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Research Article

English Proficiency Test and Academic Performance in Purposive Communication: A Correlation Study

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ABSTRACT

English is a critical subject in the Philippines; teachers themselves are also required to pass the English Proficiency Test before practicing in public schools. However, there has been a gradual decline in English language proficiency among Filipinos, as evidenced by various assessments. The study aims to explore the English proficiency of college students at the university in relation to the course Purposive Communication which sought to answer the following questions: 1) What is the academic performance in Purposive Communication course of the respondents?; 2) What are the English proficiency level test results of the respondents? 3) Is there a significant relationship between the general weighted average in the Purposive Communication course of the respondents and the English proficiency level test results of the respondents? The researchers utilized a correlational research design for the study to measure the relationship between independent and dependent variables; it determined that a correlational design was appropriate and beneficial. This phase statistical insights into the relationship between academic performance and English proficiency. The findings contributed to theory generation by shedding light on the role of specific college courses in shaping English proficiency and informing educational policies aimed at enhancing language proficiency among future teachers.

Keywords: *English proficiency, Academic performance, Correlation study*

Introduction

English is taught in basic education at the secondary and tertiary levels. It is considered a tool to unlock the acquisition of knowledge across all subjects. Teachers, who are the implementers of all the programs in the

Department of Education, are required to pass the English Proficiency Test before a licensed teacher can practice teaching in public schools in the country. It is a mandatory examination administered for all aspiring public elementary teachers. A teacher who fails to pass the

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examination hinders the ability to render service in public elementary schools. According to Santos et al. (2022), the Philippines is considered one of the largest English-speaking nations in the world. In fact, English is one of the official languages in the Philippines. However, throughout the years, a gradual deterioration in English language proficiency can be observed among Filipinos based on the EF English Proficiency Index, Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), and the average score of Filipino IELTS takers. This indicates that not all graduates are ready for their English proficiency skills as they manifest this result. Is this problem of deteriorating English Proficiency attributed to English courses taken in college or the college program in which students are enrolled?

It is a fact that teachers should possess a good level of English proficiency when they start their teaching career in education. Different subjects from primary and secondary education require them to be knowledgeable in teaching English subjects such as English, Math, and Science. "You cannot give what you do not have," a long-time idiomatic expression that gives us an assurance that teachers do possess good English proficiency, a sad reality that graduated college students of education failed to enter the teaching profession for the reason that they failed the English Proficiency Test.

According to Racca & Lasaten (2016), 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, and this is described as the interplay between everyday language skills and more advanced communication skills. Indeed, language proficiency is a key to academic performance. A person who does not know English, for instance, may not have access to the world's known scientific and technological discoveries that are predominantly written in English. This means that students need to be proficient in English for a better grasp of knowledge in another field of knowledge.

As stated by Richards (2018) as cited by Aditya (2020), language proficiency refers to the ability to use language for a variety of communicative processes. Proficient users are said to

have a command of the language, i.e., they can understand the language without difficulty, express a range of ideas clearly in speech and writing, and interact with other speakers comfortably. Five performance indicators are usually used to assess language proficiency, i.e., accuracy, fluency, complexity, appropriacy, and capacity. In summary, English proficiency is vital in this modern age.

According to Aditya (2020), English proficiency is essential because it is one of the key components that make up someone's language knowledge. If someone is proficient in English, they will be able to use English to make and communicate verbally and in writing. Furthermore, being proficient in English means that you would be able to receive the benefits of learning English. The benefits of English are such that you would be able to adapt and talk to anyone easily from one country to another because English is an international language. By being proficient in English, you would be able to enjoy entertainment, understand the international economy, learn technology, and many more benefits.

The purpose of setting language proficiency levels is to promote effective teaching and enhance the quality of education. Language proficiency levels provide an objective reference against which teachers' proficiency can be gauged to help them pursue continuous professional development. Teachers are encouraged to strive for higher levels of language proficiency for they cannot teach what they do not know (Cing, et.al., 2014). Teachers' English proficiency can impact students' ability to be responsive and effective to grasp the knowledge taught in them. Self-efficacy is developed in them when teachers display high English proficiency.

In the study of Adanza on establishing a relationship between English Proficiency and Academic performance, the study reveals that there is a significant difference in both variables, both actual and perceived, when grouped according to school/ program, but no significant difference in English proficiency when grouped according to year level. It doesn't matter whether the students are on different year levels, the English proficiency level remains the same.

The English Proficiency Test (EPT) is a standardized test that measures the English language proficiency of non-native speakers. It is used for a variety of purposes, such as student placement in English language programs, job applications, and teachers' certifications. The test is designed to assess the ability to read, write, speak, and understand English. In the Philippines, the EPT is a mandatory examination for aspiring public school teachers after passing the LET (Licensure Examination for Teachers). The test is administered by the National Education Testing and Research Centre (NETRC). The exam consists of two parts: reading and writing.

Academic performance is a multidimensional construct that involves meeting goals, achievement and objectives set in a program or course that a student attends. It is the measurement of student's achievement across various academic subjects. Academic performance is composed of the skills, attitudes and behaviours of a learners that contribute to academic success in the classroom.

Purposive Communication is a course in General Education that exposes students to various domains of knowledge and ways of comprehending social and natural realities. Its general education outcomes are categorized into intellectual competencies, personal and civic competencies, and practical responsibilities. Purposive communication is composed of topics on writing, speaking, and presenting to different audiences for various purposes (CMO 20, s.2013). In observance of academic freedom, teachers could enhance English proficiency in this course by adding topics encompassing the macro skills in English, that is speaking, listening, reading, writing and viewing as it is practice in our university.

The coverage or contents of a Purposive Communication course may vary depending on the educational institution and the specific objectives of the course. However, in general, a Purposive Communication course aims to develop students' communicative skills for specific purposes, such as academic or professional contexts. These courses are often designed to cater to students with different levels of English proficiency.

Here are some common topics that may be covered in a Purposive Communication course related to students' level of English proficiency (1). Essential Communication Skills: For students with lower English proficiency, the course may focus on foundational skills, such as building vocabulary, improving pronunciation, and developing basic grammar and sentence structures.

(2). Listening and Comprehension: The course may include activities and exercises to enhance students' listening skills, such as listening to and understanding lectures, presentations, and conversations related to specific academic or professional subjects. (3). Reading and Comprehension: Students may learn strategies for compelling reading, including skimming, scanning, and understanding academic or professional texts. They may also practice reading comprehension by analyzing and summarizing written materials. (4). Speaking Skills: The course may incorporate activities to improve students' speaking skills, such as giving presentations, participating in group discussions, and engaging in role-plays or simulations related to specific contexts and topics. (5.) Writing Skills: Students may learn and practice different types of writing, such as emails, reports, essays, and formal letters. The course may focus on developing skills in organizing ideas, structuring paragraphs, and using appropriate vocabulary and grammar. (6) Vocabulary and Terminology: Special attention may be given to expanding students' vocabulary and introducing subject-specific terminology relevant to their academic or professional interests. (7). Cultural and Intercultural Communication: The course may explore cultural aspects of communication and provide guidance on effective intercultural communication strategies when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds.

(8). Presentation Skills: Students may learn techniques for delivering effective presentations, including structuring content, using visual aids, and engaging the audience. (9). Critical Thinking and Analytical Skills: The course may encourage students to think critically and analyze information, arguments, and opinions to effectively express their ideas and opinions

in oral and written communication. (10). Ethical Communication: Students may be introduced to ethical considerations in communication, such as respecting intellectual property, avoiding plagiarism, and maintaining professionalism in academic and professional contexts.

It's important to note that these topics are general guidelines, and the actual content may vary depending on the curriculum and objectives of the specific course. The academic performance of education students greatly affects their ability to pass the English proficiency test.

In the past years of the curriculum under Bachelor of Elementary Education, a number of English courses were being taught: English 1, English 2, English 3, and 4. These subjects focus on grammatical structures that develop students' English Proficiency levels. In the recent years of K to 12, a modification of the curriculum changed these courses into Purposive Communication, which resulted in poor English Proficiency levels. The reflected English performance of students seemed to have a significant impact on the English Proficiency levels of students. As stated in Nasirudeen & Song Xiao

(2020), correlational analyses showed that English language difficulties affect general performance in English.

The study aimed to explore the English proficiency of college students at the university in relation to the course Purposive Communication. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions.

1. What is the academic performance in Purposive Communication course of the respondents?
2. What is the English proficiency level test results of the respondents?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the general weighted average in Purposive Communication course of the respondents and English proficiency level test results of the respondents?

Conceptual Framework

This study is premised on the concept of correlating general weighted average in their Purposive Communication course representing the independent variables, and the English proficiency test results of the respondents as dependent variables.

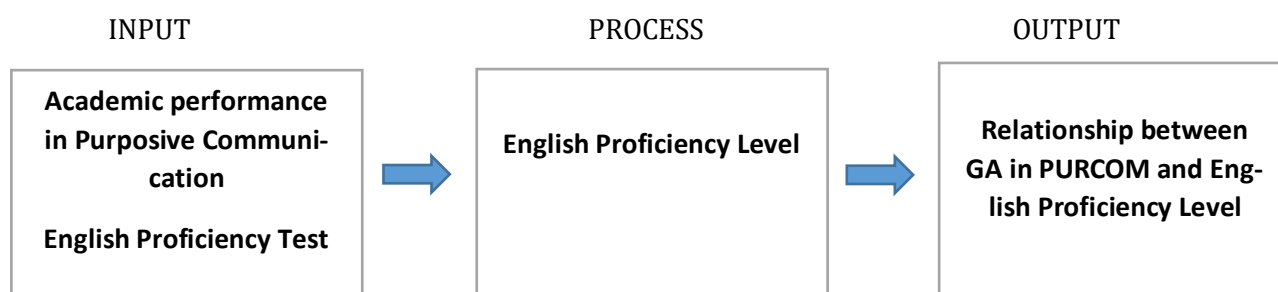


Figure 1: A paradigm showing the relationship between the Academic Performance in Purposive Communication and English proficiency test results of the respondents.

Methods

This part contains the essential details on the research design, respondents/participants, population and sampling, ethical consideration, instrumentation, data gathering procedure, and data analysis.

Research Design

This paper used the Quantitative Research Approach to collect data and conduct analysis through a questionnaire survey. (Leedy & Ormrod 2001; Williams, 2011) Quantitative

research requires data collection so that information can be quantified and statistically analysed to support or refute alternative knowledge claims. Apuke (2017) Utilizing and analysing numerical data using specific statistical techniques to answer queries such as who, how much, what, where, when, how many, and how is involved.

A correlational research design will be utilized by the researcher. Because the study measured the relationship between independent and dependent variables, it will determine

that a correlational design was appropriate and beneficial. A correlation can have either a positive or negative direction. Pritha Bhandari (2022).

Participants of the Study

This paper used random sampling among the students under the program of the Bachelor of Elementary Education of Don Honorio Ventura State University. A simple random sample is a subset of a community that is chosen at random. Using this method, every person in the society has the same chance of being chosen. This method is the easiest of all the probability sampling methods because it only includes one random choice and doesn't need much information about the population ahead of time. Because it uses randomization, any research done on this group should have high internal and external validity and a lower risk of research biases like sampling bias and selection bias. (Thomas, 2022)

The researcher used Slovin's formula to get the sample population. It is used to take a smaller sample of a community when it is not possible to study the whole group. Slovin's method lets a researcher pick a sample of the population that is as accurate as they want. Slovin's method tells the researcher how big the sample size needs to be to make sure that the results are pretty accurate. (Ellen, 2020)

Limitations

The study is limited to students in the College of Education department who are taking a Bachelor of Elementary Education. The respondents were graduating students who were considered to be pre-service teachers at the university. The researchers intentionally explored the study to test the preparedness of the future elementary teachers in the locality.

Instrument

This paper adapted DepEd English Proficiency Level Test. The English Proficiency Test is a required examination for teacher applicants nationwide under the Department of Education with reference to DepEd Memorandum 106, s. 2019. It covers grammar and vocabulary, simple sentence completion, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension. The

instrument was adapted from the DepEd English Proficiency Test administered to teacher applicants. The instrument was modified to ensure that the distribution of different macro skills was integrated. The instrument used consisted of five parts. The first part of the survey is the respondent's general weighted average in the Purposive Communication course. The second part was the adapted DepEd (Department of Education) English proficiency test. The adapted questionnaire underwent validation from experts in the field of English before it was administered to respondents.

Data Collection

First, the researchers wrote a letter to the target respondents expressing interest in conducting the study. The collection of was done face-to-face gathering the data on the administration of the English Proficiency Exam and the general average of students in Purposive Communication. in getting the general weighted average of the respondents, a thorough discussion on the purpose of the research was made clear, including the permission to provide the researchers their weighted average was made. The data was given by the class mayor of the respondents with an assurance that data privacy will be observed, such that researchers and the class mayor keep the data confidential. The results of data on English proficiency results were kept secure after the checking of the papers. Scores were deliberately provided to the authorized statistician.

Statistical Treatment

The Statistical Package for Science (SPSS) was used in treating the data. The procedures were carried out according to the objectives and the level of measurement of the variables. Both descriptive and inferential statistics will be used in this study. The analysis will be divided into the following parts.

1. The general weighted average of the respondents was calculated using frequency, percentage, range, mean, and standard deviation.
2. The respondents' English proficiency tests will be identified using percentage, range, mean, and standard deviation.

- Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient will be used to determine the relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of the degree program and general weighted average and their English proficiency level.

Ethical Considerations

This study's primary objective was to safeguard people's privacy and personal information. As a result, the researchers took all reasonable measures to safeguard the participants' and school's personal information. As a result, all signed and unsigned agreements, personal contacts, emails, and other pertinent documents will be securely stored in a password-protected cabinet. Only researchers have access to the contents. After this research

is complete, all associated documents will be erased and destroyed to safeguard personal information. Each participant will be given a pseudonym to conceal their personal information. Additionally, since the information about the locations (i.e., university and department) had no effect on the study's outcomes, the researcher will conceal the institution's information as well.

Results and Discussion

This part of the paper presents the results of the gathered data on the objective of identifying the relationship of Purposive Communication course and English Proficiency test administered to future public elementary teachers.

Table 1. Academic Performance in Purposive Communication

No. of Respondents	General Weighted Average
102	88.13

Table 1 shows the results of the 102 respondents obtaining an 88.13 mean score in their general weighted average in Purposive Communication. Results show that respondents perform satisfactorily based on the university's revised transmutation table, wherein 99-

100 is excellent, 93-98 is Excellent, 85-92 is satisfactory, 80-84 is good, 76-79 is fair, 75 is pass, and 74 below is failed. According to Amir et al. (2024), the level of communication contributes to achievement in the academic performance of students.

Table 2. English Proficiency Test Results

Test Components of the English Proficiency Test	No. of Items in the English Proficiency Test	Respondents' Proficiency Average
Sentence Completion	10	82.2
Grammar	15	83.6
Vocabulary	15	79.47
Reading Comprehension	5	87.2
Writing	5	79.8
Total	50	
Grand Mean		82.45

Table 2 shows the students' English Proficiency test results. For sentence completion, an average of 82.2 was obtained, 83.6 for grammar, 79.47 for vocabulary, 87.2 for reading comprehension, and 79.8 for writing. The scores had obtained a grand mean of 82.45, which indicates that they were above average for the given test items. As mentioned in the

study of Almeera & Usama (2024), in today's interconnected world, English proficiency is a crucial asset for navigating the global landscape successfully. The ability to communicate effectively in English is not only a gateway to enhanced career opportunities but also facilitates integration into diverse societies.

Table 3. Test of Significance between Academic Performance in Purposive Communication and English Proficiency Test

Variable	Mean	r	p	Significance	Degree of Relation
Academic Performance	88.13	0.81	0.000	Highly Significant	Very Strong Positive
English Proficiency	82.06				

Table 3 shows the results of the significant relation test between students' Academic Performance in Purposive Communication and English Proficiency test. It can be seen on the table that with an r-value of 0.81 and p-value of less than 0.01, the respondents' Academic Performance has a very strong significant relationship. This indicates that as one variable increases, the other variable increases in an almost similar degree.

Conclusion

The CHED (Commission on Higher Education) presents Purposive Communication with a description focused on writing, speaking and presenting to different audiences for various purposes. From this English course in the Bachelor Elementary Education, macro skills are not fully acquired, thus resulting in low English proficiency, affecting their opportunity to teach in public elementary schools. In our university, this problem caught our attention during the pandemic, and we modified the syllabus utilized in different departments. According to Saziso&Chimhenga (2021), curriculum modification strategies, particularly curriculum adaptations and augmentations, have been identified as important to enable learners to achieve access to and progress in the general curriculum. Additionally, lessons on macro skills were included to develop students' abilities that would increase their English proficiency level. This intervention is significantly manifested in this study, which shows a highly significant relationship between the course Purposive Communication and English Proficiency level. The researchers, therefore, conclude that enhancement of the topics embedded in the Purposive Communication should be aligned with the English proficiency test that the DepEd administers.

Recommendation

The Purposive Communication group of instructors of the College of Arts and Sciences had initially done their part in modifying the syllabus in the course, and this had resulted positively in relation to the English Proficiency level of BEED (Bachelor of Elementary) students. The researchers further recommend the following;

1. Implement the modified Purposive Communication syllabus 2.
2. Strict monitoring on the utilization of the modified syllabus
3. Standardized Modules aligned with the modified syllabus must be utilized university wide
4. Create worksheets that will enhance the English Proficiency level of students
5. Proper Monitoring of the implementation

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