

ENGLISH COMPETENCE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF FRESHMAN ENGINEERING STUDENTS OF ISABELA STATE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT: This study sought to evaluate the level of English competence and academic performance of freshman engineering students of Isabela State University and its relation to their profile. The respondents were 161 freshman engineering students enrolled at Isabela State University, Ilagan and Echague Campus. The researcher made use of the Descriptive-Normative and Inferential Method, Chi-square to test the null hypothesis and the Pearson-r to test the correlation of the variables.

Based from the results of the study, the overall English competence and academic performance of the students was on the “average”. The personal profile of the respondents such as age, gender, dialect spoken, high school graduated from and parents’ occupation were found to have no effect in their English competency level and academic performance.

The English competence of the students under the key indicators as “Stress/Intonation”, “Verbal Ability”, “Reading Comprehension”, “Correct Usage”, “Identifying Errors”, “Spelling, Punctuation” and “Logical Organization” was not affected by the students’ profile. However, the English competence of the respondents has a correlation with their academic performance.

Based from the findings of the study, the researcher strongly recommends that all English teachers and administrators must initiate programs that will surely reinforce the utilization of English language in their respective campuses.

KEYWORDS: academic performance, correct usage, competence, identifying errors, logical organization, punctuation, reading comprehension, verbal ability, spelling, organization

I. INTRODUCTION

A knowledge of the English language keeps one well informed and abreast of the times. Every year, countless interesting books, pamphlets, and articles are printed all over the world. Speeches of international significance made during conferences held in foreign countries are immediately translated in English. Important discoveries in medicine and in various branches of science are readily available in English.

Today, more than ever, the dominance of the English language can be seen. The year 2000 brought about an even greater need for relevant and effective use of English. Cyberspace, Netscape, Internet, homepage, worldwide web, e-mail, e-commerce and trade, virtual reality.

Furthermore, the list of new and other list of intriguing vocabulary of the emergent information technology keeps expanding (Garcia, 1999).

With the globalization concept sweeping swiftly across continents, it has become imperative that Filipino students must learn and acquire the standard English. Since English is the universal language, it should therefore be taught in the context of reality so that learning the English language is not only structural but it would evolve into a meaningful experience (Baduel, 1999).

Proficiency in English is a key to meaningful employment and professional advancement in the Philippines. The deterioration of English is a sad reality, but its implication draws a sadder picture. As long as the problem is left unaddressed, Filipinos miss the opportunity to land on a good paying jobs here and abroad. With this scenario it is logical to say that the decline in English proficiency greatly hampers the economic growth of the country.

ISU also believes in the significance of the English language as an important tool towards the acquisition of technical, vocational and agricultural knowledge by its clientele. Thus, this study seeks to identify the level of English competence of ISU Ilagan and Echague freshman engineering students and its relationship to their academic performance. It is hoped that through this research, the institution could further realize its objectives which can eventually lead to the attainment of the regional and national development goals.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study sought to find out the correlation between the English competence of freshman engineering students of ISU Ilagan and Echague Campus and their academic performance.

Specifically, it aimed to answer the following problems:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of: age, gender, dialect spoken, parents' occupation, and high school graduated from?
2. What is the English competency level of ISU freshman engineering students in terms of: stress/intonation, verbal ability, spelling and punctuation, logical organization and reading comprehension?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the English competency level of students and the following variables: age, gender, dialect spoken, parents' occupation and high school graduated from?
4. What is the academic performance of ISU freshman Engineering students?
5. Is there a relationship between the English Competence and Academic Performance of the respondents?

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The result of this study gives idea on the respondents' weaknesses and strengths in the use of English language, since this study gives a clear description on where the students got a low and high score in their English Proficiency Test, specifically on the aspect of: stress/intonation, verbal ability, reading comprehension, correct usage, identifying errors, spelling and punctuation and logical organization. With that, they may be able to overcome their weaknesses and enhance their strengths.

It is also a must for the teachers to come up with appropriate measures to improve the English competence of students. It also reminds the parents of their significant role in helping their children cope with language problems, and provide assistance in developing the English competence of their children.

Moreover, the school officials are provided with information that may be used as a basis for the improvement and formulation of the English program in the University. Insights may also be provided to textbook writers in coming up with books and other relevant materials that could address the deterioration of English competence of students in the province/country.

Furthermore, this study may enlighten the country's curriculum makers to come up with effective measures and laws that can respond to the needs of students, teachers and the entire educational system especially in the enhancement of the English competence of students.

IV. SCOPE AND DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study determined the English competence of freshman engineering students at ISU Ilagan and Echague Campus, School Year 2004-2005 and its relation to their academic performance.

The English competence of the respondents was determined through the results of their English Proficiency Test which was prepared by the CHED HERO 02 (see CHED Memo, 1996). Results of the Proficiency Test measured the following areas: stress/intonation, verbal ability, reading comprehension, correct usage, identifying errors, spelling/punctuation and logical organization, while the academic performance of the respondents was determined through their grades in all subjects taught in English such as: English 11, Biology 11, Mathematics 11 and Chemistry 11. These subjects were taken because these are the subjects common to the respondents and also the subjects use English as a means of communication/instruction (CHED memo).

Total numeration was used in the selection of the respondents.

V. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Table1. Profile of the Respondents

Profile	Campus				Total	
	Echague		Ilagan			
	N=97(60.20%)		N=64(39.80%)		N=161(100.00%)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Age						
16-17	70	43.50	44	27.30	114	70.80
18-19	23	14.30	18	11.20	41	25.50
20-21	4	2.50	2	3.12	6	3.70
Mean age: 17.26						
Gender						
Female	28	17.40	10	6.20	38	23.60
Male	69	42.90	54	33.50	123	76.40
Dialect						
Ilocano	69	42.90	29	18.00	98	60.90
Tagalog	23	14.30	10	6.20	33	20.50
Ibanag	0	0.00	24	14.90	24	14.90
Yogad	1	0.60	1	0.60	2	1.20
Itawes	2	1.20	0	0.00	2	1.20
Kankanaey	1	0.60	0	0.00	1	0.60
Muslim	1	0.60	0	0.00	1	0.60
High School Graduated From						
Public	77	47.80	55	34.20	132	82.00
Private	20	12.40	9	5.60	29	18.00
Mothers' Occupation						
White collar	5	3.10	5	3.10	10	6.20
Blue collar	13	8.10	2	1.20	15	9.30
House keeper	71	44.10	54	33.50	125	77.60
Business	8	5.00	3	1.90	11	6.80
Fathers' Occupation						
White collar	8	5.00	10	6.20	18	11.20
Blue collar	87	54.00	50	31.10	137	85.10
Business	2	1.20	4	2.50	6	3.70

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Table 1 presents the profile of the Engineering freshman Students of the Isabela State University at Echague and Ilagan Campus.

Age. In Echague campus, a greater number of the respondents belong to the age bracket of 16 – 17 years of age as the youngest and the eldest is age bracket 20-21. Likewise in Ilagan campus, majority of the respondents belonged to ages 16-17. The data revealed that majority of the students are of the average age for one who is first year college; his age should be between 16 or 17.

Gender. The data indicates that in Echague campus, majority were male Engineering students. The same findings were observed in Ilagan campus, wherein majority of the respondents were males and few were females. Out of 161 respondents from Ilagan and Echague campus, male students dominated the female.

Dialect. In Echague campus, majority of the respondents speak Ilocano by Tagalog and Itawes dialect. With the same result few speak Yogad, Kankanaey/Ibaloy and Muslim dialects and nobody speaks Ibanag. In Ilagan campus, majority speak Ilocano dialect, followed by Ibanag, Tagalog and only one is a Yogad. Nobody from

the respondents speaks Itawes, Kankanaey and Muslim. The incidence of more Ilocano speaking respondents is expected because most families living in Ilagan and Echague and in nearby towns trace their family roots from those people who migrated from Ilocos .

High School Graduated From. In Echague campus, majority of the respondents graduated high school from high schools and few from private schools. In Ilagan, just like in Echague campus, majority of the respondents came from the public schools and nine graduated from the private schools. It was observed that most of those who enrolled in Isabela State University are those who graduated from public high schools due to the very minimal tuition fee charged by these schools.

Parents Occupation. With regard to the occupation of the mother of the Engineering students of Echague campus, majority of the mothers’ respondents are housekeeper, followed by a blue collar job, having business and white collar job. Among the respondents’ father’s occupation in Echague campus, majority of the respondents are engaged in blue collar occupation and few are having white collar occupation and few are engaged in business. As evidenced by their being a housekeeper.

Table 2. Academic Performance of the Respondents

Academic Performance Level	Campus				Total	
	Echague		Ilagan			
	N=97(60.20%)		N=64(39.80%)		N=161(100.00%)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
High (1.0-1.75)	8	5.00	0	0.00	8	5.00
Average (2.0-2.50)	27	16.80	23	14.30	50	31.10
Low (2.75-below)	62	35.80	41	25.50	103	64.00
Total	97	60.20	64	39.80	161	100.00
Mean: 3.07 (Average)						

Table 2 presents the academic performance of the Engineering students of the Isabela State University at Echague and Ilagan campus.

For Echague campus, majority got a descriptive rating of “Low” Academic Performance Level . Few of the respondents are “Average” and only eight students are considered “High” Academic Performance Level. For ISU Ilagan, majority are considered “Low”, Twenty Three students are considered as “Average” and nobody among the students got a rating of “High”.

In the overall frequency and percentage distribution of respondents in the two campuses, majority of the students got a rating as “Low” in their Academic Performance Level followed by “Average” and few students are considered “High”. The average academic performance level of respondents for both campuses is “Average”.

Table 3. English Competency Level of the Respondents

Types of Test	Echague			Ilagan			Mean	Both	
	Mean	Descriptive Rating	Rank	Mean	Descriptive Rating	Rank		Descriptive Rating	Rank
Spelling, Punctuation	1.88	Average	1	1.89	Average	1	1.88	Average	1
Stress/Intonation	2.25		3	1.95		2	2.13		2
Verbal Ability	2.21		2	2.11		3	2.17		3
Reading Comprehension	2.37		4	2.36		6	2.37		4
Correct Usage	2.46		5	2.27		4.5	2.39		5
Identifying Errors	2.57		6	2.27		4.5	2.45		6
Logical Organization	2.77	Low	7	2.80	Low	7	2.78	Low	7
Overall Proficiency	2.36	Average		2.23	Average		2.31	Average	

identifying errors, spelling/punctuation and logical organization. Likewise, age of the respondents is not significantly related to their English competency level.

Gender

Stress/Intonation, Verbal Ability, Reading Comprehension, Correct Usage, Identifying Errors, Spelling, Punctuation, and Logical Organization are not significant. Hence, the gender is not correlated with the students competency level.

This finding does not conform with the finding of Ellis (1994) in his study that female learners do better than male.

Dialect Spoken

The dialect spoken by the respondents have no bearing on their level of competency in terms of stress/intonation, verbal ability, reading comprehension, correct usage, identifying errors, spelling/punctuation, and logical organization. In general, there is no correlation between the English competency level of the students and the dialect spoken.

Table 5. Relationship between the English Competency of the Respondents and their Profile in Terms of Parents' Occupation and High School Graduated From

Types of Test	Parents' Occupation				High School Graduated from	
	Mother		Father		Chi-square value	Prob.
	Chi-square value	Prob.	Chi-square value	Prob.		
Stress/Intonation	6.87 ^{ns}	0.33	3.33 ^{ns}	0.50	2.79 ^{ns}	0.25
Verbal Ability	7.94 ^{ns}	0.54	12.78*	0.05	3.40 ^{ns}	0.33
Reading Comprehension	3.70 ^{ns}	0.72	3.94 ^{ns}	0.41	4.63 ^{ns}	0.10
Correct Usage	4.54 ^{ns}	0.60	1.47 ^{ns}	0.83	0.66 ^{ns}	0.72
Identifying Errors	0.92 ^{ns}	0.99	3.26 ^{ns}	0.52	0.83 ^{ns}	0.66
Spelling, Punctuation	4.52 ^{ns}	0.61	0.35 ^{ns}	0.99	1.04 ^{ns}	0.59
Logical Organization	9.94 ^{ns}	0.13	2.62 ^{ns}	0.62	1.72 ^{ns}	0.42
Overall Proficiency	22.67 ^{ns}	0.54	16.18 ^{ns}	0.44	3.77 ^{ns}	0.88

*Significant

^{ns}Not Significant

Parents' Occupation

As gleaned from Table 5, the occupation of parents is not correlated with the competency level of the students in terms of stress/intonation, verbal ability, reading comprehension, correct usage, identifying errors, spelling/punctuation, and logical organization.

On the other hand, in terms of fathers' occupation, only one among the indicators was found to have a significant correlation with the level of competence. The Chi-square value implies that the students' verbal ability level has a bearing on the occupation of their father. This means that the father's occupation has a significant correlation with the competency level specifically to the student's verbal ability level. Abon's (1998) study complements with the foregoing findings when she revealed that students whose father were professionals performed better. However, as a whole, the occupation of the parents does not affect the English competency level of the students.

High School Graduated from

The data revealed that there is no correlation between the English competency level of Chi-square values and their respective probabilities as follows: Stress/Intonation, Verbal Ability, Reading Comprehension, Correct Usage, Identifying Errors, and Spelling, Punctuation, and Logical Organization.

Likewise, the overall English competency level of the students is not affected by the type of high school where they graduated from.

The above statement concurs with Carag's (1997) finding that the respondent's school graduated from do not have any bearing with the English competency of the respondents.

Table 6. Relationship between the English Competence of the Respondents and their Academic Performance

Types of Test	r-value	Probability
Stress/Intonation	0.13 ^{ns}	0.09
Verbal Ability	0.09 ^{ns}	0.27
Reading Comprehension	0.23*	0.00
Correct Usage	0.14 ^{ns}	0.08
Identifying Errors	0.10 ^{ns}	0.21
Spelling, Punctuation	0.13 ^{ns}	0.09
Logical Organization	0.18*	0.02
Overall Proficiency	0.29*	0.00

*Significant

^{ns}Not Significant

Table 6 shows the relationship between the English competence of the students and their academic performance.

Out of the seven indicators, only two were found to be significantly correlated with the academic performance of students. These are: Reading Comprehension and Logical Organization.

The r-values further indicate that the higher the competency level of the students in terms of reading comprehension and logical organization, the greater is their tendency to obtain high grades. The stated findings conform with Blas’s (2005) findings that the reading comprehension and logical organizations in the overall results of the pre-test and post-test scores are significantly related to the students’ final grade in English 11.

On the other hand, Stress/Intonation, Verbal Ability, Correct Usage, Identifying Errors, and Spelling/Punctuation were noted to have no significant relationship with the academic performance of the students.

This shows that the overall English competency level of the students has a correlation with their academic performance. This implies that students who are more competent in English perform better than those who are less proficient. This finding implies that the student who got high scores in the tests got high grades in English 11 while those who got low scores in tests got low grade in English 11. In other words the skills displayed in the tests reflect the skills showed in the English 11 class.

The findings of this study do not conform with Anduyan’s (1999) finding that the academic performance and English competency level of the students have a high positive correlation. Based on the result of his study, it connotes that even if there is a high positive correlation between the academic performance and English competency level, the correlation is not significant. This means that high positive correlation between English competence and academic performance does not imply a cause-effect relationship.

The significant relationship that was exhibited by the result of English proficiency test and their academic performance leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

VI. FINDINGS

Based from the results of the study, the following are the significant findings of the study:

1. The overall English competence and academic performance of the students was on the “average”.
2. The personal profile of the respondents such as age, gender, dialect spoken, high school graduated from and parents’ occupation were found to have no effect in their English competency level and academic performance.
3. The English competence of the students under the key indicators as “stress/Intonation”, “Verbal Ability”, “Reading Comprehension”, “Correct Usage”, Identifying Errors”, “Spelling, Punctuation” and “ logical Organization” was not affected by the students’ profile.
4. However, the result of the study implied that the English competence of the respondents has a correlation with their academic performance.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The following are the conclusions of the study:

1. The freshman engineering students of the two campuses of ISU is average in their English competence and academic performance.

2. The English competence level and academic performance of the students is not affected by their personal profile.
3. The students' profile is not affected by the key indicators of English competence.
4. The English competence of the respondents has a correlation with their academic performance.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based from the conclusions drawn from the study, the following are hereby recommended:

1. English teachers and administrators should initiate programs that will surely reinforce the utilization of English language in their respective campuses.
2. Teachers teaching English as a subject should grow professionally by attending seminars, workshop and training.
3. Due to the low English competence of the students, campus administrators should design s program to improve the students' competence in English.
4. Conduct of intensive training and seminars to improve the capability of the teachers teaching English.
5. Sufficient funds should be allocated for that purpose is very necessary.
6. Similar study should be conducted in other campuses of ISU for further comparisons.

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