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## The analysis of students' reading and writing difficulties in learning english

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the students' reading and writing difficulties in learning English, and it was conducted at Universitas Kristen Indonesia. The design of this study is a quantitative study with a survey design. The study data were collected by distributing the questionnaire to eighty students of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Kristen Indonesia. The study instrument covered the students' backgrounds, reading and writing difficulties, and perceptions of their lecturers' teaching. The instrument of this study was a set of questionnaires. The study's data were analyzed using a quantitative data analysis technique with a descriptive approach, and the study's data were analyzed using SPSS 7.5. The weakness of students in mastering reading and writing ability affects their potential and motivation to master various other skills in the English language. The study results showed that all respondents agreed that the factors of ability and creativity of lecturers could change the perception and awareness that they also have the potential to succeed in learning. Then it is concluded that in collaboration with school management, it is hoped to build a conducive school climate, and a safe school environment can stimulate motivated students to continue learning.



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## Introduction

Reading is one of the sources of knowledge and the basis of self-formation towards acquiring knowledge. The purpose of reading is to understand the text being read, and the content gives meaning to the reader (Neugebauer & Blair, 2020; Naibaho & Sangga, 2019). The ability to read is a particular skill and is a dynamic process that requires active and meaningful communication between the reader and the writer. Reading is also said to be a person's ability to recognize visual forms and connect between forms and sounds through experience and interpret their meaning (Grabe, 2008; Grabe & Stoller, 2013; Olsson & Dahlgren, 2020). Reading comprehension depends on a combination of language knowledge, cognitive style, and reading experience.

Meanwhile, writing ability is an intellectual culture that complements reading and writing skills. Writing ability is a process of channeling mechanical and channeling information systematically, taking into account the goals, use of language, audience, and writing style (Shvidko, 2020; Bateman, 2021; Kuyyogsuy, 2019). Accordingly, the ability to read and write is a skill that is the source or foundation of effective teaching and learning in various disciplines in higher education. High achievement and reading and writing ability can improve students' mastery of learning.

Each student is different in terms of experience, behavior, practice, talents, and abilities (Renzulli, 2021; Tan, 2021; Brackett, Bailey, Hoffmann & Simmons, 2019). Therefore, lecturers should understand the need for the concept of rehabilitation in the classroom to overcome the problem of mastering reading and writing abilities among Students of Universitas Kristen Indonesia, Universitas Kristen Indonesia. Various efforts have been and will be carried out by the government of Indonesia to formulate student excellence programs. Through the planned program, it is hoped to help and meet the needs of these students. Rehabilitation programs are an approach to addressing students with specific skill impairments. The lecturer's serious attention in meeting these students'

demands can help develop the potential and increase the students' confidence to compete with their intelligent peers.

To improve the language skills of these students, lecturers have a significant role to play. Language skills are essential basic skills and should be emphasized in the teaching and learning process in the classroom (Vattøy, 2020; König, Jäger-Biela, and Glutsch, 2020; Goh & Vandergrift, 2021; Hursen, 2021). Lecturers as curriculum implementers need to be concerned about the curriculum's objectives that are formulated to enable the government's aspirations to be achieved. Students are a national asset in the future to continue the nation's continuity in developing the country. However, there is a divide in developing the younger generation in balancing individual potential. Emphasis on the concept of diversity of intelligence and individual differences of students makes remedial education an option in helping them achieve life goals and the success of the education system in this country. Accordingly, rehabilitation differs from the regular classroom in the national school system. Remedial education aims to rehabilitate a deficiency or a defect in shaping students' learning skills (McGee, Williams, Armstrong & Holschuh, 2021). The problem of indolent students is of great concern to parents, society, and the government. Low achievement or student learning problems are usually influenced by psychological, biological, and environmental factors (Naibaho, 2021; Pikhart & Klimova, 2020).

The mixed level of intelligence and psychology among students is due to various genetic factors, physical disabilities of students, environment, and so on that tend to cause problems learning and remembering something taught by the lecturer. In addition, the level of health and emotional disorders often cause learning problems. Students who inherit a low level of intelligence exhibit emotional disorders such as worry, fear, anger, and various other feelings that inevitably affect focus and attention on learning (Jones & Davison, 2021; Mehta, 2022). In addition to emotional disorders, there are also biological problems such as physical health problems and the neurological function of students. As a result, students' health is affected, such as hereditary diseases, asthma, sinusitis, seizures, and articulation defects often affect students' interest and focus on lessons. Thus, intelligence or wisdom stems from the efficiency of neuronal cells in the human brain to create knowledge and provide meaningful experiences (Coleman, 2020).

Environmental problems are an external phenomenon that occurs due to the practice of the school system and the formation of students' language. In school systems that often adopt a complex curriculum and are not concerned with the needs of students of varying abilities, lecturers are more tied to time to finish the syllabus than to focus on learning is the inefficiency of school teaching management. Aspects of different student abilities are ignored, so the gap between student differences becomes more pronounced between them. In addition, the number of students who drop out of mainstream learning in schools is due to factors in the formation and use of non-standard language practices (Cushing, 2021; Henderson, 2017; Garrido & Moore, 2016). Lack of experience and unhealthy association make students more vulnerable to the speech and practice of using the district language; the market language also contributes to the problems of learning English. Certain factors create problems in mastering students' reading and writing abilities. Weaknesses in mastering reading and writing ability make students feel inferior, and self-discipline problems deteriorate. These students assume that behavior that violates the norms of school practice is intended to attract the attention of lecturers and peers. Low self-esteem due to constant failure leads to low self-concept. Aggressive, negative, childish behaviors are signs of serious emotional problems. It will affect their ability to master language skills more effectively.

The problem of mastering reading and writing abilities makes students weak and not interested in the English language due to their inability to master it (Ebadi & Rozainun, 2019; Ghouali & Benmoussat, 2019; Naibaho, 2016). Students' reading problems are mistakenly recognizing uppercase and lowercase letters while reading. Words are not sounded correctly and accurately, and students cannot pronounce the words spelled, often leaving words that do not know the meaning or fail to sound them. It gives rise to a crawling reading pattern and certainly makes the students not understand the information and meaning of the reading material. In addition, these students are weak and not interested in finding information found in diagrams or stimulus material provided by the lecturer. Reading is a process of interaction between the text and the reader's imagination. Therefore, lecturers need to diversify reading techniques to make teaching more varied and engaging and arouse students' interest in learning more diligently (Jager, Denessen, Cillessen & Meijer, 2021; Easterbrook & Hadden, 2021; Baker-Doyle, 2021).

When students do not master reading skills, it causes them not to master basic skills, namely oral skills. Among the weaknesses of students in oral skills are mispronouncing letters that seem to be the same shape, certain letters, and the names of letters that seem to be the same (Shak, Lee & Stephen, 2016). It will make students misunderstand pronouncing the order of words, sentences, and intonation with the right style. The inability of students to master these two skills gives them problems in expressing expression through writing. Among them is the inefficiency of eye and hand coordination while writing. This disability is detected when a student incorrectly

holds a pencil. As a result, students cannot write word lines accurately and mix uppercase and lowercase letters in one sentence.

On the other hand, the weakness in producing meaning in essay writing is that students are weak in arranging sentences and thoughts according to the weight of their thoughts and leaving out certain words while writing (Hyland, 2018). Students' inability to master reading and writing abilities makes students not interested in learning and not entirely focused. In addition, out-of-control factors cause the problem of mastering these skills, such as disability, disease, and genetics. Coupled with environmental factors such as poverty and lack of attention from parents, it also contributes to the problem of mastering reading and writing abilities.

However, this problem is not a barrier to lecturers and universities and is used as an excuse not to help students with learning difficulties. The government's various efforts and assistance should be the catalyst and encouragement for lecturers and schools to continue working to help students with learning difficulties (Jiang, Zang, Zhou & Cao, 2021; Zhiyenbayeva, Belyanova, Petunina, Dmitrichenkova & Dolzhich, 2021; McGarr, 2021). It can be achieved through the goals of the, namely the education development master plan focused on projects to develop school infrastructure in rural areas, increase student attendance in schools and reduce dropout rates, increase the number of trained lecturers in rural and cities, and improving the system of distribution of aid to poor students and students with special needs (Barrett, Treves, Shmis & Ambasz, 2019; Balfanz, R., Bridgeland, J. M., Moore, L. A., & Fox, J. H. (2010).

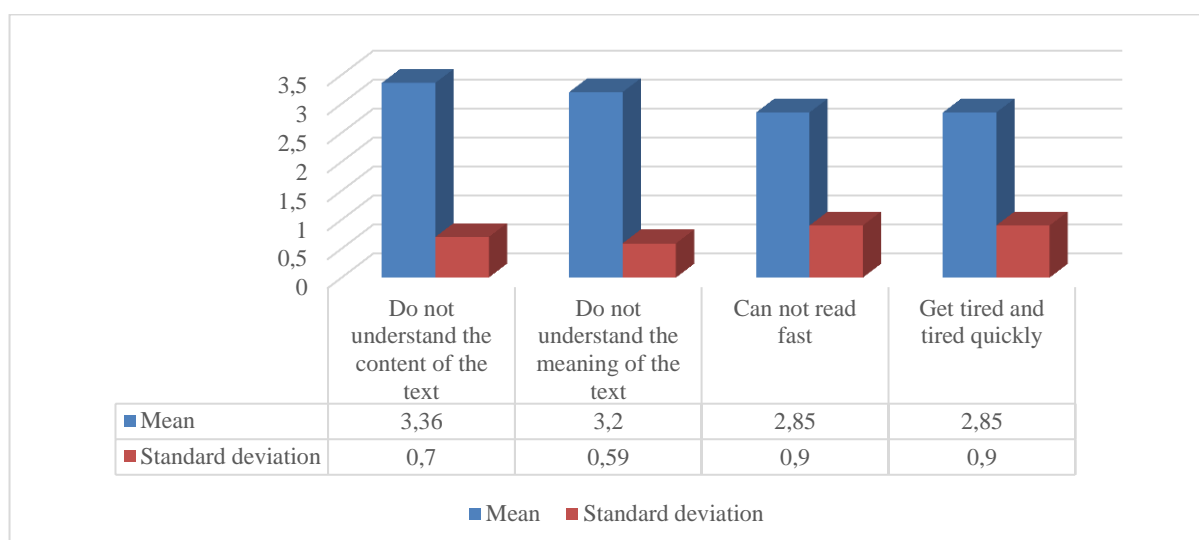
## Method

The design of this study is a quantitative study with a survey design. A descriptive study is a study that aims to describe a situation that occurs (Gregar, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Lazaraton, 2005). This study aimed to investigate the problems with English reading skills among students, the problems of writing difficulties, and the students' perceptions of lecturers' teaching in reading and writing ability at Universitas Kristen Indonesia. The population of this study was the students of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Universitas Kristen Indonesia. The data collection technique in this study was done by distributing questionnaires to eighty students who were chosen randomly using the random sample technique. The instrument of the study used was a set of questionnaires that covered students' background, reading difficulties, writing difficulties, and students' perceptions of their lecturers' teaching. This study's data analysis technique was a quantitative data analysis technique with a descriptive approach, and it was analyzed using SPSS 7.5. The study results are presented in descriptive form, namely mean and standard deviation.

## Results and Discussion

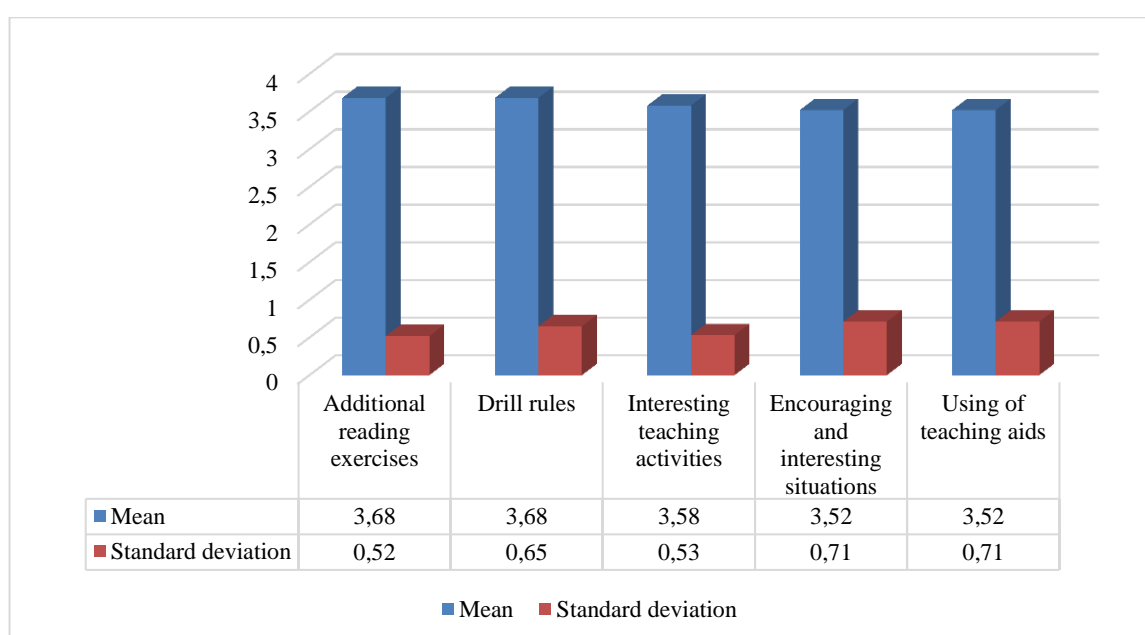
The study results showed problems with English reading skills among students in Universitas Kristen Indonesia. Overall, the results of this study show that the overall mean of reading problems among students, namely mean = 3,56, sd = 0,86. The study's findings also showed that the failure of respondents to understand the content of the text read the highest with a mean = 3,36, sd = 0,70. One of the problems is that it causes students to fail to understand the content of the information read. In addition, it was found that students could not understand the meaning of sentences that were read well, that is, mean = 3,20, sd = 0,59. Failure to understand these basic skills renders students incapable of mastering the skills of listing key ideas or classifying the content of a text well. While the inability of students to master basic skills in reading makes students unskilled in reading mechanically, that is fast reading with mean = 2,85, sd = 0,90, and students quickly feel tired while reading for a long time with mean = 2,85, sp = 0,90 (refer to Figure 1).

The results on Figure 1 shows that the problems in reading skills can be improved by planning exciting and conducive teaching activities by lecturers. In addition, a comfortable learning environment and encouragement from lecturers can create motivation and instill interest in students to continue learning. This study found that additional reading practice can improve students' reading skills with mean = 3,68, sd = 0.52, and drill methods conducted regularly in reading can help pronunciation and fluency of students in reading with a mean = 3,68, sd = 0,65. These students believe mastery of good reading skills can make reading activities in the classroom exciting with a mean = 3,58, sd = 0,53.



**Figure 1. Students' Reading Difficulties**

In addition, the motivation factor from the lecturer, the use of teaching aids that are appropriate to the ability and mastery of reading, students can make the atmosphere of reading activities to be effective and meaningful students with mean = 3.52, sd = 0.71 (refer to Figure 2)



**Figure 2. Students' Perception of the Lecturers' Teaching of Reading**

A study on writing difficulties found problems among students in Universitas Kristen Indonesia. It can be stated in Table 3. The study results found that the main problem with students' writing ability is not distinguishing uppercase and lowercase letters in writing with a mean = 3,61, sd = 0.61. Respondents agreed that the problem of distinguishing lowercase and uppercase letters stemmed from the problem of recognizing the alphabet with the second-highest problem result with mean = 3,56, sd = 0.89. It is supported by not understanding the written information with mean = 3,55, sd = 0.74.

Furthermore, the respondents also agreed that there is a problem identifying punctuation correctly when writing with mean = 3,41, sd = 0, 79. In contrast, the failure of respondents to master the mechanical skills of writing caused students not to be able to write a writing exercise well with a mean = 3,39, sd = 0,82. It certainly affects the production of essay writing by students who do not master the basic skills in writing. The study also found that respondents agreed that if they do not master the basic writing skills, students will not be able to

understand and produce meaningful essay writing mean = 3,39, sd = 0,84. The problem of poor mastery of reading skills well caused respondents to spell the words to be expressed while writing with a mean = 2,51, sd = 0,79, which in turn caused students to feel tired quickly while doing writing exercises with a mean = 2,67, sd = 0,95 (refer to Figure 3).

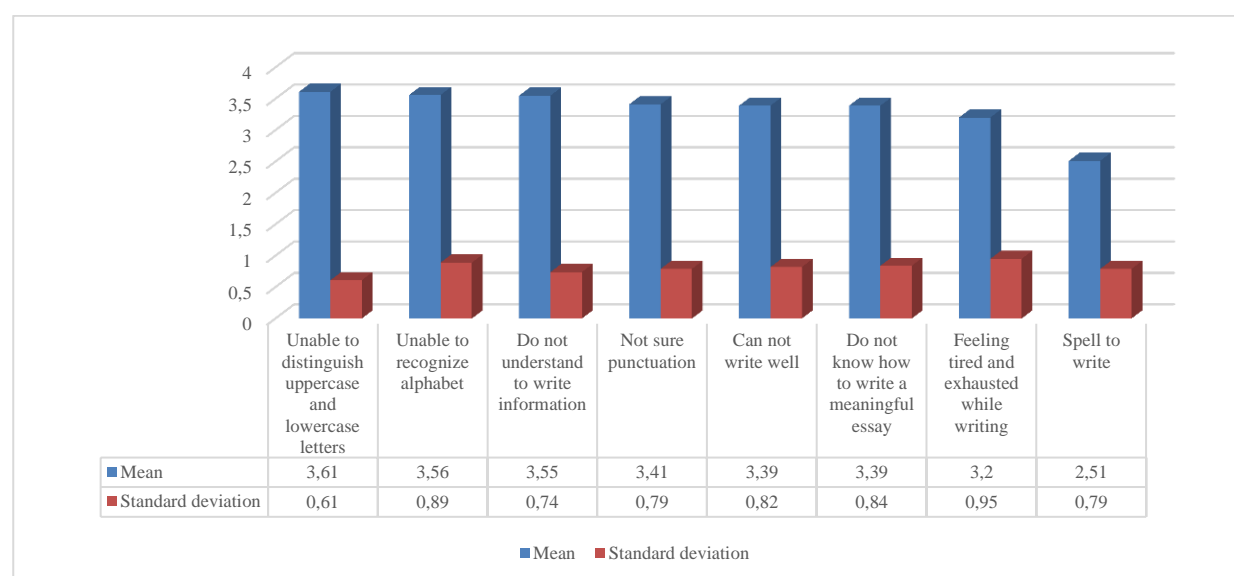


Figure 3. Students Writing Difficulties

However, respondents think that the problems in mastering writing can be improved with the help of creative and innovative lecturers who strive to build a conducive environment and motivate students to continue learning. The study's findings show that respondents have more fun if creative lecturers build various engaging writing activities in the classroom with a mean = 3,49, sd = 0,67. Respondents can write well when the lecturer provides training that can improve writing ability is very useful to students mean = 3,49, sd = 0,81. Respondents also thought that they would write more quickly if the lecturer pronounced the word with mean = 3,40, sd = 0,88, while the use of teaching aids that are appropriate to the level of ability of students can stimulate and cultivate students' interest to continue learning with a mean = 3,23, sd = 0,89. (Refer to Figure 4).

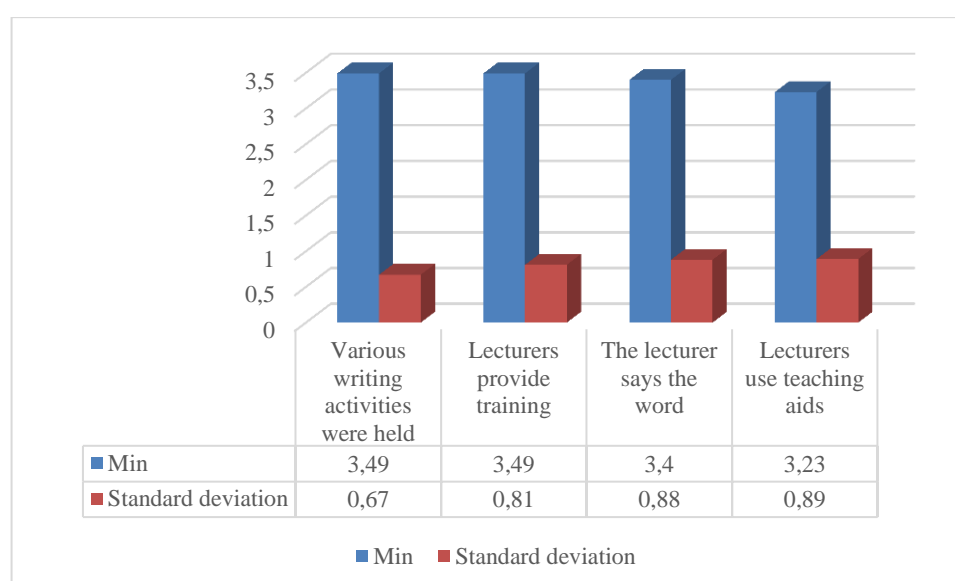


Figure 4. Students' Perceptions of Lecturers' Teaching of Writing

Most of the respondents who have problems with essential writing ability are weak in mastering basic reading and writing skills. Such weaknesses make students not interested in continuing to learn and improve skills even though they have the potential to succeed on par with their peers who are considered intelligent and capable. However, creative lecturer factors and a conducive classroom climate can create a learning environment that stimulates student interest. In addition, training appropriate to the student's level of ability makes students always motivated and ambitious and instills a desire to continue learning throughout life.

Some suggestions are considered necessary to improve students' teaching performance and learning potential to improve students' reading and writing ability in Universitas Kristen Indonesia. Among others, the primary teaching of reading and writing ability should be emphasized so students can master them. English language teaching should be presented in a more exciting approach with various gripping teaching aids and methods to develop students' reading and writing abilities further. Various methods can make students not quickly bored and tired during the learning process in the classroom (Yap, 2016; Dörnyei & Muir, 2019). In addition, using engaging teaching aids appropriate to the level of students' intellectual development while planning the lesson's content can stimulate students' interest and motivate them to continue learning. Teaching aids should be used optimally to produce meaningful learning and positively impact students. Media use aims to facilitate lecturers and students to interact or a two-way relationship that can attract the recipient's interest to respond (Tan, Whipp, Gagné and Van, 2019; Parker, 2020).

The ongoing efforts of the school management should consistently mobilize efforts to achieve the goal of helping mentally disabled students master reading and writing abilities by holding remedial classes. Beneficial seminars and courses should clearly emphasize to lecturers by providing information and input on the unique needs of students who are slow to master reading and writing. In addition, student achievement tests have a time limit and are conducted systematically to assess the effectiveness of the teaching and learning achievement of mentally disabled students (Arnold, Hodgkins, Kahle, Madhoo & Kewley, 2020; Hurwitz, Perry, Cohen, & Skiba, 2020; Raes, Vanneste, Pieters, Windey, Van Den Noortgate & Depaepe, 2020). Lecturers' perceptions of the image of sluggish students needing remedial assistance should be positive and aware that they should be treated fairly and have the potential to succeed just like their lucky peers. In addition, the patience and diligence of lecturers are crucial to forming the practice of helping sluggish students succeed. Finally, the university needs to hold more special courses for lecturers involved in reading and writing.

## Conclusions

The weakness of students in mastering reading and writing ability affects their potential and motivation to master various other skills in the English language. The study results showed that all respondents agreed that the factors of ability and creativity of lecturers could change the perception and awareness that they also have the potential to succeed in learning. In collaboration with school management, it is hoped to build a conducive school climate, and a safe school environment can stimulate motivated students to continue learning. In addition, the factors of lecturers who are skilled and able to absorb methods, techniques, and activities and structure the level of learning so that it becomes a set of creative and innovative teaching and learning constructs can provide a positive and meaningful impact. This factor can indeed build learning that promotes the direction of teaching. More serious attention must be given to strengthening the teaching and learning of English today. All English language educators must have the commitment and strength to face challenges and utilize the knowledge and skills of teaching English as much as possible. Improving the professionalism of English language lecturers is a catalyst for accountability of English language teaching.

In conclusion, the lecturers have only a bright background and attitude toward the English language but do not have the skills to master the content of this subject. Lecturers who are not proficient in language teaching and learning methods are not necessarily able to provide high commitment while teaching in the classroom—situations like this need to be given attention. A high commitment must be in line with excellent pedagogical mastery in teaching and learning English.

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