

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY LEVEL OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN AGRICULTURE STUDENTS OF SURIGAO DEL SUR STATE UNIVERSITY SAN MIGUEL

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to find out students' level of English Proficiency. The study used quantitative method of inquiry. It made use of a survey questionnaire to describe the profile of students as subjects of the study. The study revealed that being native speakers of Manobo, these students' English language acquisition may have been influenced by their native tongue. Students were already potential in their grammar competence. There are factors that contributed much why the third year BSA students are low proficiency in reading comprehension, one of those is that one of the four macro skills in English was not fully developed considering that they are graduated from ALS during their completion in basic education. Some of the competency in basic education was not fully tackled. There are signs that English proficiency of third year BSA students is not something to be taken for granted on by college professors. Students have glaring difficulty in reading comprehension in English. English proficiency enhancement is specifically most needed in reading comprehension.

Keywords: English Proficiency Level, Reading Comprehension in English, Third Year BSA, College Proficiency

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The concern of English language instructors and professors in planning the English class first falls on “what to teach and where to start”. A millennial instructors or professors will never think of how he or she can deliver the lesson and how much lesson he or she can deliver but most of all he or she should be thinking of how much learning his or her learners will get from the lesson. Given the curriculum, the instructor or professor is moved to follow what shots of lessons to deliver. With this reality however, there is always the question of learners’ preparedness to a new wave of learning task. This is especially true to language teaching.

Several studies related to English Language Proficiency has been undertaken. According to Addow et.al. (2013) in their study stressed that English language proficiency has weak effect on the students’ performance of Somali higher education students. There is weak relationship between English language proficiency and academic performance of Somali higher education students. In addition, Aina et.al. (2013) emphasized that there is correlation between proficiency in English language and academic performance of students in science and technical education; students in technical education performed better than their counterpart in science education; students who passed English language performed better than those who failed both in science and technical education. However, Arsad et.al. (2014) explained that English has become one of the most effective global medium of communication today. The significance of English is highly emphasized in many countries as it is now the medium of communication in international business and technology based trading industries.

The above studies revealed that those who have low English Language Proficiency have low academic performance. However, the global challenge of today to the academic sector is to produce graduates who are employable everywhere they might find a green pasture. After all, for what end should everyone struggle for college education if not to land a promising job. Along with this reality is the significant role of communication skills as a tool of a job seeker to grab the thinnest slice of job opportunity. Most often, a job seeker will always go through an interview. It is here where an individual job seeker should gain impression that the employer finds reason to hire him. Graduates for this reason, must be equipped with high proficiency in English language.

English proficiency and readiness in communicating are the product of English instruction which is the English Language Proficiency of students. By testing, the levels of proficiency are measured. It is therefore appropriate to evaluate the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture students’ level of English proficiency to find out what must be improved in the English language instruction of the Higher Education Institutions. The researcher being one of the instructors of English has all these reasons to go on the conduct of the study as part of his effort to improve the English language instruction for the attainment of high English language proficiency of Bachelor of Science in Agriculture students.

2.0 Theoretical Framework

Thorough investigation on the level of proficiency of the students will enlighten the instruction plan to make some innovations to attain a desired high level of students' English proficiency. To prove this claim, brilliant idea of expert on language education is applied. Acculturation is the way people adapt to a new culture. The Schumann theory on acculturation is mainly based on the social factors experienced by those learning English as their second language within the mainstream culture. The factors determine the social distance between the second language learner and the mainstream culture in which they are living in. This distance between the learner and the mainstream culture in turn determine the rate of language acquisition. Schumann states that the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language group will control the degree to which he acquires the second language.

3.0 Research Design and Methods

This study is descriptive type. It described the level of the students' proficiency through which identifying areas of English where students are low was analyzed and contained as basis for recommendatory enhancement program of English instruction to remedy or improve the proficiency of students in English. The scientific process of data gathering was used to come up with quantitatively processed data.

The level of students' English proficiency was described according to the ratings they get from the test. It is also the individual components in the English proficiency test that determined where the students are low.

Sampling Procedure

All the students who belong to the third year BSA student during 2nd semester of academic year 2016-2017 of Surigao del Sur State University San Miguel Campus were taken as subject-respondents of the study.

Research Instrument

The instrument is a test based on a test for English Proficiency provided by Transparent Language. The test was originally based on standard English vocabulary and English grammar that one would find in any English language learning material, so that this proficiency test can measure one's command of the English language. Some modifications were made to fit in the Filipino student's English learning background and was validated by expert English professors. Since modifications were made, two English professors and experts from Private school and one from public English professors from SUC were consulted to validate the content of the test and the instrument.

Data Gathering Procedure

First, the researcher sought permission from the Campus Director of Surigao del Sur State University San Miguel Campus to be allowed to conduct the survey and the

English Proficiency test to the third year BSA students. The researcher prepared the survey questionnaire where the students filled in for their profile. It is from this survey questionnaire that the researcher was able to get data about the personal profile of the respondents.

Another paper prepared was the English Proficiency test for the students to answer and to undergo for the researcher to get the level of students' English proficiency. There were seven categories of the test, six of which were answered in pen and paper while the speaking test was answered orally. There were three raters who inter-rated the oral proficiency and writing proficiency of the students using the rubrics for each respectively.

After the test was conducted and the survey questionnaire was filled in by the subject-respondents, the researcher collected the data and computed the summary of the individual rating to come up with a description of students' English Proficiency. The researcher then scrutinized the result as to what area of English is the students' lowest proficiency. This was done for the researcher to recommend what area in English language teaching will be improved to gain a lift in the English Proficiency of third year BSA students.

Statistical Treatment

The data gathered was treated statistically for the researcher to analyze easily. Frequency counting, and simple percentage was used to analyze the data gathered through the query of problem number 1. The ratings revealed in the English Proficiency test was treated with mean and came up with a qualitative description based on the scale of parameter. **Scale of Parameter for Speaking Rubric** 4.20–5.00-excellent 3.40 – 4.19 – very good 2.60–3.39-good 1.80–2.59 - poor 1.00 -1.79– very poor

Scale of Parameter for Writing Rubric 3.25–4.00-Highly proficient 2.50–3.24 Moderately proficient 1.75–2.49 Less proficient 1.00–1.74 least proficient

Scale of Parameter for Level of Proficiency 81-100% Very High Proficiency 61–80% High Proficiency 41-60% Moderate Proficiency 21–40% Low Proficiency 1-20% Very Low Proficiency

4. 0 Results and Discussions

Table 1
Students' Level of Proficiency in English

Language Area	Average Rating	Adjectival Rating	Rank
English Grammar	62%	High proficiency	1
English vocabulary	60%	Moderate proficiency	2
Speaking	51%	Moderate proficiency	3
Listening	50%	Moderate proficiency	4
Writing	46%	Moderate proficiency	5
Reading Comprehension	40%	Low Proficiency	6
Total Mean	51.5%	Moderate proficiency	

The data presented in Table 1 reveals that the students' level of proficiency is at the average of Moderate Proficiency. In the 6 components examined in the English language proficiency, it is in Grammar that the students rated High Proficiency where they got a mean of 62%. It is in reading comprehension that the students are rated Low Proficiency with a mean of 40%. In Vocabulary, Speaking and Listening, the students were rated Moderate Proficiency.

High Proficiency level of students in Grammar part tells their proficiency in the use of language structure. Part I of the test measured the ability of the students on how to string language into a correct structure. Part II measured also the students' ability to detect errors in grammar or items in the sentence that make it ungrammatical. It revealed students' high proficiency in grammar. There is implication that content coverage of English.

Part III test measured the ability of the students in vocabulary and its usage. Students were described moderately proficient in vocabulary. It implies that their ability in this aspect has not reached maximum level. There is still a need to enhance their vocabulary power which is essential to string language structure into meaningful and functional language. If the student is not achieving in fluency, educators should consider explicitly teach fluency to students in order for them to read smoothly, comprehending what they read more efficiently (Herron, 2008) states "Students who are not at least moderately fluent in reading by third grade are unlikely to graduate from college."

Part IV was the measurement of the students reading comprehension level of proficiency. It was described of low proficiency. The same with vocabulary proficiency, it did not reach maximum level. It simply implies that there is still a room for improvement in the reading comprehension skills of the students. Students may have been scared at opportunities to read more in-depth reading materials. Correlation according to the

researchers sought to identify the variable that could account for the greatest amount of variation in reading comprehension. The premise underlying this question is that vocabulary and grammar as components of linguistic proficiency are involved in reading comprehension. (Shiotsu and Weir, 2007)

Part V of the test measured the speaking proficiency. This revelation implies a scarce speaking opportunity of the students. It is related to a major finding of Csizer and Dörnyei's (2005) study with Hungarian learners is that integrativeness is the primary factor in the overall motivational disposition of second language learners. Existing evidence points to the fact that contexts have a profound impact on the way instrumental and integrative motivations relate to language learning. "The nature and effect of certain motivation components might vary as a function of the environment in which the learning takes place.

The part VI of the test revealed the moderate proficiency of the students in listening. It has an implication that there was not much opportunity of the students to engage in listening activities in their classes or in their environment.

In the general view of the third year BSA students' English Language Proficiency, there can be not much fulfilment finding them to have achieved only Moderate Proficiency in English Language. As to Kern & Warschauer, ((2000) Language is all about living the day to day life especially in this era where technology is very dominant and is using English as the medium of its operation. If the academic community has to take this seriously as life itself, there be can be no smile at this finding. Finding that the secondary students have reached only moderate proficiency, it is recommendatory that there should be a move for enhancement of English language instruction. There is the constant push to train teachers in the use of English language. It is evident in Diokno's (E.C. Dioko 2004) article "Teachers' Bamboo English Won't Do" which stresses that those teachers handling the three content areas with English as medium of instruction should be competent users of the language. Without such competence, the teaching-learning process suffers.

As it is also revealed that the lowest in proficiency of the third year BSA students among the macro skills in language is in reading. They got a rating only of 40% in reading comprehension which is described low proficiency. It means that it is also in reading skills that the students need more enhancements in instruction. Students were already High Proficiency in grammar. Competence in grammar is already a good tool in reading skill. The students may have a good command in English grammar however; they had a problem in comprehending ideas. This is confirmed the study of Suryanto (2017) revealed that that existing reading comprehension problems are composed of cultural-based issues, English teaching and learning concerns, and social contextual problems.

5. 0 Conclusions

Being native speakers of Manobo, these students' English language acquisition may have been influenced by their native tongue. Students were already potential in their grammar competence. There are factors that contributed much why the third year BSA students are low proficiency in reading, one of those is that one of the four macro skills in English was not fully developed considering that they are graduated from ALS during their completion in basic education. Some of the competency in high school was not fully tackled. There are signs that English proficiency of third year BSA students is not something to be taken for granted on by college professors. Students have glaring difficulty on reading comprehension in English. English proficiency enhancement is specifically most needed in reading comprehension in English.

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