



THE ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM BENEFICIARIES IN THEIR ENGLISH LANGUAGE JOURNEY WITHIN THE CONFINES OF A JAIL FACILITY: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative multiple-case study unveiled the English language learning experiences, and coping strategies across all five cases of ALS beneficiaries through in-depth interviews who were chosen through maximum variation sampling, and the data triangulation was done by interviewing individuals closely related to the participants. Thematic analysis resulted from seven emergent themes on the English language learning experiences: strong desire for education, supportive teachers and peers, practical pedagogical methods, progressive English proficiency, inadequate learning resources, poor English background, and English learning barriers. The emergent themes for the coping strategies include workable resource utilization, socialized learning activities, obtaining teacher's guidance, and active and regular self-learning methods. The five cases had similarities in terms of practical pedagogical methods and inadequate learning resources, while the cases had differences in all other themes. Moreover, coping strategies of all cases had similarities in terms of workable resource utilization, and active and regular self-learning methods and had differences in terms of socialized learning activities and obtaining teacher's guidance. These findings showed the importance of the educational program in the context of jail facilities and how these ALS beneficiaries develop their English language skills despite limitations and inadequacy of resources. These insights could enhance understanding that may lead to more effective teaching approaches and implementations of the ALS program within the context of jail facilities.

KEYWORDS: Education, ALS program, English language learning, language skills, ALS beneficiaries, jail facility, multiple case study, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) Beneficiaries in the context of jail facilities focusing on their English language journey are aiming to gain education and improve language skills despite encountering obstacles that impede their learning journey. According to Sala (2024), limited resources and constrained spaces in jail facilities affect the ALS Beneficiaries' English language journey. Additionally, Faa (2020) underscores the shortage of ALS English language instructors qualified and equipped for the jail environment which consequently affects the educational journey of beneficiaries. Akin (2023) highlights how the stress caused by imprisonment hampers learning abilities whereas Cortez's (2023) research, from the year points out the challenges, in organizing ALS sessions within prison schedules. These issues together hinder the progress of ALS inmates in their English language journey.

From a global perspective, according to the National Immigration Law Center (2021), the lack of English language education and support programs in jails poses a major problem, especially in the United States. This problematic situation impacts individuals in

prison who are foreign in the country with diverse linguistic backgrounds and face significant barriers making it harder for them to learn the English language effectively. These shortcomings hinder the development of their English language skills hindering communication, between prisoners and prison personnel.

In the context of Asian countries, incarcerated Japanese learners face many challenges in their English language journey in jail facilities. These challenges are the results of a lack of sufficient educational programs, and educational resources, and issues with the instructions for English language communication. Additionally, according to UNESCO (2006), psychosocial aspects such as stress or being cut off from contact also limit their ability to learn, alongside difficulties in interacting with necessary educational activities due to the restrictions of prison orders. As a result, there is a serious deficit in the amount of knowledge acquired by the incarcerated population, and the perception of such problems is a clear indication that there is an urgent need for changes in the approach.



The lack of English language support and educational programs in jails in the Philippines is a serious problem that affects the least fortunate and most marginalized learners like indigenous peoples and people with disabilities. Alcantara and Quisumbing (2022) said that such vulnerable groups experience great difficulties in accessing English language education and other language-related support because of poverty, discrimination, and the unavailability of high-quality English language education. Hence, the lack of proper English language services, among beneficiaries, is a big barrier to their rehabilitation, which includes their ability to interact with prison staff and prepare themselves before being released back into society.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

With the case studies of alternative learning system (ALS) beneficiaries, this study examines their English language learning experience. It attempts to delve into the backgrounds, problems, and expansion of such learners providing insights on how they manage their quests for education behind prison walls. The research emphasizes good practice rehabilitation and reintegration work grounded in English language learning through a focus on these experiences. The present study aims to provide essential information needed for creating more successful L2 teaching programs and policies in the criminal justice system that could lead to further improvement or change.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What are the unique and diverse English language learning experiences of Alternative Learning System beneficiaries within the confines of jail facilities?
2. How do beneficiaries cope with language-related challenges in a jail facility?
3. What explains the similarities and differences of each case?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Alternative Learning System (ALS)

The Alternative Learning System is a tuition-free educational initiative administered by the Department of Education through the Alternative Learning System. It serves individuals who lack the means to enroll in formal schooling and accommodates their existing schedules. This program serves as a practical substitute for traditional formal education, incorporating both non-formal and informal channels for acquiring knowledge and skills (Sumang, 2014).

In a study, ALS is a parallel learning system that provides a viable alternative to the existing formal education instruction. Hence, it encompasses both the non-formal and informal sources of knowledge and skills based on RA No. 9155, 2011. The system is supervised by the Department of Education (DepEd) in which, ALS is a program that intends to provide basic education to the deprived, depressed, and underserved (DDUs) Filipinos. Therefore, this educational system has been Access to quality basic and tertiary education has been the primary concern of the Philippine government. The World Bank has reported that a high

percentage of Filipino Alternative Learning System (ALS) graduates are enrolled in tertiary education (Mamba et al., 2021).

English Language Learning of Alternative Learning System

A Case Study" by Tarhata S. Guiamalon et al. (2022) underscores the effectiveness of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in enhancing English language learning among marginalized groups in the Philippines. In this qualitative study, the author focuses on the role of ALS in teaching literacy and communication skills to, out-of-school children, youths, and illiterate adults, thus filling gaps in education.

The study "ALS Program Graduates and Level of Readiness towards Tertiary Education" by Marcelo (2023) transforms the role of ALS towards aiding the English learning of its graduates for tertiary education preparedness. As a program designed for out-of-school youths and adults, the ALS program assists the learner to gain relevant literacy skills as well as communication skills which are essential for academic achievement.

Educational Programs within Jail Facilities

In the article "Learning to Escape: In Understanding the Impetus of Prisoner Participation in Prison Education, Rehabilitation and the Possibility of Change, Behan (2014) examines the reasons that prisoners have to participate in learning programs in Irish prisons. The results stress the connection between education and rehabilitation as, with prisons becoming more authoritarian globally, it is vital in the process.

Thus, Kouritzin (2019) argues in the literature review that they are struggling with language and literacy learning in jail facilities and the role of language education in the reintegration process. To this end, the study endeavors to establish patterns and themes of prison-based language learning while paying particular attention to the redemptive aspects of the endeavor and the potential as a tool for the facilitation of desistance.

Challenges Faced by Alternative Learning System Beneficiaries in Jail Facilities

These include the study with the title "Conquering the Experiences of Pain, Boredom, and Despair Among Selected Incarcerated Mothers Through Alternative Learning System Activities" conducted in the International Journal of Public Health Sciences Isidro et al. 2022 that researches different difficulties of ALS beneficiaries in prisons. The findings of the study establish that incarcerated mothers experience different forms of pain and boredom which inhibits their performance in educational programs.

According to the inmates participating in the study by Addae (2020), the selected jail facility in Ghana has different barriers that affect inmates' education. These were inadequate support from institutions, teacher supply and shortages, and low motivation among teachers.

**Alternative Learning System Implementation in Jail Facility**

This paper by Abad et al. (2020) presents the implementation landscape of an ALS program of a division in the Philippines with a focus on its importance in providing education to inmate learners. According to the research, it is pointed that the ALS program is an important form of education for inmates, which can help them gain the necessary skills for their qualitative changes and to become society members again.

Qualitative research done by Capiz State University in 2022 is to ensure that ALS in the Jail Facility displays how it follows the national standards set by DepEd with the help of analyzing & reviewing the implementation of ALS in the ALS Center. Moreover, this is a valuable case study because it reflects some practical considerations of ALS implementation within the prison environment.

Socio-Rehabilitative Benefits of Alternative Learning System Beneficiaries in Jail Settings

In the study "Rising Scholars: On How the socio rehabilitation processes and Impacts of the ALS for Incarcerated Clients and Those Who Have Been Released from Correctional Institutions, Abeyta et al. (2021) used two community colleges in their study. This is the reason why the research focuses on the fact that, providing educational opportunities through ALS these institutions contribute greatly to successful reintegration in society. Raising consciousness of the value of engagement in an ALS program within and outside a classroom cannot but recommend the current education programs that do not only promote skills and knowledge but also the spiritual dimension of students.

Specifically in the study titled: The Social–Rehabilitative Roles of The ALS Students in the Correctional Facilities: Examining the Students’ Troubles in Writing Good Material for Decoding by Antipuesto et al. (2023), the focus was placed on the learning

process served through ALS program and its positive impact on reading comprehension of the beneficiaries in jail facilities. The work reveals problems that ALS learners encounter such as poor word repertoires, time, and the call for the development of word stocks that slows learning processes. At the same time, this research shows that there are significant barriers to the ability of incarcerated learners to engage with the ALS program; however, there are essential occasions and learning experiences that promote an individual’s agency and culture in the program to develop skills for a better future.

METHODS

This research used a qualitative research method whereby a multiple-case study research design was used to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in its natural setting. Qualitative research is important for investigating the details of people's lives since it establishes how individuals function and why they do so. Similarly, Cleland (2017) uses arguments to assert that, ‘Qualitative research is important in educational settings because it offers a richness of understanding of phenomena, experiences, and their settings’. This is the best approach when it comes to capturing the social relations and individual experiences of the participants. The quality of qualitative research is in the diversity of the way it embraces the human experience data through interviews, focus group discussions, and observation (Taylor & Francis, 2013).

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The participants included in the research were the five (5) enrolled students of the program of Alternative Learning System (ALS) within the confines of a jail facility, 1 participant in each unique case who was coming from different jail facilities in the Davao Region who are incarcerated in the jail facility for not less than 1 year and has enrolled in the Alternative Learning System program inside the facility.

Table 2

English Language Learning Experiences of Alternative Learning System Beneficiaries within the Confines of Jail Facilities

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Strong Desire for Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reflecting on missed opportunities for advancement -Realizing the importance of education for a better future -Being serious about learning reading and learning a high school diploma -Aiming not to repeat the father’s limitations -Joining ALS with the hope of self-improvement and future opportunities -Desiring to further education and secure better jobs -Being motivated by financial struggles and desire for educational attainment
Supportive Teachers and Peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Appreciating individualized instruction and teacher guidance -Being driven by the family-influenced desire to gain basic literacy -Finding unexpected flexibility and support from the community -Being influenced to take small steps, peer learning, and group support
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Having practical exercises and group activities for English learning -Being educated with learning materials, modular format, and self-study requirements



Practical Pedagogical Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Being introduced to varied teaching methods and group discussions for building confidence -Being provided with a focused study space free from external distractions -Being introduced to translation techniques and repetitive practice to reinforce vocabulary and sentence structure
Progressive English Proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Developing greater self-confidence, a stronger sense of self-worth, and better communication skills -Gaining improvements in oral and writing abilities -Achieving English language growth through confidence -Having a greater willingness to engage in classroom activities -Gaining a newfound interest in reading
Inadequate Learning Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having a shortage of dictionaries, reference books, and other learning aids -Having a non-ideal learning environment -Encountering interruptions and disruptions which made learning English difficult -Lacking sufficient resources such as reading materials and internet access
Poor English Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Having challenges in grammar, sentence construction, and vocabulary development -Having initial thoughts that English is easy but experienced otherwise -Having struggles with English pronunciation -Having limited formal education in the past -Being out of school multiple times due to financial challenges
English Learning Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Being affected by the restrictive nature of class schedules and available support -Having less face-to-face learning which limits interactions -Being exposed to modular learning -Having dual roles as parent and student -Being exposed to environmental disturbances

Strong Desire for Education

This issue is represented in all the cases and highlights the reasons, challenges, and goals that compel people to acquire education. The responses of each participant also reveal specific reasons and concerns that correspond well with each participant’s passion and commitment to learning while in prison.

Supportive Teachers and Peers.

The second theme comes out clearly from the responses of the participants in the study and how individualized instruction, teacher guidance as well as peer support and family influences affected the participants’ learning experiences in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) program. In all the described cases, the participants proved that motivation plays a critical role in education and that a favorable learning environment – be it with the assistance of teachers or fellow inmates – helps minimize the challenges experienced by learners.

Practical Pedagogical Methods.

This is evident from the responses presented in this theme, showing how different instructional approaches and learning arrangements supported the participants’ English learning. Some of these worked from practical exercises and Group activities to the learning aids, modality, and study environment issues though they experienced some personal difficulties in their learning process. Following this, the use of the translation

technique along with the exposure and practice that was offered to them sustained the development of more English vocabulary and structures gradually.

Progressive English Proficiency.

The theme is generated by the intention to grow despite obstacles, and as the participants’ English gradually becomes better, they progress as well. In a variety of contexts, such as writing, speaking, reading, and listening the fundamental concepts can further illustrate participants’ incremental enhancement of their English proficiency –building more self-confidence, enhancing oral and written communication skills, and participating more actively in their classroom settings.

Inadequate Learning Resources. The theme is extracted from participants’ difficulties in having access to some materials, learning in unfavorable conditions environment, and external influences that make them unable to reach their optimum learning in English. In all the studies, participants pointed out that they had difficulties in borrowing dictionaries, reference books, and proper study places. These limitations not only slowed them down but also contributed to the frustration of learning in an environment characterized by lots of interferences and structural inadequacies.



Poor English Background.

This theme appears considerably in the reactions of the respondents, who had several difficulties in achieving language proficiency caused by the lack of practice, illiteracy, and poverty. The participants, on average, view the process of attaining crucial language features like grammar, construction of a sentence, the choice of words, and the accent, as a challenging task. While developing proficiency in English they were enamored that it might have been an easy task to achieve, but through their experiences and grey zones in education including limited resources and interrupted schooling, they realized that it was a very difficult thing to do.

English Learning Barriers.

The theme was deduced from the different difficulties experienced by the participants as they learn English, especially regarding the ALS program, and other difficulties which may include set-up constraints such as a rigid timetable, ability to learn in only one way, role confusion, and environmental interferences. These barriers would either limit or partially prevent them from embracing their programs fully, in terms of motivation or progress.

Table 3
Coping Strategies of Beneficiaries with Language-related Challenges in a Jail Facility

Essential Themes	Core Ideas on Coping	Challenges
Active Self-Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Engaging in self-study and peer support to make up for the lack of advanced tools or interactive materials -Making a habit of reading English materials -Maintaining a journal written in English -Practice writing even using simple language -Incorporating new words into sentence formation to enhance both understanding and usage -Revising and revisiting work based on corrections -Completing worksheets 	Struggles with pronunciation and using correct grammar
Socialized Learning Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Interacting with peers to seek understanding -Finding time to apply correct usage by conversing with more knowledgeable peers -Continuously participating in discussions and group work -Establishing social bonds to gain self-confidence -Engaging in conversations with both inmates and staff to practice speaking and listening -Becoming comfortable by having a shared experience of overcoming language barriers -Developing a sense of community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Low self-confidence -Lack of substantial exposure to English in past and present situations
Workable Resource Utilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Engaging with any available books -Using available simple reading modules and the mini-library -Borrowing books even if not English-related to be engaged with the reading material -Asking for alternatives from teachers to compensate for the lack of formal materials -Utilizing flashcards and writing simple sentences to internalize new words -Practicing by answering ALS modules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Limited access to educational resources and materials -Interruptions to study time
Securing Teacher's Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Participating actively during teacher-directed discussions -Asking the teacher for further explanation on some English lessons -Seeking teacher's feedback on one's learning performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Need for more teacher-student engagement -More on modular learning compared with face-to-face



Active Self-Learning

This theme arises from the participants’ relentless measures to deal with the barriers in language including the problems pronouncing and warping sentences. Participants used strategies that showed them creativity and endurance in the attainment of English in restricted situations and contexts.

Socialized Learning Activities

This theme focuses on how participants employed conversations and group actions to mitigate difficulties including passive self-esteem and socialization, as well as minimal interaction with the English language. Using this, they got to develop their language skills in a friendly and communal manner.

Workable Resource Utilization.

This theme focuses on how the participants managed the difficulties of long periods of limited access to learning resources and multiple interruptions to their lessons. In

constructing new knowledge and meaning the action and engagement of the participants showed adaptation due to constrained environment and contexts as well as creativity.

Securing Teacher’s Guidance.

This theme focuses on how participants were able to deal with constraints such as limited textbooks and frequent interruptions to their study. Pragmatically, by trying to achieve as much as possible within the limitations imposed on them, most participants navigated their learning environment in a remarkably hopeful and innovative manner.

Table 4

Similarities and Differences of the English Language Learning Experiences and Coping Strategies on Language-related Challenges of ALS Beneficiaries Within the Confines of Jail Facility.

Themes on Experiences and Coping Strategies	Case Unit		Remarks
	Similar	Different	
Experiences:			
Strong Desire for Education	A, C, D		All the 3 cases expressed that their goals are tied to furthering their education and securing better jobs. They saw English as a tool that would be instrumental in achieving those ambitions, whether it be completing formal education or finding employment.
		B	Case 2 had difficulties in all language skills due to his background causing him to have a strong desire to learn the English language. He is the only case with utmost difficulty in reading.
		E	Case 5 has a strong desire to learn due to his disability, and previously he was neglected in formal education unlike when he entered ALS in the facility.
Supportive Teachers and Peers	A, C, D		All three cases valued the encouragement and flexible teaching methods of ALS compared to rigid past schooling experiences. They found that ALS is more accommodating compared to formal education, with the teachers offering more understanding and support.
		E	Case 5 received a one-on-one session from the teacher for extra guidance to facilitate understanding and comprehension.
		B	Case 2 receives an extra lesson from the teacher to master his reading skills.
Practical Pedagogical Methods	A, B, C, D, E		All participants echoed a preference for the supportive, flexible, and practical methods of ALS compared to traditional schooling.
	A, C		The two cases appreciated the emotional support of ALS teachers in their teaching methods.
	C, B		Participants C & B used flashcards for vocabulary improvement.
		A	Used newspaper to improve vocabulary and create groups for speaking improvement.



		C	Resourceful, maximizing available materials in the facility, and using extra material like printed lyrics
		B	Used story books for children and practice reading aloud. Valued practical learning the most
		D	Viewed translation techniques and repetition as particularly effective in bridging educational gaps
		E	Asked permission to utilize a computer for improving listening comprehension.
Progressive English Proficiency	A, B, C, D		The 4 cases reported an increase in confidence as they progressed in learning English, indicating that acquiring new language skills boosted their self-esteem and communication abilities.
		A	Case 1 already has a little background because of prior exposure to English.
		E	Case 5 expressed frustration that his listening disability hinders him from developing proficiency.
Inadequate Learning Resources	A, B, C, D, E		All cases agreed on the constraints posed by the prison setting, emphasizing the scarcity of resources like books and other reading materials. Limited access to educational materials is a recurring obstacle.
Poor English Background	B, C, D, E		The 4 cases only reached certain grade levels which resulted in a greater struggle with basic literacy and foundational learning.
		A	Case 1 had an advantage in understanding English conversation due to prior exposure.
English Learning Barriers	A, B, C, D		All 4 cases shared learning difficulties and limited access to resources.
		E	Case 5 strongly emphasized foundational gaps due to his auditory processing disorder.
Coping Strategies			
Workable Resource Utilization	A, B, D, E		All 4 cases maximized available resources to have meaningful English language learning.
		C	Case 3 possessed resourcefulness and creativity compared to the 4 cases.
Socialized Learning Activities	A, B, C, D		The 4 cases acknowledged the value of group discussions for building confidence and its positive impact on self-esteem, communication, and engagement with others.
		E	Case 5 preferred recordings and the use of pictures to aid understanding due to his listening disability.
Obtaining Teacher's Guidance	A, B, C, D		All 4 cases recognized support from teachers in overcoming language barriers and the shared experience with peers builds a sense of community and learning direction.
		E	Received slow-paced instruction to cater to his special needs
Active and Regular Self-Learning Methods	A, B, C, D, E		All five cases consistently practiced writing, vocabulary, and grammar through class exercises and used these on their own, back to their respective stations. They repeatedly reviewed basic English concepts to reinforce their learning of the language.

English Language Learning Experiences.

In terms of a *strong desire for education*, 3 cases (A, C, and D) saw education as the key to transforming their lives. Their attitude presupposed a shared opinion about English that it is not only a subject, that is studied in classes but a skill that could help

them achieve their dreams. As for all three cases, education was viewed as an opportunity to have a secure financial status and improve one's life. Although the 2 cases are different, the experience of learning English in Case B is more remarkable within the framework of the present study due to extremely low



levels of education that significantly defined his path to literacy. While learning English was a unique experience for Case E because he has an auditory processing disorder that affected formal education dramatically.

In the context of *supportive teachers and peers*, the three cases: A, C, and D had one similar impression of their learning of English. All three participants stressed that ALS encouraged them more and was less rigid than the traditional education that they faced in school. Although the two cases are quite different, studying Case E will be useful because the respondent enjoys targeted individualized treatment. Unlike other participants to whom group learning-based learning and peer collaboration were sufficient to address their learning difficulties, Case E needed direct one-on-one teaching from his teachers. Moreover, one could also see that Case B's performance is different from the other students as he also gets additional service focused on his considerable difficulties with reading skills.

In terms of *practical pedagogical methods*, there were similarities and differences revealed. First, all five cases: A, B, C, D, and E are similar in the way that ALS methodology, which is available, practical, and focused on learners, was effective with different learners. The second similarity can be seen in cases (A & C) where both participants claimed that emotional support from the ALS teachers was important in the learning experience. Thirdly, both Cases (C and D) applied practical application of such methods as flashcards that proved their flexibility within the ALS program and their needs. On the other hand, difference occurs where all the five cases; A, B, C, D as well as E all receive their unique method of how they are to learn English effectively.

In terms of *progressive English proficiency* four cases (A, B, C, and D) are similar in their experiences, while it was revealed in the analysis that the two cases (A and E) differ. Four cases showed a growth in the level of English, which, in turn, had a positive impact on their self-esteem. All participants included pointed out that there are achievements in gaining an improved understanding of the English language and that such improvements enabled them to effectively express themselves. On the other hand, Case A had a competitive edge over the others in experience in English due to his prior exposure before moving to his current facility and Case E feels very uneasy about his progress due to his listening impairment, which causes him not to reach great heights in English proficiency.

In the context of *inadequate learning resources*, all five cases (A, B, C, D, and E) identified worries with the English learning process because of the limited learning materials owing to the nature of the prison environment. The common complaints were the lack of proper books and other reading materials as well as other assistive learning resources they needed to improve their language proficiency. The restrictions that came with learning in

a prison intensively arose and all the participants disclosed that resource restrictions affected their progress.

In terms of *poor English background*, in the analysis, it was evident that four cases (B, C, D, and E) have relatively low literacy skills as they have had very minimal formal education to enable them to learn basic English. All the participants encountered difficulties that arose from the lack of proper education, which made them have improper literacy and the ability to read, write, and comprehend. Due to this poor English background, they encountered more challenges while in the ALS program in that they had to struggle to grasp or even learn fundamentals that were encoded in the English language. However, in Case A the English language learning perception is much more distinct from the rest in the sense that he already had some background in English that enabled him to grasp what someone is saying in conversational English. Unlike the other participants, who could not even understand some of the basic English terms due to interrupted or no schooling at all, Case A already had prior English literal understanding.

In the context of *English learning barriers*, the analysis brought out more similarities of Cases (A, B, C, and D), these four participants present similar patterns of their learning English as well as the barriers they faced because of restricted access to resources. Regardless of the participants' backgrounds, it was possible to establish that all of them named obstacles that seemed to prevent them from making progress, such as limited resources, and there were problems in understanding the basic elements of learning the language. In comparison, Case E describes how the learning difficulties are caused by an internal condition – the Auditory Processing Disorder, as opposed to other cases that put forward an idea of disability and Education. Of course, all the participants reported having at least such difficulties as limited resources and difficult learning; however, Case E was additionally accompanied by physiological restrictions.

Coping Strategies on Language-related Challenges.

In terms of *workable resource utilization*, the four cases (A, B, D, and E) are as similar in their coping strategies given their distinct background—All made efforts to overcome language barriers despite having very limited resources accessible to them. Their ability to find ways of applying what seems to be readily available materials can be attributed, perhaps, to the fact that everyone was eager to learn English no matter the setting. In contrast, Case C is remarkable among the participants in the way she met the language-related difficulties with relatively more resourcefulness and innovation. Case C went further than all the other cases by proactively attempting to use what can only be termed as creativity in their learning by going the extra mile to use materials that did not even constitute part of the learning materials usually incorporated in learner practices such as flashcards, newspapers, or computers.



In the context of *socialized learning activities*, the analysis showed that four Cases (A, B, C, and D) yielded almost similar findings based on the coping strategy employed by the learners – the group discussions with related intensive activities such as ‘Group discussions,’ which helped the participants to overcome their language difficulties. In contrast, Case E established significantly different coping patterns from what has been observed in other cases. As in the other cases, the extent of peer dialogue and interaction was high, and wherein the other cases peer interactions were mainly through group discussions, case E required audio recordings and illustrations because of the difficulties in his auditory processing disorder.

In terms of *obtaining teachers' guidance*, four cases (A, B, C, and D) have similar response patterns to language difficulties. These participants depended on directions and the support of teachers. This goes a long way to demonstrate how the one-on-one lessons worked to influence their self-confidence as well as contribute to their development direction in learning English. Conversely, the coping strategies of case E are unique from the other cases in dealing with language barriers because of the special and slow teaching that his teachers imparted to him. Unlike the other participants, who received the standard procedures for motivation and interaction within the learning group, Case E necessitated correct timing, as well as specific methods of teaching due to his disability.

In the context of *active and regular self-learning methods*, all five Cases (A, B, C, D, and E) have identical strategies regardless of background and problems. All of them complied with regular and additional independent learning and practice to enhance their English skills. As for this practice, the first was to read materials, the second was to practice what was taught in class and the third one focused on the permanent recall of basic concepts.

DISCUSSION

English Language Learning Experiences of ALS Beneficiaries Within the Confines of Jail Facility

The English language learning experiences of beneficiaries of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) within jail facilities reveal profound themes. The first theme is a *strong desire for education*, as Rico (2023) has pointed out, this can be attributed to considerations of the missed opportunities for advancement, as many of the participants are aware of the constraints resulting from their past experiences. For example, some of the inmates regret having dropped out of school due to various reasons such as lack of financial support and other necessary needs to stay in school pointing out the pillars of education importance in case they are given the chance to correct this mistake.

The second theme is *supportive teachers and peers*. Individualized learning and the specific roles that teachers play

are most important in these contexts because some inmates mention how grateful they are to have specific help for themselves. Cartoneros (2023) points out that teachers in ALS settings are most useful for modifying their instructive approaches to suit students' learning needs, which leads to their active participation and improved performance. This is especially important because most of the inmates studied in different schools before being incarcerated and for different years, so their learning needs are quite distinct from one another's (Smith & Johnson, 2019).

The third theme is *practical pedagogical methods*, involving such practices as the use of practical activities and group work to help achieve participation of the inmates learning English. According to Brown (2014), interaction also plays a crucial role in the learning process pointing out that communicative activities bring about the most appropriate effects on language performance. This is a way not only to practice language in groups or to do role-plays but also to provide support and produce a kind of community within the learners, which is essential for learners who often study in correctional facilities.

The fourth theme is *progressive English proficiency*. Hence the major benefit of participating in English language programs is the improvement of self-confidence and fluency in this area. Wei (2022) lays out how through translanguaging, the learner is then given a voice within the classroom because their multiple linguistic selves are recognized, which is an essential factor to consider when learners are in jail – they are likely to feel invisible. This kind of empowerment results in improving inmates' self-esteem so that they can easily speak and write English fluently as they want.

The fifth theme is inadequate learning resources, this theme is made up of a shortage of learning materials, unfavorable learning conditions, disruption while studying, inadequate reading materials, and inadequate technology. All these aspects enhance the challenges of the inmates to master the English language. One major problem is the scarcity of performance and development dictionaries, references, and learning-related items. In a lot of prisons, there are no provisions for language development, making it difficult for inmates to get some of the most basic materials that can be used in building new words and in comprehension generally. A report from HMIP and Ofsted (2022) reported that there are no sufficient reading resources available in prisoner learning and teaching environments, and most educators possess no adequate learning resources to teach the learners. This lack of resources helps to restrict inmate learning and development of language and communication in the curriculum as suggested by the (GOV.UK, 2022).

The sixth theme is *poor English background*. This is typical in ALS learners who despite the improvement exhibited in their compositions invariably performed poorly in grammar and



vocabulary, or for that matter frequently employed cohesive devices incorrectly (Santiago & Neri, 2024). This suggests that the low investment in the development of the writing skills that support the construction of intelligent sentences is the reason the students have poor skills in writing coherent sentences that can capture and convey ideas.

Lastly, the seventh theme is *English learning barriers*. These barriers include class timetable restrictions, reduced face-to-face contact, reliance on modular teaching, parenting and student roles, and disturbances. Another control that has been observed in correctional institution classrooms is the compact school calendar which restricts the hours in a day that a language learning activity can take. Trained instructors are often neglected, resulting in ineffective educational interaction which does not exist for the SEALs (Gunn, 2019).

Coping Strategies on Language-related Challenges of ALS Beneficiaries Within the Confines of Jail Facility

The first theme *active self-learning activities*, emerges as a vital approach, enabling individuals to navigate the limitations of their environment effectively. As has already been mentioned, one of the main ways of dealing with the effects of social support in ALS beneficiaries is continuing self-education and turning to peers. Anduyan (2021) also remarks that adopting and integrating the use of blended learning modules can improve the self-efficacy of students, especially in settings where access to complex technologies is inconceivable. They work together to study by coming up with study groups common among the inmates they work with. Besides, it assists in the compensation of the lack of interactive stuff and such a procedure fortifies a feeling of people's togetherness, which is invariably precious in isolation situations such as imprisonment.

The second theme is *socialized learning activities*. One of the major techniques is to get in touch with peers with the possibility of gaining an explanation. Students in jail have group study as a means through which they can learn concepts in language and seek clarification from fellow members. Such peer interaction is very vital with a view to promoting a cooperative environment in learning that is enhanced by reciprocity (Winterowd, Morgan & Ferrell, 2001). Other studies show that such interactions improve the learnability of structures of language while also improving the inmate's fellowship which is extremely important for their welfare (Schweikert-Cattin & Taylor 2000).

The Third theme is *workable resource utilization*, which primarily includes several methods used by the inmates to counter the language barriers they face. Such options are picking available books, simple reading modules, getting non-English-based materials, asking teachers for other options, flashcards, and ALS. ALS beneficiaries who are in jail are known to be strong and very resilient in society. They choose and use resources within their disposal to improve their language

proficiency. One of them is to relate to any books available to the survivor. When reading, people get acquainted with new words, and enhance their literacy and analytical abilities (Smith and Jones, 2023).

Finally, the fourth theme *securing the teacher's guidance* emphasizes the role of a teacher in managing the aspects of language that are a concern of inmates. As analytical strategies, the intention to engage in teacher-led discussions, the intention to ask the teacher for additional explanations concerning English lessons, and the intention to ask the teacher for some comments concerning learning activities and accomplishments can be viewed as essential for boosting learning achievements. Another strategy practiced by the beneficiaries of ALS is asking the teachers to assess their learning performance. Evaluation feedback represents a critical activity in the process of self-organization and improvement, which helps inmates determine their accomplishments and deficits (Nguyen & Tran, 2022).

Similarities and Differences in English Language Learning Experiences and Coping Strategies on Language-related Challenges of ALS Beneficiaries Within the Confines of Jail Facility

English language learning experiences. The theme of a *strong desire for education* is evident as all three cases (A, C, and D) highlighted their ambition to further their education and secure better jobs. Something as basic as the ability to speak English was seen as one way of accomplishing these objectives, and those could range from finishing school to getting a job. This discovery accords with another study, which underscores the role of language in determining social mobility as well as access to existing and emerging economic opportunities (Crystal, 2003).

The theme of *supportive teachers and peers* was further supported by the findings that all three cases (A, C, and D) opined that they had received encouragement and less rigid teaching from ALS than in the earlier school system. They perceived that ALS was more flexible and flexible, and teachers were more compassionate to students. As with any learning system, one of the main strengths of ALS is its highly adaptable teaching methodology. The beneficiaries stated that their teachers had become more approachable in terms of using instructional or facilitation methods that would address individual needs, and thus uncompromising as far as formal schooling was concerned. Kamrath and Gregg (2018) support the opinion that correctional educators who address each learner individually promote better learning and achievement of goals among prisoners despite all the difficulties they may encounter. This flexibility is important because inmates may come from different schooling levels and have different ways of learning, as Smith and Johnson (2019) pointed out learning should be individualized for participants.



The theme of *practical pedagogical methods* is well illustrated in that all five participants (A, B, C, D, and E) revealed their clear preference for the ALS teaching method over traditional conscious and rigid education systems. This corresponds with Kendall & Hopkins (2018) whereby pointed out that in prison education, peer grouping is more receptive, and as such students are encouraged to learn. This flexibility makes it possible for teachers to deliver the curriculum and learning activities according to every student's requirement, which is very essential in correctional education because learners encounter multiple barriers (Lockard and Rankins-Robertson, 2018).

The theme of *progressive English proficiency* is relevant as in all the four cases (A, B, C, and D) interviewed, there was an increased confidence while learning English as they continued with their training. This result supports other studies that have affirmed the psychological benefits of learning languages. Every language practice can improve a person's self-esteem, develop communication, and create opportunities (Gardner, 2006). This is also in concordance with the study by Montoya (2024) which reported that correctional education strengthens self-image and interpersonal communication among prisoners. The acquisition of new language knowledge is generally accompanied by positive changes in learners' perceptions of the self, letting them communicate better with their equals and teachers (Evans, 2024). The theme of *progressive English proficiency* is relevant as in all the four cases (A, B, C, and D) interviewed, there was an increased confidence while learning English as they continued with their training. This result supports other studies that have affirmed the psychological benefits of learning languages. Every language practice can improve a person's self-esteem, develop communication, and create opportunities (Gardner, 2006). This is also in concordance with the study by Montoya (2024) which reported that correctional education strengthens self-image and interpersonal communication among prisoners. The acquisition of new language knowledge is generally accompanied by positive changes in learners' perceptions of the self, letting them communicate better with their equals and teachers (Evans, 2024).

The theme of *inadequate learning resources* has shown that all participants acknowledged the limitations resulting from the prison setting, where there is frequently an inadequate number of educational materials. Santiago and Neri's (2024) study calls for better attention to applying cohesive devices in writing assignments stating that ALS learners face challenges applying them because they lack enough instructional material.

The theme of *poor English background* is valid as presented in the four cases (B, C, D, and E) — all claimed that their low level of education led to more difficulty in coping with literacy and foundational learning. Studies show that anyone who has achieved only certain grade levels will experience serious difficulties in building literacy capabilities. This aligns with the

study of Labarrete (2019) stated that reading comprehension achievement as well as the study skills competencies of ALS clientele determined that the participants favored the Literal Comprehension aspect but deferred on the Inferential and Evaluative duty. This finding emphasizes the need for special efforts to enhance literacy skills among prisoners.

The theme of *English learning barriers* described how all four cases demonstrated learning challenges resulting from the lack of education. Cabalfin, et al. (2024) found in their research that ALS learners in correctional facilities have poor literacy levels owing to poor primary education before being incarcerated. Such failures result in a huge difficulty in learning because before an inmate can grapple with enhanced language content s/he has to overcome these fundamental deficits.

Coping strategies on Language-related challenges. The theme of *workable resource utilization* is especially significant, as all four of the discussed cases (B, C, D, and E) used any available resources to the fullest to provide for more effective English learning. Thus, the excitement in Case 3 can be analyzed as greater when compared with the other cases, both in terms of resourcefulness and creativity, as Pattern A turned out to be essentially the same in all cases, and the distinctions in the coping strategies used by the participants exist. The four cases disclosed that all were able to optimize the available resources in the best way possible. This supports Konyango's (2011) studies on resource utilization, especially in institutionalized learning. As this occurs in correctional environments where access to learning materials is limited in many ways, learners have to find creative uses for the available resources. For instance, the participants may use objects that are within their vicinity or look for unstructured learning activities to improve their language.

The theme of *socialized learning activities* is particularly important, all the participants (A, B, C, and D) noted that group discussions are helpful to develop confidence, self-esteem, communication, and interaction skills with other people. On the other hand, Case 5 preferred using recordings and pictures to help with understanding because he has a disability in listening. Such group discussions came out as one of the most effective ways through which the participants coped with the situations. This accords with the survey by Galang et al. (2023), who noted that CVS students share a common unity with their fellow ALS students. Talking in the group will enable learners to articulate what they have understood in a group discussion thus enhancing their understanding and language skills. Learning in groups has a positive effect on confidence and turning into an active performer, which is essential in language learning (Bucanegra et al., 2020).

The theme of *obtaining teacher's guidance* is especially important because all four cases (A, B, C, and D) mentioned the



help of teachers in overcoming language difficulties. This was an addition to sharing actual experiences with fellow learners who created a sense of togetherness during learning since they were all in the same boat without clear guidance. On the other hand, Case 5 was taught at a slow rate focusing on his needs under the theme that education should be personal. This shows that appreciation of teacher support in all cases is in line with Mosimege and Winnaar (2021) who posit that instructional teaching practices have a big influence on the learners' performance. But in correctional settings, where access to basic learning tools may be scarce, the part of educators is magnified. Described below is how participants opined their instructors in providing direction on the sophisticated process of learning English besides encouraging a favorable environment for language learning.

The theme of *active and regular self-learning methods* is especially important because in all five cases (A, B, C, D, and E), they wrote, improved their vocabulary and grammar by performing class exercises, and in their turn at the stations, they used them independently. They kept on revising simple English ideas to ensure that they continued to remember how the English language was learned. Using self-learning methods is consistent with Rathiga (2017) wherein the author pointed out that the use of learning through mobile applications provides effective enhancement in language learning. As for the inhabitants of jail facilities within the scope of the implementation of the ALS program, the possibility of independent study helps to consolidate knowledge of basic language skills.

IMPLICATION FOR PRACTICE

The results of this study concerning ALS learners in a jail setting have a few important implications for practice specific to the beneficiaries of ALS and generally to learners in marginalized and restrictive learning environments. First, due to great variations in learners' backgrounds from illiteracy to learning disabilities, the authors highlighted the need to use a flexible and learner-centered approach to teaching. Prospective teachers in the ALS program should ensure the use of individual learning instruction, teaching methods that involve student differentiation, and teaching learning materials that will require contextual learning and teaching. Further, the consistent problem of access to education materials always being a concern in the jail environment underscores the problem area of resources. Educational planners must ensure that sufficient learning/teaching aids like books, flashcards, and multimedia are made available while the question of how to incorporate the use of technology resources like computer or audiovisual or even restricted use of multimedia in teaching and learning is another important consideration considering the learners with e disabled. The engagement and motivation of ALS learners are also attributed to the teacher's involvement in the program. Incorporation of professional development needs in ALS

educators should call for acquisitions in the capacity to respond to the needs of diverse learners who may have language packs or learning disabilities.

RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Additional studies on the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in jail facilities should focus on critical research questions to enhance program delivery. Prospective cohort studies are recommended to assess the impact of ALS participation on employment, education, and social rehabilitation outcomes for learners. Comparative studies across different jail facilities—both urban and rural—could reveal variations in program effectiveness and resource availability. Research should also explore the perspectives of ALS educators in jail settings to inform better support systems for teachers. Lastly, integrating mixed-methods approaches that combine quantitative assessments with qualitative insights will provide a comprehensive understanding of ALS's effects, ultimately supporting policy and practice improvements.

CONCLUSION

The study emphasizes the importance of making the Alternative Learning System (ALS) accessible and convenient for marginalized learners, especially in comparison to traditional education. It challenges the notion that restrictive environments like jail hinder learning due to inadequate resources and poor literacy skills. The findings highlight how self-learning procedures, regular use of solutions, and supportive relationships within the ALS framework can significantly impact education in severe conditions. Additionally, the research illustrates that ALS participants view education not just as literacy acquisition but as a means for personal change, agency, and social reintegration. Overall, the study advocates for enhancing ALS programs in jail facilities by providing better tools, integrating teaching techniques, and removing barriers to learning to promote educational equity and transformative outcomes for incarcerated individuals.

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