





## The Factors Affecting Grade Progress in Language Proficiency of Undergraduate Medical Students

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**Abstract:** Language Proficiency is necessary to communicate and comprehend educational concepts. Consistent language practice and routine is essential to maintain growth; hence, an abundant number of breaks can be a hindrance to reaching proper proficiency. This study aims to analyze students' progression and perspective regarding factors that affect their growth. The contributors were 19 dentistry freshmen from Tishk International University who had limited English language ability. They were assigned to take a supportive foundation English course alongside their medical courses to support their development. Quantitative and Qualitative methods were used to gather data. SPSS was used to analyze grade progression and the effects of breaks on scores. Interviews were applied to grasp the contributors' experience with language learning and the factors they encountered. The participants' responses presented that substantial workload and lengthy breaks were the factors that affected their language development. The first pair of SPSS data showed that there was not a significant difference (p-value of .05) between the two sets of quizzes as the break was shorter. However, the SPSS results showed that there was a significant difference (p-value of .001) amid the scores of midterms and finals which had a lengthy break between. Therefore, it was found that breaks, workload, and other factors did result in a decline of scores and pupils' academic progression.

**Keywords:** Breaks, Language Proficiency, Medical, Students

### 1. Introduction

Universities have a language of instruction that requires an adequate level of proficiency to be reached by the learners. At Tishk International University, the language of instruction is English; hence, the learners are required to demonstrate adequate knowledge of the language. A lack of proficiency would require the learners to take a supportive English Foundation course. Language proficiency development is essential to be monitored especially in freshmen medical students who are learning complex topics regarding medical practices. Medical field individuals need proficient language ability to converse with coworkers, patients, and the clinical field (Chan et al., 2022). Designing suitable educating approaches to positively aid language growth can be done through comprehending the influencing factors. Moreover, recent studies have indicated multiple factors that affect performance and the attainment of language.

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For example, socio-economic status has commonly been found to considerably influence language progression. Research by Munir et al. (2023) supports this by finding that pupils with better socio-economic status were able to successfully reach educational and language goals.

Furthermore, the examination time and other factors like holidays can influence the results of learning a language. Research has found that student's performance can be affected by the examination schedule and holidays. Al-Bashir et al. (2009) highlighted the effect of efficient feedback and appropriate exams on learners' accomplishments. Correspondingly, holidays and assessment schedules interrupt educational stability and influence the students' grades (DeLeon et al., 2022). In addition to exam schedules, academic workload and motivation are essential in learning a language. Based on Jiao et al. (2022) findings, motivation considerably impacts the determination and success of learning languages. Moreover, an extensive amount of coursework and medical responsibilities can overload learners, possibly affecting their concentration on learning languages (Rapillard et al., 2019). Also, a high workload can reduce motivation and disrupt the overall learning process.

Through the investigation of such factors, the aim of this study is to present a thorough interpretation of how they impact the development of the student's language proficiency grades. Also, the statistical data was analyzed using pupils scores on various assessment components will aid in understanding which period during the academic year faced the most decrease in progression. Acknowledging these factors could play a role in helping medical students' academics by enhancing educational methods and support systems.

### **1.1 Research questions:**

1. What were the students' perspectives regarding the English foundation course?
2. What are the main factors that impact medical students English language development?
3. How do learners' scores progress throughout the academic year?
4. What does the data show regarding pupils scores before and after breaks?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Grade Progress**

Grades are scores assigned to pupils based on educational performance. It represents their mastery of the content and depth of comprehension of the concepts (Brookhart, 2013). Progress is action or movement to reach a specific developmental result. In education, progress focuses on pupils' educational or personal progression (Locke & Latham, 2002). According to Stecker et al. (2008), grade progress centers on consistent monitoring and assessment of pupil's academic performance to direct the educational journey and increase achievements. Grades being consistently observed can provide educators a guide to enhance the learning process through modifying the necessary aspects of the educational process and identifying struggling learners to provide necessary support (Stiggins et al., 2004; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). The data can be referred to by educators to make informed decisions and alterations to their instruction and lesson resources. Also, grade progress can indicate if the goals set for pupils to achieve are realistic or need to be reconsidered to promote motivation and growth (Marzano, 2007). Moreover, grade process provides students with the necessary information to be aware of their standing and depth of understanding within a

subject. This contributes to improved learner performance by increasing student responsibility, engagement, effort, and self-efficacy (Zimmerman, 2008). Grade progress has the essential ability to indicate the areas that require improvement in the educational process, and it can be referred to observe students' progress throughout the course.

## **2.2 English Support Courses**

English support courses are used at the university level to help students develop their language skills especially those who are not native English speakers. Such courses are created to improve different skills like listening, speaking, writing, and reading, which are important for succeeding academically. Hyland (2014) stated that English support courses familiarize pupils with academic standards, which helps them easily move into the educational community. Furthermore, Andrade (2006) emphasizes that these programs can reduce the obstacles that non-English speakers face; therefore, encouraging a more inclusive academic setting.

Studies show that English support courses affect pupils' grades in a positive way. Research conducted by Arkoudis et al. (2012) indicated that students who took part in such courses presented with significant enhancements in their academics in comparison to those who did not. Moreover, they concluded that the organized setting and personalized feedback helped the students comprehend and use the learned skills in their education. Furthermore, Evans and Morrison (2011) conducted a longitudinal study that found that continuous attendance in such programs was linked to improved grades. Additionally, Harklau (2000) validated that being proficient in language is an important aspect in succeeding academically and that tailored assistance can help non-English speakers overcome barriers, which can lead to improved academic results and general pupil satisfaction.

## **2.3 Language Proficiency**

According to Bachman (1990), language proficiency is the aptitude of using language properly for a variety of purposes in scholarly and societal settings. Producing and comprehending written and verbal language within these settings is necessary for communicative competence. Moreover, language proficiency places importance on communicating clearly and building language skills. People that are proficient in two or more languages usually have greater cognitive capability that supports academic success (Bialystok, 2001). Similarly, Green and Abutalebi (2013) found that bilingualism enhances cognitive capacities and intellectual range. It is essential that pupils are proficient in language to have a successful experience in the educational setting and achievements. Pupils are more prepared to comprehend educational concepts and effectively participate in critical thinking activities when their Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency is developed (Cummins, 1979). Insufficiency can cause learners to encounter difficulties in comprehending and maintaining a suitable learning place due to their limited language. According to Thomas and Collier (2002), developed ability and comprehension of the instructional language can help pupils easily contribute to discussions and form social connections. Hence, high language proficiency has been connected to enhanced intellectual growth, academic accomplishments, and problem-solving capacity (Hakuta, 1986).

## **2.4 Factors Effects on Grade Progress and Language Development**

Language development and grade progress are affected by several factors, such as socio-economic status, motivation, and breaks (Wallace & Leong, 2020). Motivation plays a major role in academic and language achievement. Davidovitch and Dorot (2023) stated that learners who are motivated intrinsically are likely to participate better in school, which indicated higher results in both academics and language enhancement. Motivation increases resilience and determination, which is crucial for learning a new language.

Moreover, the steady progress of language learning can be hindered for medical majors by breaks for examinations or holidays (Sreyvid et al., 2019). Lengthy breaks cause pupils to encounter interruptions to their daily educational habits. This may lead to language aptitude to be weakened because maintaining and developing language necessitate constant practice and functioning. According to Cooper et al. (1996), educational environments being interrupted may lead to pupils to be unable to remember the language components they gained, which leads to stalled language progression and scores to suffer. Additionally, the stress of attempting to regain previous proficiency and knowledge may overwhelm pupils since they are managing their medical course as well. Thus, breaks affect language growth, academic progression, assessment scores, and pressure levels.

One major factor is socio-economic status. Sirin (2005) highlighted that learners who come from higher socio-economic statuses usually perform better because they tend to use support and tutoring programs. On the other hand, those with a lower socio-economic status have restricted access to various resources, which can deter their academic and language achievements. Likewise, Munir et al. (2023) stated that students from higher socio-economic backgrounds perform better in academics. This emphasizes the significance of guaranteeing that all students receive an equal chance to succeed.

## **2.5 Medical Students' Major Courses and Responsibilities**

The curriculum created for medical schools is intended to provide students with the essential expertise and proficiency needed for healthcare professionals (Burgess & Mellis, 2015). In the beginning of their academics, the students participate in introductory courses including physiology, anatomy, and pharmacology. Such courses are required to develop a strong scientific background. According to Cooke et al. (2006), combining the foundational scientific courses with basic clinical experience will improve the practical application of theory and promotes critical thinking skills required for clinical practice.

As medical students advance through the curriculum, they take on bigger responsibilities, specifically throughout the process of clerkships (O'Brien & Poncelet, 2010). Such rotations give students opportunities to transfer from theory to practice by performing hands-on tasks in handling patients while being supervised. Wimmers et al. (2006) accentuate that clerkships are important for acquiring clinical and communication skills as well as professionalism. This educational stage is a fundamental step in training students for the medical field.

Aside from the clinical responsibilities, medical students usually participate in research, which is important for their educational progress (Bhuiya & Makaryus, 2023). Engaging in research is crucial for developing their comprehension of the scientific method and contributing to the enhancement of medical expertise.

Bierer and Chen (2010) emphasized the significance of research in encouraging dedication to learning and evidence-based practice. They accentuated that research could improve the students' skills and interests; however, it may be challenging for them to balance their medical responsibilities and research. In general, medical students' major courses and responsibilities are designed to guarantee that the learners are fully equipped for the complex necessities of their future roles in the medical profession. However, the demanding curriculum also initiates considerable hindrances to the development of their language skills. The extensive workload and restricted concentration on language development highlight the necessity of support programs to aid students in improving their language proficiency as well as their medical preparation.

### **3. Methods**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The focus of this article is to form a clear understanding of medical students' progress and the factors to influence their focus or achievement in the Foundation English course. The design of this research consists of a mixed method approach that uses qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data. The mixed method was chosen to analyse the grade progression of medical pupils who were assigned to take a supportive foundation English course. The quantitative method was performed through SPSS and consisted of descriptive analysis, frequency analysis, the Kruskal-Wallis test, and the Mann-Whitney test. The analysis of numerical data and interviews ensures that the possible factors hindering the development of language proficiency are properly acknowledged and understood. Hence, SPSS was used to compare their performance on examinations and quizzes within the academic year. It presented their progress pattern that indicated their ability before and after breaks from the classroom, which displayed data about possible academic decline. Therefore, the analysis assisted in recognizing important connections linked to the research questions. Interviews were conducted to gauge learners' opinion regarding managing language class with their medical courses. The questions for the interviewees were put through a process to ensure validity by drafting, pilot testing and revising.

#### **3.2 Participants and Setting**

The participants were first year dentistry students from Tishk International University (TIU) in Erbil, Iraq. The language of instruction at this university is English. Each freshman attending the university must take a diagnostic English test to estimate if they have the necessary language level to be successful in their majors. The passing score of the English diagnostic test was set at 65 or above. However, the diagnostic assessment showed that these participants did not reach the required language level set to understand the language of instruction. Hence, they were assigned to attend a mandatory Foundation English language course to develop their English language proficiency. There were 19 participants that formed class 113 Dentistry within the TIU foundation English program of the 2023 to 2024 academic year. The classes were held five days a week from Sunday to Thursday for 2 hours every morning starting at 8:15 am. These lessons took place prior to their medical courses. The contributors consisted of 12 females and 7 males.

### 3.3 Instruments

SPSS was utilized to examine learner's scores to measure their comprehension level throughout the course. Moreover, factors influencing pupils' scores were contemplated and evaluated to determine their impact on their English. The data consisted of scores from various sources of assessment that enables an in-depth examination of developments. Furthermore, the qualitative aspect of the research consisted of interviews. The interviewees were selected through their own volunteering. The interviews were 15 minutes each and they were conducted in the classroom where their English learning occurred. Open-ended questions were provided to the interviewees. These questions were used to gather pupils' perspectives and experiences regarding the educational language journey and the factors that influenced their focus. These questions were pilot tested on a sample group to identify weakness or ambiguity and alterations were made based on the observations to increase reliability. Additionally, the identity of the interview contributors remained anonymous by labeling them as interviewee 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data. The qualitative and quantitative elements were constructed and reviewed so that the required data was properly gathered.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Table 1: Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Quiz 1	80.76	19	8.111	1.861
	Quiz 2	75.20	19	20.240	4.643
Pair 2	Midterm	82.53	19	9.879	2.266
	Final	72.95	19	10.819	2.482

The data analysis shows the different mean scores of two pairs of assessment through a semester long course. The first pair is the difference between two quizzes done before and after a long break. The second pair is the difference between midterm and final scores which was again between the long breaks. The difference between the mean score of the first pair is 5.6 scores. This analysis shows that the average score of the first quiz (80.76) conducted before the break is higher than the second quiz (75.20) by 5.6 marks. As for the second pair, the difference between the mean scores of midterms (82.53) and final (72.95) exams is 9.6 scores. This analysis shows that the students got less marks in the final by 9.6 marks margin than what they got in midterms.

Table 2: Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Quiz 1 - Quiz 2	5.563	17.063	3.914	-2.661	13.787	1.421	18	.172
Pair 2	Midterm - Final	9.579	11.072	2.540	4.242	14.916	3.771	18	.001

A paired sample t-test was conducted to evaluate the mean differences of each pair of the students' scores before and after the long breaks. The analysis of the first pair of the data shows that although there is a difference between the scores of each quiz, the difference is not significant due to having a *P-value* of more than .05. However, the second pair shows a significant difference between the midterm and final scores by a *P-value* of .001.

#### 4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Four questions were asked to the interviewees that were open-ended so that they could provide details of their experience and guide the conversation to show their opinion towards the experiences they had this academic year with Foundation English courses.

##### Questions:

1. What factors do you believe affected your language learning journey during this course?
2. How was the experience of managing the workload of English Language course and medical courses?
3. How was your time management when dealing with the responsibilities of the English and Medical courses?
4. What is your overall opinion towards the English Foundation courses and the scores you received?

Thematic analysis was the chosen data analysis tool, considering that thematic analysis is a versatile tool that can be used in many different situations and data sets. It deals with singling out patterns, themes, or meanings of the data (DeJonckheere et al., 2024). Consequently, this type of analysis helps with understanding the students' viewpoints in a more in-depth way complementing the qualitative analysis shown in the previous section.

After the process of coding and analysing the data, three main themes emerged: Time Management and Workload, Impact of Breaks and Holidays, Perceived Value of English Courses, and Language Development and Proficiency.

#### **4.2.1 Theme 1: Time Management and Workload**

This theme emerged as the most recurrent among the identified themes. The participants expressed their inability to balance their workload and manage their time. They referred to the fact that they are taking their departmental courses as well as their language preparatory courses. One of the participants quoted “I was constantly in running mode throughout this academic year. I felt exhausted and started to lose interest in both the English language and the field of dentistry due to the constant high pressure.” Another student mentioned that “I was juggling many different assignments and projects for the medical and English courses. It made me feel overwhelmed and defeated most of the time. I felt like the workload was too much for a freshman student to handle.” This kind of comment accrues in all of the interviews. Considering that these students are first grade students coming from mostly public schools, their perception of workload is different from other students with different backgrounds or different stages of university. In public schools the students’ workloads are minimum ranging from solving equations to doing homework, but when it comes to university the workload is more and the type changes like having projects. Remarkably, it is understandable for the students to feel more pressure and lose the track of time. Another student mentioned that “I realized that due to the medical content, I did not have enough time to fully concentrate on enhancing my English proficiency. The academic workload from the English and Medical courses was sometimes overwhelming, and I usually put my medical studies first, specifically when it was time for examinations.”

#### **4.2.2 Theme 2: Impact of Breaks and Holidays**

This theme is one of the important themes in this paper being supported by the quantitative data. The participants of this paper strongly suggested that the duration of breaks affects their language performance negatively. The disruption of the breaks that happened in the semester was frequent and in long periods of time. For example, the spring break lasted for one whole month. One of the participants said, “These long breaks made me lose track of the topics and forget the knowledge and skills I learned.” Another participant mentioned that “During breaks, it was very hard to stay focused and it interrupted my routine for studying.” Moreover, another interviewee mentioned that “There was also limited time in the foundation English classroom because of the breaks we got for our midterm exam and holidays. I spent weeks away from the classroom and this really hurt my language knowledge.” The thematic analysis and the quantitative analysis show that having long and frequent breaks has a negative effect on students’ language levels. The mean scores from both pairs (quizzes and midterm-final) showed that the students’ performance got lower after having a long break. Both themes 1 and 2 are intertwined because when students cannot manage their time effectively and breaks happen frequently the workload accumulates.

#### **4.2.3 Theme 3: Perceived Value of English Courses**

The importance of having English Language proficiency is no doubt the most important skill a student might have. The language of knowledge in the field of medicine and the university courses are both in English. To be successful, a student needs to be proficient in the language. All the students are aware of this fact but there are some factors that they mentioned in their interviews that affect their English language courses negatively. The content of the courses, timing of the courses, and their own lack of focus were some causes for their negative perception of their English courses. Some of the participants reported that



“the books used in the English courses were not good because it was too easy and boring. This had a negative effect on my English skills. So, my grades in English were not that good because I did not have much motivation to focus on the coursework.” As for the timing of the course, the students mentioned that it was not effective. “English courses are helping me with my communication and understanding; however, the breaks kept causing issues and the high pressure of medical courses put English learning as a second choice.” Another one said, “I think that the English foundation course would have been beneficial if given at another time like during summer.” Finally, for the students’ lack of focus, students mentioned that they cannot focus on their English courses because their medical courses take up a majority of their time and effort. That is why they think their scores are getting worse. One student reported that “Every time I finished one assignment, two more were ready to take its place. I barely kept up with these demands and I do not think that the scores I received properly represented my English language proficiency. I placed a majority of my effort and focus into my dentistry courses so my scores in the Foundation course did suffer because I felt that it was not as important.”

## 5. Discussion

Findings from the quantitative and qualitative data analyses provide valuable insights into the academic experiences of freshman dentistry department students enrolled in the Foundation English Course alongside their departmental studies, particularly in the context of the impact of long breaks and academic workload on performance in the English Language Course. The findings reveal that the combination of frequent and long breaks and varying perceptions of the necessity of English courses significantly impacted students’ academic performance in language learning Courses.

The quantitative data analysis highlights a noticeable decline in students’ academic performance following long breaks. This is evidenced by the paired samples statistics where the mean score of Quiz 1 (before break) was higher than Quiz 2 (after break) and the midterm scores were higher than the final which was held after a long break. Although the difference between the quiz scores was not significant, the decrease after the break is evident. However, the paired samples tests for the Midterm and Final scores showed a significant difference with a p-value of .001 indicating that the long break has a significant negative impact on students’ academic performance in the English language Course.

The findings of this study align with Kuhfeld et al. (2020) research which observed that the long breaks, extended periods away from structured learning like school closure during summer breaks (in this study Nowruz holidays, followed by midterm weeks break, and the Eid al Fitr holiday totaled 45 days) are linked to learning loss and significant setbacks in academic progress, especially in disciplines that require continuous practice and review like learning languages and mathematics. This study's findings similarly demonstrate the negative impact of long breaks on students’ performance, with mean scores dropping after breaks in both quizzes and final exam. The decline in performance in this study and Kuhfeld et al. (2020) research demonstrates the difficulties students face in retaining knowledge, staying academically engaged, and maintaining their performance levels after the interruption of long breaks and extended time away from a structured learning environment.

This study's findings are consistent with the previous research by Paechter and Maier (2010) which found that students frequently struggle to regain their learning momentum after long breaks. This study’s

participants reported that long breaks had a negative impact on their academic motivation. A decline in motivation may consequently have a detrimental effect on students' engagement with coursework and their learning outcomes. This study provides empirical evidence supporting this relationship, as the documented decline in Final Exam scores might have been partially related to a decrease in students' motivation during the prolonged breaks. Paechter and Maier's (2010) study aligns with the findings of this study, where the significant drop in scores after breaks highlights the struggles students face in returning to their previous level of academic performance. Moreover, the studies of Fitzpatrick et al. (2011), Ginns et al. (2023), Sreyvid et al. (2019), and Barber (2015) supported the decline in academic performance, the disruption of breaks in students' study routines, difficulty in recalling previously learned material, and lower performance in subsequent assessments. On the other hand, there is a divergence between Fitzpatrick et al. (2011) and the findings of this study. Fitzpatrick et al. (2011) suggested that the lengths and timing of breaks can have varying effects on student retention, with some students able to maintain their performance based on the type of break and learning activities that take place during that time. Another reported factor in this study is an academic workload that influences students' performance; cognitive overload, particularly after breaks can hinder students' ability to perform well. This study's findings show a performance decline when the workload combined with the disruption caused by breaks led to noticeable declines in students' academic performance because in language learning constant practice is essential.

Furthermore, the qualitative data analysis revealed that students prioritized their dentistry-related courses, perceiving them as more challenging than English Language classes. The students allocated more time and effort to their dentistry courses. However, not hearing English for the entire 45 days of break negatively affected the understanding of field-related materials which are all taught in English.

Building on the discussion, it can be suggested that improving students' English language proficiency could significantly enhance their understanding of department-related courses. A higher level of English competence would likely reduce the time required for students to comprehend dentistry-related course material which would help to solve the time management problem. Consequently, the challenge of insufficient time to engage with courses could be minimized. To address this, the implementation of regular seminars, workshops, or advisory hours focused on language development can effectively raise awareness among students regarding the importance of English Language skills. These kinds of programs would support students in balancing their academic demands more effectively.

The research contributes to the understanding of how long breaks can affect students' academic performance where language learning is integrated into demanding courses like medical studies. This study gives novel perspectives by focusing specifically on the context of Foundation English courses within medical education. Moreover, this specific intersection of these two disciplines has not been widely explored, so this research adds a new dimension to existing studies on academic breaks. Another significant contribution of this study is the combination of quantitative and qualitative data that provides a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges students face. The integration of paired sample t-tests with thematic analysis reveals how long breaks not only decrease students' academic achievement but also deteriorate time management and academic workload issues, which earlier studies examined separately. Participants' reflections add new insights into how breaks not only disrupt their academic routine but also lead to a loss of motivation and academic engagement.

## 6. Limitations

Limitations consisted of conducting this research on a single group of medical dentistry freshman. This group consisted of a small sample size of 19 contributors, which limited the depth of generalization. This research was conducted at one university and city in Iraq. Hence, further works can expand and diversify findings by sampling larger groups from diverse backgrounds and collect data from a multitude of institutions. The data collection processes lasted for a single academic year. The outcomes can be altered based on educational aspects, such as curriculum design and educational expectations. Moreover, scores may not be the only indicator of every influencing factor that affected the contributors' progress because individual characteristics can cause difference in their achievements. Interviews could contain bias due to self-reported data from the participants.

## 7. Conclusion

This research has presented significant insights into the various factors that influence the development of students' grades in language learning. Using quantitative evaluation of the students' scores and qualitative understanding from interviews, the study emphasizes the important effect of socio-economic status, examination time, workload, and motivation on learning a language. The results suggest that even though examination time and socio-economic factors have an effect, the academic workload usually impacts the student's capability to concentrate on and enhance their language proficiency. Thus, it highlights the necessity of educational facilities to contemplate the support available to develop pupils' language ability and the workload they are handling. This research's data presents that language growth can be better experienced by acknowledging the factors. Once the factors are identified, taking the proper interventions to overcome hindrances can help provide a positive English learning experience. Moreover, the quantitative data revealed that quizzes did not present a significant difference after the break; however, there was a noticeable change between the midterm and final examinations. This indicates that breaks can interrupt the process of learning specifically in medical fields, where constant participation is necessary for grasping complex content. Such results emphasize the importance of suitable scheduling and the effects of breaks in the learning process, as well as the necessity of aiding learners in preserving the balance in their education. Additional research can guide improving the approaches to support medical pupils' language growth by investigating these aspects in various educational environments.

Suggestions for additional study directions:

- Explore how language development is affected by the extensive workloads and various assessments throughout different academic years.
- Assess the effect of different support systems including academic advising and counselling on learners' ability to manage their academic workload and enhance their language skills.
- Perform similar research in various locations and medical schools to recognize how academic workload, socio-economic factors, and extensive breaks from the classroom impact language progression in varied settings.

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