



English Academic Writing Performance Level of KSU Students

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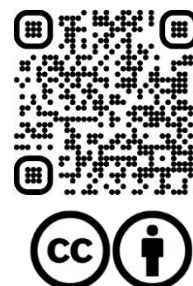
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Abstract— *Linguists and scholars have been studying the influence of English language competency on numerous domains such as academic performance and employability for many years. While early researchers suggested that English proficiency did not predict high academic ratings and employment aptitude, evidence now shows that English proficiency is a cutting-edge asset in areas of academic success and employment in highly competitive and demanding industries in various fields of specialization. This is descriptive-evaluative research that employed a survey to investigate the English proficiency level and the relationship between English proficiency and academic accomplishment of technical writing students. In this study, a non-probability sampling strategy, namely the purposive sampling technique, was used. The findings show majority of respondents are proficient at English grammar and reading but have a low degree of competency in writing. Only grammar had an effect on the respondents' sex profile out of the three English competence levels tested. The survey also indicated that respondents' English proficiency levels (grammar, reading, and writing) are highly connected to their academic accomplishment. It is recommended that a more thorough evaluation and analysis be conducted in order to identify real variables and predictors that would truly affect and influence students' levels of proficiency and academic achievement, ultimately creating and producing the best teaching and learning enhancement program.*



Keywords— *Proficiency, Technical Writing, learning enhancement*

I. INTRODUCTION

For many years now, linguists and researchers have examined the impact of English language proficiency on various fields like academic success and employability. While early researchers suggested that English proficiency does not dictate high academic rating and employment aptitude, evidences are now showing that proficiency of the English language is a cutting-edge asset in areas of academic success and employment in a highly-competitive and demanding industries in different field of specialization.

It is on this ground that the issue of how English language proficiency relates to academic achievement and employability is relevant to the educational development of bilingual and trilingual students.

This issue has been a widely debated topics not only in the Philippines, but also around some parts of the United

States and Europe. Underlying these issues, the question of what proficiency means and how it relates to the academic achievement and employability should be addressed. Central to the understanding of English language proficiency is J. Cummins's Theory of Language Proficiency. To be proficient in a second language (English, for Filipinos), both basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) need to be developed. The latter is the basis for students' academic success but may take from 5-7 years or longer to master. The former, in contrast, is usually attained within the first two years of exposure to the second language and is characterized by superficial oral language skills.

Language proficiency, furthermore, develops along these two continuums: from context-embedded to context-reduced communication, and from cognitively less-demanding to cognitively-demanding tasks. Then how do

we measure English language proficiency? Canale provided a set of criteria he termed communicative competence to assess proficiency in the language as follows: grammatical competence which encompasses knowledge in lexical items and rules of morphology, syntax, sentence, grammar, semantics, and phonology; discourse competence which is the ability to connect sentences in stretches of discourse and form a meaningful whole out series of utterances; sociolinguistic competence which involves knowledge of socio-cultural rules of language; strategic competence which is the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdown in communication due to performance variables or due to insufficient competence.

Summing it up, English language proficiency is competence in basic mechanics, manipulation and ability to use words, phrases, and sentences, distinction of appropriate function of the language, and compensation or remediation for a lack in some language areas. These have been the basis for myriad of researches on the relationship of English language proficiency to academic achievement of the students. At present, researches have turned their attention to the broad cognitive development of language among students. These researches have found an increasing evidence for positive relation between English language proficiency and reasoning abilities including “nonverbal problem-solving skills, divergent thinking skills, and field dependence”. Research has also indicated that additive-bilingual students who have high proficiency in English outperform their monolingual counterparts who have low proficiency in English on tasks requiring high level of cognitive control.

The series of studies by J. Cummins in 1979, 1981, 1989, and 1992, respectively, have shown that proficiency in the acquired language must be obtained in order for the students’ cognitive abilities to be properly incited. In short, academic achievement is only attained through literacy and proficiency of English. Additionally, the more proficient one is in English, the quicker one is to amass knowledge. For a student to be academically competent in areas like Mathematics, Science, Humanities, Arts, and even Character Education, focus on “linguistic structures, functions, and mechanics” 14, should be considered first.

Thus, culturally diverse students must make the transition from using only concrete language style to a more contextualized language. Systematically selecting language activities along the oral-proficiency continuum and facilitating the development of the students’ narrative abilities prove to be effective in promoting academic achievement as well. Furthermore, Wallach and Miller noted that “the shift from utterance-based communication

to text-based communication means that students engage in the manipulation of language topics, forms, and functions”, which is very crucial in attaining academic success. According to the researches of Wallach and Butler, and of Simon, there is an existing relationship between English language proficiency and academic achievement, and becoming academically good involves proficiency in English. Thomas and Collier suggested that sustained instruction in English enhances students’ academic success in later years, as shown in their research study on high school students.

The general perception of a “declining English competence” of our students and graduates has been constantly talked about by industry insiders, media practitioners, and educators. Has there been a decline of English competence? If there is, what measures are currently in place to ensure academic and language success in schools? Does proficiency in the English language ensure good academic standing? What factors contribute to proficiency in the English language ensure good academic standing? What other factors contribute to language proficiency and academic performance of students?

Background of the study

The academic achievement of bilingual and/or trilingual students has long been a major educational concern. It has been said that before these students are confronted with academically challenging tasks in any discipline, they should be masters of the English language first. Since, majority of the subjects taught in the school use English language as medium of instruction. But the question here is: how do these learners acquire the standard of English proficiency? There are several factors that affect or inhibit learners in attaining mastery of English; thus, attaining academic success is near to impossible. Such factors includes age and/or level of maturity, first language proficiency, and attitude and individual differences. Collier said that “for academic achievement, it does not matter when second language begins, as long as cognitive development continues at least through the age of 12.

First language proficiency is also a major factor, as what was noted by researchers that it may inhibit the development of the second language. Sex, age and attitude and individual differences. It is on this premise that this research study is geared to prove or disprove the validity of the effects of English language proficiency on academic achievement and employability. Sufficient data are then gathered to supplement the research study and to aid the researcher with the proper procedures in conducting the study. These data are grouped according to relevance and importance and on the degree of reference. The interest of the research study started as a practical observation in the

classroom. It has been observed that those who have ability, in whatever level of proficiency, in the English language have the competitive advantage over those who are less or no ability to use English in terms of academic performance.

Statement of the problem

This study determines the significant correlation of English language proficiency to academic achievement of technical writing students of College of Criminal Justice Education-KSU for the school year 2018-2019.

Objectives of the Study

This study investigated the English proficiency level and the significant correlation of English language proficiency to academic achievement of the technical writing students of CCJE - KSU. The results further enhanced the teaching-learning process and the goal of English education.

Specifically, it dealt on the following objectives:

1. To determine the English proficiency level of the technical writing students of CCJE-KSU.
2. To determine if there is significant difference on the English proficiency level of the respondents when group according to sex and age.
3. To sought the correlation between the respondent's English proficiency level and their academic performance.

Hypothesis

A. English proficiency level of respondents has no significant difference when group according to sex.

B. English proficiency level of respondents has no significant difference when group according to age.

C. English language proficiency has no significant effect on academic achievement of the students; thus, no correlation can be made between the level of proficiency in English language and academic achievement.

The study on the relationship of English language proficiency and academic achievement has been the subject of many researches for decades now. Educators and school administrators promote the idea that language proficiency affects academic performance and language proficiency and academic performance affect employability. Although there are some who contradicted such idea, the impact of the results of these researches and studies proved to be interest-provoking and had alarmed those in the authority. That is why considerable number of similar studies is still conducted. The study on the significant effects of English language proficiency on academic achievement is the key factor in understanding learners' diverse ways on acquiring mastery of the subject matters specially those that use English as medium of instruction.

The study alone may eliminate subjectivity on the part of the teachers in terms of assessing the academic performance of the students. In such ways, the teachers are given prior knowledge about the capacity of their students to use the English language and eventually make the necessary adjustments so that all students, in whatever level of English proficiency they have, shall learn effectively whatever the academic subject is. Additionally, understanding that the students are going through a predictable and sequential series of developmental stages in English language proficiency helps teachers predict and accept students' current stage, while modifying their instruction to encourage progression to the next stage. This study can also help teachers develop appropriate instructional strategies and assessments that guide students along a continuum of language development.

This study will also benefit the students themselves. Having this background, they can already adjust to different academic tasks in the classroom. Also, this shall provide them with necessary information on assessing their own competence in English and suit it to appropriate level of academic struggle. They will be given substantial help for them to understand their level of competencies in the language. In the case of those who are in the authority, they will be given enough background on the level of English proficiency and its effect to academic achievement of the students. With this, they shall have basis in future program implementation in relation to educational development.

Furthermore, this research study is an important area in English language education, perhaps an area that can be significantly studied more. This study will generate new ideas that can be used for future researches related to the topic. As a mere research study, this may not be the be-all and end-all in describing students' academic learning styles, but this will be a starting point in analyzing the important role of English not only as an international language, but also as a language of academics.

Finally, understanding the concept of English language instruction and its impact to the overall academic performance of the students is a good bird's eye view to course developers and educators. Identifying the areas of English our students are challenged with versus the English proficiency requirements in their job application in the future. Moreover, it is imperative for the whole academe to understand the demands of the global market and the relevance of language proficiency and academic performance to employability. This research ultimately seeks answers to the unidentified reasons of the "declining English proficiency" and what effective programs and solutions can we implement to address such issues.

Existing research on factors contributing to academic achievement of students in higher education reveals a number of factors in multiple dimensions. In general, these factors fall into the following four categories: academic, psychosocial, cognitive, and demographic (McKenzie & Schweitzer, 2001). All these factors have been extensively explored and examined by previous research. For example, among academic factors, prior academic achievement (e.g., McKenzie & Schweitzer, 2001; McKenzie, Gow, & Schweitzer, 2004), learning skills and habits (e.g., Abbott Chapman, Hughes, & Wyld, 1992), learning strategies (i.e., general learning strategies, subject-matterspecific strategies) and approaches (e.g., Duff, Boyle, Dunleavy, & Ferguson, 2004; Pokay & Blumenfeld, 1990; Sadler-Smith, 1996; Watkins & Hattie, 1981) were explored as variables influencing academic performance. With regard to the psychosocial dimension, social integration into the university system, motivation, anxiety, social and emotional support, and psychological health were explored (e.g., Terenzini & Pascarella, 1978). The cognitive dimension, which includes self-efficacy (e.g., McKenzie & Schweitzer, 2001) and an individual's attribution style (e.g., Peterson & Barrett, 1987) were also studied in many empirical studies. Lastly, various demographic features such as gender and age were examined in relation to academic performance in higher education (Li, Chen, & Duanmu, 2010).

II. METHODOLOGY

Locale of the study

This study was conducted at the CCJE-KSU in Tabuk City, Kalinga. CCJE is one of the colleges of Kalinga State University located at the Bulanao campus.

Research Design

This study is descriptive-evaluative research using a survey to seek the English proficiency level of the technical writing students of CCJE-KSU. The study is also relational in the sense that it sought the correlation between the respondent's English proficiency level and (a) their identified profile variables – age, sex, and final grade, (b) identified macro skills – reading, writing and grammar.

Respondents

The respondents of this study were the 33 identified technical writing students who were enrolled in Technical Writing of CCJE - KSU for the AY-2018-2019.

Non-probability sampling procedure was employed, specifically the purposive sampling technique. Students' final grade were the marks considered in the academic achievement of the respondents of the study.

Instrument

The pertinent data needed for the study were collected with the use of the data-gathering instruments.

Personal Data Sheet (PDS) – profiles and which will likewise serve as the personal variables in this study. This is comprised of questions that seek for the background of the respondents like age, sex, final rating in Technical Writing.

English Proficiency Test Questionnaire. The English Proficiency test was composed of 80 items, with three different types of test such as; Reading (20 items), and Writing (30 items), and Grammar (30 items).

Data Gathering Procedure

Researcher obtained an approval from the college dean of College of Criminal Justice Education where the study was carried out. Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants were given informed consent forms, which provided information regarding the study, including the contact information of the researcher.

The questionnaire was the primary tool used in gathering the data and information pertinent to the study. It consisted of three (3) parts.

READING: A 20 question which requires students to read quickly to find specific information in authentic texts such as newspapers, university calendars, web pages, and bibliographies.

WRITING: The Writing test involves writing a composition on a topic assigned to the respondents. The time for this test is 45 minutes.

Grammar: The grammar test is a fill-in-the-blank type of exam which accounts for the way in which words are combined to form sentences.

Data analysis

To answer the specific questions in this study, the following statistical treatments were employed.

Frequency and Percentage. This was used to determine the respondents' profile.

Mean. This was employed to establish the respondents' language proficiency in the English language.

Pearson – r Correlation Analysis. This was utilized to determine whether the respondents' profile correlates with their English proficiency level.

Anova. This was utilized to determine the difference between the Respondents' English Proficiency Level and their Age.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the English Proficiency Level of the Respondents in Grammar

English Proficiency Level Grammar	Frequency	Percent
Poor	2	6.1
Good	26	78.8
Very Good	5	15.2
Total	33	100.0

The table clearly shows that 15.2% or five (5) of the respondents are very good in English and only 6.1 % or two (2) of them are poor. Majority of the respondents are generally good in English grammar. It is shown by its percentage of 78.8 and its number of 26 respondents. This implies that their attendance and consistence in attending the lectures could have helped their acquisition of English proficiency in grammar.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the English Proficiency Level of the Respondents in Reading

English Proficiency Level Reading	Frequency	Percent
Poor	2	6.1
Good	28	84.8
Very Good	3	9.1
Total		100.0

The table shows that only 3 or 9.1% of the respondents got the very good proficiency level in reading and similar to grammar, only 2 or 6.1% of the respondents got poor proficiency level in reading. Of the 33 respondents, 28 or 84.8% of them got the good proficiency level. This could mean that, similar to their acquisition of proficiency in grammar, their attendance to classes and lectures had contributed to their reading proficiency.

Summary of the Result

1. To determine the English proficiency level of the technical writing students of CCJE-KSU.

1.1 Grammar

Five (5) or 15.2 % of the respondents are very good in English and only 6.1 % or two (2) of them are poor. Majority of the respondents are generally good in English grammar. It is shown by its percentage of 78.8 and its number of 26 respondents.

1.2 Reading

Only 3 or 9.1% of the respondents got the very good proficiency level in reading and similar to grammar, only 2 or 6.1% of the respondents got poor proficiency level in reading. Of the 33 respondents, 28 or 84.8% of them got the good proficiency level.

1.3. Writing

Only 5 or 15.2% of the 33 respondents got the “good” proficiency level in writing and the 28 or 84.8% of the respondents had the poor level of proficiency in writing

2. To determine if there is significant difference on the English proficiency level of the respondents when group according to sex and age.

English proficiency levels, reading and writing were found to have no significant relationship with the respondent’s age and sex.

3. To sought the correlation between the respondent’s English proficiency level and their academic performance.

English proficiency levels (grammar, reading and writing) are statistically not significantly related to the academic achievement of the respondents. The results of - .224 for grammar, .133 for reading and -.014 show low degree of correlation to the academic achievement of the respondents. This implies that the English proficiency level on grammar, reading and writing does not strongly influence the respondent’ academic achievement.

IV. CONCLUSION

The English proficiency level of the respondents in grammar, reading and writing is statistically significantly related to the respondents’ academic achievement. The proficiency level is a strong indicator of the students’ performance inside the classroom.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Participation and listening to lectures and class sessions would strongly help and enhance the knowledge and skills of the students in technical writing. Formative assessment must be strengthened and more exercises, practices and exposure on writing must be made to develop and improve the skill in writing. The results and conclusions should be reviewed and analyzed to come up with the real variables

and predictors that would really affect and influence the students' level of English proficiency and academic achievement. Further research and study should be made on the student's level of English proficiency to be able to create and produce the better, if not the best, teaching and learning enhancement program.

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