LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND SOFT SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN MOROCCAN HIGHER EDUCATION

NADIR AKRACHI & MOHAMED EL KADI
University Mohamed Premier, Oujda, Morocco

ABSTRACT

This article explores the role of language proficiency, with particular attention to English and French, in shaping the development of communication and presentation abilities among university students in Morocco. As higher education institutions in Morocco experience significant linguistic transformation, especially through the growing adoption of English as a medium of instruction in scientific and technical fields, increasing concern has emerged regarding students' preparedness to demonstrate essential transferable competencies. These competencies include oral communication, academic writing, collaborative work, and professional presentation. Grounded in sociolinguistic perspectives, models of transferable competency development, and empirical research conducted within North African higher education contexts, this study contends that language proficiency constitutes a central factor that either enables or constrains students' ability to master key competencies required in contemporary academic and professional environments. The article introduces three analytical frameworks: the Linguistic and Communication Skills Interaction Model, the Bilingual Communication Competency Framework, and the Relationship between Academic Achievement and Language Proficiency. These frameworks are supported by statistical tables that highlight existing challenges, patterns of correlation, and instructional limitations. The findings indicate that students who demonstrate limited proficiency in English or French frequently encounter difficulties in public speaking, display reduced levels of confidence, tend to withdraw from classroom engagement, and experience challenges during employment interviews. The article concludes by proposing pedagogical recommendations that emphasize the integration of structured language development initiatives within university curricula in order to support Morocco's ongoing alignment with international academic and professional standards.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Language proficiency has become widely acknowledged as a fundamental determinant of students' academic achievement and professional advancement, particularly within multilingual societies such as Morocco. The Moroccan educational system operates within a complex linguistic environment in which Arabic, French, and increasingly English interact to shape access to knowledge, employment opportunities, and social mobility. Within this evolving landscape, Moroccan universities are progressively adopting English as a medium of instruction, particularly in scientific, technological, and engineering disciplines. Nevertheless, this linguistic transition introduces significant academic challenges, as a considerable proportion of students enter higher education with limited linguistic competence. Such

limitations often hinder their ability to participate effectively in academic environments that require advanced communicative engagement.

Transferable competencies, including communication, teamwork, analytical thinking, presentation abilities, professional conduct, and adaptability, have become essential prerequisites for successful integration into contemporary labor markets. In Morocco, professional sectors such as engineering, commerce, digital industries, and international trade increasingly require graduates who demonstrate strong multilingual communication abilities. Despite this demand, employers frequently emphasize the gap between academic training and professional expectations, noting that many graduates encounter difficulties in oral and written communication as well as professional presentation. These deficiencies are commonly associated with insufficient mastery of English and French. This article therefore investigates the ways in which linguistic competence shapes the development of transferable competencies and examines the structural and educational factors that contribute to the persistence of this challenge.

2.0 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Language Proficiency as a Foundation of Communication Competence

Language proficiency represents a central element in the development of effective communication competence. Canale and Swain's model of communicative competence provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the multidimensional nature of language mastery. According to this model, language proficiency extends beyond the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary to include several interconnected forms of competence that collectively shape an individual's ability to communicate effectively in academic and professional contexts. These forms include grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence.

Within the Moroccan educational environment, limitations in students' mastery of English or French tend to weaken each of these communicative dimensions. Grammatical competence, which refers to the knowledge of language structure and rules, plays a fundamental role in ensuring clarity and accuracy in both oral and written expression. Students who lack strong grammatical control often experience difficulty expressing complex ideas, which reduces their academic performance and confidence during communication tasks. Discourse competence involves the ability to organize ideas logically and coherently across extended communication forms such as presentations, academic essays, and professional reports. In academic settings, this competence is particularly significant because students are frequently required to structure arguments, provide explanations, and synthesize information. Insufficient discourse competence can therefore limit students' capacity to present information in an organized and persuasive manner. Strategic competence refers to the ability to overcome communication challenges through the use of compensatory strategies, such as paraphrasing, clarification requests, or contextual interpretation. Students with limited linguistic proficiency often lack the confidence or ability to employ such strategies effectively, which can result in communication breakdowns during classroom interaction or professional exchanges. Sociolinguistic competence involves understanding the social and cultural norms that govern language use in different communicative contexts. In multicultural academic and professional environments, this competence becomes particularly important because it allows individuals to

adapt their language to different audiences and social expectations. In this regard, language proficiency functions not only as a tool for transmitting information but also as a mechanism that supports confidence, clarity, coherence, and cultural adaptability in communication.

2.2 Soft Skills and Employability Theory

The concept of soft skills is closely connected to socio constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in the development of knowledge and competencies. Vygotsky's theoretical perspective highlights the role of communication, collaboration, and shared learning experiences in shaping cognitive and social development. Within higher education, soft skills are increasingly recognized as essential competencies that prepare students for professional environments characterized by teamwork, adaptability, and interpersonal engagement.

Soft skills encompass a wide range of abilities that support professional and academic success. Communication skills include oral expression, written communication, and interpersonal interaction, all of which are essential for academic participation and workplace effectiveness. Teamwork and collaborative abilities enable individuals to work productively within group settings, share responsibilities, and contribute to collective problem solving. Leadership skills involve the capacity to guide, motivate, and coordinate group efforts, while presentation abilities and public speaking skills allow individuals to communicate ideas confidently to diverse audiences. Emotional intelligence also plays a significant role, as it involves understanding personal emotions and responding effectively to the emotions of others. Furthermore, critical and analytical thinking supports decision making, evaluation of information, and problem solving in complex situations. The development of these competencies within higher education requires learning environments that encourage interaction, dialogue, and active participation. Since many soft skills rely on verbal and written expression, linguistic competence becomes a prerequisite for their development. Students who possess strong language skills are more likely to participate actively in discussions, collaborate effectively with peers, and engage confidently in professional communication tasks.

2.3 The Moroccan Linguistic Landscape and Higher Education

The Moroccan educational system operates within a multilingual environment shaped by the coexistence of Arabic, French, and English. This linguistic diversity reflects Morocco's historical, cultural, and economic connections with different global regions and significantly influences educational practices and professional opportunities. Arabic functions as the primary language of instruction during early and secondary schooling, providing students with foundational academic knowledge and literacy skills.

French maintains a dominant role in scientific and technical disciplines, particularly during secondary and higher education. Many specialized academic materials, scientific publications, and professional training programs continue to rely on French as a principal medium of communication. At the same time, English has gained increasing importance within Moroccan universities, especially in fields related to science, technology, engineering, and research. The expansion of English reflects global academic trends and the growing demand for international collaboration and knowledge exchange. Despite the potential advantages of multilingualism, the transition between these languages often creates challenges for students. Many learners

complete their early education primarily in Arabic and are later required to study complex scientific content in French or English. This linguistic transition can produce gaps between students' existing language abilities and the linguistic demands of higher education. Such gaps may limit students' academic engagement, reduce their participation in classroom interaction, and hinder the development of communication and presentation competencies. Consequently, the Moroccan linguistic landscape plays a significant role in shaping students' academic performance and the acquisition of essential professional skills.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing scholarly research consistently highlights the significant relationship between language proficiency and graduate employability, particularly within multilingual educational contexts. Studies conducted in North African settings have emphasized the growing importance of mastery of English and French in shaping students' communication competence, academic success, and professional readiness. Research by Bouziane and by El Kirat and Ennaji demonstrates that students who possess strong proficiency in these languages tend to display greater confidence in academic interaction and are better prepared to meet the communicative demands of professional environments. These studies suggest that language competence plays a decisive role in facilitating students' ability to participate actively in academic discussions, express complex ideas, and adapt to diverse workplace communication contexts.

Within the Moroccan labor market, employers increasingly identify bilingual or multilingual communication abilities as essential professional qualifications. Reports from professional sectors frequently underline the gap between academic preparation and workplace expectations. Employers often observe that many graduates encounter difficulties in oral expression, which limits their ability to engage effectively in professional conversations and collaborative tasks. Challenges also emerge in workplace communication etiquette, where graduates may struggle to adopt appropriate levels of formality, clarity, and cultural sensitivity in professional exchanges. Furthermore, professional writing remains a major area of concern. Many graduates face difficulties in producing structured reports, formal correspondence, and analytical documents that meet workplace standards. Presentation and public speaking abilities also represent significant challenges, as students frequently report anxiety and lack of confidence when required to deliver structured presentations or defend ideas in professional or academic settings. Participation in teamwork activities is similarly affected, since collaborative work requires clear communication, negotiation skills, and the ability to contribute actively within group discussions. The existing body of literature therefore suggests that language proficiency should not be viewed solely as a tool for accessing academic content. Instead, it operates as a fundamental structural condition that shapes the development and performance of transferable competencies. Language mastery provides the communicative foundation through which students can acquire, demonstrate, and refine the interpersonal and professional skills that contemporary labor markets increasingly demand.

4.0 METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

Although this study adopts a theoretical and analytical approach, its arguments and conclusions are informed by a wide range of empirical and scholarly sources. The article draws upon findings from research conducted within Moroccan universities that examine students' linguistic abilities and their relationship to academic performance and communication

competence. These empirical studies provide valuable insights into the practical challenges students encounter when navigating multilingual academic environments and help ground the theoretical discussion in observable educational realities. The study also relies on employer survey reports published by the National Agency for Evaluation. These reports offer an institutional perspective on graduate preparedness and highlight the expectations of professional sectors regarding communication abilities and language proficiency. By incorporating these survey findings, the article connects academic discourse with labor market demands and provides a broader understanding of the professional implications of linguistic competence. In addition, the analysis integrates qualitative research that explores Moroccan students lived academic experiences. Such research offers detailed accounts of students' perceptions, attitudes, and challenges related to language use in higher education. These qualitative insights contribute to a deeper understanding of how linguistic barriers influence participation, confidence, and skill development. Finally, the study engages with international scholarship that examines the relationship between language mastery and communication competence across different educational contexts. This broader academic perspective allows the article to situate Moroccan higher education within global debates surrounding language, employability, and professional skill development, thereby strengthening the analytical foundation of the study.

5.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Table 1: Common Language-Related Barriers to Soft Skills in Moroccan Universities

Table 1: Language Proficiency Barriers Influencing Soft Skills

Barrier	Impact on Soft Skills
Limited English/French grammar	Poor clarity; broken sentences; limited flow in presentations
Weak vocabulary	Difficulty expressing ideas; hesitation in discussions
Low self-confidence	Avoiding participation; anxiety during presentations
Code-switching challenges	Fragmented speech; unclear communication in professional settings
Poor pronunciation	Misunderstandings; lower credibility in group tasks
Writing difficulties	Poor reports; weak project documentation; unstructured essays

The data presented in Table 1 highlights several key language-related barriers that significantly influence the development and performance of soft skills among Moroccan university students. One of the most prominent barriers is limited grammar proficiency in English and French. Students with weak grammatical skills frequently produce speech and written work that lacks clarity, contains broken sentences, and demonstrates limited coherence. This directly affects their ability to deliver smooth, structured presentations and undermines the overall effectiveness of their communication. A second critical barrier is weak vocabulary. Insufficient lexical knowledge limits students' capacity to articulate ideas effectively, often causing hesitation during discussions and impeding their ability to engage fully in academic and professional exchanges. This limitation not only restricts the depth and precision of their contributions but also affects their confidence in collaborative settings.

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Low self-confidence is another pervasive challenge. Students who doubt their linguistic abilities are more likely to avoid active participation in class discussions or public presentations. This avoidance behavior can exacerbate communication difficulties, create anxiety in evaluative settings, and limit opportunities for skill development. Code-switching challenges also pose a significant obstacle. In multilingual environments, students frequently switch between Arabic, French, and English. Without adequate training or fluency, this practice can produce fragmented speech and reduce clarity, particularly in professional contexts where coherent and consistent language use is essential. Poor pronunciation constitutes an additional barrier that affects credibility and understanding. Mispronounced words or inconsistent articulation can lead to misunderstandings in group tasks and may diminish the perceived competence of students during academic and professional interactions. Finally, writing difficulties represent a crucial impediment to soft skills development. Inadequate writing proficiency manifests in poorly structured reports, unorganized project documentation, and incoherent essays. These deficiencies compromise students' ability to convey ideas clearly, coordinate collaborative work effectively, and produce professional-quality academic outputs. Collectively, these barriers illustrate that language proficiency is not merely a technical skill but a structural prerequisite for the acquisition and effective application of soft skills. Addressing these challenges requires integrated pedagogical strategies that strengthen grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and confidence, while also providing opportunities for consistent practice in both oral and written communication. Such interventions are essential to prepare students for the demands of the contemporary labor market and to enhance their overall academic and professional competence.

Language anxiety emerges as a significant barrier to effective communication among Moroccan university students, influencing both their psychological well-being and their ability to develop essential soft skills. Many students experience fear and apprehension when speaking in English or French, often worrying about making grammatical errors, mispronouncing words, or producing imperfect sentences. This pervasive anxiety frequently leads students to avoid asking questions, contributing minimally to classroom discussions, and limiting their engagement with peers and instructors. The consequences of such anxiety extend beyond participation alone. Reduced classroom interaction negatively affects the development of assertiveness, as students are less likely to voice opinions or take initiative during collaborative activities. Similarly, discussion and debate skills suffer because students avoid expressing ideas in group settings, which restricts opportunities to practice constructing coherent arguments or responding to alternative viewpoints. Critical expression, a cornerstone of academic inquiry, is also undermined by linguistic fear, as students hesitate to challenge ideas or present independent analyses for fear of making language-related mistakes.

Research conducted in international contexts supports these observations. Horwitz and colleagues (2016) indicate that language-related anxiety is a significant inhibitor of oral communication performance, affecting learners' fluency, confidence, and overall engagement. In the Moroccan context, where students are required to navigate a multilingual educational environment, this anxiety is particularly pronounced. The combination of limited language proficiency and psychological apprehension creates a reinforcing cycle: linguistic challenges fuel anxiety, which in turn suppresses opportunities to practice communication, ultimately impeding the acquisition of core soft skills. Addressing this issue requires pedagogical interventions that foster a supportive and low-pressure learning environment. Strategies such

as guided practice, incremental exposure to speaking tasks, peer collaboration, and positive feedback can help students gradually overcome anxiety, build confidence, and enhance their oral communication abilities. By integrating language development with structured opportunities for participation, universities can mitigate the psychological barriers that hinder students' engagement and professional readiness.

5.2 The Linguistic–Soft Skills Interaction Model

Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Language Proficiency

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Cognitive Processing (vocabulary, fluency, coherence)

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Communication Skills (speaking, listening, writing)

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Soft Skills (presentation, teamwork, confidence, leadership)

This model explains how linguistic limitations create a domino effect that ultimately restricts soft skill execution.

Figure 1 presents a conceptual model that illustrates the sequential relationship between language proficiency and the development of soft skills among university students. At the foundation of the model lies language proficiency, encompassing students' mastery of English and French in the Moroccan higher education context. Proficiency in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation serves as the essential base for all subsequent cognitive and communicative processes. Limitations at this stage, such as weak grammatical knowledge or restricted lexical range, initiate a cascading effect that impairs higher-level competencies. The next level of the model focuses on cognitive processing, which includes vocabulary recall, verbal fluency, and coherence in thought organization. Students with limited language proficiency often experience challenges in these areas, resulting in fragmented ideas, hesitation during verbal expression, and difficulties structuring coherent arguments. This stage represents a critical intermediary because cognitive processing acts as the bridge between raw language knowledge and practical communication. When cognitive processing is constrained, students struggle to translate linguistic competence into effective performance during academic and professional tasks.

Communication skills form the subsequent tier in the model and encompass speaking, listening, and writing abilities. Deficits in language proficiency and cognitive processing directly undermine these skills. For example, students may have difficulty participating in discussions, responding to questions, delivering presentations, or producing structured written documents. Weak communication skills further limit students' capacity to collaborate effectively, engage with peers, and perform confidently in evaluative situations.

At the apex of the model are soft skills, including presentation capabilities, teamwork, confidence, and leadership. These competencies depend on the successful integration of language proficiency, cognitive processing, and communication abilities. When any foundational layer is compromised, the execution of soft skills is significantly hindered. For instance, a student who lacks linguistic confidence may struggle to take leadership roles in group work or to deliver persuasive presentations, even if they possess theoretical knowledge or technical expertise. Overall, Figure 1 demonstrates a domino effect in which limitations in language proficiency propagate through cognitive processing and communication skills, ultimately constraining soft skill performance. This conceptual framework underscores the importance of integrated language development strategies in higher education. By strengthening proficiency at the foundational level, universities can enhance cognitive processing, improve communication abilities, and foster the acquisition of critical soft skills that are essential for academic success and professional employability.

5.3 How Language Shapes Presentation Skills

Language proficiency plays a crucial role in shaping students' ability to deliver effective presentations. Students who demonstrate limited competence in English or French often face substantial challenges in structuring their ideas coherently and presenting them in a logical sequence. Difficulties in creating smooth transitions between points, selecting appropriate academic or technical vocabulary, and responding effectively to audience questions are common. These obstacles compromise both the clarity and persuasiveness of their presentations, limiting their ability to communicate complex concepts with precision and confidence. Time management and the overall flow of presentations also tend to be affected, as students may spend excessive time formulating sentences or struggle to maintain momentum while speaking.

Beyond the structural elements of presentation, linguistic limitations manifest in observable performance behaviors. Many students rely heavily on reading from slides or notes, which reduces spontaneity and engagement. Others deliver memorized speeches, resulting in a lack of flexibility to adapt to audience reactions or unexpected questions. Avoidance of eye contact and minimal use of body language further diminishes the effectiveness of delivery, signaling reduced confidence and engagement. Collectively, these behaviors convey a lack of preparedness, even when students possess strong content knowledge. Importantly, these difficulties do not reflect students' intellectual capacity or understanding of the subject matter. Rather, they stem from linguistic insecurity and anxiety associated with using a second or third language in high-stakes communicative situations. This underscores the integral connection between language mastery and presentation skills. Without adequate proficiency, students' ability to perform essential aspects of professional and academic communication, such as persuasion, audience engagement, and real-time problem solving, remains limited.

Addressing these challenges requires pedagogical interventions that integrate language support with presentation skill development. Strategies such as guided practice in structuring arguments, rehearsal of impromptu speaking, exposure to technical vocabulary in context, and feedback on delivery can help students overcome linguistic barriers. By enhancing language confidence, students can improve not only the mechanical aspects of presentation but also their

expressive and interactive abilities, thereby translating knowledge into effective, professional communication.

5.4 Sources of Limited Soft Skills Among Moroccan Students

Table 2: Institutional and Pedagogical Factors

Factor	Resulting Soft Skill Problem
Teacher-centered pedagogy	Few opportunities for speaking
Overcrowded classrooms	Limited participation space
Lack of oral assessment	No motivation to practice speaking
Minimal presentation tasks	Low exposure to performance skills
Weak school language foundation	Persistent grammar/vocabulary gaps

Table 2 highlights several institutional and pedagogical factors that contribute to the underdevelopment of soft skills among Moroccan university students. The first factor identified is the prevalence of teacher-centered pedagogy. In classrooms where instructors dominate discourse and rely heavily on lectures, students have limited opportunities to speak, ask questions, or engage in interactive discussion. This lack of oral participation hinders the development of essential communication skills, such as articulation, argumentation, and confidence in expressing ideas, which are critical for both academic success and professional readiness. Overcrowded classrooms represent another significant barrier. High student-to-teacher ratios reduce the available space for individual participation, making it difficult for students to actively engage in discussions or collaborative exercises. In such environments, quieter or less confident students are often marginalized, further limiting their exposure to practical communicative tasks and reducing opportunities to practice teamwork and leadership skills.

The absence of systematic oral assessment also undermines soft skill development. Without regular evaluation of speaking abilities, students lack motivation to practice oral communication and may underestimate the importance of these competencies. The absence of formal assessment reinforces the perception that written performance is valued more than verbal expression, leaving students underprepared for situations that require public speaking, debate, or persuasive communication. Minimal inclusion of presentation tasks in the curriculum further exacerbates the problem. When students are rarely required to present ideas or projects, their exposure to performance-oriented soft skills remains limited. Opportunities to practice structuring presentations, managing time, handling audience questions, and developing confidence in front of peers are essential for cultivating professional competencies but are often neglected in traditional classroom practices. Finally, a weak foundation in school-level language education perpetuates persistent gaps in grammar, vocabulary, and overall linguistic proficiency. Students who enter higher education without a solid command of English or French face ongoing challenges in both academic performance and soft skill acquisition. These foundational deficiencies compound the effects of restrictive pedagogical practices, making it difficult for students to develop communication, presentation, and collaborative skills effectively. Overall, the table illustrates that soft skill development is not solely dependent on individual effort or motivation. Institutional structures, classroom

practices, and prior language education collectively shape students' opportunities to practice and refine these competencies. Addressing these factors requires a systemic approach that incorporates student-centered pedagogies, interactive tasks, oral assessments, and strengthened language foundations, thereby creating an educational environment conducive to holistic skill development.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM

The findings of this study carry important implications for the design and reform of higher education in Morocco, particularly with regard to the integration of language instruction and soft skill development.

6.1 Integrating Language and Soft Skill Training

Soft skills should be systematically incorporated into language curricula rather than treated as separate or supplementary components. Embedding communication, presentation, and teamwork exercises within language courses allows students to develop linguistic competence alongside practical competencies that are essential for academic and professional success. Such integration ensures that language learning is meaningful and contextually relevant, providing students with opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world scenarios.

6.2 Shifting to Task-Based Language Learning

Task-based approaches to language instruction offer a practical pathway for developing both linguistic and soft skills. Activities such as oral presentations, structured debates, collaborative projects, and role-playing simulations create authentic communicative contexts in which students must negotiate meaning, organize ideas, and engage interactively with peers. By prioritizing active participation over passive memorization, task-based learning enhances fluency, confidence, and critical thinking, while simultaneously fostering teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving abilities.

6.3 Strengthening English Language Preparation

Universities should implement bridging or preparatory programs for first-year students entering scientific, technical, and engineering disciplines. These programs can address gaps in grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and academic writing, ensuring that students possess the foundational linguistic skills necessary to engage with complex content. Early intervention in language development reduces cognitive and psychological barriers, enabling students to participate fully in classroom discussions, collaborative projects, and professional simulations from the outset of their higher education journey.

6.4 Redefining Assessment Practices

Assessment practices should be expanded beyond the evaluation of content knowledge to include core aspects of communication and soft skills. Evaluations should measure clarity of expression, logical structure of arguments, pronunciation, the ability to defend ideas persuasively, and overall confidence during oral and written tasks. By redefining assessment to encompass these dimensions, universities can incentivize the development of both language

proficiency and transferable skills, creating a more holistic framework for student learning and professional readiness. These reforms emphasize the interdependence of language competence and soft skill development. By aligning curricula, pedagogical methods, and assessment practices with the demands of a multilingual and globally connected labor market, higher education institutions can better equip students to navigate academic challenges and professional opportunities with confidence and competence.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of language proficiency and soft skill development among Moroccan university students, several actionable recommendations can guide higher education institutions in enhancing both linguistic competence and professional readiness.

7.1 Introduce Compulsory Communication Skills Modules in Early Years

Universities should implement mandatory courses focused on communication skills during the first and second years of study. These modules would provide students with structured opportunities to practice oral and written expression, build confidence in public speaking, and develop essential interpersonal skills. Early exposure ensures that students establish a strong foundation for academic participation and professional engagement.

7.2 Implement English for Academic Purposes and French for Academic Purposes Courses

Specialized courses in English and French tailored to academic contexts can help students bridge gaps in vocabulary, grammar, and disciplinary discourse. English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and French for Academic Purposes (FAP) programs equip students with the linguistic tools needed to comprehend complex texts, produce structured written work, and participate effectively in discussions and presentations within their respective fields.

7.3 Encourage Debate Clubs and Language-Speaking Circles

Extracurricular initiatives such as debate clubs and English or French speaking circles offer informal yet impactful opportunities for students to practice communication skills. Engaging in debates, discussions, and conversational activities fosters fluency, spontaneity, and critical thinking while creating a supportive environment in which students can experiment with language without fear of judgment.

7.4 Train Faculty on Interactive and Communicative Teaching Methods

Faculty development programs should focus on interactive, student-centered teaching methods that emphasize participation, dialogue, and collaborative learning. By equipping instructors with strategies to facilitate discussions, group projects, and task-based activities, universities can create classroom environments that encourage active language use and reinforce the development of soft skills.

7.5 Use Peer-Reviewed Presentations to Build Confidence

Integrating peer-reviewed presentations into coursework allows students to receive constructive feedback from both instructors and classmates. This practice not only improves presentation structure, clarity, and delivery but also fosters self-assurance and resilience in public speaking contexts. Regular opportunities for practice and feedback are essential for transforming linguistic knowledge into confident, professional communication.

7.6 Collaborate with Employers to Design Workplace-Oriented Communication Curricula

Universities should work closely with industry partners to align communication training with real-world professional expectations. Employer input can inform curriculum design, ensuring that students develop the language proficiency, teamwork, and presentation skills required for effective workplace performance. Such collaboration bridges the gap between academic preparation and labor market demands, enhancing the employability of graduates.

By implementing these recommendations, higher education institutions in Morocco can create a holistic learning environment that integrates language mastery with the development of transferable skills, equipping students to navigate academic challenges and professional contexts with competence and confidence.

8.0 CONCLUSION

Language proficiency constitutes a fundamental determinant of students' capacity to develop and perform essential soft skills. In Morocco's multilingual higher education system, mastery of English and French is not merely an academic requirement but a key factor that shapes students' ability to communicate effectively, collaborate with peers, and demonstrate professional competencies. The findings of this study indicate that students with weak linguistic foundations encounter persistent barriers that hinder their oral communication, presentation skills, and participation in team-based activities. These challenges are compounded by anxiety, low self-confidence, and limited exposure to interactive learning environments, creating a cycle in which linguistic insecurity constrains the development of transferable skills.

The increasing prominence of English as a medium of instruction, particularly in scientific, technical, and professional programs, heightens the stakes of linguistic competence. Students are expected to navigate complex academic content, engage in debates, deliver structured presentations, and interact with diverse audiences. Without adequate language preparation, these expectations become difficult to meet, limiting not only academic performance but also employability in competitive national and international labor markets. French, as a continuing medium for many technical disciplines, similarly remains crucial, and proficiency in both languages forms the backbone of academic and professional success.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive, integrated approach that combines language development with structured soft skill training. Pedagogical strategies such as task-based learning, oral assessments, interactive classroom activities, and targeted bridging programs can strengthen linguistic competence while fostering confidence, critical thinking, and collaborative abilities. Extracurricular initiatives, including debate clubs, language circles, and peer-reviewed presentations, further reinforce the application of language in authentic

communicative contexts, allowing students to practice, experiment, and develop fluency in real-world scenarios. Institutional reform and curriculum design also play a vital role. Universities must shift toward student-centered teaching methods, provide consistent opportunities for oral and written practice, and collaborate with employers to align academic training with professional expectations. Assessment practices should extend beyond content knowledge to include evaluation of clarity, coherence, pronunciation, and persuasive communication, incentivizing students to integrate language proficiency with professional competencies.

In conclusion, language proficiency and soft skill development are deeply interdependent, with linguistic competence forming the foundation upon which transferable skills are built. By embedding language training within broader pedagogical and institutional frameworks, Moroccan higher education can equip students with the tools, confidence, and adaptability required to thrive in globalized academic and professional environments. Such reforms are essential not only for individual student success but also for the broader goal of strengthening Morocco's workforce and academic competitiveness on an international scale.

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