



DEVIATIONS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES (LSWR) IN FRENCH TRANSLATIONS ACROSS INDIA

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Abstract: In the globalised world today, foreign language acquisition is a significant skill of career upgradation. Acquiring any new language has various challenges, as the target language is generally learnt with deeply rooted native language or mother tongue. While translating, students face difficulties due to linguistic complexities like idioms and technical terms, cultural gaps involving unfamiliar contexts, references, and lexical challenges stemming from polysemantic words and a lack of specialized vocabulary in the target language. Students often struggle with understanding and accurately transferring the original text's nuanced meaning and cultural subtleties, especially in technical or literary content.

This study explores the challenges in translation and the factors that influence the process from the perspective of foreign language students at undergraduate level. It further examines the difficulties learners face when translating into French as a foreign language focusing upon the four basic skills namely listening, speaking, writing, and reading. Employing a mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative), the analysis draws on descriptive statistics of findings from the individual student.

Based on these findings, the study proposes pedagogical approaches to strengthen translation competence and advocates the integration of modern technologies into academic practice.

Keywords: Translation, French as a foreign language, Listening comprehension, Writing difficulties, Communication barriers

INTRODUCTION

With the rapid pace of globalization, the significance of learning foreign languages has become increasingly clear, especially as global economies grow more interconnected. For individuals, acquiring language skills opens the door to broader and more fulfilling career opportunities. For example, professionals engaged in international trade often need to communicate and negotiate with clients from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, where strong language proficiency proves essential. In today's world, many multinational corporations require employees to demonstrate fluency in foreign languages to operate effectively on a global stage. Moreover, mastering a foreign language not only supports professional success but also deepens one's understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity through meaningful exchange.

Learning a new language is often a lengthy journey that presents learners with numerous challenges. Research and practical experiences highlight that these difficulties may arise from both academic and non-academic factors. Language learning is a dynamic process that involves multiple skills: speaking, reading, writing, and listening. For many students in foreign language programs, mastering these skills requires more than classroom instruction; it demands practice, confidence, and support systems that address individual learning needs. While some students adapt quickly, others face significant difficulties that affect their academic performance and self-esteem. To become an effective communicator, one needs competence in all four areas. These skills allow learners to create situations where they can exchange genuine information, demonstrate their learning, and, most importantly, build confidence. Broadly, the four skills are categorized into two types: receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing). These skills are acquired in a natural sequence: listening comes first, followed by speaking, then reading, and finally writing. For this reason, they are often referred to as the LSRW method of learning. The primary purpose of learning any language is to communicate effectively, and meaningful communication is impossible without opportunities to practice it.

This study focuses on the challenges encountered by undergraduate students in learning French as a foreign language. It explores their struggles in speaking, reading, writing, and listening. An online survey was conducted to collect student feedback, and its results were analysed to highlight patterns of difficulty. The final section offers recommendations to support students through improved pedagogy, technology integration, and peer mentoring.

METHODS

A quantitative research design was adopted to analyse patterns of deviation in listening, speaking, writing, and reading components of French as a Foreign Language. The target population comprised 113 undergraduate students enrolled in French language programs at Amity University Mumbai. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that all respondents had completed at least one year of formal French instruction. Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire designed in Google Forms. The survey included both closed-ended and open-ended questions to gather quantitative and qualitative insights. The questionnaire was divided into sections corresponding to LSWR components, focusing on translation accuracy, comprehension, and usage deviations. Ethical considerations were maintained, ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality of responses. Data was collected over a period of two weeks through online circulation via institutional channels. Qualitative responses were subjected to thematic analysis to identify common linguistic patterns and translation errors. Findings were triangulated with theoretical frameworks in French for Specific Purposes to draw pedagogical implications for curriculum enhancement.

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FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Out of 113 students participated in the survey at Amity University Mumbai, 57.5% students were from semester 3.

Table 1.1 Total number of students participated

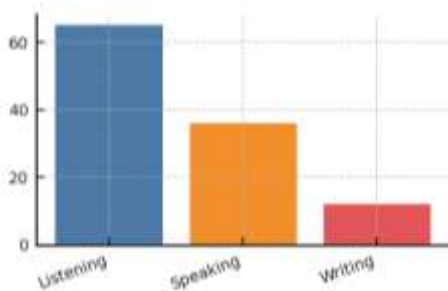
Response	Number of Students
3	67
1	16
5	15
7	15
Total	113

1.1 Q. Which is most difficult skill to learn in French as a foreign language?

Table 1.2: Response to LSWR for learning French as a foreign language.

Response	Number of Students
Listening	65
Speaking	36
Writing	12
Reading	0
Total	113

Figure 1.1: The most difficult skill to learn in French as a foreign language

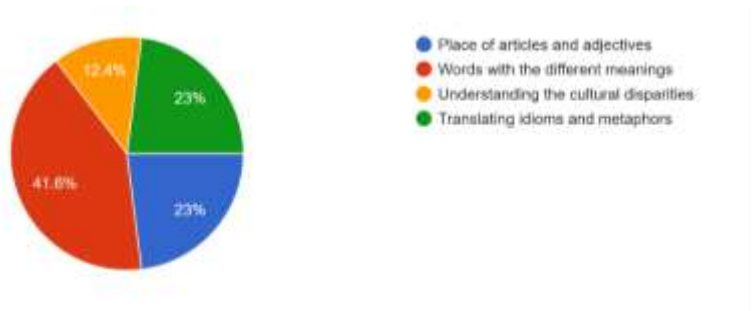


Out of 113 students, the majority (65 or 57.5%) indicated 'Listening'. This response pattern offers clear direction for targeted pedagogical adjustments. No student opted for reading as a difficulty out of 4 skills. 67.8% students opted for yes as an option on the question: Do you translate sentences of French in your mother tongue while listening, speaking, reading or writing?

Linguistic challenges in translation arise from the structural and cultural differences between languages. Variations in grammar and sentence construction make it difficult to convey complex ideas while preserving the original meaning. Ambiguity and words with multiple meanings further complicate translation, as context plays a key role in determining accuracy. Additionally, some words or expressions may have no direct equivalents in the target language, leading to partial or approximate translations. Idioms and collocations pose another challenge since they are deeply rooted in culture and cannot be translated literally. Overcoming these linguistic barriers requires not only linguistic proficiency but also cultural and contextual understanding.

1.2 Q. Which part is most difficult to translate sentences of French in your mother tongue while listening, speaking, reading or writing?

Figure 1.2: Which part is most difficult to translate sentences of French?



Translation in a foreign language from your mother tongue involves several challenges, including the correct placement of articles and adjectives, which often differ in order and agreement from one language to another. Words that carry different meanings or connotations across languages can lead to confusion or mistranslation if not carefully interpreted. Understanding cultural disparities is equally important, as language reflects social values, customs, and attitudes that may not have direct equivalents in another culture. Moreover, translating idioms and metaphors requires more than literal conversion—it demands a grasp of their figurative meanings to convey the same emotion or message in the target language. These aspects make translation a skill that combines linguistic accuracy with cultural sensitivity. 47/113 students surveyed found translating words with the different meanings challenging.

SPEAKING CHALLENGES

Speaking is often the most challenging skill for students learning a foreign language. Many report feelings of anxiety and fear of making mistakes in front of peers or teachers. Even when they know the correct words, hesitation and lack of fluency create barriers to effective communication. Pronunciation is another obstacle, particularly when students are not familiar with the phonetic system of the target language.

Some students rely too heavily on translation from their native language, which interrupts the flow of conversation. Others lack vocabulary, making it difficult for them to express ideas spontaneously. In group discussions, stronger speakers often dominate, while weaker students remain silent, reinforcing a cycle of low participation and low confidence.

The survey revealed that 65% of students feel nervous when asked to speak in class, and 48% admitted that they avoid volunteering answers even when they know them. This shows that speaking difficulties are not merely about knowledge but also about psychological barriers such as fear of judgment and lack of self-assurance.

The emotions influence language learning by either facilitating or hindering input processing. High oral anxiety raises the “affective filter,” limiting learners’ ability to absorb linguistic information and reducing overall language achievement. Similarly, research suggests that anxiety in language learning is transferable across skills. This means that anxiety affecting one skill, such as speaking, can also influence others like listening or writing. Learners experiencing anxiety may over-focus on understanding input, leading to distraction and weaker comprehension. Since individuals differ in their abilities, emotions, and strategies, anxiety manifests uniquely in each learner. It arises from the interaction between personal traits and the learning environment, ultimately influencing learning outcomes. From a cognitive view, language learning involves comprehension and application, not mere memorization. Anxiety disrupts these cognitive processes, hindering the reception, processing, and retention of linguistic information. Overall, affective factors exert a broad and interconnected influence on second language learning.

Out of 113 students surveyed, 67.8% thought that biggest hurdle in speaking is pronunciations. Speaking French poses significant challenges for many learners, especially when it comes to pronunciation. The French language contains sounds that do not exist in many other languages, such as the nasal vowels and the subtle differences between words like beau, bon and bonne. Learners often struggle with silent letters, liaison, and the rhythmic flow of speech, which differ greatly from English patterns. Mispronouncing even a single sound can change the meaning of a word, making clear communication difficult. Additionally, the French ‘r’ and vowel combinations require precise mouth movements, which take time and practice to master. As a result, pronunciation becomes one of the main obstacles to gaining confidence in spoken French.

Student Testimony (Speaking)

Shreya Gupta (Semester 5 Mass Media Communication Student)

“When my teacher asks me to speak in French, I freeze. I know the words but can’t say them, afraid of making pronouncing it wrong. In French even though the script is same as English the phonetiques are completely different. I think speaking in smaller groups would make me feel more comfortable and confident.”

READING CHALLENGES

Reading in a foreign language presents unique challenges for students. Unlike speaking, where communication is immediate, reading requires a sustained effort to decode text, understand vocabulary, and grasp meaning within a cultural context. For many learners, the main obstacles are:

Limited Vocabulary: Students often cannot understand academic or literary texts because they lack sufficient vocabulary. Limited vocabulary is a common challenge for foreign language students learning French. A restricted range of words often makes it difficult for learners to express their thoughts clearly and accurately. Students may understand basic conversations but struggle with complex topics or abstract ideas due to a lack of appropriate vocabulary. This limitation can also affect other language skills, such as reading comprehension, writing fluency, and listening ability, as learners may fail to recognize or recall certain words in context. Moreover, limited vocabulary can lead to hesitation, repetition, or reliance on translation from the native language. To overcome this, consistent

practice, exposure to authentic materials, and active vocabulary-building strategies are essential for developing confidence and fluency in French communication.

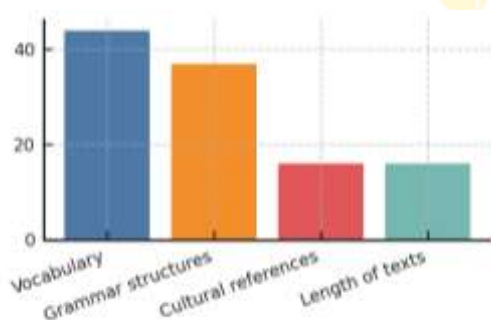
Complex Grammar Structures: Long sentences with subordinate clauses are difficult to interpret. Complex grammar structures in French present a major challenge for foreign language learners. The language includes intricate rules for verb conjugations, gender agreements, and tenses such as the subjunctif and plus-que-parfait for semester 7 students, which have no direct equivalents in many other languages. Learners often struggle with choosing the correct verb forms, adjective agreements, and word order, especially in written expression. These grammatical complexities can lead to confusion and errors, making it difficult to construct accurate and fluent sentences. Mastering French grammar therefore requires consistent practice, attention to detail, and a strong understanding of grammatical patterns and exceptions.

Slow Reading Speed: Students read word by word, translating into their native language, which makes comprehension slow and tiring.

Lack of Contextual Knowledge: Many texts include cultural references that students are unfamiliar with, reducing overall comprehension. Words and phrases can have different meanings depending on the situation, tone, or cultural background. Without understanding the full context, a translator may choose incorrect words or expressions, leading to loss of meaning or misunderstanding. Context also includes familiarity with cultural references, idioms, and social norms that shape how language is used. Therefore, accurate translation in French requires not only linguistic skills but also a deep awareness of the context in which the original message was created.

1.3 Q. What makes reading difficult for you?

Figure 1.3: What makes reading difficult for you? Vocabulary, Grammar structure, Cultural references pr Length of texts?



The survey showed that 38.9% of students struggle with lack of vocabulary, while 32.7% admitted to avoiding long passages because they find grammar overwhelming. Another 14.2% reported that they rarely understand the cultural references, which limits their exposure to the language.

A lack of vocabulary poses a significant challenge when translating French as a foreign language. Limited word knowledge restricts the translator's ability to find accurate or nuanced equivalents for expressions in the target language. As a result, translations may lose their original tone and meaning. Expanding one's vocabulary through regular reading, listening, and exposure to authentic French materials is essential for producing clear, accurate, and natural translations. 54.6% students answered to 'occasionally' for the question 'How often do you read texts in the French language outside of class?' Teachers often note that students rely too heavily on online translation tools, which gives them a literal but not nuanced understanding of the text resulting in missing of the deeper meaning or style present in the material.

Student Testimony (Reading)

Vishwa Jadhav (Computer Science Engineering Student Semester 3)

"Whenever we are given a passage to read in French, especially during viva assessment, I spend so much time understanding that I lose the meaning of the whole paragraph. Sometimes, I understand the individual words but not the sentence. For example, when reading a story, I can identify names and places, but I miss the humour or cultural references. If I had more practice with short, simple texts before moving to longer ones, I think my confidence would improve."

WRITING CHALLENGES

Writing is a skill that combines vocabulary, grammar, and organization of ideas. Many students find it the hardest area of language learning because it requires both accuracy and creativity. Unlike speaking, mistakes in writing are more visible and permanent, which makes students feel pressure to "write perfectly."

The main challenges identified in the survey and class observations include:

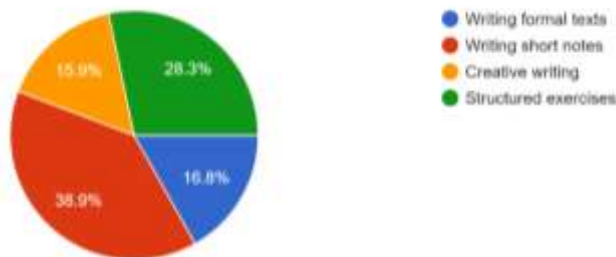
Grammar and Syntax Errors: Students often confuse verb conjugations, tenses, and gender agreements. The language has strict rules for gender agreement, verb conjugation, and sentence structure, which can be confusing for non-native speakers. Mistakes often occur in using the correct tense, matching adjectives with nouns, or placing words in the right order. These errors can change the meaning of a sentence or make it sound unnatural. To avoid such mistakes, learners need consistent practice, a solid understanding of grammar rules, and careful proofreading while writing in French. They often get repetition of simple words instead of using varied expressions.

Organizing ideas: Students often struggle to structure essays, paragraphs, and arguments in a clear and logical order, especially when the writing conventions differ from their native language. They may find it difficult to use appropriate connectors leading to disorganized or unclear writing. This lack of structure can affect the overall coherence and impact of their work. Developing effective writing organization requires practice in outlining, using linking words, and understanding the rhetorical patterns of the target language. Moreover, influence of Native Language while direct translation from the mother tongue leads to awkward sentence structures.

Spelling: Silent letters and accents in French or irregular spelling in English often confuse learners. It plays a crucial role in learning French writing, as it directly affects comprehension. French spelling is often challenging because many letters are silent, and pronunciation does not always match the written form. Learners frequently confuse similar-sounding words or overlook accent marks, which can change a word's meaning entirely. Mastering correct spelling helps students build confidence, improve grammar awareness, and communicate ideas more effectively. Regular writing practice, reading, and attention to accent usage are essential for developing strong spelling skills in French.

1.4 Q. Which part of writing is difficult for you? Writing formal texts, Writing short notes, Creative writing or Structured exercises?

Figure 1.4: Most difficult part in writing



Out of 113 students, the majority (44 or 38.9%) indicated 'Writing short notes'. Writing appears to be impacted by structural and grammatical concerns, suggesting a need for more guided writing exercises. The survey revealed that 28.3% of students struggle with grammar in writing, while 15.9 % find it difficult to organize ideas into coherent paragraphs. Some also admitted that they copy phrases directly from online sources, which prevents them from developing original writing skills. While students can produce simple sentences, they often avoid complex structures for fear of making mistakes. This prevents them from progressing to higher levels of proficiency.

Student Testimony (Writing)

Harshil Panchal (Aeronautical Engineering Student Semester 7)

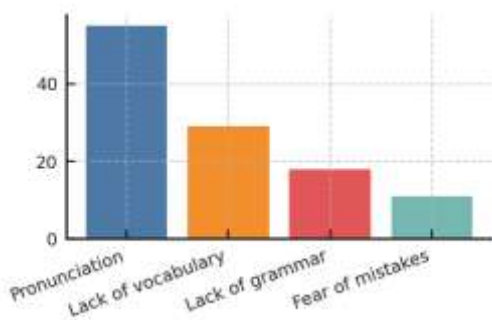
"I enjoy expressing my ideas, but writing in French often makes me feel confused. I'm never sure if my verb forms are correct, and I frequently forget to use the right gender. When I wrote an essay, I noticed that most of my adjective agreements were incorrect. I believe receiving more feedback on my drafts before submission would help me improve gradually."

LISTENING CHALLENGES

Listening is one of the most complex skills for foreign language learners. Unlike reading, where students can pause and reread, listening happens in real time, leaving little room for reflection. Many students feel discouraged because they cannot keep up with the speed of native speakers.

1.5 Q. What is your biggest hurdle in speaking?

Figure 1.4 What is your biggest hurdle in speaking? Pronunciation, Lack of vocabulary, Lack of grammar, Fear of mistakes?



The main listening challenges include:

Native speakers often talk quickly, making it hard for students to identify words. When learning French, students often face significant listening challenges due to the nature of the language and the way native speakers communicate. Fast speech is one of the biggest difficulties that native French speakers tend to talk rapidly, linking words smoothly, which makes it hard for learners to distinguish individual words or expressions.

Accents and pronunciation add another layer of complexity; French is spoken differently across regions such as Paris, Marseille, Quebec, and Belgium, each with unique sounds, intonations, and rhythms that can confuse learners who are used to a standard accent. Connected speech also poses a challenge, as French frequently uses liaison and elision, where sounds merge or drop (for example, "je t'aime" sounding like "j't'aime"), making it difficult for students to recognize familiar words. Different regional or international accents confuse learners.

Finally, anxiety during listening tasks or exams can heighten stress, reducing concentration and comprehension. Learners may miss key details or lose confidence when they cannot immediately understand spoken French, reinforcing their listening difficulties.

1.6 Q. Do you practice listening outside class (radio, podcasts, films, songs)?

Table 1.3: Number of students practicing outside the class

Response	Number of Students
Yes	61
No	52
Total	113

About 54% of learners use external resources such as radio, podcasts, films, and songs to support their French learning, while 46% admitted that they do not feel connected to the language. While 38.9% students devote approximately 2 hours per week studying French, 38.1% opted the option 'none'. Teachers observe that students who do not practice listening outside the classroom have the slowest progress. Exposure and habit play a key role in developing listening skills.

Student Testimony (Listening)

Daanish Shaikh (Computer Science Engineering Student, Semester 3)

"When I listen to French audio, I usually catch only the first few words before losing track. The speakers talk so quickly that I can't separate the words. In class, I often panic knowing there will be questions afterward and fear not understanding anything. I couldn't answer the questions after listening to the dialogue. But when I later read the transcript, I realized I knew most of the words. I think practicing with slower recordings first would really help me improve."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the survey results, student feedback, and classroom observations, several recommendations can be proposed to enhance language learning outcomes. These suggestions are designed to assist both students who face difficulties and those who wish to engage in more advanced learning experiences.

1.5.1 For Speaking Skills

To help students improve their speaking skills in French, teachers can create a supportive and interactive learning environment. Encouraging small group discussions or pair work allows learners to speak more freely without the pressure of addressing the entire class. Activities such as role-plays and debates can simulate real-life situations, helping students practice spontaneous communication. The use of language labs or recording tools enables learners to listen to their own speech, identify errors, and self-correct. Additionally, providing constructive and positive feedback reduces the fear of making mistakes, boosts confidence, and motivates students to participate more actively in speaking tasks.

1.5.2 For Reading Skills

To enhance students' reading skills in French, it is essential to use a structured and engaging approach. Introducing graded texts that gradually increase in difficulty helps learners build confidence and vocabulary step by step. Teaching effective reading strategies, such as skimming for overall understanding and scanning for specific details, allows students to read with purpose. Providing background information on cultural references also supports comprehension by giving context to unfamiliar ideas. Additionally, encouraging students to explore authentic materials like newspapers, blogs, and short stories outside the classroom promotes independent learning and exposes them to the natural flow of the language.

1.5.3 For Writing Skills

To strengthen students' writing skills in French, teachers can adopt a gradual and supportive approach. Offering step-by-step writing tasks, beginning with simple sentences and progressing to more complex essays, helps learners build confidence and structure their ideas effectively. Allowing students to revise their drafts after receiving feedback encourages improvement through reflection and correction. Peer review sessions promote collaboration, enabling students to learn from each other's strengths and mistakes. Incorporating creative writing activities, such as short stories or journal entries, also makes writing more engaging and less intimidating, fostering both creativity and linguistic accuracy.

1.5.4 For Listening Skills

To improve students' listening comprehension in French, a gradual and consistent approach can be highly effective. Starting with slower audio materials helps learners recognize sounds and words more easily before progressing to faster, authentic recordings. Using subtitled videos in the beginning can aid understanding, and gradually removing subtitles builds confidence and independence. Exposing students to different accents through films, songs, and podcasts enhances their ability to understand diverse speakers and real-world conversations. Encouraging short, daily listening practice of just 10 to 15 minutes outside the classroom helps reinforce learning, improve pronunciation, and develop stronger listening habits over time.

1.5.5 General Support

To create a more inclusive and effective learning environment, several supportive strategies can be implemented. Establishing a mentor-mentee program allows stronger students to assist their peers, fostering collaboration and confidence. Remedial classes can provide personalized guidance to those who need additional help in mastering difficult concepts. Incorporating gamification tools such as Kahoot, Quizizz.com and live worksheets make learning interactive and enjoyable, helping students retain information through play and software applications. Above all, teachers should adopt a student-centered approach that balances theoretical understanding with practical application, ensuring that every learner is actively engaged and supported in their language development. Watching TV shows with subtitles helps them connect spoken and written French, improving their understanding.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the challenges faced by undergraduate students in learning foreign languages, with a particular focus on French. An analysis of survey data, classroom observations, and student testimonies reveals that mastering a language goes beyond memorizing grammar rules or vocabulary. It involves building confidence, adopting effective learning strategies, and developing consistent habits that promote meaningful and successful communication. The survey responses offered clear insights into students' needs, showing that most learners face significant challenges in listening and speaking, while many also experience difficulties with reading and writing. Notably, students demonstrated awareness of the support they require, such as additional classes, peer mentoring, and access to online learning resources. This indicates that learners are proactive and capable of identifying their own needs when provided with the opportunity to express them.

Across the four key skills (speaking, reading, writing, and listening): students face distinct but interconnected challenges. Speaking difficulties often stem from fear of making mistakes or lack of fluency. Reading problems are related to limited vocabulary, complex

grammar, and unfamiliar cultural references. Writing challenges include grammar errors, spelling issues, and poor organization of ideas. Listening difficulties are magnified by fast speech, accents, and anxiety during comprehension tasks. Together, these obstacles reveal the complex nature of language acquisition and the need for tailored pedagogical approaches. Teachers must diversify their methods by integrating role-plays, debates, graded readings, step-by-step writing tasks, and authentic listening materials. Universities should support these efforts by offering remedial classes, mentor-mentee systems, and technology-based learning tools.

Another significant insight from this study is the profound impact of peer support in language acquisition. Students tend to feel more at ease practicing with their peers than with instructors, underscoring the value of strengthening collaborative and interactive learning environments. In this context, language learning evolves beyond a purely academic exercise into a shared social process like patience and mutual understanding among learners.

Furthermore, this research highlighted that language learning is deeply intertwined with personal development. Students who confront their fear of speaking, challenge themselves to read more complex texts, or engage in consistent listening practice are not merely refining their linguistic abilities.

Ultimately, the findings reaffirm that foreign language learning is both a demanding and transformative journey. The obstacles students encounter, whether in speaking, reading, writing, or listening while translating is genuine and require thoughtful, innovative interventions. Yet, when approached with proper support, these challenges become catalysts for growth. Through a blend of effective pedagogy, institutional backing, peer collaboration, and intrinsic motivation, universities can enable students not only to master linguistic forms but also to communicate authentically in real-world contexts. In doing so, education achieves its higher purpose, not merely transmitting language knowledge, but empowering individuals to connect in an increasingly multilingual world.

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