningful and engaging for criminology students. Drawing from Cognitive Learning Theory and Sociocultural Theory, the syllabus was designed to help students understand and use language more effectively through structured lessons and collaborative activities. It also made use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which allowed students to apply what they had learned through real-life communication tasks such as role-plays, simulations, and case presentations. These methods not only helped students improve their language skills but also built their confidence and readiness for professional responsibilities. With these approaches in place, the course did not simply teach English, it also prepared students to use the language effectively and responsibly in their future roles as law enforcers and justice advocates.

Furthermore, the course syllabus was designed to help criminology students interpret and analyze both spoken and written legal English through exposure to realistic texts such as case studies, courtroom dialogues, and police reports. Through all of these, criminology students were able to learn how to listen and read critically, as well as how to use formal language appropriately in responding.
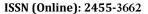
The learning outcomes of this course syllabus aimed to produce students who could effectively use the English language in criminal and legal justice environments, demonstrating the skills to communicate effectively, comprehend accurately, and exhibit professionalism. Therefore, the implementation of this course syllabus was seen as a necessary step to enhance the quality of language instruction, preparing students for the future demands of their field. Teachers were also encouraged to modify or adapt the topics as needed, provided that the changes remained aligned with the findings and identified needs from this study.

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AUTHORS' NOTE

The study used a researchers made test questionnaire to gather data and information as to the current level or status of the students' language proficiency concerning the four macro skills including reading, writing, speaking, and listening. This questionnaire is vital as it served as the basis for the present situation analysis of the students who are the respondents and participants of the study. Also, this test questionnaire underwent a validation process which includes the checking of its content and construct reliability. In addition to this, the output of the study is course syllabus which is a specialized curriculum for language teaching based on the results and findings of the study. However, due to the limited number of words to be included in the study, these important documents are not included. Meanwhile, if you wish to ask for a copy of the test questionnaire and specialized syllabus, feel free to contact the researchers at their specified email address given above of this article. Thank you.