

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND ATTITUDE: ITS INFLUENCE IN THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF THE FIRST YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Language proficiency is a measurement of how well an individual has mastered a language. Proficiency is measured in terms of receptive and expressive language skills, syntax, vocabulary, semantics, and other areas that demonstrate language abilities. The study aimed to determine the English language proficiency and attitude: its influence on the academic performance of the first year college students of Guimaras State College, Academic Year 2010-2011. Male respondents have moderate level of proficiency in English while females had a satisfactory level. All respondents had the same proficiency level which was moderately satisfactory when grouped according to monthly family income. Respondents from Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Education, and Information Technology had a satisfactory English proficiency level compared to those from Hotel and Restaurant Management, Criminology, and Industrial Technology who had a moderate level of proficiency. The respondents had a positive attitude towards English. The respondents had similar English language proficiency when categorized according to monthly family income; however, they had different proficiency levels when grouped according to course and gender. When grouped according to course, monthly family income, and gender, respondents had a positive response towards English. Respondents who obtained higher grades in English I, had higher English proficiency level while those who got lower grades had lower English proficiency level. The respondents' English proficiency level and attitude towards English affected their academic performance.

Keywords: *English Language Proficiency, Attitude, Academic Performance, Guimaras State College*

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Language is central to education: it is the means by which educational content is communicated; it is an object of study; it is an object of beliefs that are important in education; it is a key element of students' identities; it poses potential problems in education, mainly because of the beliefs we have about it; and it is a valuable resource for those who know how to make use of it. Language is a means of education in that it is the primary medium of communication between students and teachers and between students and textbooks.

Language proficiency is a measurement of how well an individual has mastered a language. Proficiency is measured in terms of receptive and expressive language skills, syntax, vocabulary, semantics, and other areas that demonstrate language abilities. There are four domains of language proficiency: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Language proficiency is measured for an individual by each language, such that the individual may be proficient in English and not proficient in another language (education.com).

Based on the study of Racca et al.(2016) on English Language Proficiency and Academic Performance of Philippines Science High School Students, "Educators agree that proficiency in the English

language is the basis for success in academic pursuits. Reading, writing, and working with numbers are tasks that are based on language skills, describes this as the interplay between everyday language skills and more advanced communication skills". They claim that language proficiency in English is significantly related to academic performance. Academic subjects like Science, Mathematics, and English often require the use of language functions. The language functions play a significant role in critical and analytical thinking required in science and mathematics subjects. The more language functions with which students are adept, the more effective their thinking can be. Thus, the more the students are proficient with the English language, the more they are likely to perform well in their academic subjects.

A group of researchers (Latif, Fadzil, Bahroom, Mohammad, San, 2011) conducted a research to determine the relationship between various socio-psychological variables like attitude, motivation, anxiety and instrumental orientation on performance in English as a second language. The results indicated that all of the four variables were significantly correlated with learners' performance in the English course conducted at the Open University of Malaysia. Moreover, the regression analysis showed that all the variables except for personal motivation exerted significant impacts on performance with anxiety having a negative impact while attitude and instrumental orientation having positive impacts.

Chalak and Kassaian (2010) investigated the motivation and attitude of Iranian undergraduate EFL students towards learning English. The research focused on the motivation orientations of the students and their attitudes towards the target language and its community. A group of 108 students majoring in English Translation in Isfahan, Iran was surveyed using Attitude, Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). The results revealed that these non-native Iranian speakers of English learned the language for both 'instrumental' and 'integrative' reasons and their attitudes towards the target language community and its members were generally found to be highly positive.

Statement of the Problem

This study conducted to determine the English language proficiency and attitude of the first year college students and its influence on the students' academic performance. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: 1) What is the profile of the first year college students in terms of gender, family income and course? 2) What is the English language proficiency level of the first year college students in terms of sex, family income and course? 3) What is the attitude of the college students towards English language? 5) What is the academic performance of the first year college students in English? 6) Are there significant differences in the English language proficiency and attitude of the respondents when categorized according to their personal attributes of gender, family income and course? 7) Are there significant differences in the academic performance of the students when classified as English language proficiency and attitude? and 8) Is there a significant relationship among the English language proficiency, attitude and academic performance of the respondents?

METHODOLOGY

The study employed the descriptive-correlational method of research. The respondents were 192 first year college students at Guimaras State College. This study used the CAT English and an attitude scale which was specially made to determine the students' attitudes towards English and the students' final grades in English I, which they took on the first semester of Academic Year 2010-2011. The result of the English entrance test conducted by the Admission Office was used to determine the level of the students' proficiency in English. Descriptive analysis, frequency distribution, mean, and standard deviation were the statistical data analysis and procedures used in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Profile of the Respondents. Results revealed that out of the 192 respondents, 61 (21.8%) were males while 131 (68.2%) females. Such implies that there were more females respondents than males. The results showed that out of 192 respondents, 187 (87.0%) have a monthly family income below P14,000.00; 10 (5.2%) have P14,000, and 15 (7.8%) of the respondents have a monthly family income above P14,000.00. It means that most of the study demographic have a monthly family income of below P14,000.00, followed by above P14,000.00, and finally P14,000.00. Out of 192 respondents, 44 (22.9%) were from Info-Tech; followed by BSBA with 40 (20.8%); BSIT with 34 (17.7%); Criminology with 30 (15.6%); followed by HRM with 23 (12.0%); and 21 (10.9%) from the School of Education. This result means that a majority of the respondents were from IT, followed by BSBA, BSIT, Criminology, HRM, and the least number of respondents came from the School of Education.

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Profile	F	%
Sex		
Male	61	31.8
Female	131	68.2
Total	192	100.0
Family Income:		
Below P14,000.00	187	87.0
P14,000.00	10	5.2
Above P14,000.00	15	7.8
Total	192	100.0
Courses:		
Info Tech	44	22.9
BSBA	40	20.8
BSIT	34	17.7
Criminology	30	15.6
HRM	23	12.0
Education	21	10.9
Total	192	100.0

Proficiency Level in English of First Year College Students. The proficiency level in terms of gender, the male respondents was moderately satisfactory while the female respondents were satisfactory. All respondents had the same proficiency level when grouped according to family income. The BSBA, Education, and Info Tech students were satisfactory while HRM, Criminology, and Industrial Technology were moderately satisfactory when categorized according to course.

Table 3. Proficiency Level in English of First Year College Students

Category	Mean	Description
Gender		
Male	22.0	Moderately Satisfactory
Female	27.96	Satisfactory
Family Income		
Below P14,000.00	26.37	Moderately Satisfactory
P14,000.00	23.40	Moderately Satisfactory
Above P14,000.00	24.47	Moderately Satisfactory
Course		
Info Tech	27.75	Moderately Satisfactory
BSBA	30.43	Moderately Satisfactory
BSIT	20.53	Moderately Satisfactory
Criminology	27.27	Moderately Satisfactory
HRM	23.57	Moderately Satisfactory
Education	29.95	Moderately Satisfactory

Attitude of the College Students towards the English Language. The results revealed that the attitude of the respondents towards English was positive. The Focus Group Discussion results further confirm this. The items in the questionnaire that got the highest mean was “I attend my English class regularly”, item 15 “I consider English as an essential subject”; “I submit English requirements on time”, and “I enjoy attending my English classes”. It was good to note that most of the respondents attended their class regularly and at the same time they submit English requirements on time which may mean that students gave importance in learning English language. However, they got lowest mean in item that states that “I like joining contests in English” and “I buy magazine written in English” which implies that they were not interested in joining contests in English and prefer buying magazine that were written in Filipino or native languages.

Yang (2012) conducted a short study with 20 University Malaya Master students to gauge their attitudes and motivation in L2. The main objective of the study was to find out what makes some people acquire and learn English better than others. The findings reveal that ‘learners who were highly and positively involved in their English proficiency had positive attitudes and highly motivated towards learning English’.

Table 4. Attitude of the Respondents

Items	Mean	SD	Description
1. I enjoy attending my English classes	2.64	.48	Positive
2. I first review my English subject than other subjects during exams	2.09	.39	Positive
3. I like my English teacher better than my other teachers	2.57	.51	Positive
4. When attending my English classes, it gives me a feeling of enjoyment and satisfaction	2.49	.55	Positive
5. I buy magazines written in English	1.73	.51	Positive
6. I read the English items first when reading magazines and newspapers	2.24	.48	Positive
7. I am attentive to my English teacher	2.46	.51	Positive
8. I prefer listening to English conversation	2.35	.50	Positive
9. I like reading articles written in English	2.35	.51	Positive
10. I like to watch movies in English	2.39	.55	Positive
11. I appreciate instructional materials written in English	2.39	.50	Positive
12. I like joining contests in English	1.82	.53	Positive
13. I like doing my English assignment	2.42	.50	Positive
14. I understand my lessons in English better than any other subjects	2.30	.46	Positive
15. I consider English as an essential subject	2.80	.39	Positive
16. I feel happy when I perform activities in my English class	2.50	.50	Positive
17. I participate more in my English class than in any other subjects	2.25	.46	Positive
18. I am more inclined to read materials in English	2.39	.57	Positive
19. I like to speak in English with my friends	2.13	.54	Positive
20. I like reading news items in English	2.35	.52	Positive
21. I attend my English class regularly	2.86	.35	Positive

Table 4. Continued....

22. I feel motivated to learn any skill in English class	2.62	.62	Positive
23. I can express my ideas in my English class	2.29	.49	Positive
24. Whenever I attend my English class, I have high spirits	2.36	.55	Positive
25. I submit English requirements on time	2.68	.47	positive
26. My English notebook is the best notebook I have	2.25	.54	positive
27. I am at ease doing my English tasks	2.26	.49	positive
28. I look forward to entering my English class	2.44	.54	positive
29. I like to go with friends who enjoy activities related to English	2.31	.68	positive
30. I like to listen to speakers who talk about English-related matters	2.52	.53	positive
Overall Mean	2.36	.25	Positive

Academic Performance of the First Year College Students in English. The respondents' general average grade mean for English I was 2.07 described as good. It showed that they were performing well in their English subject. Moreover, 21 or 10.94% of the students got average grades of 2.00 in English, followed by 19 or 9.9% students that got average grades of 2.2. It was sad to note that there were student that got 2.6 to 3.0 average grades which means that they have difficulty in learning English language.

Study habits of students may be relevant to the prediction of grades because it is possible that student's grades may be related to their study habits. That is, students with poor study habits may obtain lower grades than those students with better study habits (Shahzadi & Ahmad, 2011).

Results in the Differences in the English Language Proficiency of the Respondents When Categorized To Their Attributes

There was no significant difference in the language proficiency level of the respondents when they were classified according to their monthly family income. The results showed significant differences in the respondents' English language proficiency when they were grouped according to their gender and courses. As to the attitude of the respondents, results revealed that there were no significant differences in English language proficiency when they were categorized according to family income, sex, and course. The t-test computation in table 8 revealed a significant difference in the English language proficiency level of the students when classified according to sex, $t(130) = 3.719$, $p = .000$. It means that the English language proficiency level of the respondents varies. The male respondents have different level compared with the females. This result indicates that the female respondents were more inclined to be proficient in the English language.

As to attitude, result revealed that there is no significant difference in the attitude of the respondents when categorized according to variable family income, $X^2(2,189) = 0.74$, 929 . This result suggests that the attitude of the respondents whose monthly family income is below P14,000.00, P14,000.00, and above P14,000.00 is the same. The attitude of the students towards English is not affected by their monthly family incomes.

Further study revealed that there is no significant difference in the attitude of the respondents when grouped according to course. $X^2(5,186) = .928$, $p = .484$. This result means that the attitude of the respondents towards English is the same. The respondents coming from various courses exhibit the same attitude when it comes to English subject. They viewed English as one of the subjects that they should give importance to and that they must value the advantages of being proficient in it.

Moreover, there is no significant difference in the attitude of the respondents when categorized according to sex, $z(190) = .470$, $p = .143$. This result implies that the attitude of the respondents towards English, when grouped according to sex, is the same in the sense that both the female and male students have a positive attitude towards English.

Table 5. Differences in the English Language Proficiency of the Respondents When Categorized According to Profile

Source of Variation	f-value	p-value	Interpretation
Family Income	1.429	.242	Not significant
Course	7.522	.000	Significant
Sex	3.719	.000	Significant
Attitude			
Family Income	.074	.929	Not significant
Course	.928	.484	Not significant
Sex	1.470	.143	Not significant

$p > .05$

Results on the Academic Performance of the Respondents when Classified According to the English Language Proficiency

The results in table 8 showed significant differences in the academic performance of the respondents when classified according to English language proficiency $F(3,188) = 15.27, p = .000$. The academic performance of the respondents is affected by their English language proficiency level. Therefore, students with high academic performance have a high English proficiency level.

When classified according to attitude, results that revealed a significant difference in the academic performance of the respondents. This result implies that the academic performance of the respondents is affected by their positive attitude towards English.

In general, there were significant differences in the academic performance of the students as to their English language proficiency and with their attitude towards English. Therefore students with high grades in English I have high proficiency levels, while the attitude of the students affects the academic performance.

Kola (2013) revealed that high English language proficiency could also aid academic reading which is in a view to aptly indicate the influence of English language on students' academic performance in other disciplines.

Table 7. Differences in the Academic Performance of the Respondents when Classified As to English Language Proficiency and Attitude

Source of Variation	f-value	p-value	Interpretation
English Language Proficiency	15.27	.000	Significant
	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Attitude	3.719	.000	Significant

$p > .05$

Relationship in the English Language Proficiency, Attitude, and Academic Performance of the Respondents

There is a significant relationship between English language proficiency, attitude, and the academic performance of the respondents.

When Students' Proficiency in English Language is high, it will definitely affect and improve the academic performance of such students. Nevertheless, where the proficiency in English is lacking in any academic setting, it will definitely lower the academic performance of such students. (Aina, et.al)

Table 8. Relationship between the English Language Proficiency, Attitude, and Academic Performance of the Respondents

Variables		Proficiency Level	Academic Performance
Academic Performance	Pearson r	.433**	
	p-value	.000	
	Interpretation	Significant	
Attitude	Pearson r	.174*	-.146*
	p-value	.016	.044
	Interpretation	Significant	Significant

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the study, male and female respondents vary in English Language proficiency with the later having higher proficiency level. Personal and other attributes of the respondents have lower English proficiency levels. Despite these results the respondents' attitude in English language was positive. There was no significant difference in the English language proficiency level of the respondents when they were categorized as to their monthly family income. However, the results showed that there were significant differences in gender, courses of the respondents, and their language proficiency. As to the attitude of the respondents, results revealed that there were no significant differences when the respondents were categorized according to monthly family income, gender, and course. There were, however, significant differences in the academic performance of the students as to their English proficiency level, as well as in their attitude towards English. Therefore, students with high grades in English I have high English proficiency levels compared to those who have lower grades in English I. Hence, the attitude of the students affects their academic performance. There was a significant relationship between English language proficiency, attitude, and the academic performance of the respondents.

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